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REMOVING HIDDEN BARRIERS: USING CHAT TO EXAMINE HOW WOMEN SHAPE THEIR MILITARY EXPERIENCE

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Major: Higher and Adult Education

The University of Memphis

December 2021

ABSTRACT

Using Critical Military Studies (Basham & Bulmer, 2017; Duncanson & Woodward, 2016), this exploratory case study analysis describes how women officers made sense of their gendered experience within the military, and uses agency, as defined by Post-structural feminism (Davies and Gannon, 2005), to highlight how women are shaped by their environment. The purpose was to both observe how women officers perceived military gender beliefs and practices, and analyze how those perceptions shaped how they learn to participate in the military, as well as to analyze how those experiences helped them reshape gender beliefs and practices within the military. I also used Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 1996, 2001, 2014; Sawchuk, 2003) to describe how women officers learn to participate within the military by observing their actions and motives within their overall activity of becoming an officer and then observing the resolution of contradictions found within that activity.

I observed six U. S. Air Force women officers attending Air Command and Staff College. Even though the U. S. Air Force recently removed barriers for women seeking to work in careers historically offered only to men, women described several hidden barriers to their participation that continued to thrive within the military culture. This forced women to perform adaptive acts of resistance like avoidance and acceptance, as well as over-preparing and over-excelling, which could have long-term impacts that could distance men and women officer more from each other and discourage inclusivity. If the U. S. Air Force intends to formulate policy regarding the removal of barriers, it needs to also address cultural barriers that sometimes remain hidden yet are deeply rooted in the cultural expectations of what it means to be a member of the military forces.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for His goodness and grace to me and my family during this focused and intense time of study and work. He gave me the peace and patience to help me see this effort through to the end.

I also want to thank my beautiful wife, Jeannene for her patience and love as I spent countless hours away from our family in the evenings and weekends to complete my coursework and dissertation. You have single-handedly kept our family going while I was away and have done so with kindness and generosity. Thank you, sweetie. I love you dearly.

I also need to thank my wonderful advisor, Dr. Edith Gnanadass, who inspired me, invigorated me, pushed me and, sometimes, drug me to the finish line. You have been a tremendous advisor over the past four years and have become a very dear friend. Your energy and encouragement are infectious and the way you care for your students has inspired me to do the same!

I dedicate this work to my late father, Col. (Retired, US Air Force) Dan Bellue. He passed away as I was finishing my degree and was unable to see me complete it. He taught me how to love God, treat others with love and respect, and was the number Godly influence in my life. You are my hero, dad. I love you and miss you dearly.

Introduction

"You're a part of the good ol' boys' club, aren't you?" I was shocked when she asked me that question. I had recently reconnected with an Air Force colleague after not seeing her for over ten years. We worked together several years ago and while I had continued in my assigned career field in the Air Force, she had quietly transitioned into another one within the Air Force. I never knew the circumstances behind her transition, but as she recounted her divergent career path, she was quick to tell me it had to do with the working environment that she experienced and perceived to be biased against women officers. Because of this, she pursued another career in the Air Force. Through our conversation I learned that after these painful experiences she had since thrived and had been recently selected for a promotion to the rank of Colonel. Even though she was extremely proud of her new accomplishments and career path, she was still confused and scarred by the way she was treated ten years ago. So, she confided in me seeking closure and meaning of her past experience assuming that I might have known more about her situation, because of my gender. I was a man, so her assumption was that I was a member of the "boy's club."

What did it mean to be a member of the "boy's club" in the military? Certainly, for my colleague, the meaning was attached to a negative experience that included both exclusivity and devaluing of her input. However, is this the case for most women in the military? The U. S. military is a complex organization comprised of both men and women who participate, learn, and work together. It has not always been that way, but has, in recent years, become more inclusive toward women. As an example, the Department of Defense (2015) has recently made policy changes that removes eligibility

barriers for women opening all occupational opportunities for them to pursue. However, as beneficial as policy changes can be in shaping the direction of an organization and creating equality, there are other social and cultural factors that also contribute to shaping how women learn to participate within the male-dominated military. Is there a way to investigate and describe these social and cultural barriers to women's participation in the military?

The "boy's club" nomenclature is also used in Callahan and Tomaszewski's research (2007) analyzing women's participation and learning experiences as members of a military non-profit organization. Their study sought to examine the effect gender had on women's participation within a male-dominated organization. Their work expanded upon Bagilhole and Goode's (2001) findings of "sisterhood" learning communities established within similar male-dominated organizations acting as a counter to the mainstream learning community of men within the same organization. This notion of segregated learning communities within the military set apart by gender piqued my interest regarding how participation and learning how to be a part of an organization may be shaped by gender. How do women participate within an organization that has accepted them, yet still classifies them as not a part of the "boy's club"? How does this differently shape how women learn to be a part of that organization?

Background of the Study and Positionality

For this study I was interested in exploring how gender beliefs and practices in the military help shape how women in the military learn to participate and become a part of their organization. The learning I wanted to observe, then, is cultural and social. It is informal learning examined through the everyday experiences of women in the military.

It is learning through their participation in the culture. Since the military is predominantly male, a study investigating how women learn to belong in the military helps spotlight social and cultural aspects of the way women perceive their environment, and then interpret and participate in it.

I spent 28 years serving as an officer in the U. S. Air Force. As one deeply entrenched within its culture, I understand my positionality as a former male officer might offer a male-centric perspective of this subject. I too have been impacted by the culture around me and I continue to be impacted by that culture today. There are assumptions, beliefs, and perspectives I possess that constantly shaped my role as researcher. Additionally, my higher rank as a Lieutenant Colonel Officer interviewing lower-ranking Majors put me in a delicate position managing researcher/researched issues of authority and power. In the proceeding chapters I outline how I tried to mitigate and carefully manage my positionality, beliefs, and assumptions throughout the research process.

The intent of this study was to foreground the voices of women in an exploration of seldom heard stories of women who daily negotiate the tension of being both in the organization and out of the "club." Throughout my time in the military, I have seen policy and cultural changes regarding women's participation in the military slowly modified and adapted. Yet as a male within a male-dominated organization, I have never considered their impact on women as what Tisdell (1998) calls, "relevant knowledge" (p. 6). In her discussion of post-structural feminist pedagogies, she recalls a time as professor when her positionality as a white woman shaped what she saw and considered valid and relevant knowledge regarding a certain subject matter in her classroom. It was only after

a student voiced her concern that she understood and was exposed to the bias she held due to her positionality as a white woman in authority. Similarly, it has been easy, as a man of authority within the male-dominated military, to disregard and count as irrelevant the impact the long road to full acceptance has had on women in the military.

When I joined the military in 1992, women could serve in the military, but not in combat positions. During this time, the military operated from a risk-mitigation perspective regarding women's participation in and near combat operations. Known as the "risk rule," the Department of Defense developed this policy in 1988 (U.S. GAO Report, 1988, p.45) when deciding the extent to which women could participate in non-combat support roles near combat areas. The risk rule "excluded women from noncombat units or missions if the risks of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture were equal to or greater than the risks in the combat units they supported" (U.S. GAO Report, 1998, p. 45). This rule was left up to the separate military services to manage and oversee. The risk rule was eventually rescinded in 1994 (Kamarck, 2016) giving women more opportunities to participate in the military. Even with this revocation, there were still several combat positions from which women were excluded.

Regardless of this move toward greater participation and equality, the journey for women as an equitable participant of the United States military has been a long one that has spanned several decades (discussed in detail in chapter two). Women have always been the minority and have experienced periods of no access, restricted access, and, most recently, full access into all occupational positions within the military. Once the memorandum entitled "Implementation Guidance for the Full Integration of Women in the Armed Forces" (Department of Defense, 2013) was signed, the issue of women's full

integration into the military was a completed task from a policy perspective. Within a subsequent memo, the Secretary of Defense noted that the Department of Defense had, "effectively remov[ed] the remaining barrier to the integration of women into all military occupational…career fields within the U.S. military" (Department of Defense, 2015, p. 1).

However, my recent conversation with a woman colleague made me question whether this policy change was truly the last "remaining barrier" for women who serve in the military. It provoked me to wonder if other barriers to women in the military still existed and how those barriers impacted a women's ability to fully participate in the military. To my colleague, her "boy's club" remark certainly depicted a bifurcation of a deeper community of acceptance and participation based on gender. This provoked me to wonder how women's experiences of participation in the U.S. military were different from men's. How did gender beliefs and practices in the military shape women's learning of how to participate in the military? Were there indications where women's participation within the organization helped to reshape their deeply held gender beliefs and practices?

In recent years, the military has commissioned several studies to examine the impact on women in the military as a gendered minority group. Based on 2016 data, women represent 16% of the enlisted military corps and 18% of officers. The U.S. Air Force has the largest representation with 19% enlisted and 21% officers (Reynolds & Shendruk, 2018). The U.S. Air Force has employed the RAND Corporation to study and report on issues related to the force. The RAND Corporation is a non-profit organization that helps improve policy and decision making through research and analysis. Since 2014, RAND has completed six studies regarding women in the Air Force. These studies

discuss and analyze women's retention (Keller et al., 2018), sexual assault (Matthews, 2017; Miller et al., 2018), the integration of women into entry-level training (Schaefer et al., 2018), and demographic diversity (Lim et al., 2014; Schulker et al., 2018). However, most of these studies were focus-group or survey-based and cited family and personal considerations, career or work environment issues, or broader military factors as reasons why women depart the military or why they believe women's promotion rates are unequal to men.

These RAND studies have also provided recommendations to the military, such as providing more resources for childcare, providing sabbatical time, and giving women with children greater career flexibility and educating leaders on prevention of sexist work environments (Keller et al., 2018). However, they conclude that barriers to women participating in the military may be due to women choosing careers with fewer promotion opportunities, women feeling like they must work harder than their male counterparts, or tensions that are inherent with dual-income family situations (2018). RAND also readily admits that their current research "has not fully explained these differences" (2018, p. 59) regarding why women separate from the military sooner than men. While these studies attempt to identify organizational and social barriers to women by addressing promotion opportunities and work-life balance issues, they do not focus on the full experiences of these women as participants within the organization, as well as how gender beliefs and practices in the military might shape their participation.

The Dichter and True (2015) study also cited the need for a deeper examination of women's military participation by focusing on why women leave the military. They stated, "Empirical literature on why women enter and leave the military is sparse and has

relied primarily on survey-based studies" (p. 194). While surveys are useful in determining attitudes and opinions at a point in time, there are other qualitative methods that can better capture the lived experiences of women as they participate within the culture of the military. Based on this deficiency, their research attempted to capture women's themes of their time in the military. While Dichter and True's 2015 study attempted to provide a richer discussion and explanation, they chose 35 women veterans from the same Veteran's Administration (VA) hospital who volunteered to participate. This limited their scope in ascertaining women's active experiences in the military. They admitted as much in their article by stating, "study participants from older service eras may have served under policies less friendly to women that are no longer in place and experiences of more recent veterans may not be shared by future female service members" (p. 195).

While Dichter and True's research was limited by its retired participants, these limitations could be easily addressed by interviewing women still serving in the military and who are currently living through these policy and cultural tensions that include both inclusion and exclusion. This may help to close the gap and substantively add to the scholarship regarding how gender beliefs in the military impact women's participation. Dichter and True echo this by stating, "ongoing research is needed to identify and understand the impacts of more recent policies…related to women" (p. 195). In other words, military experiences, told from a woman's perspective of those still serving, need to be told to discover hidden barriers to how women learn how to participate in the military.

Problem Statement

To study women's participation in the military, I find using a post-structural feminist lens most useful as it examines gender within the actions that are preformed (Butler, 2002; Cockburn, 2010; Enloe, 2000) and also foregrounds women and their role within organizations in the construction of knowledge and positionality (Tisdell, 1998). Examples of this include scholarship that discusses the conceptualization of the military identity as constructed around gender (Barrett, 1992; Higate & Cameron 2004; Kronsell, 2005; Lande 2007; Woodward, 2000), as well as several that focus on gender, identity, and the military in terms of the level of women's participation (Callahan & Tomaszewski, 2007; Carreiras, 2006; Duncanson & Woodward, 2016; Greenwood, 2017; King, 2013; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Sasson-Levy, 2011; Segal, 1995). These studies have all served to spotlight the tension for women integrating with the military structure that accepts them as a provisional member of the military and calls for, "strategies to transform institutions and organizations still possessing rigid gender regimes" (Sasson-Levy, 2011, p. 92). As a result, these researchers have observed a potential for women's participation in the military to redefine gender roles and practices, or as Sasson-Levy writes, a "regendering" (p. 81) effect. Simply put, they have observed a potential for women's participation within the military to help reshape gender beliefs and practices within the organization.

Duncanson and Woodward (2016) also discuss "regendering" of military gender beliefs and ask, "What factors prohibit or inhibit women's military participation?" (p. 14). They admit that more attention needs to be given to the effects this participation has on supplanting old, gendered dichotomies in favor of new ones. Specifically, they ask,

"When does women's presence translate into process that tackle gendered inequalities and contribute to the transformation of the institution?" (p. 14). Presence here does not mean in numbers only, although data shows that women's enrollment in the military has increased over several decades (Reynolds & Shendruk, 2018). Rather, real transformative presence is assessed in participation by women within the organization that is valued by the majority. Duncanson and Woodward (2016) conclude with a challenge for future researchers, by stating, "there is a need for scholarship on the gender-military nexus to engage with when and how the participation of military women leads to transformation, and, equally, the circumstances when it does not, or when it even incurs backlash" (p. 14). Duncanson and Woodward seek research that analyzes women's participation that goes beyond a mere increase in numbers.

More specifically, Duncanson and Woodward call for research able to test these "theories of institutional change" (p. 15). To move scholarship in this area forward, a deeper examination of women actively serving in the military is required to provide empirical data to assess the validity of these theories. Greenwood (2017) echoes this concern and believes a lack of access to active military personnel, as well as non-military accessibility to military women's professional spaces, have limited the depth (and length) of observation and analysis that must occur in order to thoroughly examine the everyday lives of these women. Segal (1995) also cites the deficiency of rich, observational studies with women in the military by calling for more analytical studies of women's military roles at the "organizational, interpersonal and individual" (p. 772) levels. Therefore, the problem is that current research in the field of gender and the military does not contain enough deep and extensive analysis at the personal level of women who are currently

serving in the military, and, therefore, does not accurately answer how military gender beliefs and practices helps to shape women's learning of how they participate in the military.

Research Purpose

Using Critical Military Studies (Basham & Bulmer, 2017; Duncanson & Woodward, 2016; Greenwood, 2017; Kronsell, 2005; McLeish, 2015), and agency, as defined within post-structural feminism (Butler, 2002; Cockburn, 2010; Enloe, 2000; Tisdell, 1998), this exploratory study describes how women officers make sense of their gendered experience and learn to participate within the military. The purpose of the study was twofold: a) to observe how women officers perceive military gender beliefs and practices and analyze how those perceptions shape how they learn to participate in the military and b) how those experiences help reshape their gender beliefs and practices within the military. The DoD (2015) memo removing barriers for women in the military has been operational for several years. This study serves to investigate how the military culture has been shaped by this change in policy, as well as investigating other social factors within the military that serve as barriers to this change.

I chose to examine the activity of women officers from within the U. S. Air Force. The presence of women in the military is most prevalent within the Air Force officer corps, as the U.S. Air Force has the largest representation of women with 19% enlisted and 21% officers (Reynolds & Shendruk, 2018). Therefore, this study focused on women Air Force officers attending Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) at Air University (AU) located in the Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, where I was an instructor. These women officers are approximately at the ten-to-twelve-year point in

their careers and have participated in the military during a time of several policy changes regarding women's inclusion. This study excluded women from other branches of the military to keep external factors as similar as possible to observe trends.

Officers referred to in this study are made up of women who have completed a commissioning program either through the U. S. Air Force Academy, an Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) program at a university or have successfully completed Officer Training School (OTS) at Maxwell Air Force Base.

I used Critical Military Studies (CMS) (Basham & Bulmer, 2017; Duncanson & Woodward, 2017; Greenwood, 2017; Kronsell, 2005; McLeish, 2015) as a part of my theoretical framework to help me deconstruct traditional military gender definitions "showing where they fail, are negotiated or are resisted" (Basham & Bulmer, 2017, p. 60). To accomplish this, CMS relies on close encounters with those they research in the military in order to observe everyday experiences where these gender beliefs are practiced.

Post-structural feminism (PSF) views gender as performative, and therefore socially constructed (Acker, 1990; Herbert, 1998; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Woodward, 2000). Identifying agency using this lens assisted me to recognize traditional military gender definitions and practices, as well as highlight approaches women officers construct "new ways of being a man or a woman" (Barrett, 2005, p. 88) and participate within the military. Specifically, Davies and Gannon (2005) states, "Feminist post-structuralists theorizing focuses in particular on the specific processes whereby individuals are made into gendered subjects" (p. 312). These processes (or actions) can help highlight how my participant's beliefs about gender shape how they participate within, and are constituted

by, the military system in their journey of learning how to become an officer. Agency, as defined within PSF, examines the way culture formed the individual, as Davies and Gannon (2005) writes, a post-structural view of agency forces us to first, "examin[e] the ways the social inscribes itself on the individual" (p. 312) to determine how power structures, "shape us as particular kinds of being" (p. 312). This awareness of how my participants were constructed socially was a critical step in questioning its legitimacy and efficacy on their lives.

I defined learning using Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 1996, 2001, 2009, 2014; Sawckuk, 2003). Learning in CHAT is the activity that occurs when a person or group, while interacting with and interpreting the world around them, sees contradictions within their activity and transforms it into something new. CHAT provided a descriptive framework to explain women officers' participation and learning within their central activity of becoming an officer as it helped me to examine learning from a social and cultural perspective.

I used a multiple case study approach (Reissman, 2008; Stake; 1995, 2005) and employed these feminist ethnographic strategies (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Parameswaran, 2001; Skeggs, 2001; Stacey, 1998; Visweswaran, 1994, 1997; Wolcott, 1990) to give women agency in telling their own story.

Research Questions

Therefore, the primary purpose of the study was twofold: to describe how women officers perceive military gender beliefs and practices and to analyze how those perceptions shape how they learn to participate within the military environment. The central question of this study was: How do women's perception of military gender beliefs

and practices shape how they learn to participate within the military? My secondary research question is: How do women officers' participation and experiences help reshape their gender beliefs and practices?

Significance of the Study

The primary audience of this study is military leadership. As mentioned above, the DoD (2015) memo removing barriers for women in the military has been operational for several years. Yet there are still lessons military policy makers can learn regarding its reception by its members. The results of this exploratory study may be used to inform military leaders of lingering, and often silent, social and cultural barriers that remain regarding military gender beliefs and practices. These results could also be used to modify current pedagogical practices that reinforce traditional gender beliefs within the military.

This study also contributes to the ever-expanding body of CMS literature regarding gender and the military by examining the everyday lives of women officers as they learn to participate within the military. This is an important contribution for two reasons. First, my occupational status within the military academic institution offered a proximity and access to the military participants which is lacking in CMS research, as noted by Greenwood (2017). Hopefully, this will provide a better examination of women who are actively participating in the military.

Secondly, as Segal (1995) argues, the lack of proximity and access leads to a deficiency of deep, ethnographic-like studies which observe women's daily activities within the military. This calls for more analytical studies of women's military roles at the "organizational, interpersonal and individual" (p. 772) levels. This study added to the

depth of CMS research, by providing a more personal examination of women actively serving in the military. This empirical data is needed to assess the validity of theories within the gender and military scholarship.

Theoretical Framework

I used Critical Military Studies (Basham & Bulmer, 2017; Duncanson & Woodward, 2016; Greenwood, 2017; Kronsell, 2005; McLeish, 2015) and agency, as defined by post-structural feminism (Butler, 2002; Cockburn, 2010; Enloe, 2000; Tisdell, 1998), to describe women's participation within organizational structures of the military and how gender beliefs and practices shape how they learn to participate within these structures.

Critical Military Studies (Basham & Bulmer, 2017; Duncanson & Woodward, 2016; Greenwood, 2017; Kronsell, 2005; McLeish, 2015), located within the gender and military scholarship, differs from other gender and military research. Critical Military Studies (CMS) turns a critical lens on all military practices and organizations and observes all activity as candidates for investigation (Kennedy-Pipe, 2017). This study used CMS strategies of close encounters with their subjects and the questioning of traditional male/female occupational roles in studying gender and the military as it provides a deep examination into the lives of women currently serving in the military and questions the impact that gender has on their experience.

Using both post-structural feminist and CMS lenses, I observed and analyzed the role military gender beliefs and practices has on the activity of women officer's participation within the military academic environment.

Post-structural feminism is a useful analytical lens with which to examine women who participate within the military as it views gender as a social construct (Acker, 1990; Herbert, 1998; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Woodward, 2000) that can be shaped and reassembled based on observed and accepted social and cultural meanings and definitions. This is important as military identity can be formed around gender beliefs and practices (Barrett 1992; Higate & Cameron, 2004; Kronsell, 2005; Lande 2007; Woodward 2000) and could lead to contradictive experiences for women who serve in the military (Atherton, 2016; Carreiras & Alexandre, 2012; Chisholm, 2016; Cohn, 1987; Hale, 2012; Jaffe, 1995; Sylvester, 2013). In cultures like the military, where gender beliefs are deeply embedded, this could have a detrimental impact on women's participation.

This study focused on the theme of agency within post-structural feminism to observe and analyze women's participation (St. Pierre, 2000). Specifically, I examined how women in the military academic setting used agency to alter discourse within their military experiences as a means to disrupt language that is formed and controlled by the majority.

Learning in this study was defined from a social and cultural perspective using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 1996, 2001, 2009, 2014; Sawckuk, 2003) and provided a descriptive framework to explain women officers' participation and learning within the military. It does this by using human activity as the unit of analysis to understand human actions, motives, and operations. Human activity is defined as an object-directed, socially mediated, collective effort. Individual and group actions are entrenched in, and thereby made meaningful by, the collective effort by the group.

Activity is always evolving and changing due to inherent structural contradictions within and among these activity systems. These contradictions become the "source of change and development" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137) within a system. Their identification and resolution may lead to both individual and societal change. The resolution of these contradictions leading to new patterns of activity, or the formation of new activity systems, is called expansive learning (Engeström, 2001, p. 139).

CHAT takes a holistic approach to collective activity, and the learning that occurs within that activity system. Therefore, the purpose of using CHAT in this study is to explain how women officers learn to participate within the military. Other gender and military studies have looked at women officers' issues such as sexual harassment, occupational inequalities, and work/life balance (Bell et al., 2014; Carreiras, 2006; Keller et al., 2018; Maung et al., 2017; Morral et al., 2015), but there is little by way of literature addressing the scope of social and cultural aspects that shape women's participation and how they learn from their environment.

Assumptions

The researcher assumed that women within the military understand what participation within an organization means and could articulate their experiences of being women as part of the military. The researcher also assumed that the participants in this study would be honest in their responses to the questions they are asked, and that they could clearly reflect on the history of their experiences throughout their military careers. I also assumed that the participants were eager and willing to share these experiences with the researcher. The researcher also assumed that the participants understood that the military is a gendered organization (Acker, 1990) where men dominate in numbers,

culture, and ownership of knowledge. As such, women's experiences of learning how to participate may remain hidden and their participation may be devalued as they navigate how to contribute to the military organization. Lastly, it was assumed that the women interviewed are capable of identifying experiences where gender may have impacted their ability to learn how to participate within the organization.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this study. First, as women officer students complete ACSC in nine months, I had limited time and opportunity to obtain observation and interview data. While this may not be optimum to gather rich descriptions of their gendered experiences, it was a limitation I worked to mitigate with multiple and meaningful contact opportunities with my participants.

Secondly, face-to-face opportunities were limited this academic year for both ACSC faculty and students due to social distancing precautions from the COVID-19 pandemic. ACSC leadership began the academic year in the classroom, but the virus began to spread within the school, so ACSC moved most classroom instruction into the on-line environment. Also, because of social distancing concerns, there was a limit to the number of people that can be in one classroom. As such, I this impacted my data collection, access, and data analysis, as participation within an in-person classroom setting looked differently than an on-line classroom.

Lastly, since the researcher is a male officer in the military and the participants are women who may be of lower rank, the dynamic of power, authority, and gender was a limitation to consider and mitigate. To mitigate these impacts, the researcher met with participants away from the military installation and asked to meet in civilian clothes, or

whatever they felt comfortable in, to lessen the impact and appearance of power issues between the researcher and participant during the interview process (Parameswaran, 2001). While researcher positionality will always be present and shape the research, I chose, like Ann Gray (2003) to accept, "our own experience of everyday life and culture…not as a hindrance or something which might sway or bias our research, but something which should be acknowledged and employed in our intellectual work" (p. 27).

Delimitations

In scoping this study, I made some difficult decisions of what to leave out. First, I limited myself to observing women officers only. Officers serve as the primary leaders of the military organization. They are able to set the tone of the organization and shape its culture. As I will explain further in chapter 2, an officer's duty from the day they are commissioned into the military is to lead. Therefore, inherent within the identity of every officer should be a responsibility to lead, shape and influence others. This should provide a common motive in all my participants that will be of interest to this study.

Secondly, I chose to examine the activity of women officers from within the U. S. Air Force at ACSC as discussed above. I realize this limits the perspectives I might gain from observing women officers in other services. However, I wanted my participants to come from a common gendered experience, so keeping all participants within one military service attempts to accomplish this. Different services (Army, Air Force, Navy, etc.) have different cultures, so having my participants as part of the same organizational culture will help me find trends.

Thirdly, I limited myself to participants attending Air Command and Staff College. Since I served as an ACSC instructor there from August 2018 to February 2021, choosing participants from ACSC was a deliberate one as it allowed me to continue to teach, while being close to my research participants throughout the entire academic year. Also, as an instructor at ACSC, I had unlimited access to the school, the classrooms and course schedules and can easily set up observations and interviews with my participants based on this access. I also had rapport with the administration and the faculty to organize this study and will build rapport and trust with my participants as I was in the same building with them throughout the study.

Lastly, I recognize the military academic institution I wish to study is located within the southern United States and there are several social and cultural beliefs and practices regarding gender that are particular to the south (Moore & Vanneman, 2003; Rice & Coates, 1995). However, I do not think this greatly impacted the data as ACSC is attended by officers from locations all around the U.S. and is only a temporary place of residence for my participants for one year. In other words, military students attending ACSC were not necessarily from the south. However, most ACSC faculty are civilians and live in Montgomery, Alabama. Therefore, some administrators and faculty might hold to gender beliefs and practices widely accepted in the south. I took this into consideration and keep this in mind in my data collection and analysis.

Definitions

For the purpose of better understanding the key elements of this study, key terms are defined below:

Air University – Air University is accredited through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and is the Air Force's premier institute of higher learning and professional development for officer and enlisted members alike. It is located on Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, and is a system of over 30 colleges, schools, institutes and research centers. Among offering several professional certifications, the main AU campus offers graduate degrees at both the Master and Doctor of Philosophy levels (Air University Academic Affairs, 2018).

Air Command and Staff College – Air Command and Staff College is an institute within Air University for Air Force officers reaching the rank of Major. It is a rigorous ten-month graduate-level program taught through intensive small group seminars and lectures for the entire student body. Courses cover topics that include the profession of arms, ethical leadership, joint operations and planning, airpower, and international security. The residence school holds roughly 500 students per year. Students who successfully complete the program are awarded the Master of Military Operational Art and Science Degree.

Research Design

This was a qualitative multiple case study (Reissman, 2008; Stake; 1995, 2005) of women Air Force officers. I employed feminist ethnographic strategies (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Parameswaran, 2001; Skeggs, 2001; Stacey, 1998; Visweswaran, 1994, 1997; Wolcott, 1990) to ensure my participant's voices were foregrounded. I conducted this study during the 2020-2021 Academic Year at ACSC. Criterion sampling (Patton, 2014) was used to identify the participants of my study, since I wanted to select the most

information-rich cases that meet a pre-determined criterion. The predetermined criterion in this study are women officers attending ACSC who have the desire to allow their experiences in the classroom, and throughout their careers as officers, to be observed and analyzed.

Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews at a local coffee shop, restaurant, or on Zoom if required because of social distancing. I also performed participant observations in their ACSC classrooms. Analysis was completed using a thematic narrative approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Reissman, 2008) to identify participant's motives of becoming an officer and also to find recurring themes in my participant's stories.

As this is an exploratory study, the choice was made to limit my participants and study between four to eight women officers to provide a richer and more nuanced examination of women officer's gendered experience within the military. Stake (2005) classifies a case as a "specific, unique, bounded system" (p. 445). Therefore, I will treat each participant as a bounded and unique case. The cases are studied both apart and together to provide insight into how gender beliefs help shape women officers experiences in the classroom and beyond. Stake also refers to this as a collective case study (Stake, 2005). I began with six interested and willing participants.

Organization of Dissertation

The remainder of the study is divided into four chapters covering the literature review, methodology, findings, implications and future research. In chapter two, I will go into depth regarding my theoretical framework of Critical Military Studies, agency within post-structural Feminism, and Cultural-Historical Activity Theory. In chapter three, I will

further discuss the case study approach and feminist ethnographical strategies used in this study. In chapter four, I will provide background information of the participants as well as present the findings. In chapter five, I will present the implications of the findings within the military, my conclusions, and directions for future research.

Review of Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature relevant to this study. First, I will discuss a brief history of women's participation in the military. Next, I will discuss scholarship within the field of Critical Military Studies (CMS) as it relates to observing and problematizing the concept of gender within the military. Next, agency within the field of post-structural feminism will be introduced. Lastly, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory will be discussed as a framework to examine how learning occurs within women's participation within the military.

Women and the Military

While US military policy has recently granted women access to apply to all occupational opportunities within the military, researchers must consider other "barriers" to women's participation in the military that may still exist. A brief discussion of the history of women's participation within the military might shed some light as to why this latest policy "barrier" may not necessarily be the last barrier to overcome.

Women serving in the military have had a complicated and long journey of exclusion, partial inclusion, and full inclusion when it comes to their participation. U.S. military policy has gone through several iterations and has finally rested on the premise that if someone (whether man or woman) is qualified to perform a specific duty, that person should be given the opportunity to apply (DoD Memo, 2015). This seems like such an uncomplicated standard. However, in looking at the journey to get to where the military is today regarding women's opportunities, there are several interesting facts and driving factors that reveal a complicated path.

World War II

One must go all the way back to World War II to find the first compelling reason made by the US to integrate women into its military. The nation had a need for soldiers, so the US Congress opened limited service roles to women to meet that need (Kamarck, 2016). During the 1960s and 1970s, Congress again opened opportunities for women in the service after the draft ended and an all-volunteer force was established. In both cases, the US military had a need for personnel and looked to women to fill that gap. Also, during this time the equal rights movement was gaining traction leading to demands for increased women's inclusion into male-dominated organizations (Janowitz & Moskos, 1979).

These few examples showcase an interesting pattern for the military regarding women. If the right amount of social pressure existed and the organization needed more personnel, then U.S. military policy makers would allow military access, albeit partially, to women. This follows Mary Segal's (1995) notion of societies where military need and cultural acceptance both increase, women's participation in the military also increases. However, in analyzing this using a post-structural feminist lens, the power to control invitations to the military belong solely to U.S. military policy makers and can, therefore, be critiqued for motive and objective. This power to control who is admitted into the military based on gender should not be examined by the policy itself, as Foucault (1980) reminds us that power itself is not by itself negative, but in what the power *produces*. In this case, the power by U.S. military policy makers to fluctuate admittance standards based on gender should be examined based on what perceptions of value this produced in women joining the military. This policy change of extending an invitation to women only

when they are needed, while having an appearance of acceptance, may instead have produced an attitude and culture within the military of low value toward women.

Selective Service

Yet, even in the 1960s and 1970s, this was a part of the broader social and cultural environment for women. This can be further exemplified by the Senate Armed Service Committee's (SASC's) 1979 decision not to include women when reconsidering the reinstitution of the Selective Service registration, stating "The committee feels strongly that it is not in the best interest of our national defense to register women for the Military Selective Service Act" (as cited in Kamarck, 2016, p. 3). If women were competent enough to volunteer to participate in the US military, albeit in a limited fashion, then why would Congress not make them eligible for the draft? By making this restrictive statement after they had allowed women to volunteer, a deconstruction of Congress' message toward women illustrated a mixed message of valuation/devaluation toward women's contribution to the military. Here is another example of what the power relation between the authority of Congress and military may have *produced* in the experiences of women desiring to serve and participate.

Risk Rule

The next hurdle for women in their participation in the US military was the combat position exclusion rule, known as the "risk rule," the Department of Defense developed in 1988 (US GAO Report, 1988). This rule decided the extent that women could participate in non-combat support roles that were located near areas of military combat. Essentially, the risk rule "excluded women from noncombat units or missions if the risks of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture were equal to or greater

than the risks in the combat units they supported" (1988). This rule was left up to the separate military services to manage and oversee.

However, this policy brings up yet another interesting issue of power-relations regarding women and military service. If the military accepted women into non-combat positions by the standards set by each service, and these services deemed these women "qualified" to fill these roles, then what specific risks to women were the services concerned about that was not also present for men? Again, post-structural feminism is useful here dissecting what is said and not said but implied within this policy statement. Post-structural feminism problematizes the idea that language is apolitical and correctly defines and reflects the world everyone lives in. It endeavors to spotlight the words and meanings as two separate entities. Chris Weedon discusses Saussure's theory of language deconstruction by explaining signs, "Each sign is made up of a *signifier* (sound or written language) and a *signified* (meaning)" (as cited in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 481) and that the two are only arbitrarily related to each other. Post-structural thought, then, supports the notion that meaning is not fixed but interpreted (Derrida, 2016) and controlled by those in power. Therefore, it this example, the signified or meaning of what constituted risk was explicitly stated for a woman, yet implied and given a different definition for men serving in the support position. So, what this policy signified, or what it *produced,* was an inequality toward qualified women serving alongside qualified men in similar positions.

Operation DESERT STORM

During Operation DESERT STORM in 1991, when some women in non-combat units were captured as Prisoners of War (POWs), public concern rose regarding women's role in the military leading to a presidential commission established (Herres, 1992) to

address these issues, namely The Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces. One of the issues addressed was the validity of the risk rule. Specifically, it asked, "Should the DoD "Risk Rule" which reduces servicewomen's risk of injury, death or capture be retained, modified, rescinded, or codified?" (p. 36). In its discussion, the commission itself admitted that there was "some confusion over the purpose of the Risk Rule" (p. 36). It further stated that the intent of the rule was not to, "keep women from serving in combat, but to reduce the probability that women will be exposed to direct land combat inadvertently" (p. 36). Again, the expectation from what was not said in the report was that there was a difference in the risk acceptable to men versus women exposed to combat situations. Ultimately, the commission decided to retain the risk rule in 1992.

These two examples, the selective service decision and the "risk rule," both serve as contradictive messages toward women who sought to serve in the military during this period. There was an acceptance of women's presence in the military, but it was selective, bounded and at the discretion of the organizational majority. One could argue that having the ability to serve in the military, yet not being able to serve in combat and harm's way, sends a very conflicting message to women. Also, since this message was originated and perpetuated by male leadership, what message did this send to women in the military who desired to assimilate into the military culture and participate in the organization? Did these mixed messages shape women's ability and desire to assimilate and learn within that organizational culture?

Post-DESERT STORM

It was not until 1994 when the US Secretary of Defense rescinded the risk rule and further codified the ground combat definition for women, as well as the furtherance of women's opportunities in the military. The risk rule, he stated, "is no longer appropriate" (Department of Defense Memo, 1994, p. 1). However, in the following paragraph, while codifying the direct ground combat definition he further stated,

> Service members are eligible to be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified, except that women shall be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground. (Department of Defense Memo, 1994, p. 1)

Here is yet another example of the loosening of policy restrictions leading to equal opportunities for women, yet contradictive messaging after the exemption for those in direct combat. If service members are eligible for all positions for which they are qualified, then what need is there for any other restriction? How does this seemingly conflicting guidance shape a woman's perception of their participation in the military? Unlike a man, a woman who chooses to participate in the military will be judged on their qualifications, except in positions that those in authority deem too risky for women. How does this application of power shape a woman's ability to be accepted within the male-dominated military? Does this impact their ability to learn and contribute?

Post 9/11

As we fast-forward to post-9/11 military activity, battlefields and combat lines were not distinct and became further blurred as support units were often placed in proximity to traditional combat units to support the Army's new, modular force structure

(Feickert, 2005). When three women from a logistical support unit were captured and held by the enemy, public debate rose again regarding the definition and danger of women in combat.

However, it was also during this time that other narratives rose to the surface regarding women and the military. Referencing Kamarck's Congressional Research Service (CRS) report regarding women in combat (2016), women were embedded in Special Operations Forces (SOF) units and served to communicate directly with Afghan women in the villages. Marines used military women to aid in body searches of Iraq and Afghan women for weapons. The US Army used women soldiers in logistical support roles to assist in safely getting supplies from base to base (Kamarck, 2016). Sometimes, areas where these support missions were ongoing could wind up looking like a "combat zone" as these convoys were commonly attacked. When they were, women soldiers were unavoidably part of the combat action. As an example, in 2005 Army Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester became the first female soldier to be awarded the Silver Star since World War II for fighting her way through an enemy ambush of a US convoy south of Baghdad. The Silver Star is the third-highest decoration in the U.S. military for valor, next to the Distinguished Service Cross and to the Medal of Honor (Tyson, 2005). Hester technically was not in a combat zone. Her unit was assigned to clear convoy routes of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and escort supply convoys safely through certain routes. This would not be a routine support mission as enemy forces attacked and killed several US military in the convoy. To help save her team, Hester maneuvered them through the chaotic kill zone into a flanking position where she later assaulted the enemy's offensive position with her grenade launcher and machine gun. She was able to kill three insurgents

and save her team's lives that day. This provides a poignant example of women's contribution in the military in combat action roles. However, what makes this narrative even more powerful is that Hester was not an active duty military soldier. She joined the Army National Guard and was assigned to the Kentucky National Guard's 617th Military Police Company. Even though the unit trained well for their mission and were well-qualified, they were not full-time military soldiers and did not have the benefit of being completely indoctrinated within the active duty military organization.

Regardless, Hester felt as though the training she did receive made her ready for anything she would face. In an interview with National Public Radio (NPR) she stated, "You know, it's just something that happened one day, and I was trained to do what I did, and I did it. We all lived through that battle," she says. (Martin, 2011). Sergeant Hester was an example of a willing and qualified military women whose combat effectiveness was proven in a real, life-threatening combat experience. To confirm that this is not just a single story, data received through 2012 showed that 437 women earned awards for valor to include two Silver Stars, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, 31 Air Medals, and 16 Bronze Stars. (Sisk, 2013). Combat in the post-911 environment gave the military numerous examples of military women found to be both qualified and effective in combat.

Challenging the Risk Rule

While the boundaries of the risk rule were blurred due to the changing and convoluted nature of warfare during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, they were similarly being tested and defied through the validating and heroic actions of women in combat activity. Yet even as the risk rule was being challenged from a practical viewpoint,

questions remain as to the underlying reasoning and assumptions that make the rule valid in the eyes of its decision makers. While the risk rule was first questioned during the Presidential Commission in 1991 (Herres, 1992), it was determined at that time to be valid. However, as Iraq and Afghanistan were vividly illustrating, if women were trained, qualified and willing, then what was the risk? The more exposure to combat environments women experienced, the less this rule made sense. Even as women were receiving decorations for valorous service and suffered increased deaths and wounds in combat, they were still controlled by the policies of the majority.

It should be noted that combat "risk" was not the only reason to limit women's roles in the military during this time. As an example, the US Navy restricted women from serving in submarines. Their concerns were fiscally related regarding "cost concerns of retrofitting submarines to accommodate both men and women" (Kamarck, 2016, p. 9), as well as related to unit morale and cohesion (2016), privacy concerns leading to sexual misconduct due to the close quarters (Myers, 2014), and pregnant women's health issues regarding the lack of quality filtered air (Scarborough, 2010). However, in February 2010, the ban on women serving in US Navy submarines was lifted.

Another issue with restricting women from combat positions was addressed in the 2009 session of Congress where they authorized a Military Leadership Diversity Commission focused on studying "fair promotion and command opportunities for ethnic- and -gender-specific members of the Armed Forces" (Kamarck, 2016, p. 10). Their findings included the fact that combat restrictions put women at a disadvantage when competing for senior leader promotions.

This commission prompted Congress in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA, 2011) to require another review of the Department of Defense's combat zone exclusion policies "to determine whether changes in laws, policies, and regulations are needed to ensure that female members have equitable opportunities to compete and excel in the Armed Forces" (Public Law 111-383, p. 81). After investigating, the Department of Defense provided the following response in 2012, "The Department of Defense is committed to removing all barriers that would prevent Service members from rising to the highest level of responsibility that their talents and capabilities warrant" (DoD Report to Congress, 2012, p. i). Regarding barriers to promotion for women, they stated, "the RAND Corporation found no statistical differences in the career progression of female officers in open occupations with closed positions as compared to women in fully open occupations; both groups of women shared the same likelihood of reaching pay grade O-6 (Colonel or Navy Captain)" (2012, pp.3-4). However, the data mentioned that military women comprised over 14% of the 1.4 million active duty military personnel, but just over 7% of officers of general or admiral rank. The DoD claimed, "These figures are strong given that retention of women is significantly less than that of men beyond 20 years of service, where the majority of these promotions to the senior grades occur." (2012, p. 4). However, the report failed to identify a causal relationship between the lack of retention in women and their promotion to higher ranks.

All Barriers Removed

Regardless of not seeing any discriminatory factors in women not getting promoted, the DoD finally did remove the location restriction for women serving near combat zones and stated this might "Expand career opportunities for women" (DoD

Memo, 2013, p. 1). So, the impact of this report was that restrictions against women serving in units co-located with combat units would be lifted as an exception to policy.

This policy change led to military departments opening over 14,000 positions in 2013 that were previously restricted to women (Kamarck, 2016). By 2015, the Department of Defense signed policy for the full integration of women into the military. As stated in the policy memo signed by the Secretary of Defense, "no exceptions are warranted" and "Anyone, who can meet operationally relevant and gender-neutral standards, regardless of gender, should have the opportunity to serve in any position" (DoD Memo, 2015, p. 1). It went on to declare that the above decision was made after a "deliberate, methodical, evidence-based, and iterative process that ensures combat effectiveness and protects the welfare of the force" (p. 1). So, in the end, it was decided by US military leadership that if anyone was qualified for any position, that person should have the opportunity to serve in that position.

In fact, there were over 40 studies completed over a time span of 2013 to 2015, after the Secretary of Defense published policy eliminating the Direct Ground Combat rule and directed the services to implement by 1 January 2016. Prior to 2013, Congress, the Secretary of Defense, and the military services had slowly moved toward this direction since 1988 when the risk rule was placed into Public Law. From 1988 until 2016, it took over 27 years and over 50 studies to come to the conclusion that anyone, who can meet operationally relevant and gender-neutral standards, regardless of gender, should have the opportunity to serve in any position and any occupation within the military.

Does this slow progression of acceptance by military leadership to eventually allow women to participate as full members still have an effect today on women' perception of gender beliefs and practices within the military? How do these beliefs shape how women learn to participate within the organization?

The Military as a Unique Organization

Several studies have explored women's participation within male-dominated organizations and have spotlighted inequalities in opportunities and advancement (Davies, 1995; Hearn, 1990; Jacobs, 1996; Sadker et al., 1993; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). So, what makes the military experience different from women's experiences in other workplace settings? Can those studies assist in revealing how women's participation is shaped by culturally accepted norms, or does the military as an organization create a culture that goes deeper than workplace expectations?

What sets apart, or perhaps complicates, the military experience is the expectation of commitment required by the organization of its members. Military members raise their right hands and swear an oath to support and defend the Constitution,

> I, [name], do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God. (U.S. Code, 1966)

Military Officers also swear to "bear true faith and allegiance" to this profession, to pursue it "without any mental reservation" and do so "well and faithfully." To most

military officers, these are not just words, but rather a calling to a profession of arms. As Swain and Pierce (2017) write regarding the military officer oath, "faithfulness to the Constitution, binds the officer to the Nation and the people the officer serves" (p. 2).

In 1950, S.L.A. Marshall began the first edition of the book, *The Armed Forces Officer* (1975). This book was typically handed out to all commissioned officers upon their commissioning ceremony. In his book, Marshall wrote of the enormous expectations laid on military officers: "the moment he takes the oath, loyalty to the arms he bears ranks first on the list, above all other loyalties" and called it a "radical reorientation of the individual life" (p. 158).

Equal only to religious occupational callings, it is difficult to find a similar profession in the civilian world that compares to the commitment required of U.S. military officers. This type of commitment and duty requires more than a casual obligation to those aspiring to join its ranks. As Marshall (1975) stated above, becoming a military officer takes a "radically reorientation" of your life. A military officer is not something one does, but rather who one becomes. When asked, a military officer would not say, "I work as an officer," but rather state, "I am an officer." It becomes a state of being. Even the Airman's Creed (US Air Force, 2015) memorized by every Air Force member starts with, "I am an American Airman" (p. 1). Whether officer or enlisted, the expectation and standard of those pursuing the profession within the U. S. military is a process of being and becoming.

This study spotlights this process of being and becoming an officer and asks how gender beliefs in the military help shape this learning process for women. In short, how do women participate within an organization that has accepted them, yet still may see

them as not part of the "boy's club," and how does this affect a woman's ability to participate and learn within that organization?

In examining women's participation of being shaped by and reshaping gender beliefs and practices within the military, the researcher posits that while an expectation exists that military identity is to be somehow non-gendered as one begins military service, for women, identity is still socially constructed around gender (Barrett 1992; Higate & Cameron, 2004; Kronsell, 2005; Lande 2007; Woodward 2000) and therefore full of contradictive experiences that can be assembled and altered based on observed and accepted social and cultural meanings and definitions. This is echoed by Segal's (1995) observations,

> Cultures can stress gender equality or differences between the genders, which has strong effects on women's military roles. The greater the emphasis on ascription by gender (and thereby the less the emphasis on individual differences), the more limited women's military role. (p. 768)

Therefore, if gender practices and beliefs can be shaped by its environment, then it can also be deconstructed and reshaped. However, in order to correctly observe and analyze these constructions, one must employ methods that both capture the unique environment of the military holistically as well as problematize the entrenched gender boundaries that exist in the military.

The researcher will use Critical Military Studies (CMS) strategies, located within the gender and military scholarship, to problematize gender beliefs and practices within the military and women's participation within military academia. Enloe (2015) states the purpose of CMS is to be a "skeptically curious military analyst" (p. 7) and to take no

observation for granted. Specifically, CMS is useful in that it "deconstructs and destabilises the gendered boundaries…showing where they fail, are negotiated or are resisted" (Basham & Bulmer, 2017, p. 60). Because its focus is on "close encounters" with the military experience, it recognizes and welcomes what it defines as messy deconstructions, or deconstructions that do not form along clear boundaries. Therefore, CMS' acceptance of messy boundaries regarding gender beliefs in the military will assist me in observing contradictive manifestations of women's participatory activity within their military experience.

Critical Military Studies (CMS)

Scholarship within gender and military studies are contained roughly within these broad approaches: anti-militarist feminism, liberal feminism, and critical military studies. Each of these categories have provided a wealth of research and scholarly thought from authors within their respective fields and have their merits in the pursuit of social change. However, Critical Military Studies (CMS) provides the best approach to deconstruct the role gender plays in women's lives within the military.

The Anti-Militarist Feminist approach, led by authors such as Cynthia Cockburn, Carol Cohn, Cynthia Enloe, Ilene Feinman and many others, see militaries as masculine organizations who are violent and pose physical, structural, and environmental threats to society (Duncanson & Woodward, 2016). Thus, their research seeks to expose these activities and seek for more peaceful solutions from state institutions that lie outside the scope of military power. They are categorically opposed to militaries in general as they see them as hostile and exploitative spaces for women. Militaries breed misogynistic

cultures, so much of their scholarship is focused toward dismantling the militaries' socially and culturally destructive power and influence (Duncanson & Woodward, 2016).

The Liberal Feminist approach, led by Orna Sasson-Levy, Laura Sjoberg, Mary Segal, Anthony King, Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, Jean Elshtain, and many others, may seem to take an opposite approach from anti-militarist feminism, but actually share quite a bit of scholarly space. Liberal feminists seek to support women's right to fight within western democracies yet acknowledge military's harm toward women and society globally (Kennedy-Pipe, 2017). They see women as being equally capable, both physically and emotionally, to fight alongside men (Segal, 1982) and seek to disrupt the boundaries of what women are incapable or unwilling to participate in from within the military.

Based on my brief history of women's participation in the military it would appear as if liberal feminists have achieved the purpose for which they endeavored. As Kennedy-Pipe (2017) states, "liberal feminists have won the argument over incorporation into state militaries and on to battlefields. Traditional barriers have been overcome" (p. 34). These traditional barriers are the same ones stated in the Secretary of Defense's memo in 2015, yet it is my position that there are other barriers, namely cultural, social and structural, that are still in existence and may still be impeding women's participation in the military. For this reason, a liberal feminist approach to studying gender and the military is insufficient and requires a deeper description of women's experiences that I believe is only provided by Critical Military Studies (CMS).

CMS is a growing interdisciplinary sub-field within the scholarship of gender and the military which approaches gender and the military from a slightly different

perspective. CMS turns a critical lens onto all military practices and organizations and observes all activity as candidates for investigation (Kennedy-Pipe, 2017). CMS researchers employ three main approaches to contest military activity and authority.

First, CMS remains critical and reflexive of commonly used feminist "short-hands" (Basham & Bulmer, 2017, p. 59) regarding gender and military studies and seeks to question and deconstruct gendered boundaries positioned by "feminist fables about gender and the military" (p. 60). CMS problematizes heteronormative narratives regarding the military as comprised of men who are the masculine warriors and women who serve as the protective mothers. Using the same method, CMS would also question the idea of the military as a "masculinized" organization (p. 59). This appears to go counter to the arguments made by anti-military feminists. As Zalewski (2017) argues, if, in today's military, "'men' are not men, and 'women' are not women, then the rationale driving militarization might unravel" (as cited in Basham & Bulmer, 2017, p. 60). This critique should not be shunned by feminists who investigate gender and the military, for it opens wide possibilities of gender's impact on the military as an organization when it comes to de-gendering and re-gendering (Lorber, 2005; Sasson-Levy, 2011; Duncanson & Woodward, 2016).

However, to deeply examine and question these "fables" and myths regarding the military, CMS researchers must remain in close proximity to what they observe. Yet, that can be a problem for those without access. As Monahan and Fisher (2015) observe, there are strategies ethnographers can use to mitigate these access and proximity issues. Another barrier may be that some organizations may not want a researcher to observe because of what they may find, "It might be difficult to convince representatives of

secretive or guarded organizations that the research is not a threat to their operations or that they can gain something meaningful from their participation" (2015, p. 13). In Ken MacLeish's (2015) study of soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas, he utilized other ethnographic methods by interacting with soldiers when they were not on the military installation.

Secondly, CMS research deconstructs and destabilizes gendered boundaries built in other feminist analysis of war and militarism. The goal is to find where these boundaries are less stable or fluid in order to correctly observe the ever-changing description of the military. Since CMS researchers seek to obtain close observations with their participants, they understand this deconstruction may get a little dirty as the closer you get to participant's experiences, the less defined those boundaries become. In Macleish's (2015) work, he documents a soldier who is both grateful for the quality of medical treatment he desperately needs, but also endures skepticism and denial of care from the same doctors who do not believe his ailments to be worthy of care. This is a perfect example of the messy boundaries that can appear in conversation when observing the military. The boundaries are not always clear, but they are authentic and honest. It captures rich descriptions and meaning in order to destabilize fables and myths regarding the military. CMS researchers do not shy away from messy descriptions, for it is these tensions or contradictions that can lead to transformative thinking. As Basham and Bulmer (2017) state, "To seek messiness is to pay close attention to confusion, paradox and failure and to resist the disciplining of ways of thinking that so often occurs within academic institutions and practices" (p. 64).

Lastly, CMS research unlocks ways to think differently about the notion of resistance. They are open to larger possibilities regarding where and how this resistance

may take place and assume no predetermined solution. CMS researchers, therefore, work with and engage the military and do not take a combative stance toward those institutions. Of CMS research, Rech et al. (2015) add, "to be critical is to be engaged in critique; it is not to be dismissive" (p. 56). Being engaged with the institution is not synonymous with being in full agreement, however, as CMS researchers seek to engage with those involved in and with the system to draw on their own critical experiences. Basham and Bulmer (2017) write, CMS scholarship "starts with the assumption that people engaged with military power have their own critical capabilities which they use to reflect on their experiences" (p. 68). Therefore, resistance does not start with the researcher, but is borne out of the experiences of participants already within and engaged with the military organization. Based on this, resistance will look different in most individual cases.

Therefore, this study uses CMS as a way to approach the topic of gender and the military. CMS provides a deep examination into the lives of women currently serving in the military and questions the impact gender has on their experience and deconstructs what gender means in the context of the military. This study contributes to the CMS body of work for two reasons: close access and a deeper analysis of women officer serving in the military.

First, the researcher's access to his military participants provides a close examination of women who are actively participating in the military, which is lacking in CMS research. Greenwood (2017) argues a lack of access to active military personnel, as well as non-military accessibility to military women's professional spaces, has limited the depth (and length) of observation, analysis, and reflexivity that must occur in order to

thoroughly examine the everyday lives of these women. My occupational status within the military offers a proximity and an access to the participants that is rare within the CMS field.

Second, this lack of proximity and access has also led to a deficiency of deep qualitative studies to observe women's daily activities within the military. Segal (1995) cites the deficiency of rich, observational studies with women in the military and calls for more analytical studies of women's military roles at the "organizational, interpersonal and individual" (p. 772) levels. More specifically, Duncanson and Woodward (2016) call for research that is able to test these "theories of institutional change" (p. 15). To move this scholarship forward, a deeper examination of women actively serving in the military is required to provide empirical data to assess the validity of these theories. Some observe this deficiency to be caused by the fear of studying a phenomenon so seemingly unsuited. However, Basham and Bulmer (2017) state, "The assumption that feminism and being in close proximity to military personnel are somehow incompatible constitutes one of feminism's most problematic fables" (2017, p. 65) and counter with the argument that it is precisely in these spaces where observing and critiquing women's roles in the military can help push feminist thought to deeper levels. Therefore, current research in the field of gender and the military requires deeper and more extended analysis at the personal level of women who are currently serving in the military focusing on their lived experiences and how gender impacts their participation and learning in the military.

Post-structural Feminism and Agency

Post-structural feminism (PSF) foregrounds and troubles the cultural classifications of gender and takes its insights and tenets from post-structuralist thought.

Post-structuralism has its roots in Europe with critical theorists like Derrida, Foucault, Habermas, Lyotard, Rorty and others who struggled to expose abuses of power and control by dominant and oppressive systems created by the universality and objectivity of structuralism and humanism during the Enlightenment period (Parpart, 1993). As St. Pierre (2000) writes, "Post-structuralism is thus a continuation of an ongoing skepticism about humanism and its effects" (p. 507). PSF's main voices were two French philosophers, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir (Tong, 2018). They highlighted how women served in the secondary role of "other" in society while men placed themselves in the primary, "self" role (Vinteges, 1999). Since knowledge, language, and societal structures were all defined by men, these concepts were not universal or objective and were subject to critique. Humanism views man as "self" and woman as "other" (Derrida, 2016; Parpart, 1993; Sartre, 1956; Tong, 2018); therefore, valuing the self over the other (Sartre, 1956). This view of difference has tremendous foundational implications to an organization when it comes to identity within the organization. As Tong (2018) points out, "In establishing itself as a self, each self describes and prescribes roles for the other" (p.232). So, through humanism, man views themselves as the primary actor in their lives, and as such, the woman remains in a secondary role, thus never achieving the status of "subject." Therefore, PSF seeks to question this and foreground women as the subject of investigation.

As leaders within the military (or in any other male-dominated organization), the rudimentary category of man/woman may be so deeply hidden and woven so delicately into the culture that they may be unaware of its infiltration into organizational thoughts and beliefs. If men only view themselves as the subject, then the way to become a part of

the organization are held by them alone and imparted or released only at their discretion. De Beauvoir (1974) added by stating if this were true, women are relegated to being inessential, or the opposite of men, primarily because they lack the power to change their cultural position. Thus, PSF scholarship is focused on investigating situations where this is true and problematizing these cases to improve women's conditions, position, power, and voice within society and culture.

Agency

Agency, as defined by Settersten and Gannon (2005) is defined as the capacity and ability one has to act independently and make their own choices in order to "maximize their own development within parameters set by their social worlds" (p. 21). Bronwyn Davis and Susanne Gannon (2005) discuss the power of agency within PSF and clarify it as such, "agency is no longer the defining feature of the successful, powerful, heroic, lone individual, retracing well-worn narrative trajectories, but that of the subject-in-relation" (p. 313). This describes women in the military well, as they are both defined by their culture, and also redefining it as they participate as "subjects-in-relation". Regarding subjects-in-relation, Davies and Gannon (2005) go on to say she is,

> reflexively aware of the constitutive force of her discursive practices, and of the particular social, historical moments, and material contexts in which her ongoing differenciation (becoming other than she was before) is made possible. She is thus capable of disrupting the signifying processes through which she constitutes herself and is constituted. (pp. 313-314)

Organizational and cultural structures serve to limit and control one's agency. This is a tension identified by Settersten and Gannon (2005) and is observed by how much

"individuals interact with, and even make proactive attempts to alter, those worlds" (p. 21). Agency within PSF includes the acceptance of a fluid and subjective view of self-identity that is constantly being redefined through discourse (Gannon, et al., 2007) and is at times "precarious" and "contradictory" (p. 83). It is in the tension of being subjected to the organizational structure that agency is discovered and refined. In this study I observed a similar type of subjective construction from my participants who are learning to situate themselves within the military, yet also experience contradictory elements while participating in this activity that prompt them to disrupt this process and alter their experience.

Cultural-History Activity Theory (CHAT)

Viewing the military and gender from a post-structural feminist lens, the concept of agency and viewing women as the subject must remain foregrounded when describing the central activity of women's experiences of becoming an officer. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) takes these factors into account. Learning is in the doing and in the doing with others within the social setting. However, CHAT also accounts for hierarchies, division of labor, and instruments or tools used within the organization (or signifiers, accepted meanings of knowledge) to account for the activity of learning. Therefore, I will employ CHAT as a theoretical model to describe how women learn to participate within the cultural setting of the military.

Learning in this study will be defined from a social and cultural perspective using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2001, 2014; Sawchuk, 2003) and provides a descriptive framework to explain women officers' participation and learning within military setting. CHAT posits that individuals constantly form, and are

being formed, by social and cultural environments and perspectives and, therefore, problematize activity and learning as something solely acquired by an individual. A person's activity is only fully understood through his or her cultural and societal environment, and, conversely, society can only be fully understood through the agency of a collective of individuals who create activity through the use and reification of cultural tools and artifacts. Roth and Lee (2007) state that CHAT, "explicitly incorporates the mediation of activities by society" (p. 5) and views this activity as a single unit of analysis to be observed.

I am not discounting one's individual cognitive ability as an extremely important aspect of learning. However, even from cognitive psychologists like Carl Bereiter (1985), there exists a recognition of the importance of "more complex cognitive structures" (p. 206) that exist outside the realm of the individual and are "situated in the culture" (p. 206). Bereiter argues that by observing and manipulating these societal and cultural constructs, we might better understand how a person internalizes knowledge. These constructs are built through "material artifacts and in patterns of social interaction" (Engeström, 2014, p. 26). Therefore, CHAT is a useful theory in analyzing the activity and learning that occurs as one interacts within one's social environment. Below, I give an overview of CHAT, to include how it defines learning, its history and foundational scholars, its key tenets, strengths, weaknesses, and how CHAT is relevant to this study.

Learning and CHAT

Learning in this study is defined from a social and cultural perspective using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2001, 2014) and provides a descriptive framework to explain women officers' learning within military academia.

Learning in CHAT is the activity that occurs when a person or group, while interacting with and interpreting the world around them, sees inconsistencies within the activity and transforms it into something new. In this definition, learning occurs in the doing, participating, and becoming. Learning also occurs in the doing *with others*. As Sawchuk et al. (2006) states, "CHAT allows everyday social practice to move to the fore as a defining feature of learning" (p. 244). This social analysis of learning starts with collective activity and the mediated, dialectical relationship between the learner and the world. Learner and world are connected in CHAT. As the subject participates and becomes a part of a collective activity in pursuit of an object, learning takes place through the person observing, and questioning, aspects of this participatory activity. Sawchuk (2003) understood learning "as participation in social practice defined by dynamic transformations, change, and interrelation with other social systems" (p. 39). Therefore, learning is not just cognitive, but is connected to the way the learner sees, interprets and interacts with the world.

In order to understand learning within CHAT, one must first understand its elements. There are six main elements considered and observed within CHAT: subject, object, mediating artifacts, rules, community, and division of labor. The object is what is driving the activity, which can be both material and ideal (Roth & Lee, 2007). The object is viewed as the "problem space" that the subject is moving toward an outcome (Engeström, 1996, p. 67). The mediating artifacts are the tools, signs, and symbols; and are known by the community as the main repository of the culture. The artifacts and mediating tools are the key that help us unlock the door to understanding learning as both cultural and historical (Youn, 2007). As an example, since the military is a male-

dominated organization, it is safe to assume that its artifacts and knowledge are mediated by its dominant participants. Therefore, CHAT applied to the activity of women learning how to participate within the military academic setting, and how they shape their activity based on mediated artifacts, stands to be an extremely interesting activity to examine.

The last three elements of community, rules, and division of labor provide the essential cultural and historical scaffolding of the human activity. These elements all contribute to advancing the activity toward the motive or goal. Objects differentiate one activity from another and rooted within every object is the motive or aspiration. Without motive, there is no activity. The object (motive) thus fuels and directs the activity.

Human activity is the unit of analysis to understand human actions and motives. Human activity is defined as an object-directed, socially mediated, collective effort. Individual and group actions are entrenched in, and thereby made meaningful by, this collective effort by the group. Activity is always evolving and changing due to inherent structural contradictions within and among these activity systems. These contradictions become the "source of change and development" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137) within a system. Their identification and resolution may lead to both individual and societal change. The resolution of these contradictions leading to new patterns of activity, or the formation of new activity systems, is called "expansive learning" (Engeström, 2001, p. 139).

Therefore, CHAT is very useful in the study of learning by overcoming some of the basic problems in current learning theories, such as dualisms of subject and object (Youn, 2007), learner and knowledge (Roth & Lee, 2007), and individual and society (Youn, 2007), where the two ideas remain conceptually separated from each other with

no adequate mechanism provided for their interaction. CHAT provides a good framework for this interaction. CHAT has also been instrumental in problematizing the favoring of the cognitive dimension of learning (Sawchuk, 2003), as well as challenging the idea of learning as a process that is devoid of any historical or cultural context (Sawchuk, 2003).

CHAT provides a complete and descriptive framework to explain how something is learned and what external factors impact learning. It accomplishes this by identifying the motive that drives the activity, as well as the six dialectical aspects of the activity. Learning lies not within the activity itself but is shaped by the historical and cultural aspects embedded within the activity. Learning is then analyzed through the observation of collective activity, as mediated dialectically through the learner's interaction and interpretation of the world around them.

Learning might be one of several outcomes of an activity, but it is not the only outcome. Object-directed activity is the unit of analysis and learning is one possible outcome of activity. Learning occurs through the resolution of contradictions. Therefore, in order to empirically examine learning within CHAT, one must first analyze everyday collective activities, then search for contradictions within these practices and ask, "What new and transformative activities have these contradictions generated?" It is within these transformative activities, borne from contradictions, that learning occurs.

A Brief History of CHAT

CHAT has a long history that can be traced back to dialectical materialism in classical German philosophy (Roth and Lee, 2007) before it was developed further by Vygotsky and refined even further by his two students, Aleksandr Luria, A. N. Leont'ev, as well as many others. It has many contributors and has undergone several

transformative iterations. One of the current leading innovators of CHAT is Yrjö Engeström (2014), who through his body of research has emphasized the growing importance of nonhierarchical ways of working. Engeström's research purposes are not only concerned with describing human activity, but also in the intervention into this activity leading to expansive learning. He classifies CHAT in three basic generational conversions (Engeström, 2014).

First Generation. The first generation can be linked to Vygotsky's (1980) work and is primarily concerned with mediated human action. Vygotsky opined learning to be an activity not only initiated with internal cognitive systems but also triggered through external structures. He believed these structures to be complex and, "situated in the culture" (p. 206). Therefore, when discussing human activity and cognition, the subject required something outside of themselves in order to make meaning of the object or its environment. In Figure 1 (A) we see Vygotsky's simple mediated action, where S represents stimulus, R represents the response and X represents external tools. Figure 1 (B) represents how Vygotsky's idea of social mediation is commonly expressed, as a triangle of subject, object, and mediating artifact.

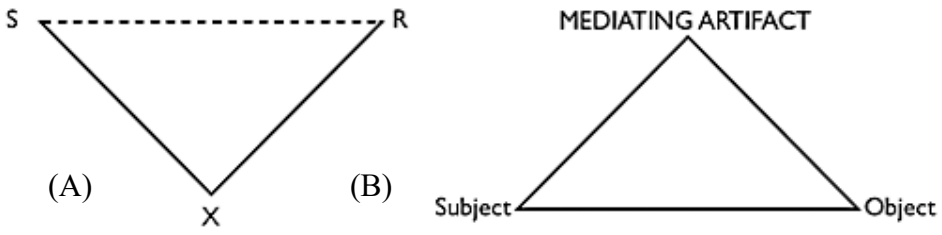

Figure 1
(A) Vygotsky's model of mediated act and, (B) its restructured form (Engeström, 2001, p. 134)

Vygotsky (1987) used the experiment of the "meaningless situation" (p. 356) to illustrate his point of mediation. The experimenter is with a subject in a room. After some time, the experimenter leaves the room and observes the subject from a separate room. The subject's frustration and confusion grow as time passes without the experimenter's return. Eventually, the subject looks at a clock on the wall and decides that when the hand on the clock reaches a certain point, the subject will leave the room. Once this occurs, the subject leaves.

This is Vygotsky's example of the subject searching for an external point of support (the clock) in order to change their current meaningless situation into a new situation that has a clear meaning and purpose. In this case, the meaning-making action by the subject to utilize the clock was an interpretation by the subject through the mediation of an external artifact. This led to the iteration of Figure 1 (B) of viewing a subject's activity and motive toward an object, mediated by tools or artifacts at their disposal. This example also led to an important point regarding mediating tools, namely that the subject could find new tools and take voluntary action in order to transform their activity. Old tools still existed, but there was space for the subject to discover, recreate and redefine tools at their disposal to change their environment and learn new ways to pursue the object.

The limitation of this first generational model was that it was individually focused and did not account for activity within a collective. The second generation, fueled by the work of Vygotsky's students, expanded upon this first iteration.

Second Generation. The second generation of CHAT was greatly influenced by Vygotsky's pupils, Luria and Leont'ev, as well as others in western cultures as it gained in popularity. With the notion of societal structure contributing to human activity, also came considerations for rules and divisions of labor, differentiating between action and activity, as well as the inevitability of contradictions that may occur in the system (Engeström, 2014, p. xv).

Leont'ev (1981) demonstrated the deficiency of focusing on individual, mediated-based actions in his example of the beater involved in a collective animal hunt (p. 212). Although the beater's motive for being involved in the activity was for food or clothing, his actions of alarming game during the activity (the hunt) were not necessarily linked to his overall motive. However, when all actions of the contributors are taken together, that activity contributed to, and was motivated by, the object of obtaining food and clothing. Leont'ev's example speaks to a cooperation of labor among a community within a single activity-motive that works harmoniously and is accomplished effectively.

Yet, cooperation does not always equate to harmony in an activity and may sometimes lead to division or conflict. Not everyone within the activity has the same perspective. Added to that, Engeström (2014) noted that some participants within this construct may not be fully aware of the activity's object or goal. He observed that individuals, "participate in activities mostly without being fully conscious of their objects and motives. The total activity seems to control the individual, instead of the individuals controlling the activity" (p. 54). He went on to state, "We may well speak of the activity *of the individual*, but never of *individual activity*; only actions are individual" (p. 54).

Therefore, in this construct, activity is defined only in connection to the motive or the object. All else is simply considered action.

If it is possible that individuals performing actions within an activity may unknowingly work *toward* a motive or object, then it would be equally possible for individuals to misguidedly transform their own actions into ones that run *counter* to the activity's motive thereby creating different activities altogether. Leont'ev (1981) spoke to this as an "opposite direction of development" (p. 238) revealing incongruities, or contradictions, within the system.

However, to Leont'ev, contradictions within the system were inevitable, and even essential, within his description of human activity. Engeström (2014) described them as "inner unrest" (p. 69) within the structure. Leont'ev (1981) used a doctor to describe the idea of contradictions when he stated,

> The doctor who buys a practice in some little provincial place may be very seriously trying to reduce his fellow citizen's suffering from illness…He must, however, want the number of sick to increase, because his life and practical opportunity to follow his calling depend on that. (p. 255)

This described an internal struggle and tension between wanting to heal yet wanting to stay in business. Leont'ev saw these contradictions as both vital and positive to human activity.

Leont'ev's observations regarding contradictions of participant actions within an activity system is applicable to individuals working within a hierarchal structure like the military where power and control dictate acceptable activity and approved artifacts, and the contradictions that arise from those power relations. Leont'ev did not expand upon

Vygotsky's diagram, but a model of his collective activity system that included community, rules and division of labor is depicted in figure 2. In this example, we see Leont'ev's six elements of activity, as mentioned previously, (subject, object, mediating artifacts, rules, community, and division of labor) all have their place.

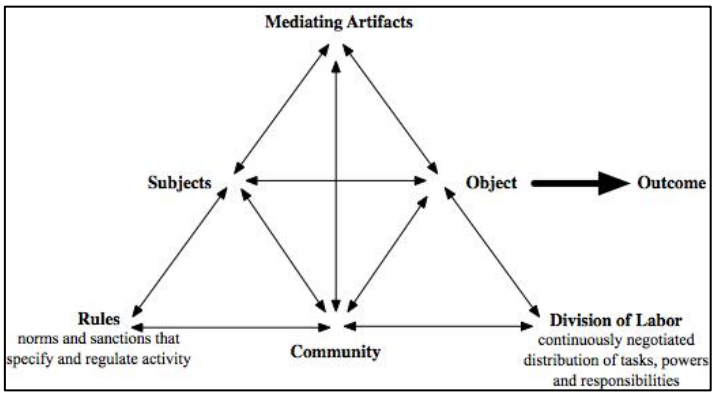

Figure 2
The Structure of the Human Activity System (Engeström, 2001, p. 135)

These elements collectively play a role in the process of influencing the subject toward the motive or goal of making sense of the object. The model in figure 2 is a heuristic aid to help visualize the activity from its different aspects. Engeström (2001) calls the top of this model the "tip of the iceberg" (p. 134) where all the individual and collective actions take place. It is at the tip where old mediating artifacts are kept and utilized, and new artifacts are discovered and tested by the subject. The base of the triangle represents both the historical and cultural context of that activity and includes agreed-upon rules and the division of labor.

One major critique of this second iteration was the lack of different perspectives, voices and cultural diversity (Cole, 1988) that inevitably would come from a larger collective of individuals working within an activity. Coupled with the diversity growing

out of a larger collective, the model in its current state also did not account for networks of interacting activity systems. Those factors were addressed in the third generation.

Third Generation. This third iteration, theorized by Engeström (2001), provides conceptual tools and models to help better understand the activity system and networks of interacting activity systems; as well as also emphasizes diversity of voice and thought in helping to evolve the activity. This is depicted in figure 3, where the object shifts from an initial state of un-interpreted "raw material" (object 1) to a collectively and shared meaningful object constructed by the activity system (object 2), and finally to a jointly constructed transformed object (object 3).

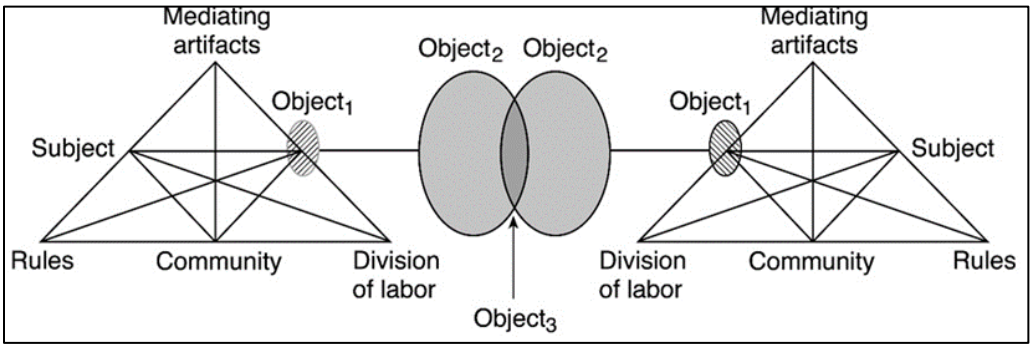

Figure 3
Third generation of CHAT (Illeris, 2018, p. 56)

The third-generation activity model can also be summarized by 5 main principles (Engeström, 2001). First, the activity system is the primary unit of analysis and, therefore, activity of the subject moving toward the object (motive) is influenced by the contributions of all the elements within that activity. There are multitudes of interactions to analyze within the triangle, however, these smaller, goal-oriented actions are only truly understood, "when interpreted against the background of the entire system." (p. 136).

Conversely, activity systems become identifiable by effectively and thoughtfully producing actions from within, and for the benefit of, the system.

Second, each activity system is multi-voiced and has different perspectives and potentially differing interests. This can be seen in the division of labor from Leont'ev's example of the beaters. In his example, the beaters share in the motive of the object (obtaining food or clothing), yet their actions taken by themselves may not display this clearly. In a complex activity system with myriad actions taking place, there may be countless perspectives to consider in the accomplishment of those actions. Some of those actions will be in concert with the activity, and some may be more competitive and dissonant. Engeström labels this as both, "a source of trouble and a source of innovation" (p. 136). Regardless, of its positive or negative implications, this diversity is inherent and vital within the CHAT activity system.

Third, each activity system has historicity and only transforms over lengthy periods of time. Impediments and transformations can only be fully translated over extended periods of time for the activity to be completely understood. For example, under mediating tools and artifacts we see language and symbols develop. Some of this language and symbols remain throughout the activity and some are discarded and replaced by new mediating tools. For example, the transformation of how cigarette smoking has been viewed historically in the military serves as a good illustration. Once viewed as closely linked to the military image, military leadership has only recently worked to replace cigarettes with other artifacts with newer symbols like healthy eating and fitness (Hunt et al., 2004) to represent a new military image. This is just one example

of the power of tools and symbols that exist and can evolve over a lengthy period within an activity system.

The fourth main principle asserts that contradictions exist through tensions within the elements and participants of the activity system. Contradictions can occur both internally and externally. Additionally, contradictions may appear when strong representatives of culture introduce an object (and, therefore, motive) of a more advanced activity into the original activity. Engeström expands on Leont'ev's work and discusses multiple levels of contradiction that can occur within an activity system: primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary.

Primary contradictions occur internally within each element of the system. An example could be artifacts within an organization that provide countering messages. An example I mentioned earlier were the contradictory artifacts of the military's glamorization, through posters and advertisements, of both cigarette smoking and exercise. As the harmful effects of smoking were more researched, this led to smoking as a contradictive artifact depicting what a healthy soldier looked like who was fit for duty.

Among the element of the activity triangle, Engeström (2014) states that secondary contradictions occur between the elements of the system. Engeström's (2001) example illustrates this perfectly:

> When an activity system adopts a new element from the outside (for example, a new technology or a new object), it often leads to an aggravated secondary contradiction where some old element (for example, the rules or the division of labor) collides with the new one. (p. 137)

In this example, the secondary contradiction the activity system must contend with is between the updated tools and artifacts and the old rules or division of labor guidelines. A military example of this could be the updating of the Air Force song, which added more inclusive lyrics toward women. This contradiction was only noticed when the Chief of Staff of the Air Force recently stood among women Air Force Academy cadets, who had just won a volleyball tournament, and sang the Air Force Song. Only then did Chief of Staff notice the exclusion. In this case, the old artifact (Air Force song) collided with the new community (women cadets) or a new rule (inclusivity toward women), resulting in the Chief of Staff transforming the old artifact into something more inclusive (Losey, 2020).

Tertiary contradictions appear when strong representatives of culture introduce an object (and, therefore, motive) of a more advanced activity into the original activity. Again, Engeström (2014) assists us with an illustration from administrators and physicians working at a primary care facility. He states:

> A tertiary contradiction arises when, say, the administrators in the medical care system order the practitioners to employ certain new procedures corresponding to the ideals of a more holistic and integrated medicine. The new procedures may be formally implemented, but probably still subordinated to and resisted by the old general form of activity. (p. 72)

In this example we see those in power seeking to alter the object (and motive) by changing elements within the system (rules). A military example of a tertiary contradiction could be policy changes to women's access to all military occupations. Even though the policy grants access, there may be resistance at lower levels of authority

to accept this policy, resulting in these authorities finding other ways to deter women from seeking these occupations.

The quaternary level involves the consideration of neighboring activities and how they integrate with the central activity. For example, the actions that include the administration and procedural portion of the central activity, may evolve into a rule-producing activity within itself. Similarly, actions that produce key tools for the central activity, may evolve into a tools-producing activity. These contradictions seem to be problematic as they create turbulence and dissonance, but this is also where learning and growth can occur within the system.

It is in this quaternary level that I find most of my participant's contradictions and will investigate if learning is taking place. My participant's central activity is becoming an officer, yet other activities serve rule-producing, tools-producing or division of labor-producing activities that interact with the central activity creating contradictions that my produce learning or new object-motives.

The final principle within the third generation of CHAT development is that of transformational change. Specifically, contradictions that take place within a system and resolve themselves have the potential to lead to change and expansive transformation of the entire activity system. It is only in the face of contradictions that new forms of thinking, learning and activity may arise. As Ilyenkov (1977) stated:

> Thus, any new improvements of labor, every new mode of man's action in production, before becoming generally accepted and recognized, first emerges as a certain deviation from previously accepted and codified norms. Having emerged as an *individual exception* from the rule in the labor of one or several men, the

new form is then taken over by others, becoming in time a new *universal norm*. (pp. 83-84)

This statement strengthens the case as to why examining the historicity is so important within an activity system. The transformation of an individual exception into a universal norm may take a tremendous amount of time and may go through several iterations. It is precisely during this time of dissonance and discontent when individual exceptions can slowly transform into universal norms.

Strengths and Weaknesses of CHAT

At the core of CHAT is the idea that human activities, such as learning, may emerge out of contradictions that arise from internal or external interactions and, therefore, the unit of analysis must include the individual coupled with their social and cultural contexts. CHAT provides a methodical framework with which to empirically examine these interactions holistically within the entire sphere of these influences. Therefore, one strength of CHAT is its unique ability to systematically spotlight areas of investigation within complex and conflictual interactions of human activity that account for social and cultural factors (Daniels, 2004) and find potential learning areas that may occur within these complicated systems.

Another strength of CHAT is in its account of power with activity systems. Even though changes to processes and artifacts can serve as descriptors of transformation and learning within an organization, the question of who controls the processes and the artifacts (or tools) must be taken into account. In Sawchuk's experience working on the factory floor, he was around peers of varying experience and competence. Yet, he still

felt the dynamics of power as it related to knowledge, especially when a machine broke down. Of that experience he wrote,

> I was truly dependent on the group of fellow workers in my department. People who've been in the position I'm describing know that if your fellow workers do not take you under their wing, learning can turn into an experience of social exclusion and powerlessness no matter what kind of diploma or degree you have. (Sawchuk, 2003, p. 1)

Sawchuk described a dependency (and expectation) that all knowledge will and should be shared among peers within an organization that is working toward the same activity. Yet, he also felt the fear and hopelessness of exclusion based on the denial of knowledge within a social setting. This, again, spotlights the strengths of CHAT in its inclusion of division of labor and rules in analyzing activity and learning.

While CHAT has several strengths, it is not without critique. However, since CHAT has gone through several generational iterations, most of these critiques have been answered by its subsequent adaptations, especially in the third generation. Regardless, some weaknesses remain.

Engeström (2009) admits one weakness is in what he labels as "runaway objects" (p. 304). These objects, as related to one of the six elements within CHAT (object/motive), have the potential to escalate and expand to a global scale of influence. The ability for groups to grasp the changing character of objects may produce contradictions that groups cannot keep up with. Engeström states these objects are rarely under anybody's control and could potentially have far-reaching, unintended effects. He labels them as, "monsters: They seem to have a life of their own that threatens our

security and safety in many ways." (p. 304). Naomi Klein (2007) argues that within capitalism, disasters and shocks are becoming a dominant object for large organizations and groups and are being exploited by economic and political elite groups in order to reorganize societal conditions that favors their elitist beliefs. So, with the incorporation of multiple voices and perspectives also come the potential for motives within the activity that are subversive and disruptive.

Related to this, James Avis (2007) argues that CHAT's concept of collective activity "fails to be translated into wider societal interventions that challenge capitalist relations" (p. 163) and has the potential to move activity towards conservativism and capitalism. While change does occur, it also favors and secures capitalistic ends. To Avis, true societal and cultural transformation must not be encumbered by majority agendas or ideologies. This, in Avis's opinion, truncates the process of expansive learning within organizations that unshackles true revolutionary transformation.

Relevance of CHAT to my Study

CHAT is a useful theoretical framework for my research on gender and the military because of its holistic approach to activity and learning, as well as its ability to foreground women as subjects of the activity.

Holistic Approach. CHAT will accomplish a holistic approach to this gender study by probing into the interpretation of military mediating artifacts, as well as cultural, historical, and societal elements, that help shape this activity. Once this is done, we may be able to employ CHAT to spotlight potential contradictive elements within the activity to determine areas of contradiction for future examination. Where those contradictions have been resolved, this will hopefully lead to examining how women

officers participate and shape learning within military academia.

Specifically, tools and artifacts are the instruments by which the subject carries out the activity and can be an avenue through which the subject understands the object and motive. In my study, for example, tools could be changes of the use of certain offensive language in the workplace, different military uniform standards for men and women, and military artifacts such as squadron emblems and morale uniform patches that are now derogatory toward women and have been since banned in the military. However, as useful as artifacts may be in mediating, there can also be a danger in misrepresenting, or underrepresenting, of those artifacts. The same artifact can represent multiple realities to those within the collective. For example, in the military a picture of a male fighter pilot stepping into his plane can be the embodiment of masculinity to men, yet at the same time appear as a restrictive barrier to women. This is just a small illustration of the enormous power and utility of societal tools and artifacts, and how CHAT can account for these tools that are used collectively to mediate and negotiate how women learn within military academia.

Next, rules are another element that could be investigated for this study. An example could be military policies and cultural norms implemented that both formally and informally that serve to dictate acceptable behaviors of being an officer. Examples of rules include recent policies allowing women to serve in combat roles, as well as policies that accommodate pregnant women with time off after giving birth. How do these rules, some inclusive and others exclusive, shape women's activity of being an officer? How are these rules and norms managed inside a military academic classroom?

Lastly, in my analysis I will focus on CHAT's three principles of multi-voiced-ness, historicity and contradictions of the activity of women's participation with military academia, as these principles help to best capture women's experiences within the activity of addressing gender beliefs and activities in the context of the military's long history with the ever-increasing inclusion of women's voices, and the contradictions the two are creating. These are just a few examples of the usefulness of CHAT in investigating and explaining how gender beliefs and practices shape women officer's participation and learning with military academia.

Foregrounding Women. CHAT is an appropriate theory to study gender issues in the military as it foregrounds women as the subject of the activity and critiques the universality and generalization of women's issues and focuses on the specific and the local. It also includes division of labor and artifacts in its observation of activity, thereby addressing power relations within organizations, as well as the constitutive power of language and meaning, as contributing factors in shaping an activity. Lastly, as CHAT foregrounds women is subjects of the activity, it highlights strategies for women to seek to discover and reconfigure agency in an effort to bring about change within the activity.

Conclusion

In summary, my theoretical framework consists within the field of Critical Military Studies (CMS) as it relates to observing and problematizing the concept of gender within the military. I also use agency, as defined within the study of PSF to highlight the tension of being shaped by their organizational structure, yet also reshaping their participation within that structure. Lastly, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory will be discussed as a framework to examine how learning occurs within women's

participation in the military. Given its rich history and potential for detailed observation and investigation, the third generation of CHAT provides a balanced and systematic analysis of change that can occur within a complex and interconnected human activity and can be beneficial to examine learning that occurs in women officers within their military experience.

Methodology

This chapter describes my study's research methodology and provides a brief discussion of the following areas: research approach, research site and participants, data collection, trustworthiness and credibility, data analysis, and positionality.

The primary purpose of the study was twofold: to describe how women officers perceive military gender beliefs and practices and to analyze how those perceptions shape how they learn to participate within the military environment. Here are my research questions that drive this study:

1) How do women's perception of military gender beliefs and practices shape how they learn to participate within the military environment?

2) How do women officers' participation and experiences within this environment help reshape their gender beliefs and practices within the military?

Critical Military Studies (CMS) and agency, as defined using a Post-structural feminist (PSF) lens ground every aspect of this study as PSF views gender as performative, and therefore socially constructed (Acker, 1990; Herbert, 1998; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Woodward, 2000). Agency within PSF (St. Pierre, 2000) was used to investigate my participant's gender beliefs and practices as they participate in the military, as well as highlight opportunities where they have created agency to disrupt and alter their experiences, while CMS relies on close encounters with the military to observe and deconstruct these military gender definitions.

I used Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 1996, 2001, 2009, 2014; Sawckuk, 2003) in my analysis to define the learning that takes place while these women participate in the military. CHAT provides a descriptive framework to

explain women officers' participation and learning as it examines learning from a social perspective within a cultural and historical context.

Research Approach

My research study was qualitative, which "is designed to reveal a target audience's range of behavior and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues" (QRCA, 2015, para. 1). Qualitative research is highly descriptive and includes in-depth observations of "people, cultures and values" (Savin-Baden & Howell-Major, 2013, p. 196) with a goal of creating an understanding of those being observed. Specifically, this study followed a multiple case study approach (Reissman, 2008; Stake; 1995, 2005) using feminist ethnographic strategies (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Parameswaran, 2001; Skeggs, 2001; Stacey, 1998; Visweswaran, 1994, 1997) of respect for differences, representation and power differentials, and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fetterman, 2019) and CHAT (Engeström, 1996, 2001, 2009, 2014; Sawckuk, 2003) to analyze women officer's motives for becoming an officer and their activity as participants within the military culture with the goal of "interpret[ing] cultural behavior" (Wolcott, 1990, p. 5).

To explain and interpret accurately, I embedded myself within this military academic culture, as qualitative data collections typically occur "over a long period of time" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13) and its corresponding analysis, "focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live" (Holloway, 1997, p. 2). The strength of this form of inquiry is that it is an interpretive approach to social and cultural realities. As such, qualitative inquiry uses smaller sample sizes, yet provides deeper analysis and interpretation. As Patton (2014)

points out, qualitative inquiry, "focuses on relatively small samples, even single cases…selected *purposefully* to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon *in depth*" (p. 46; italics in original). Its focus on small sample sizes to gain in-depth understanding of phenomena is why I chose to use multiple case study as my research method to examine and describe how women learn to participate within the military.

Multiple Case Study

I used multiple case study (Reissman, 2008; Stake; 1995, 2005) as my research method for this study. Stake (2005) says that each case is a "specific, unique, bounded system" (p. 445). I treated each participant as their own, bounded case full of their own uniqueness and interpretations. However, the cases were studied together to provide overall insight and identify themes about the relevance of gender beliefs and practices to the women officers at ACSC. Stake (2005) refers to these as a collective or multiple case study. Multiple case study is useful in that it allows me to both view each participant as a separate, enclosed and unique description of their experience, yet it also allows me to view these experiences collectively to analyze similarities and differences with which to create themes of these experiences and bring out rich descriptions.

Stake (1995) includes four main characteristics of a good case study: holistic, empirical, interpretive, and empathic (as cited in Yazan, 2015). Case studies should be holistic as they should observe the interrelation of the phenomenon in its contextual setting. I did this by observing women as they interacted within the military educational environment. Case studies should also be empirical in nature and be primarily based on field observations. My data collection was mostly based on one-on-one interviews with my participants and observations within the classrooms. Third, case studies should be

interpretive and constructivist in nature, relying on researcher and subject interaction, as well as interpretation of the analysis. Here, I relied on my participant's accounts of their military experiences and placed their interpretation into my analysis. Lastly, case studies should be empathic and should be told through an emic perspective. This was accomplished by using feminist ethnographic strategies of respect for differences, representation, and power differentials throughout my study. I was reflexive about my positionality and careful to include my participants in the analysis process during our interviews. I also built strong relationships and trust with my participants which allowed their perspectives to be heard.

I refer to a multiple case study approach as synonymous with a collective case study (Creswell, 2016) as my intent was to investigate one issue, how military gender beliefs and practices shaped women's participation within ACSC, using multiple participants as different case studies to illustrate this issue. Stake (2013) also describes this method as an instrumental case study approach as its purpose is to develop overall themes that can be generalized "beyond the case" (p. 10). To ensure unique perspectives are captured while maintaining standardization of the research design process, I used Yin's (2017) logic of replication to ensure each case is analyzed similarly. I relied on Stake's (1995) methodology for conducting a multiple case study.

Stake's (1995) methodology includes clearly identifying a case with boundaries to investigate with the intent to "provide an in-depth understanding of the cases" (as cited in Creswell, 2016, p. 74). Purposeful sampling is recommended to select cases that illustrate different perspectives of the issue. As such, I used criterion sampling (Patton, 2014), as it involves selecting or searching for rich or excellent examples of the phenomenon of

interest. Data collection in Stake's methodology is extensive and draws from several sources, to include observations, interviews, and archived documents and artifacts. Analysis of this data was a holistic analysis of the entire phenomenon. This analysis went through first a descriptive phase of accumulating the individual overarching concepts of my participant's experiences in the military, and then moved to a thematic phase, where I focused on key themes or culminating concepts of each case. Once that was completed, Yin (2017) suggests looking at common threads emerging from these central concepts that transcended the individual cases. Finally, Stake (1995) suggests assigning meaning through the analysis and interpretation of these themes. Using CHAT as my way to analyze my participant's central activity of becoming an officer and their formative secondary activities accomplished this, as I was able to analyze the way my participant's interpreted contradictions found within these interactions and if learning was an outcome of their activities.

Feminist Ethnographic Strategies

In following the multiple case study approach, I also used feminist ethnographic strategies (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Parameswaran, 2001; Skeggs, 2001; Stacey, 1998; Visweswaran, 1994, 1997; Wolcott, 1990) of respect for difference, representation, and power differentials to inform and guide my research method.

Respect for Differences. Visweswaran (1994) speaks to disturbing the researcher/researched boundary within ethnographic research by advocating for a "respect for the integrity of difference" to replace "the ethnographic goal of understanding and representation" (p. 21). This strategy disturbs the self/other binary found in most ethnographies and seeks to eschew the researcher viewing and labeling the

participant's perspective as "other." As a researcher who is also a male officer, this required reflexivity throughout the research process, as well as discipline to focus my listening on my women participants without providing personal opinions or judgment. To ensure that I remained reflexive throughout the study, I included personal notes of reactions to my observations within my personal journal. During each observation and interview I mostly listened. I asked for clarification when unclear and did not lead them into conclusions. I accepted when they were not sure how to answer the questions at the moment of the interview and often went back to discuss previous questions and points from the last interview through member checking.

Representation. Along with respect, I was aware of the power and politics of representation (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Stacey, 1988) when interpreting and describing women officer's experiences in the final research product. Even though the above strategy of respect speaks to differences in researcher/researched interpretations, the researcher must still contend with the tension of creating the final research product that is fully generated by the researcher while also ensuring their participants voices are heard and not misrepresented. While this may not completely eradicate misrepresentation (Stacey, 1988), it serves to ensure participants remain empowered with agency while also carefully recognizing the power of the "research relationship" (McNamara, 2009, p. 165) to mitigate inherent biases in observing, analyzing and interpreting qualitative data (Stacey, 1988; Visweswaran, 1994). Remaining reflexive throughout the research process through journaling and member checks helped mitigate this issue, although the power differentials between the researcher and researched remained. As seen in chapter four, the main way I accounted for representation was to ensure my participant's words were used

in this study as much as possible. While this created a lengthy chapter four, their exact words were inserted into the text, as well as their interpretations of their experiences. I also recounted something they said during a previous interview to ensure I understood their meaning and also to ask them to expand on their thoughts.

Power Differentials. Attention to the power differentials (Stacey, 1988; Visweswaran, 1994) in the relationship between researcher and researched was also addressed throughout the research process. Stacey (1988) speaks to a keen awareness by the researcher to understand the potential exploitative and invasive nature of gathering data from participants, as some might feel a desertion after the closeness of fieldwork has ended and a betrayal of intimacy if the researcher misrepresented them in their research. In the end, Stacey (1988) warns even the most well-intentioned researchers of a "more dangerous form of exploitation" (p. 22) in research approaches that rely on close encounters with their participants. As a male officer researching female, lower-ranking officers, I remained aware of this by building relationships and trust with my participants. During the first interview I was nervous about my ability to connect with them and build their trust. However, I noticed that when I began the next interview using their powerful words and phrases to launch into more depth, they became excited to tell me more. This process grew over time and built trust and rapport, as I shared my imperfect analysis of their stories and they shared their imperfect experiences within the military. I remained transparent with them, which enabled them to be transparent with me. I desired rapport with those in my study but was also empathetic and respected the intimate nature of the researcher/researched relationship. Parameswaran (2001) writes, "the process of

conducting fieldwork …calls for negotiations of power relationships between researchers and people they encounter in the field" (p. 69).

By approaching this study using the feminist ethnographic strategies of respect, representation, and power differentials, I was able to examine women's gendered experiences within the military, while giving them voice and agency as they interpreted the broader impact of these experiences. As Perry et al. (2006) explain, "the researcher begins by examining…but then proceeds to explore how the broader social relations have shaped them" (p. 177). In using this approach, I remained reflexive in attending to gender beliefs and practices throughout the study by placing my perspectives on hold and foregrounding the perspective of woman participating in a male-dominated organization as much as possible. McNamara (2009) states, "gender implications must be intrinsic to all research processes" (p. 165). Therefore, attending to them must be a continual process for the researcher. These strategies helped me keep my research process a critical one, as strategies of feminist ethnography not only questions and continually critiques the process of performing and writing qualitative research (Visweswaran, 1994), it also challenges the researcher "to write about the oppressed without becoming one of the oppressors" (Patai, 1991, pp. 138-139). Using their words and spotlighting their perspectives and emotions on every page of this study somewhat accomplished this.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

I also employed CHAT to explain learning from a sociocultural perspective (Engeström, 1996, 2001, 2014; Sawchuk, 2003), and used it as a framework to analyze the relevance of gender beliefs and practices to women officer's participation and learning within a male-dominated, military environment.

CHAT provides a descriptive framework to explain how something is learned, what external factors impact learning, and why learning occurs (or, what is the goal of learning). CHAT answers these questions by using human activity as the unit of analysis. In CHAT, one's activity is directed toward an object and is mediated through both cultural and social influences. Individual and group actions are embedded in, and thereby made meaningful by, this shared activity. In CHAT, learning happens in everyday life and is one possible outcome of an object-directed and goal-oriented activity. It is important to note in CHAT that learning is not necessarily the outcome of every activity. Activity is always evolving and transforming due to inherent contradictions within its structural components. It is within these contradictions that reconstruction and learning are birthed. These origins of "development" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137) and transformation are critical, as the recognition and resolution of these contradictions are what lead to individual, organizational, and social change. The resolution of contradictions leading to new patterns of activity is referred to as expansive learning (Engeström, 2001, p. 139).

CHAT takes a holistic approach to collective activity, and the learning that occurs within that activity. Therefore, the purpose of using CHAT was to explain how women officers learned to participate within the military. Other gender and military studies have looked at women officers' issues such as sexual harassment, occupational inequalities, and work/life balance (Carreiras, 2006; Keller et al., 2018; Maung et al., 2017; Morral et al., 2015; Turchik et al., 2014), but there is little by way of literature addressing the scope of social and cultural aspects that shape women's participation and how they learn from their environment.

I used CHAT's unit analysis of mediated human activity, embedded in their cultural historical context, to analyze how women perceived gender beliefs and practices in the military and how they learned to reshape these beliefs and practices as they participated. Primarily, I focused on CHAT's three principles of multi-voiced-ness, historicity, and contradictions of the activity of women's participation with the military, as these principles helped to best capture women's experiences within the activity of perceiving and reshaping gender beliefs and practices in the context of the military's history and the ever-increasing inclusion of women's voices.

Research Site

Following Stake's (1995) essential elements for conducting an instrumental multiple case study (as cited in Creswell, 2016), after determining the need to explain women's participation and learning while participating in the military, I identified specific cases to study. This included identifying a "culture-sharing" (p. 71) group of women officers within the military. Therefore, I chose Air University (AU), which is a fully accredited university through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and is the Air Force's premier institute of higher learning and professional development for officers and enlisted members alike as my research site. It is located on Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, and is a system of over 30 colleges, schools, institutes, and research centers. Among several professional certifications, the main campus offers graduate degrees at both the Master and Doctor of Philosophy levels (Air University Academic Affairs, 2018). Among its main colleges are Squadron Officer School (SOS), Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) and Air War College (AWC).

Specifically, the research site within Air University that I chose is Air Command and Staff College. ACSC is a nine-month school that offers a master's degree in military science upon completion of 36 credit hours of academics. ACSC normally enrolls approximately 500 students per year. Students who attend ACSC are normally officers (with a few civilians) who are approximately at the ten-to-twelve-year point in their military careers. The typical learning experience for most ACSC courses involves a lecture-seminar format. All students attend lectures concurrently that introduces concepts and main objectives, and then separate into 40 seminars comprised of twelve students and one instructor, where deeper discourse and supporting concepts are unpacked through application and discursive pedagogical activities. A typical seminar consists of ten men and two women officers.

I limited myself to participants attending ACSC, as between August 2018 and February 2021 when I served as an ACSC instructor. Choosing students as participants from ACSC was a deliberate one as it allowed me to continue to teach, while being close to my research participants throughout the entire academic year. Therefore, as an instructor at ACSC, I had unlimited access to the school, the classrooms and course schedules and could easily set up observations and interviews with my participants based on this access. I also had rapport with the administration and the faculty to organize this study and could easily build rapport with my participants due to my proximity.

Participants

For my study, I observed a selected group of women at Air University who were enrolled in ACSC. These women are officers who have spent roughly ten to twelve years in the military and have experienced the military through various stages of women's

equality policy initiatives. Officers have a window of eligibility for being selected to attend ACSC. Most are selected around the ten to twelve-year window and are typically within the same age range of 30-35 years old.

I also chose to only examine the activity of women officers from within the U. S. Air Force. Since presence of women in the military can be most seen within the Air Force officer corps, as the U. S. Air Force has the largest representation of women with 19% enlisted and 21% officers (Reynolds & Shendruk, 2018), the study focused on women Air Force officers attending ACSC and excluded women from other branches of the military. While this limited the perspective, I gained from observing women officers in other services, I wanted my participants to come from a common gendered experience. Keeping all participants within one military service attempted to accomplish this. For future studies, it would be interesting to examine women from other branches of the military for comparison.

I also chose to examine only women in this study. As the military is a male-dominated organization, the predominant narrative regarding how to participate as an officer comes from the male point of view. My goal in examining women officers' experience was to explain how women officers problematize this view and learn to recreate and shape a new way to learn how to participate.

Recruitment and Criterion Sampling

I selected six women officers as participants, as is Stake's (1995) suggestion since too many cases risks "dilut[ing] the overall analysis" (as cited in Creswell, 2016, p. 76). I wanted six to begin with, as I thought some might drop out during the academic year.

This did not occur. These women were ACSC students in Academic Year 2021, which began in August of 2020 and ended in May 2021.

My selection criteria were women who were: a) born or naturalized U.S. citizens, b) members of the U. S. Air Force, c) officers, d) ranging in age from 30-25 years old, e) willing to allow their educational experiences in the ACSC classroom to be observed and analyzed, and f) able to balance being a part of the study and completing their studies. To recruit my participants, I used purposive criterion sampling (Patton, 2014). My intention for choosing these criteria was to find women with similar military and life experiences based on the military service they chose, the years under which their service began, and their perception of gender norms within their culture. While I could not control all these factors, my selection criteria sought to mitigate varying cultural influences by restricting my selection to women Air Force officers who are U. S. citizens and were within the 30 – 35 age range.

My other criteria, both a willingness to be observed and an ability to balance both being a student and being researched, attempted to capture participants who have both the willingness and the dedication to be observed and researched the entire academic year. My six participants were selected based on their interest in the research question, their ability to provide "information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely" (Creswell, 2016, p. 127), and their availability throughout the year.

I recruited my participants by participating in an ACSC elective course that was run by a fellow ACSC professor at the beginning of the academic year in August. This elective focused on women's issues in the military and was a fruitful source from which to recruit. In August, my fellow ACSC professor also allowed me to use some of the class

time to inform interested women students about my introductory meeting. From there I recruited two interested participants, who spread the word to other interested women by word of mouth.

Using my recruitment script and slides (Appendix D), I set up a Zoom meeting at ACSC and asked for volunteers at the conclusion of my introductory meeting. There were four initial women who were interested in participating. A few of them spread the word even more, which eventually grew my participant group to six. I held another Zoom meeting from my home in late August and presented the study to them via powerpoint (Appendix C).

To maintain ethical considerations throughout the study, consent forms were used to protect the rights of the participants and the consent forms were only seen by me and each participant. This form detailed the purpose of the study, the length of the study, detailed steps about the study, the plan to protect the confidentiality of the participants, as well as the known risks and benefits of participation. To maintain respect for my participants and to avoid coercion, I informed each participant of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. The consent form also explained how I would keep all observation and interview files protected using a password-protected Microsoft Word document on my laptop, or paper files within a locked drawer in my ACSC office. I also removed all personal identifiers on documents and used pseudonyms to protect their identities. My participants and I both signed the form. Lastly, this research method received both Air University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and the University of Memphis' IRB approval (Appendices G and H).

Data Collection

For a successful and meaningful case study, prolonged engagement is key, so fieldwork selection is critical. Wolcott (1990) explains the importance of a researcher's commitment to, and immersion in, what they observe and states,

> fieldwork is a form of enquiry in which one is immersed personally in the ongoing activities of some individual or group for the purposes of research. Fieldwork is characterized by personal involvement to achieve some level of understanding that will be shared with others. (p. 66)

Data collection consisted of conducting participant observations within their ACSC classrooms over a nine-month period (as social distancing allowed) and performing semi-structured interviews located at ACSC and at a local coffee shop or restaurant (COVID-19 restrictions permitting), as well as collecting archived written Department of Defense (DoD) and United States Air Force policy documents. Participant observations allowed the researcher to walk the line between participant involvement and professional distance (Fetterman, 2019), while semi-structured interviews allowed participants the freedom to converse with minimal direction (Angrosino, 2007). Written material, such as government documents, previous debate, and research literature, was used to provide insight into the organizational and leadership levels. Data was collected regarding women's identity, gendered practices within the military, women's perceptions of gender differences and beliefs, and how these beliefs manifested themselves in the classroom, as well as data about the agentic acts of women in their conception of gender beliefs and practices during their participation.

My fieldwork was located in the ACSC classrooms and building, where my participants attended school. My fieldwork was scheduled throughout the entirety of the ACSC academic year, which began in August 2020 through May 2021. In particular, my classroom observations occurred within seminar classrooms that consisted of cohorts of 12 student officers. School COVID-19 restrictions forced some classrooms on-line during this academic year. I annotated this as part of my collection. My individual interviews were held in private and away from the classroom. In order to comply with school COVID-19 restrictions, I was forced to conduct some of the interviews on-line as well. I include more specifics below.

I used appropriate fieldwork collection methods, including participant observations and interaction through interviews and reflexivity through personal journaling, to oscillate between emic and etic approaches. This helped to triangulate my data to increase the trustworthiness of the data and analysis. In combination, these collection methods involved a detailed interrogation of talking, note-taking, and interacting (Silverman, 2015), and it is the multiplicity of methods, and its triangulation, that has been described as a routine hallmark of sound qualitative work (Brewer, 2000; Denzin, 2017).

Participant Observation

My participant observation plan consisted of observing each participant in their classroom settings throughout their academic year. COVID restrictions enforced by the school impacted my ability to observe my participants in the classroom multiple times throughout the year. I was able to observe each participant one time for a three-hour, in-person instructional time block with their classroom cohort. This provided important data

regarding how they viewed the value of their input as women within a male-majority classroom. During each observation, I used a guide (Appendix B) and compiled field notes, as well as recorded my observations. My handwritten notes were converted into text, which was saved into MaxQDA software for analysis and trends.

Interviews

Interviews are constructions of knowledge and meaning making between the interviewer and interviewee, and are, as Silverman (2015) reminds us, "some version of the world appropriate to what we take to be self-evident about the person to whom we are speaking and the context of the question" (p. 86). Therefore, an interview lends itself to a less restrictive and more organic discussion between the interviewer and interviewee. For this reason, a semi-structured interview method was chosen for this study.

For my study I conducted three one to two-hour interviews (Appendix A) with each of my participants. I modeled my interviews using Seidman's (2006) three-interview series to help me to contextualize the information gathered in terms of each participant. The first interview was a general background interview, and then following Seidman (2006), the second and third interviews allowed the "participants to reconstruct the details of their experience in the context in which it occurs" (p. 17). My goal was to have a total of at least 5-6 hours of interview time and I was able to achieve that goal with all my participants. The interviews were recorded using one primary and back-up digital recording devices and then transcribed by Rev Transcription Services. I kept researcher notes on the interviews in addition to detailed field notes on the observations. In the end I gathered from each participant roughly 100-130 pages of interview transcription and learned a lot about my participants.

I began this study with six participants, thinking that I would lose one or two during the Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) school year. However, all my participants were dedicated to this study and open about sharing their gendered experiences in the classrooms and throughout their military careers. As stated before, I conducted three interviews with each participant and was able to observe all of them in the classroom once. COVID's social distancing policies within the institution restricted me from doing more observations, however I was able to talk about their classroom experience amply during our multiple interviews. My interest was to understand how these women learned how to perform the day-to-day actions of becoming an officer and how (or if) being a woman shaped those experience. Observing the ACSC classroom experience provided a good illustration of their participatory actions they have learned throughout their career and provided rich items to discuss during our interviews.

I began data collection with the first interview, where the primary goals were to get to know who they were, where they were from, why they joined the military and what were their occupations in the military (table 1).

Table 1

Participant Information

Name	Occupation	Years in Military	Raised	Gender	Race	Family
Ruth	Medical Supply Officer	23 years	West Virginia	Identifies as a woman	Caucasian	Married to a retired military member and has children
Jem	Pilot	13 years	Germany (US military)	Identifies as a woman	Caucasian	Married to a military officer and has children

Table 1 (Continued)

Luna	Medical Doctor	13 years	New Hampshire	Identifies as a woman	Caucasian	Married to military officer and has children
Alex	Aircrew Battle Manager	13 years	Texas	Identifies as a woman	Latinx	Married w/ children
Barbie	Weapons Officer	12 years	Nebraska	Identifies as a woman	Caucasian	Married w/ children
Diana	Personnel Officer	12 years	Ohio	Identifies as a woman	African American	Married to military officer and has children

During the first interview, we spoke a little about their experiences when they joined the military and some of their gendered experiences throughout their careers, but my primary goal was to get them comfortable talking with me and to lay the groundwork for deeper discussions in later interviews. The second interview focused on their actions in the classroom and why they participated with their cohorts as they did. I primarily used the third interview to review the first two interviews, as well as to get clarification and dig deeper regarding the topics they had discussed earlier.

Artifacts

Archived documents, such as military policy memos, was also used to illustrate the breadth of the military culture that shapes the environment the participants both live and work in. Since CHAT includes the impacts of artifacts and tools within activity, I was able to observe how these tools served to strengthen or problematize deeply held gender beliefs in the military.

From military policy memos dating back to 1988 outlining rules prohibiting women's inclusion into combat positions to the 2015 memo from the Secretary of Defense claiming the removal of "all barriers" to women's occupational service in the military (DoD Memo, 2015), these served as artifacts documenting policy shifts toward greater inclusion of women in the military. Although the intent of these official memos was to help shape policy regarding women and the military, I asked my participants to question the effectiveness of these documents in transforming a culture entrenched in gender beliefs and practices. During the interview and observation process, these contradictive artifacts surfaced as important markers in the construction of my participant's gender beliefs of the military.

Data Analysis

Watling's (2002) definition of data analysis is, "the researcher's equivalent of alchemy – the elusive process by which you hope you can turn your raw data into nuggets of pure gold. And like alchemy, such magic calls for science and art in equal measures" (p. 262). To that end, data analysis is a continuous process throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing portions of this study. Specifically, I used both thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fetterman, 2019) and CHAT (Engeström, 1996, 2001, 2014) to analyze and interpret my data.

Prior to thematic analysis, my interviews and observation transcriptions led me to perform initial in-vivo coding to capture the power of their specific words as they explained their personal experience. Their voices were raw and unfiltered, and I left in that emotion believing that it best captured the realities of their experiences. Next, I turned to values coding (Saldana, 2009) as I captured the participant's overall attitudes,

values, and beliefs about what they believed being a military officer meant to them. Lastly, I used thematic coding to organize overall experiences that were formative in shaping their military experience and what participating in the activity of "becoming an officer" meant to them.

I used thematic analysis as the first phase of my data analysis to give me a general idea about what I saw in my data and to discover overall themes in my participant's central activity and motivations of becoming an officer. I looked for "patterns of thought and behavior" (Fetterman, 2019, p. 97) and focused on key events to analyze and make meaning from what they saw and experienced in the culture. I used the following three phases informed by Wolcott (1987): description, analysis, and interpretation (as cited in Creswell, 2016). Initially, I found over 460 descriptions (Appendix E) that I narrowed down into categories and themes. Thematic analysis gave me a glimpse into women's experiences of coming into the military while investigating how military artifacts, culture, and hierarchy shaped and influenced their gender beliefs and practices as participants in the military. Using these themes also guided me to locations within my participant's experiences where there were potential contradictions within their actions. For example, I found at least ten main themes within their experiences that could lead to contradictions. Themes included: being professional and good at their jobs, being vulnerable, standing out because of physical appearance, working harder than men to succeed, being expected to care for family, needing to show restraint when speaking to be accepted, developing a male persona to be accepted, being remembered for what you do and say, having to maintain perfection, having to be physically fit to be a good officer and controlling the narrative (Appendix F). With the goal of finding resolved

contradictions within their central activity of becoming an officer, I then turned to CHAT.

I employed CHAT's unit analysis of mediated human activity to analyze how women conceptualize gender beliefs in the military and how they learned these conceptions from their environment. CHAT was also used to account for narratives embedded in their cultural historical context (Riessman, 2008). Recalling from my previous chapter, quaternary contradictions come about from the integration of two activity systems (see figure 4) where the central activity interacts with other activities. These may produce contradictions, but they can also lead to learning and the development of new object-motives (figure 4, $Object_2$ & $Object_3$).

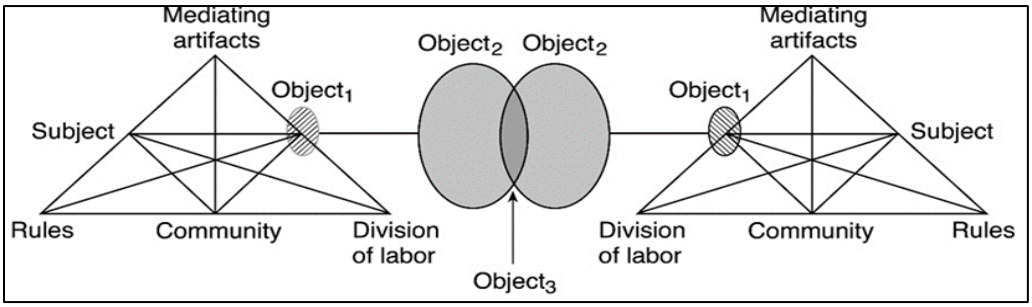

Figure 4
CHAT Activity System (Illeris, 2018, p. 56)

I accomplished this by first starting with their central activity of becoming an officer and analyzing their individual actions within this central activity. Next, I identified different, secondary activities that may have been temporary but were formative to my participant's interpretation of their central activity. I did this by looking for different object-motives. Next, I identified the contradictions as the secondary activities interacted with their central activity of becoming an officer to see if these

contradictions were resolved. Lastly, I observed if these resolved contradictions led to a new activity or expansive learning within their activity system.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

I was rigorous in maintaining research quality throughout this study. I employed three methods to ensure trustworthiness and credibility throughout the research process: reflexivity, member checking and peer briefing.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a key aspect of those using feminist ethnographic strategies, so I incorporated it throughout my research process. I was purposeful and rigorous regarding the quality of my data during this study. I constantly reflected on my theoretical framework and research questions and stayed within its boundaries. My participant observations and interaction with my participants were prolonged and persistent (August 2020 – Feb 2021), which added to the credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, I maintained access and rapport with my participants through auditing and participating in their elective course, as well as by maximizing interaction with my participants in places other than the military installation. This was challenging with the COVID-19 restrictions in place, but I provided several on-line meeting options for my participants to increase participation. As we progressed through data collection, my participants became increasingly comfortable sharing information with me and were anxious to meet and discuss what they observed in their ACSC classrooms and discussed with their peers.

Even though my relationship with my participants grew, I continuously problematized my positionality as a man, an Air Force officer and researcher, as well as

my position of rank above my participants. I accomplished this by journaling my interaction with my participants throughout the study focusing on the barriers my positionality might create in each interaction and remained self-aware and humble in writing and interacting with my participants. Keeping numerous research memos about my reflections on the interviews, observations, and ongoing data analysis in my audit trail through journaling helped keep me grounded as a researcher and helped me maintain reflexivity throughout the research process.

Member checking

Member checking is another strategy that I used to establish credibility throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Checking my observations and analysis was agreed upon by me and my participants at the beginning of this project and was ongoing through the research process. I made my transcripts available to them after each interview, as well as my CHAT analysis models, and they clarified what we had discussed and added clarification, if needed, before each subsequent interview. I also made myself available to clarify questions that arose from their interviews and the data. Lastly, I gave my participants a chance to provide feedback of my analysis of their cases, as my desire to give voice to their experiences, rather than "taking those voices" (Lengel, 1998, p. 237) was one of my research goals. In this way, my hope was rapport was strengthened, and my participants felt like their voice were heard through the pages of this study.

Peer briefing

Peer briefing was another important component to establish credibility in this study. My dissertation advisor and committee chair and my methodologist were critical

peers who provided feedback on my findings, in addition to valuable feedback regarding my theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Using these three quality assurance methods throughout the research process added to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study and helped ensure that my positionality as a researcher did not eclipse the voice of the researched.

Positionality

Although retired, I have spent nearly 28 years serving as a male officer in the US Air Force. As one deeply entrenched in, and greatly impacted by, its culture, I understand my positionality as a male officer might offer a male-centric perspective of this subject. I have been affected by the culture around me and I continue to be shaped by that culture. It has conditioned me to view some issues in a certain way, while being blind to other issues around me. Therefore, I bring certain assumptions, beliefs, and perspectives about the military that will inform or shape my role as researcher in this study. Additionally, my higher rank as an officer compared to my participants put me in a difficult position managing researcher/researched authority and power issues of feeling coerced to participate. At the beginning of my data collection, I was nervous to research women in the military as a higher-ranking, male officer. Building relationships and trust with my participants was critical for me. I had to remain humble and teachable, as a researcher, in order to stay empathetic and foreground their perspectives. This is why reflexivity, member checking, and peer briefings were critical steps within my research process to mitigate and carefully manage my positionality, beliefs, and assumptions. I cannot completely change who I am or how my culture has shaped me. However, by employing these research strategies, I was able to look at my culture critically and empathically,

viewing it from my subjects' emic perspective (Yazan, 2015) to understand the complexity of the issue I was researching.

To that end, I was careful to employ feminist strategies and ethics into this research. Those strategies and ethics were particularly relevant to this study and include identifying and deconstructing the self/other binary and being informed by feminist ethics. Feminist ethnographic literature argues that researchers using this method must, "acknowledge his/her own gender orientations and belief systems and the part these play in the research process" (McNamara, 2009, p. 165). Therefore, my personal beliefs regarding gender and how it is shaped in the military environment, greatly affected this study.

As stated previously, during the study, I was an Air Force officer that outranked my participants and was also an instructor at Air University during most of the data collection phase. I am also a man. I have been in the military since 1992, so I have seen the military evolve in its policies toward women. I have great respect for the institution of the Air Force as well as a respect for those who raise their right hand and choose to participate in this institution and make it a better place. I am keenly aware of who I am as a man and who I am researching.

Another critical aspect of feminist ethnographic strategy is the requirement to position oneself and incorporate personal "feminist views with her methodological approach" (Reinharz as cited in Buch & Staller, 2007, p. 192), informing and infusing every phase of the research. This makes me a responsible and culpable reporter and producer of knowledge constructed in this project. As Haraway (1988) states, critical researchers are accountable for this knowledge. I take that responsibility seriously. My

positionality as both male officer and male researcher makes me responsible for my knowledge construction, knowledge claims, and enabling practices, thus I am "called into account" (Haraway, 1988, p. 590) for my research. Reflexive positionality is a hallmark of good feminist research that challenges the traditional, dehumanized, and objective social research methodology and keeps the researcher focused on writing "about the oppressed without becoming one of the oppressors" (Patai, 1991, pp. 138-139).

Lastly, I recognize the military academic institution I studied was located in the southern United States and there are several social and cultural beliefs and practices in the south regarding gender. I believe these southern cultural gender beliefs were ever present during this study, as it was a part of the daily interaction this school had with the culture it touched. However, this southern culture was somewhat mitigated by the fact that ACSC is attended by officers as a temporary duty location for most students. They arrive at ACSC from locations around the United States and the world. So, while the school's location shares a southern setting, its culture is impacted more by the wider acknowledged gender beliefs of the military, and not its southern location.

Summary

In this study, I used a combination of fieldwork, semi-structured interviews, along with participant observations and archived documents, to explain the activities by my participants (Pole & Morrison, 2003). Using multiple case study with feminist ethnographic strategies, I examined how women officer learn to participate within the military and the role gender beliefs and practices had on their participation, Analysis was done through a thematic approach to capture overall themes and categories of women's gendered experiences. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory was then employed to provide

a descriptive framework to explain women officers' learning within the military. The next chapters detail the findings and implications of the study.

Findings

This chapter details my findings from my data collection and analysis. It includes an examination of each participant's experience learning how to participate in the military and the secondary activities that helped shape this central activity. It also identifies the contradictions that led to problematizing their experiences and, at times, reshaping their actions. Finally, from these contradictions I will discuss their final activity system and observe what learning has taken place.

Several themes and strategies (or actions) were uncovered across the six cases. The central themes were: being professional and good at their jobs, being vulnerable, standing out because of physical appearance, working harder than men to succeed, being expected to care for family, needing to show restraint when speaking to be accepted, developing a male persona to be accepted, being remembered for what you do and say, having to maintain perfection, having to be physically fit to be a good officer and controlling the narrative. These themes also created contradictions within their military experience requiring, at times, new actions to be made by my participants. The actions my participants took to reshape these contradictions were: having an identity outside the military, avoidance, ignoring, acceptance of behavior, over-preparation, moderation of participation, speaking up, humor, stopping the little bits, addressing the culture and journaling.

Within this chapter is the analysis of my six cases. Each participant case was organized in the following way. I first provided a summary of each participant, to include their family background and motives for joining the military. Next, I divided their experiences into major events or secondary activities and used CHAT to examine them as

they interacted with the central activity of "becoming an officer". As discussed in chapter 2, activity is the unit of analysis in CHAT. I then observed the contradictions that took place and looked for changes in their actions to find new object-motives. Lastly, I summarized the participant's activity with a diagram and discussed if learning occurred within their activity system. I begin with Ruth.

Ruth's Case: "The good apples have to stay"

Ruth is a pseudonym she chose herself and represents the late Supreme Court Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, whom she respected for her tenacity, perseverance, and wisdom. Ruth is from a small, rural town in West Virginia. During our interviews, Ruth recalled not having many options after high school other than her job as a grocery store cashier. So, she enlisted in the Air Force to leave her small town and escape the dead-end future she felt was the only solution her town afforded her as a woman, afforded. She did not have any family members who served in the military as her father was kept from serving because of medical issues. She also did not believe higher education was an option for her.

In our first interview she recalled only two options, the military or "working at the grocery store forever" (Ruth Interview #1, p. 1). Ruth went on to state that it was rare growing up in West Virginia to see moms working (Ruth Interview #3). These were only a few options Ruth believed she could choose from, so she made her decision to enlist into the U.S. Air Force.

At this point in her life, Ruth's decisions come from the limited options presented to her by her social and cultural surroundings. However, since her family did not have a history of military service or of anyone attending college, one could argue that Ruth's

decision to do something other than work at the grocery store revealed a desire to call into question and break free from options known to her. Ruth first had to become aware of how her environment was attempting, albeit innocuously, to limit her options. As Davies and Gannon (2005) write, a post-structural view of agency forces us to first, "examin[e] the ways the social inscribes itself on the individual" (p. 312) to determine how power structures, "shape us as particular kinds of being" (p. 312). This awareness of how we are constructed socially is a critical step in questioning its legitimacy and efficacy in our lives. Ruth began at a young age to question her options and, therefore, began the process of opening herself up to what was new and not yet known to her.

While Ruth was serving her enlistment in the Air Force, she was informed about several opportunities to become an officer. So, Ruth applied for and got accepted in the program to get her degree as a healthcare administrator and become an Air Force officer. Once her college education was completed, Ruth went to Commissioned Officer Training (COT) at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama to complete her officer training. So began Ruth's journey to understand how to become an officer.

Ruth has been in the military over 20 years and has had a very successful career as a medical administrative officer. Ruth was competitively selected to become a student at ACSC. However, Ruth's decision to become an officer is where I wanted to examine how gender began to shape Ruth's beliefs and perceptions of being an officer as she joined the military. Specifically, I wanted to look at actions Ruth took because of her perceptions of gender within the military and her subjectivity to it, as Davies and Gannon (2005) states, "Feminist post-structuralists theorizing focuses in particular on the specific processes whereby individuals are made into gendered subjects" (p. 312). These actions

helped highlight how Ruth's beliefs about gender shaped how she participated within and was constituted by the military system in her journey of identifying as an officer.

However, not only was Ruth constituted by the military she also participated in defining this constitution. Bronwyn Davies describes this as the "dual aspect of subjectification" (2000, p. 12) and sees its contradictive nature as both "difficult and important" characteristics within post-structural theory. The contrast between seeing self as being perfectly woven within the social and cultural fabric, yet also being able to identify and signify self as specific and unique may seem contradictive. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) add, "You will be [both] organized…[and] organism…interpreter and interpreted" (p. 159). Yet, it is in the identification of areas where we both shape and are being shaped by our culture that we find contradictions that give the interpreted the power to also be the interpreter and discover new action possibilities within their activity. Activity analysis through CHAT critiques knowledge "as something discrete or acquired by individuals" (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 189), and acknowledges it as socially and culturally interpreted and accepted. If knowledge is socially constructed and has the power to constitute those within its structure, then those within its structure also have the ability to re-interpret and reshape the knowledge for which it has been constituted. As Butler (1997) reminds us:

> ...to claim that the subject is constituted it not to claim that it is determined; on the contrary, the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency. For what is it that enables a purposive and significant reconfiguration of cultural and political relations, if not a relation that can be turned against itself, reworked and resisted? (p. 46)

Butler emphasizes the constructive, and sometimes contradictive, nature of being constituted by culture, yet at the same time reworking and reshaping that constitution. Therefore, it is in these CHAT-spotlighted contradictive spaces that I believe we observe women in the military both interpreting and being interpreted by their social environments. They are both subject to their gendered environment yet also in the process of reconfiguring and reinterpreting their subjectivity. It is by observing Ruth's contradictions within her activity of becoming an officer, and the resolution of those contradictions, that help us determine how Ruth "disrupt[s] the signifying processes through which she constitutes herself and is constituted" (p. 313), that can lead to learning new actions and possibilities within her activity. I will first analyze Ruth's activity system of becoming an officer, specifically focusing on narratives learned during her training and key events throughout her career. I will secondly observe the contradictions within these activity systems. Lastly, I will determine if and how these contradictions were resolved to see if learning and/or expansive learning (Engeström, 2014) took place and if other intentional or unintentional outcomes arose.

Ruth's Introduction

Ruth is a prior-enlisted officer which means she first enlisted in the military and applied to become an officer while serving her enlisted commitment. Through our interviews I determined that Ruth's activity of becoming an officer has been greatly shaped by her experiences within military education, her interactions with men during work meetings and her experience going through an investigation. These are not all the experiences that shape Ruth, but they were the most formative in her mind when we spoke together. Using those three events, I employed CHAT to observe and describe

Ruth's overall activity of becoming an officer as shaped by these subordinate events and labeled them as either subordinate activities or actions, depending on whether I observed separate object-motives. This included observing contradictions within her operations, resolution to those contradictions, as well as observing new actions or operations that may constitute learning.

When I observed the data, the overarching activity for Ruth was her drive and passion to become an officer. However, along that journey to understand what that means and to learn how to participate in that activity were other activities that, although secondary to the central activity, were still formative to Ruth and greatly shaped that central activity of becoming an officer. These were attending military education and participating in an investigation, while attending work meetings were an action within Ruth's central activity. These activities all produced operations by Ruth that created quaternary contradictions within Ruth's central activity system. In some cases, these contradictions were resolved to produce learning within the activity system. A summary of this case is included in table 2.

Table 2

Ruth's Summary of Secondary Activities/Actions that Interact with Central Activity of Becoming an Officer.

Rule-Producing Activity: Attending Military Education	
Action	Ruth takes on more workload than the men in her cohort. She believes she must prove her worth and overcome that she is a female.
Contradiction	***Women must take on more work just to remain equal to men.***
New Actions	N/A
Learning	N/A

Table 2 (Continued)

Action	Ruth moderates her participation in the classroom in order to be accepted so that she will not appear over-bearing toward men.
Contradiction	***Confident women are easily labeled by men as hard to work with.***
Resolution	Ruth is both resolving yet still being shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Ruth participates "behind the scenes" with her cohort to accomplish group goals without drawing attention to herself.
Learning	Ruth learns by accomplishing things "behind the scenes" and not for attention garners respect among her male cohort.
Actions	Ruth believes using emotions, rather than suppressing them, is a more effective way of leading. She also speaks out against those who do not believe emotions are a part of what it means to lead others.
Contradiction	***Good officers must remain stoic.***
Resolution	Ruth is both resolving yet still being shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Ruth rejects this contradiction and is vocal about it within ACSC classroom. Yet, Ruth also values officers who do not always display emotion.
Learning	Ruth learns to "work with herself" to interpret situations where emotions are needed versus situations where they need to be set aside.
Action within Central Activity: Attending Work Meetings	
Operation	Ruth puts herself down during meetings before men get a chance to.
Contradiction	***Women's voices are valued less in work meetings where men are present.***
Resolution	Ruth is resolving and being shaped by this contradiction.
New Operations	Only when Ruth sees another younger woman officer performing a similar action does she notice it in herself. She uses her voice to tell other women of their value to the organization. Ruth also over-prepares to ensure she adds value to every discussion.

Table 2 (Continued)

Learning	Ruth learns to stop devaluing herself and catches herself before she goes into meetings, yet still believes she must over-prepare when attending meetings.
Division of Labor-Producing Activity: Participating in an Investigation	
Actions	Considers leaving the military.
Contradiction	***Investigation procedures meant to protect women, protect men instead.***
Resolution	Ruth is both being shaping by this contradiction and is also reshaping its constitutive effects.
New Actions	Used new tools of a recording device to re-signify how she is constituted within the system, thereby shaping it herself. She also chooses to stay in the military to change it from within.
Learning	Learned that even though officers are professional, she must sometimes use new tools (recording device) to protect herself from unprofessional behavior of others. She also learns that "good apples" like herself must stay in the military in order to change it.

Ruth's Activity System – Becoming an Officer

Analyzing human activity as a primary unit of analysis helps us understand human actions and motives embedded within that activity. Human activity is defined as an object-directed, socially mediated, collective effort. Individual and group actions are entrenched in, and thereby made meaningful by, this collective effort by the group. Activity is always evolving and changing due to inherent structural contradictions within and among these activity systems. These contradictions become the "source of change and development" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137) within a system and their identification and resolution may lead to both individual and societal change. The resolution of these contradictions leading to new patterns of activity, or the formation of new activity systems, is called "expansive learning" (Engeström, 2001, p. 139).

As stated previously, Ruth's journey to becoming a military officer began with her ability to question the limited options presented by her history. The military option was unknown to Ruth, as were the expectations of what being an officer entailed. The contradictions that most shaped Ruth's estimation of what it means to become an officer are her military education experiences of Commissioned Officer Training (COT), Squadron Officer School (SOS) and Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), her attendance in meetings, as well as a pivotal investigation that took place during her career. These contradictions will be covered next.

Contradictions in Secondary Activity: Attending Military Education

I observed three contradictions between Ruth's central activity and secondary activity of attending military education. The first contradiction involves work equity between women and men. The second contradiction involves a rule that difficult women are hard to work with and the third contradiction involves the lack of emotion expected from all officers.

First Contradiction. The first contradiction observed is a quaternary contradiction between the tools of professionalism that Ruth believes embodies all officers within her central activity of becoming an officer and the unwritten rule in the secondary activity of attending military education where women complete more group work than the men in their cohort. Roth & Lee (2007) remind us that contradictions within activity systems are to be expected (p. 203) and can coexist within the activity because the motive of that activity, "exist[s] twice, as material and as vision" (p. 203). Not only do these coexist, but Ruth is also strongly constituted by the norms that surround this rule to the point where she accepts it as ordinary. Even though Ruth

accomplishes far more than her fair share of reviews when compared to her cohorts, Ruth does not see this additional work as unfair and believes she is doing her normal part as a student. She states, “I guess I’m not doing anything extra than anyone else is doing” (Ruth Interview #2, p. 11) when asked about her work. Ruth is strongly constituted by a feeling of over-participating, even claiming it as her own, “this is just me, still me, it has always been me” (Ruth Interview #1, p. 5).

This constitution is illustrated even more starkly as Ruth also reveals in her interviews the anger she feels toward her husband whenever fellow students ask her to review papers late the night prior to its due date, “I get frustrated that my husband continues to be mad about it when he knows I'm going to say yes every time” (p. 12). Ruth sees her operation of reviewing papers for her peers as a necessary way to participate in the class and views it as a normal and crystalized operation within the overall desire to be over-prepared for class to show her value to them. Ruth’s husband, however, sees her operations as doing more than her fair share. Yet, these are necessary operations for Ruth and greatly shape Ruth’s motive of becoming an officer. She also does not understand why her husband views this action from a different perspective, as saying “yes every time” and reviewing the paper is an operation Ruth happily takes up as her own. Davies and Gannon mention this as a product of power within structures, “not just to shape us as particular kinds of being, but to make those ways of being desirable such that we actively take them up as our own” (2005, p. 312). Even though Ruth’s husband may not understand her operations, Ruth feels compelled and happy when reviewing other’s papers, and chooses to ignore the late hour of the requests as well as the unequal division of labor from the other students in the class.

> I have a really hard time saying no to helping people, and- and honestly my happiness, like, my brain and my heart are just better. I would not feel good getting up on Saturday morning if I said no about that. (Ruth Interview #1, p. 12)

Helping others in the classroom in this way has become such an integral goal relating to who Ruth is as an officer, she is willing to ignore the secondary contradiction found between the division of labor and the professionalism she expects from all students in the classroom to divide work evenly.

From Ruth's interviews, I observed that Ruth has identified this contradiction exists, but has not altered her actions to reshape this contradiction. Therefore, I cannot determine if any learning is taking place regarding this operation. This operation, though contradictory to the way she views professionalism, has greatly shaped Ruth's object-motive of becoming an officer.

Second Contradiction. Another reason Ruth feels the need to over prepare in the classroom stems from a second quaternary contradiction she observes between the same two systems regarding her professionalism expectation and the cultural rule regarding how confident women are easily labeled as difficult to work with in the military. When talking about the way she participates in class, Ruth states,

> And if you are more direct, then I think you can easily become labeled, um, hard to work with and a word that rhymes with witch. And so, uh, I do think, because it's an added layer, um, that we're always trying to think about the way we're presenting ourselves. And are we being professional and are we working more hours and harder than anyone else? (Ruth Interview #1, p. 8)

Ruth identifies a contradiction regarding the rule she perceives as “direct women can be labeled hard to work with” as she struggles to over prepare yet remain measured in the way she participates in class. She defines “direct” as one who is confident in their knowledge and role as an officer and views this as a positive trait in officers rather than a negative one. Yet her struggle is with the way this positive trait is perceived by men as she participates in class. As one who has read through the material thoroughly, “I've read it three times to make sure I'm ready for class” (Ruth Interview #2, p. 7), Ruth feels as if her preparation enables her to participate in class confidently and is a part of every officer’s professional responsibility in the classroom. However, because of the rule that women may be singled out negatively for their directness, or confidence, in class, Ruth believes she must carefully measure and temper her participation. She says,

> I notice this more lately, um, you know, you'll have people who interject and do that quite frequently. And it seems like if it's a man, they don't really think too much about it. But as a female, I try to participate but not overly participate. I don't know if this makes sense but I am careful not to try to be the rambling medical female, uh ... So, uh, (laughs) I'm very... there are a lot of times when I want to say something else but I don't because ... I don't want people thinking, “Now I've got the overbearing female type, great." (Ruth Interview #1, p 13)

Ruth admits that she feels like she must regulate her participation because she is both in the medical career field (and is a military support officer) and a woman. She wrestles with how much to participate, so as not to perpetuate the “overbearing female” stereotype. This measured participation has become a crystallized operation in Ruth’s mind that is contradictory to her belief in professionalism of officers regardless of gender

to prepare for and respect everyone's classroom input. Yet Ruth remains constituted by the need not to be stereotyped in the classroom and is, therefore, restrained in her verbal participation.

Ruth appears to resolve this contradiction by doing most of her participation with other class members behind the scenes and away from the classroom. As Ruth becomes aware of classroom responsibilities that are not being attended to, she contacts her classmates and offers to assist.

> we will have positions that currently, um, aren't very timely with their responsibilities, and so I will do stuff behind the scenes. And um, you know, they'll push it out, like, reading assignments, stuff like that. Um, I'll say, "Okay, you must be…so busy. Let me…do this for you. I'll send it to you, and then you can send it out to everyone." (Ruth Interview #2, p. 11)

Here, Ruth participates and performs other student's work, but does not want the credit to be given to herself as she relays to her cohorts, "I'll send it to you, and then you can send it out to everyone." So, Ruth maintains her academic participation and preparation, but spreads the credit to her classmates, effectively creating a façade of an equitable division of labor. This is a change in operations that allows Ruth to participate to the extent she feels comfortable yet avoids potential judgment from her cohorts of participating too much in the classroom.

Ruth also uses this background participation to build trust with her male cohorts. As discussed previously, there are some men officers (especially in the Army) who have never worked with women before. Ruth sees this as both an opportunity and a responsibility, "I do feel this…responsibility to do this in a way that portrays that we

[women] can...do this, handle all, say yes to these things, help people out" (Ruth Interview #3, p. 4). Her participation behind the scenes helps to build trust with male officers that may translate into a broader understanding of women in the military, "I want him to take forward in his interaction with a female officer is…I was as helpful as I could be you know, a teammate to him" (p. 4). Yet, even in Ruth's new actions she understands them to be constituted by gender as she does not believe men feel the same measured responsibility when they interact with other men.

Third Contradiction. Ruth's third contradiction within the military education activity is a quaternary contradiction while at ACSC regarding an unwritten rule stating officers should be stoic and not employ their emotions while leading. Using emotions is how Ruth leads as an officer and is manifest in two primary ways: caring for subordinates and speaking out. These actions contribute greatly to how Ruth identifies herself as an officer, yet she notices in several classroom discussions at ACSC that not all officers share these values. Specifically, during her elective class at ACSC "Psychology and Leadership" Ruth recalls getting emotional when a fellow male student says that officers do not have time to care for people in certain combat situations.

> that is such BS, no. Just because you're an officer doesn't mean you can't care about people…No, that's crap. You, you know, there are very few times that any of us are...you know, just placed onto a battlefield, given a bunch of people and told to go bomb someone or what, you know, whatever that case is. (Ruth Interview #1, p. 14)

Ruth questions the view from other officers in her class that being emotional is not a valid quality of being an officer, especially when time or military mission limitations

prohibit it. In Ruth's previous experience at COT, she learned that being an officer meant that "everyone was willing to help each other" (p. 4) and was emotionally invested in caring for others. In contrast, at ACSC she learns that some officers put limitations on their willingness to care for others and do not place caring and inspiring others as a priority of their leadership approach. This definition is validated by others and threatens to redefine a valuable aspect of her activity of learning what it means to become an officer.

Coupled with that narrative, Ruth also observes and wrestles with the contradiction of being too vulnerable and emotional when speaking out. Even though she values these traits as an officer and believes them to be essential, she admits she must carefully mediate her feelings and actions when interacting with other male officers. She says,

> I think it's always a battle between being vulnerable but not being emotional…we're always trying to think about the way we're presenting ourselves…Because the second my kid is sick and I need to go then, you know...Does someone think, "Oh wow, you know, only moms have this issue." And so I think all of that… those aren't things that we put on men typically. Um, if I have a man who calls me and says, "Hey, my kid's sick, my wife has to stay at work today, I don't judge that he's a father. (Ruth Interview #1, p. 8)

Ruth believes that tempering how one acts and feels (thereby limiting emotions) are rules that only women must navigate. She believes these actions to be gendered and levied upon her as the underrepresented group in the military system. This rule serves as an added layer to Ruth's actions and goals of becoming an officer and includes several

operations of not judging male officers as fathers when they must leave the class to take care of their families. It also includes the operation of tempering emotions in her participation with men for fear of being labeled as "difficult" to work with by men within the military. Also, for Ruth, caring for others and inspiring her subordinates is a part of her identity as an officer and being vulnerable is an integral part of that process. Yet, Ruth also sees this action as contradictive to how men view officers should be, so she battles with exposing too much of her emotion when speaking out, "I think it's always a battle between being vulnerable but not being emotional… I think all of that, and we, that- those aren't things that we put on men typically. (Ruth Interview #1, p. 8), and, "I try not saying anything that is offensive or too emotional or too feelings based…either when we're talking about vulnerability and feelings, I try to keep it to something that is pertinent." (p. 13). Ruth feels this contradiction in herself when she speaks and admits that men probably do not battle with the same contradiction. This is because she believes it is men who control this rule and ratify its efficacy.

Ruth's operation of being emotional as a part of her activity of becoming an officer is mediated by gender. Ruth feels that women are more likely to add the characteristics of emotion and vulnerability into the activity of being an officer, and she believes this leads her to mediating her emotional responses when speaking out. Ruth clearly struggles with this contradiction and admits what she wanted to say, but did not, to a male cohort in class during a confrontational incident,

> I do think that it comes back to [someone saying], 'Oh my gosh, she's an emotional, feeling based…person.' And so, I would lose…So, this is my defense mechanism. I try not to lose credibility with what I am going to say. And I realize

> that it's going to be judged, because of a few factors. And so, I'm careful, I guess…Or I try to be careful. (Ruth Interview #1, p. 14)

Ruth's defense mechanism of worrying about the value of her input toward her male peers by constantly mediating the emotions of her verbal contribution illustrates this action to be largely constituted by her belief that because of her gender she is more likely to be emotional and, therefore, disregarded.

Ruth still wrestles with this contradiction, but she admits to better understanding both the value and the circumstances where emotions should be muted and where they are required. She says,

> I feel like every type of emotion…if it's anger then, you know, it's, it's emotion and that is not an acceptable...You know, if it's, you're too bubbly, you're too happy then oh, you're the...You know, clearly, um, you're not bringing enough to the fight. Um, if you're... If you show emotion and tears, then you're being weak. (Ruth Interview #3, p. 6)

This response shows that Ruth understands how her environment controls her actions of using her emotions as they see emotions as weak. Yet at the same time, Ruth admits that over time, she has learned to value some circumstances where showing no emotion is useful. When I asked if she felt that she was losing some of herself by not showing emotions, she says,

> Sometimes…It needs to be tempered sometimes…something I value in a male leader…I ran the medical control center and an aircraft just crashed. Um, and had someone said that to me, I probably would have been like, "What?"…and my

> boss at the time was like, "Okay, all right, let's start on the checklist". And so the calm of let's just logically work through this, I value. (p. 7)

In this illustration, Ruth admits to seeing value in circumstances where officers responding with no emotion helped a teamwork through a crisis situation. So, Ruth is not ready to discard all ideas of remaining stoic as an officer. Yet, Ruth remains conflicted and does not believe this is the right response in every situation. Of connecting with her subordinates, she says, “But I also know that when it comes to connecting with people, there are times when I guard in a way that I could connect better or maybe more authentic” (p. 7). So, Ruth desires to balance situations that require emotions, learning from her environment, yet creating enough space to insert emotions into what it means for her to be an officer. Ruth says, “I work with myself on those things to not have too dramatic of a reaction” (p. 7). Therefore, Ruth’s struggle with how much and when emotions should be a part of being an officer is both shaped by Ruth and also influenced directly by her gendered environment.

Ruth’s activity of attending military education held several contradictions that led to resolution and learning. However, not all contradictions are resolved, and Ruth continues to be shaped by this activity and learn from its interaction. An illustration of this activity system is in figure 5.

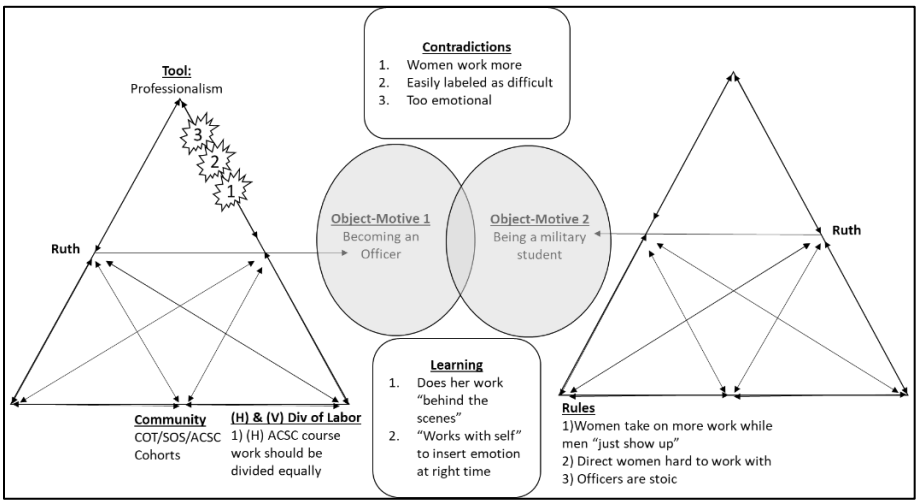

Figure 5

Interaction between Ruth's central and secondary activity: Military education

Even though Ruth's participation within military education has tremendously impacted her activity of becoming an officer, there are other experiences that have shaped Ruth's overall object-motive that need to be added to her activity system and evaluated. Specifically, Ruth recalled her experiences participating in work meetings and her experience during an investigation both served as illustrations of how gender shaped Ruth's central activity of becoming an officer. These will be discussed below.

Contradictions within Central Activity: Attending Work Meetings

Although Ruth has gotten used to being in the minority after over 20 years in the military, she still believes that military uniforms serve as a good way to transcend the biases of gender, "So, unless it's…unless they do something to make me think of them as a man, I very much think of us as a uniform a lot of times." (Ruth Interview #1, p. 13). The Air Force uniform, then, serves as a mediating tool with which Ruth views and interprets how to be identified as and become an officer. In Ruth's mind, she sees uniforms as what professional's wear, regardless of gender. Therefore, uniforms serve to

level the field regarding gender and help to create equality of value among all officers. Uniforms mediate and reinforce Ruth's goal-driven actions toward her motive of becoming an officer.

Yet when Ruth attends meetings with male officers, the uniforms do not do enough work to make Ruth feel like her input is of similar value to the input given by the males in uniform at the same meeting. She believes the uniform only works as an equaling tool only after, "I have established that I am competent enough to be there" (p. 9). Instead, Ruth goes against her mediative belief in the uniform and attempts to preemptively devalue her own input and intelligence when she first arrives at the meetings. Her goal is to publicly self-proclaim her low intellect before men have a chance to make that determination themselves. She says,

> And if I come off as a strong female, I don't want you to be offended by that, either, so let me come down. Let me come in and put myself down before you can do it in your mind. (Ruth Interview #2, p. 10)

Ruth, again, notices this contradiction of the implications of coming across as a "strong female" in the military setting, so her automatic operation is to put herself down before anyone else has an opportunity to do so. Ruth struggles mightily in performing this operation as it contradicts the work and preparation she has put into her efforts and the professionalism it symbolizes, "I want to set the bar low for everyone around me, just, um- but I force myself to never, ever discredit myself in that way, and that's taken me a really long time to learn" (p. 10). Ruth fully recognizes how she is constituted and viewed within the Air Force. She is both a woman and a medical administration support officer. Therefore, Ruth feels like her contribution and intellect are not as valuable as

men's input. She also fully recognizes the power of this discourse to define the value of her input and even embraces the logic behind it in her mind, as is made clear by her comments.

The contradiction Ruth experiences within this activity involves her belief that uniforms are tools that signify equity between men and women as military professionals. In the situation of attending meetings where men are present, her actions become self-devaluing and self-deprecating. I believe this to be a secondary contradiction between the uniform as a tool Ruth uses to mediate her activity of becoming an officer, and the rule that Ruth believes that her voice is less valued during work meetings. Ruth's action of devaluing herself is shaped more so by this rule, than her belief in the equitable characteristics of the uniform.

Ruth appears to be working toward resolving this contradiction when she notices this same operation in other women officers. As she recalls this event in our interview, Ruth is shocked by other women degrading themselves during work meetings and then realized she did the same thing. Ruth now incorporates this lesson when she speaks to young, women officers, "It is a very specific conversation that I have…" (p. 10). This is the reason work meetings has become such a shaping event of Ruth's journey of what it means to become an officer. Even though men and women wear the same uniform, there are some women who still do not feel like they belong to the military. It has taken new actions of over-preparation and the use of her voice for Ruth to say to younger officers and herself, "You should be here…you've earned it" (Ruth Interview #2, p. 10). This action within Ruth's central activity of becoming an officer is depicted in figure 6.

Next, we will observe how gender was involved in Ruth's experience during a traumatic investigation, and how it helped shape Ruth's activity of becoming an officer.

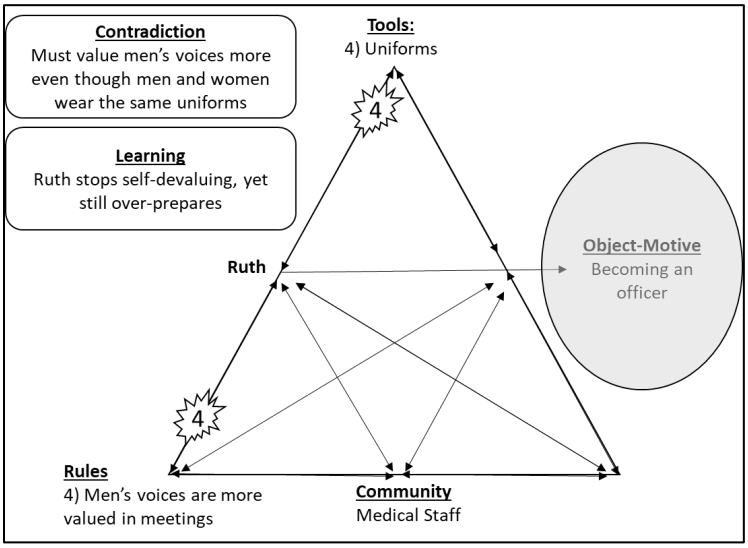

Figure 6
Interaction within Ruth's central activity and action: attending work meetings

Contradictions in Secondary Activity: Participating in Investigation

Using values coding, I learned that Ruth strongly values being vocal as a critical aspect of her identity as an officer, as well as reminding other women officers to be vocal too.

However, Ruth learned this only after being shaped by some painful and unsettling gendered experiences. Ruth recalls one of the most formative experiences that took place early in her career as a lieutenant.

Ruth confesses a reluctance to speak out when needed and believes teaching young officers how to respectfully express themselves to superiors when they see something is wrong is needed within military education. Because of this, Ruth is a vocal advocate for women to stay in the military to make a difference. Ruth calls herself a "good apple" (p. 16) and advocates staying in the military and remaining vocal within the

structure to change it from within. Agency, viewed from a post-structural perspective, does not come from someone standing outside the structure (Davies & Gannon, 2005, p. 313), but as someone working within, immersed, and disrupting it from the inside. When speaking to other women in the military, Ruth admits, "the good apples have to stay, because when all the good apples leave, then we are stuck with just the bad apples" (Interview #2, p. 16). By staying in the military and encouraging more "good apples" to stay with her, she is creating new narratives for those she mentors, "you have an ally that agrees with you that will speak up and say that's not okay" (p. 16).

Being a good apple in Ruth's estimation involves the difficult task of being a vocal officer. Ruth admits that sometimes the decision to speak out is a difficult one. It was a choice that Ruth almost did not make during a critical moment in her career. During our interviews, Ruth recalls a painful and challenging experience that radically shaped how she participates in becoming an officer and had the potential to alter the trajectory of her career.

As a younger officer, Ruth was faced with a male boss (general officer) who had made repeated inappropriate comments toward women on his staff. Ruth chose to file an official complaint regarding his behavior. This complaint led to an investigation, which put Ruth in a difficult situation as it was led by high-ranking, male officers who were internal to Ruth's organization (p. 6). At several times during the investigation, those leading it approached Ruth to tell her that her version of the story was not true and that the incidents she recalled "had not happened that way" (p. 6). Ruth's story was being socially regulated by the men who carried out the investigation and, in her opinion, was not being handled professionally.

From Ruth's activity triangle (see figure 6) we see that her activity is mediated and shaped through a division of labor consisting of higher-ranking, male officers who investigated the complaint. Ruth also told me about what she considered a conflict of interest as the investigator and the one investigated, "were peer group partners. They knew each other very well" (Ruth Interview #3, p. 12). The investigators immediately discounted Ruth's input and presented her an alternate version of the incident. That incident created a contradiction for Ruth between her story and theirs as her account was deemed untrue by the investigation team. The truth Ruth discovered within the hierarchal division of labor from the investigation team was that those in power define what truth is and those not in power are powerless to deviate from this truth, as the investigation team told her, "you can't get anyone to believe you" (Ruth Interview #1, p. 6). During this incident Ruth had two choices. Either she could leave the organization and accept the narratives given to her, "I'm retirement eligible soon, and I can just be done" (Ruth Interview #2, p. 16), or she could continue to trouble and disrupt the narrative she was offered as being the only truth.

During the investigation, Ruth's boss (the one being investigated) called her at one point to personally speak to her. Quickly, Ruth decided to record the conversation. He asked Ruth to drop the investigation, as she was told that, "[leadership] had lied before and they were going to lie again" (Ruth Interview #1, p. 6). With her recording in hand, Ruth decided to stay in the military and continue with the investigation by handing over her recording to the investigators.

> I immediately turned that over [the evidence]…and he's now removed. But in the process…when you have no one, it's happening but you can't get anyone to

> believe you and you have…a 20-year track record and no complaints, [no one ever] filed a complaint [against him]… it was…pretty rough (p. 6)

With the assistance of the phone recording, Ruth finally convinced the investigators of her story and the general officer was finally reprimanded and removed from his position.

This is a good example of agency, as Ruth chose to remain in the structure and was aware of the contradictive forces and narratives from the investigators in their attempts to signify and define what truth is during the investigation. Even though this truth has constituted her beliefs about how some officers behave, namely their actions are uncontested because "they have been around forever, they're amazing [and] they have incredible records" (p. 6), Ruth still sees a contradiction in this rule which allows her to open herself up to other possibilities regarding the accountability required of professional officers.

> I didn't realize how hard it would be to say, to stand up and say, "That's not right," until I was put in a situation where I had to. And it was the most difficult thing I have done in my entire life was when everyone around me was, um, turning a blind eye and I was the most senior person, um, to continuously try to say it wasn't right. (Ruth Interview #1, p. 7)

In this illustration, Ruth sees the contradiction of her activity of becoming an officer mediated by this investigation experience. This experience continues to shape how Ruth behaves and views herself, as informed by the culture of the military structure. Specifically, Ruth's activity is informed and constituted by a secondary contradiction between a set of rules (men protect other men during investigations) and the division of labor (investigators are men within organization who protect those in power) that regulate

this rule. Ruth identifies the restrictive nature of the investigation, the rules, and the division of labor stating, “that's the way the system is made” (p. 6), “I had lost all hope in any of the Air Force systems” (p. 6) and “it does go back to what I see as the good old boy’s system and taking care of your own” (Ruth Interview #3, p. 11). Because of this Ruth momentarily considers leaving the organization, rather than confronting the situation. This is a clear example of the investigation’s power to mediate Ruth’s activity of learning how to become an officer and the conflict she feels between the rules and division of labor and the fairness Ruth believes should imbue every officer regardless of gender. Ruth feels something is not right in her situation, yet the rules of the organization and its division of labor have inscribed their truth onto Ruth and offer her only their narrative and solution.

Yet, this investigation experience also provides Ruth an opportunity to go against this narrative and open herself up to the not-yet-known (Deleuze, 2004). In this moment, Ruth is a subject-in-relation (Davies & Gannon, 2005) recognizing herself within her socially regulated and historically specific condition and is capable of “disrupting the signifying processes through which she constitutes herself and is constituted” (p. 313). She does this by continuing with the investigation, utilizing new tools (her recording device), maintaining her story, and, ultimately, exposing the contradictions within the system.

> the programs that are supposed to help your airmen have miserably failed, and I'm a senior major. What happens when an airman actually detailed the programmatic failures and sent that to the staff? (Ruth Interview #2, p. 11)

Ruth not only considers how she is able (or unable) to navigate through the system of reporting workplace harassment, but she also empathizes with women of much lesser rank trying to do the same. Because of this, Ruth is emboldened to take a new path within the system.

Were the contradictions within this activity resolved, and did they lead to learning for Ruth? During her interview, Ruth recalled getting another phone call from a different general officer who thanked Ruth for coming forward and wanted to Ruth to help him address toxic leaders within the community. Today, Ruth has a new purpose and is a part of team looking at the effects of toxic leadership within the military. She says,

> And so, we started, the three of us, my boss at the time, um, I had been moved by that point, started working with General [name omitted] team to try to get…some better help for airmen when you have toxic leaders. So, all of that to say…I've…had a new cause and a purpose to stay. (Ruth Interview #2, p. 6)

Ruth also exemplifies learning through the use of new tools during the investigation. When the investigation, with its restrictive rules and division of labor, attempted to constitute Ruth's activity of becoming an officer by offering her only one solution, Ruth disrupted this action by introducing a new tool (voice recorder) that helped her provide an alternate narrative to the rules and division of labor controlling her activity. This process revealed new action possibilities for Ruth galvanizing who she was as an officer and her purpose to remain within the organization.

Yet, while these new actions and outcomes have borne growth in Ruth's career, they are not without cost and not without duplicitous outcomes. Even though she is glad

to have had the recording device, she still questions her professionalism and integrity in the use of it. She admits,

> I still feel guilt over that recording one, because, you know, you established relationships and loyalty with people, and it felt like a breach of even my own integrity to need to do the recording… And I needed someone to protect me and no one would. And so I had to find a way to do that for myself (Ruth Interview #3, p. 13)

Even though Ruth is glad she used the recording device, that incident forces her to question her loyalty to the military structure and even her own integrity as a professional officer. I ask if, looking back, she is still glad she used the recording device. She responded,

> I'm happy that I had it, but I think more than anything it frustrates me that I had to use it… you have to go to something extreme to be believed. And that disheartens me more than anything…I know now to record something, but it's just hurting, 'cause I feel like I could absolutely have to do it again and I never want to have to do it again (p. 14)

In this contradiction, Ruth learns to use new tools to shape her environment, but still struggles with the necessity of it because she is a woman. Ruth's interaction with this activity is depicted in figure 7.

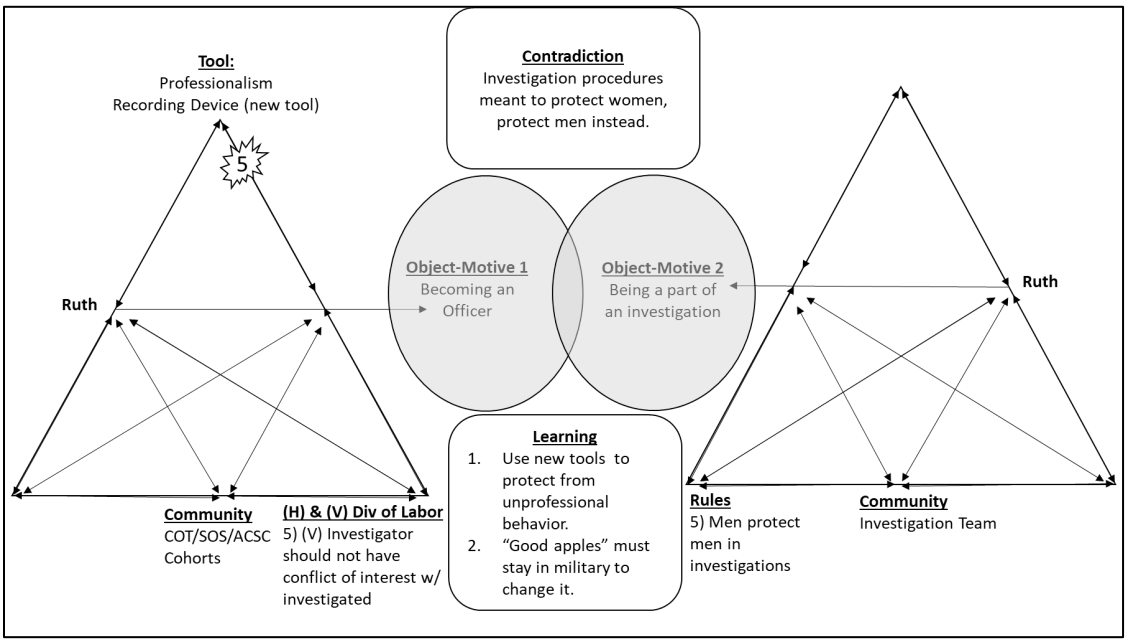

Figure 7
Interaction between Ruth's central and secondary activity: investigation

Ruth's Becoming an Officer Activity System

Analyzing Ruth's activity of becoming an officer reveals that gender greatly shaped her activity through several goal-oriented actions and routine operations that occurred within her activity. Some of these served to shape how Ruth participates within this activity and some have been disrupted and reshaped by Ruth. There are several contradictions within this activity with which Ruth has had to contend. She has resolved some, yet others she has only identified its constitutive nature to shape how she acts and believes. This dichotomy is possible within the same activity, because, as Roth and Lee (2007) explain, there is the present state of the activity and there is also the envisioned and projected activity. Both exist together within the activity as the subject accepts and disrupts its elements. This is made possible due to the evolving nature of Ruth's subjectivity within the organization and is clearly illustrated by describing Ruth's journey

of becoming an officer through CHAT. Ruth's becoming an officer activity analysis can be seen in figure 8. Within this activity are the narratives that Ruth believes have most shaped her activity of understanding what it means to be an officer and her journey to become an officer within the organization. These narratives include her military educational experiences, her experiences participating in meetings, and her involvement in the investigation.

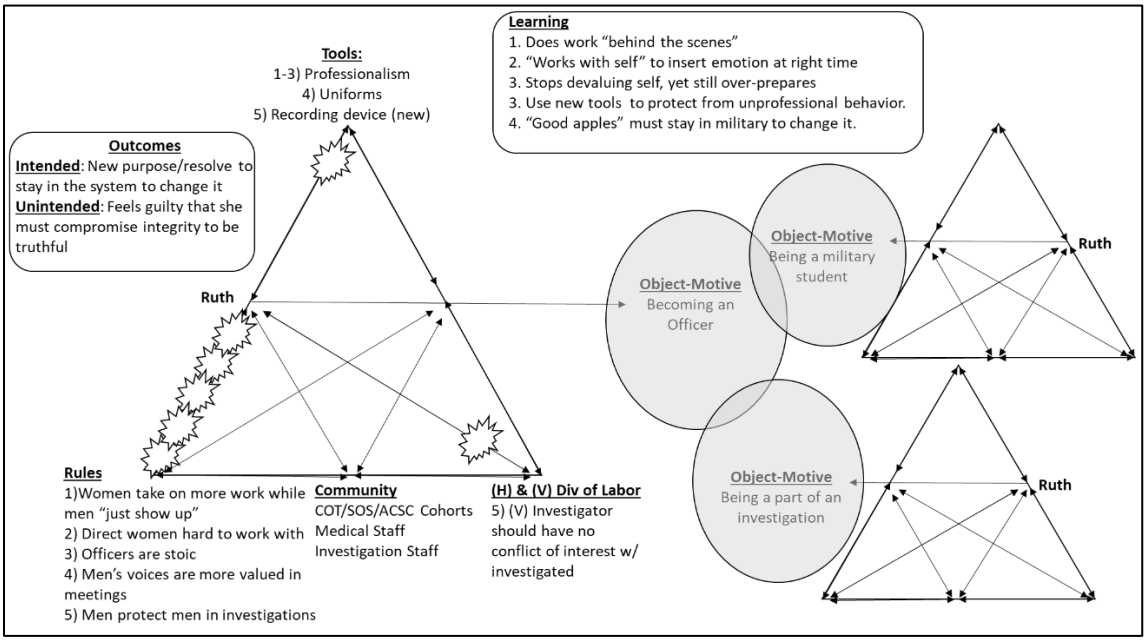

Figure 8
Ruth's becoming an officer activity system

The horizontal and vertical divisions of labor are depicted with an (H) and (V), respectively. Did the analysis reveal changes, to include learning, in Ruth's activity, and what were the intended and unintended outcomes?

Learning in Ruth's Activity System

As stated previously, learning might be one of several outcomes of an activity, but it is not the only outcome. Learning can occur through the resolution of contradictions. Therefore, in order to empirically examine learning within CHAT, one must first analyze

everyday activities, then search for contradictions within these practices and ask, “What new and transformative activities have these contradictions generated?” It is within these transformative activities, borne from these observed contradictions, that we can determine if learning has occurred.

Some of the contradictions found within Ruth’s experiences in the military classroom (COT, SOS, and ACSC) remain unresolved for Ruth. She continues to feel subjected to the rules and division of labor that are established by actions in the classroom. These serve to shape how Ruth identifies herself as an officer, as well as shape Ruth’s crystallized operations of working harder than the men in her cohort and moderating her contributions within the classroom. In this way the social indeed inscribes itself on the individual (Davies & Gannon, 2005, p. 312) and shapes the way she views herself within the organization and how she learns how to identify with being an officer.

Yet, in other contradictions, Ruth strategically finds new ways to act, as she learns to navigate being labeled by men by working behind the scenes to get work done and to build trust and respect of other men within her cohort. She also learns to “work with herself” to discern when circumstances in leadership require a more emotional versus a more stoic approach. Ruth has also learned the harm in devaluing herself during meetings with men, as it diminishes Ruth’s earned accomplishments and credentials, and presents a poor example to younger women officers coming after her. Lastly, we see Ruth learning to use new tools and her voice to remain within the organization and stand against an imperfect system that she still dearly loves.

Ruth’s intended outcomes of this activity are her willingness and tenacity to remain within the system as a “good apple” and work hard to make sure women’s input is

valued. I see other intended outcomes being the resolution of investigation and a new purpose and resolve by Ruth to improve military processes. From my time spent with Ruth, I see unintended outcomes of her activity of becoming an officer as the guilt of compromising her integrity she still feels after moving forward with the investigation. She will most likely carry this with her throughout her time in the military, yet she still feels a drive to stay. She says,

> I can be mad at it and…be done with it, or I can try to mentor others along the way and, um, reach out to other people and be part of the solution versus part of the problem…But, I do realize that I can touch more, um, do more by being in it and trying to mentor and guide…I definitely don't feel alone…in it anymore" (Ruth Interview #2, p. 14).

Jem's Case: "Willing to take a little heat"

Jem (pseudonym she gave to herself as one of her favorite childhood cartoon characters) was raised in a military home and comes from a "long line of military service" (Jem Interview #1, p. 2). This greatly influenced Jem's decision to join the military. She also found herself struggling to find a sense of direction after high school, so the military option, guided by the support of her parents, seemed to be a good solution for Jem. Not that Jem saw the military as the only option for her, but the positive effects of a family military legacy presented the military as a hopeful and accessible solution.

By choosing to pursue becoming an officer in the military it is unclear whether Jem's military upbringing and environment has constituted its way of being onto Jem. At this point, the military is a known solution to Jem and a place where approval from her family lies, "my family as far as parents and whatnot were all very supportive" (p. 2).

Even though it was Jem's decision to pursue the military, her familiarity with it and support in pursuing it illustrate a certain social shaping that has occurred by the military influence that has surrounded her.

Jem's initial experiences with military education at Officer Training School (OTS) is where I began to examine how gender shaped her beliefs about what it meant to her to become an officer. Specifically, I observed the actions that helped shape Jem's initial perceptions of gender within the military and her subjectivity to it, "focus[ing] in particular on the specific processes whereby individuals are made into gendered subjects" (Davies & Gannon, 2005, p. 312). This helped highlight how Jem's beliefs about gender shaped how she identifies as an officer and, therefore, participates within (and is constituted by) the military environment.

Not only is Jem constituted by the military, but she also participates in the defining and reshaping processes of this constitution. Within the military structure and experience, Jem undergoes a "dual aspect of subjectification" (Davies, 2000, p. 12) where she is both woven into the social and cultural fabric, yet also able to signify herself as unique and set apart from that fabric. Investigations into these contradictive aspects of her participation was once again critical in the discovery of new operations within Jem's activity of identifying as an officer as it also highlighted areas of potential learning.

Therefore, it is in these CHAT-highlighted contradictive spaces that I observed Jem both being interpreted by and interpreting her social military environment. She is both subject to their gendered environment yet also in the process of reconfiguring and reinterpreting her subjectivity. By teasing out the contradictions within Jem's activity of identifying as an officer, and her process of resolving those contradictions, helped me

determine how she "disrupt[s] the signifying processes through which she constitutes herself and is constituted" (Davies & Gannon, 2005, p. 313), which led to learning new actions and possibilities within her activity of becoming an officer.

Jem's Introduction

Jem has experienced observing military life through her parents, who both served as enlisted military police. Since Jem was the first officer in the family, they instilled in her the importance of listening to other's perspectives and not being too arrogant. This advice led to Jem placing being authentic to herself and being on a team as high-value items in her central activity of becoming an officer. In our first interview Jem defined what being authentic meant to her as she discussed women in the military who feel like they must put on a persona to participate and be accepted. She says, "It would be really exhausting to pretend so much, but I definitely still see it in some [women]" (Jem Interview #1, p. 19). Jem views building a persona just to participate as "exhausting" and, instead, tries to be herself as she learns to become an officer. However, through our interviews I determined that Jem's activity of becoming an officer had also been greatly shaped by her experiences within military education, her participation with men while in her flying squadron and her experience going through Air Force Fitness Tests. These are not all the experiences that shape Jem, but they were the most formative in her mind when we spoke together. Using those three events, I employed CHAT to describe Jem's overall activity of becoming an officer as shaped by these secondary events and labeled them as either secondary activities or actions, depending on whether I observed separate object-motives. This included observing contradictions within her operations, resolution

to those contradictions, as well as observing new actions or operations that may have constituted learning.

When I observed the data, the overarching activity for Jem joining the military was her passion to become an officer and lead others. Being authentic and comfortable with her true self were values that Jem embodied in her activity of becoming an officer. Along that journey to understand what that means and to learn how to participate as an officer were other, secondary activities that were still formative to Jem and greatly shaped that central activity of becoming an officer. These were attending military education, participating in her flying squadron, and participating in the Air Force fitness test. These activities all produced operations that created quaternary contradictions within Jem's central activity system. In some cases, these contradictions were resolved to produce learning within the activity system. A summary of this case is included in table 3.

In the proceeding paragraphs I will first analyze Jem's activity system of becoming an officer, specifically focusing on her three secondary activities. I will then describe the contradictions within these activity systems. Lastly, I will describe if and how these contradictions were resolved to see if learning and/or expansive learning (Engeström, 2014) took place and if other intentional or unintentional outcomes arose.

Table 3

Jem's Summary of Secondary Activities that Interact with Central Activity of Becoming an Officer

Secondary Activity: Attending Military Education	
Action	Jem initially feels like she must walk away to avoid confrontation in order to fit in with the culture.
Contradiction	***Successful and assertive women are verbally attacked. Success on tests result in suspicion by men***
New Actions	Jem develops new tool of voice to help others recognize inequities.
Learning	Jem feels more "comfortable in [her] skin" to speak up and push boundaries for things she believes in.
Action	Jem moderates what she says in the classroom to not be seen by men as incompetent.
Contradiction	***Women's participation more likely to be remembered and judged by men.***
Resolution	Jem is both resolving yet still being shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Jem over-prepares both academically and professionally when she provides class input.
Learning	Jem believes what she says has implications to stereotype all women in the military.
Secondary Activity: Participating in Flying Squadron	
Actions	Jem incorporates emotions and uses humor in the way she leads her flight crew. This action is in line with her value of teamwork and camaraderie as part of what it means to be an officer.
Contradiction	***Aviators must remain stoic.***
Resolution	Jem is both resolving yet still being shaped by this contradiction.

Table 3 (Continued)

New Actions	Jem rejects this contradiction and is vocal about it in the flying squadron. Yet, Ruth also worries about how her male flight crew will accept her true self (humorous and vocal).
Learning	Jem learns to be more comfortable with herself, but still knows that fear of being authentically emotional is still not completely accepted behavior for aviators within the flying squadron.
Actions	Jem initially avoids confronting this issue when she first joins military.
Contradiction	***Men believe women succeed only because of promise of sexual activity.***
Resolution	Jem is still being shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Jem uses voice and sarcastic humor to defend and validate herself when a male aviator accuses her of succeeding because she promised sexual activity to leadership.
Learning	Jem learns that by using her voice and humor, men respond by avoiding the issue and walking away.
Actions	Jem over-prepares her family home schedule to make sure it does not interfere with her work. She is visibly upset by the double-standard when men can prioritize family over work.
Contradiction	***Only men are valorized for placing family over work***
Resolution	Jem continues to be shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	n/a
Learning	Jem feels like she must take care of her family life on her own time and not bring family scheduling issues to work, while men are seen as "good dad" for caring for their families. Jem learns through this contradiction that although men and women are given the same opportunities, women are still looked at as being in the primary caregiver role.
Actions	Jem followed this rule and thought it was true as a younger officer, pretending she was someone she is not.

Table 3 (Continued)

Contradiction	***Women must develop male persona to be accepted.***
Resolution	Jem shapes this contradiction.
New Actions	Jem now feels exhausted by putting on a male persona. She also feels frustrated and sad when she sees other women feeling like they are forced to fit in by putting on a male persona.
Learning	Jem sees this rule as harmful if applied over long periods of time, as it may lead to a loss of identity and authenticity. Jem learns to not allow external entities to have "ownership" over who she is as a person.
Secondary Activity: Participating in Air Force Fitness Test	
Actions	Jem admits to not being a strong runner, so she concentrates on other aspects of her fitness test, such as eating well and staying physically fit through other exercise regimes.
Contradiction	***Perfection is the only goal.***
Resolution	Jem is both being shaping by this contradiction and is also reshaping its constitutive effects.
New Actions	Jem uses every part of the "Excellent" scale to measure herself during the fitness test. Since at score of 90% is still excellent, she focuses on that score, not perfection, as her goal.
Learning	Jem learns to live and do all things within an "excellent" scale and not always pressure herself to be perfect all the time.

Jem's Activity System – Becoming an Officer

Jem's journey of becoming a military officer were greatly shaped by being brought up in a military home. Yet, the activities of attending military education, participating in a flying squadron, and participating in the Air Force fitness test were just as formative in shaping her beliefs about what it means to become an officer. Not only were they formative, they were also, at times, contradictive as I will detail below.

Contradictions in Secondary Activity: Attending Military Education

I observed two main contradictions to Jem's activity of becoming an officer located in the actions of her military educational experiences: one regarding the success of women during written exams while at Officer Training School (OTS) and the other regarding how women's participation is remembered by men.

The first is a quaternary contradiction between a tool in Jem's central activity of becoming an officer and a rule within the secondary activity of attending military education. Jem stated while at Officer Training School (OTS) she observed that assertive and successful women were targeted and attacked when they showed success on the academic tests used to measure officer performance and potential. Here, the norm within the secondary activity of military education contradicts the tool of the written exams used by Jem to determine how successful of an officer she will be.

Jem remembered being one of only two women within her flight of twelve and seeing only four women within her larger squadron of 40 new officers. Regarding gender, she recalled officers within her squadron who just, "saw people" (p. 3) and did not judge based on gender. However, she also remembered some officers who created a very competitive atmosphere through an "us versus them mentality" (p. 3) that targeted women who were "more assertive…[and] had higher performance standards" (p. 3). These women, Jem recalled, received greater negative attention from men by way of threatening verbal attacks and physically intimidating behavior (p. 4). These men used the loudness of their voice to intimidate one particular woman. As Jem recalled,

> so they would get very loud with her. Um, like, unnecessarily, not very conversational. If, like, with correction or whatnot, they would correct somebody

> next to her, and would have a stern but room [level] voice, and then when they would get to her it was the stern, very loud, almost yelling voice. Um, they would continually ask her things along the lines of, um, "So you think you're better," or something like that. (p. 4)

What made this experience stand out to Jem was that she and her colleague was getting negative attention for getting perfect scores on their written examinations. The attention was not disciplinary in nature to produce better performance. Rather, Jem believed it to be an intimidation tactic that was solely focused on the women of her training squadron

Jem recalled that her initial action in response to this norm was to avoid the individuals and if she had to interact with them ensure it was, “very public, um, and very short” (p. 4). Although Jem did not understand or agree with this rule, her action of avoidance was constituted by gender as she was controlled by, “fear of giving the opportunity to create a rumor” (p. 5), regardless of how unequitable she thought it was.

As she continued in her career, Jem developed a new action, the use of her voice, to disrupt these norms and see herself as a “subject-in-relation” (Davies & Gannon, 2005, p. 312) who, in a Deleuzian manner, is open to “who we might become” (Semetsky, 2011, p. 139). At the same time Jem experiences *being* an officer, it serves as a life classroom for her to learn how to *become* an officer. As Semetsky reminds us, “Experience is rendered meaningful not by grounding empirical particulars in abstract universals but by experimentation on our very being for the purpose of becoming” (p. 141). Jem is and is becoming at the same time, and so new tools to mediate her activity exist, as well as contradictions to that activity. In her activity of becoming an officer she incorporates new tools (voice) as experiments to modify that activity and redefine it for

herself. At ACSC she does not feel uncomfortable being a stand-out student academically. Conversely, during my classroom observation I saw Jem comfortable speaking up and directing classroom discussions.

It has been roughly ten years since Jem's experiences at OTS and she is once again in the military academic setting at ACSC. When asked if she still performs avoidance operations when it comes to identifying threatening men, she says she does not. Jem admits that having a supportive and encouraging cohort at ACSC has helped her get past avoidance actions and use her voice more (Jem Interview #3, p. 6). She also admits that the avoidance action still exists, as she says, "I may still revert to some avoidance [but]…I'm at a point in my career that I'm willing to push boundaries for things I believe in…I'm willing to take a little heat" (p. 6). The use of Jem's voice is a new action and tool to mediate her overall motive in being an officer and she is learning how to effectively use it within the ACSC classroom. She now speaks of a confidence she has as an officer in using her voice to disrupt questionable narratives and come to the aid of those in need (p. 6). This stems from her learned experiences, her strong relationships, and a developed habit of over-preparation for her course work.

Yet, for Jem the new action of voice also created a second contradiction within this secondary activity. It is borne from another norm that Jem discovered while attending military education stating that women's participation is more likely to be remembered and judged by men. Jem is now keenly aware of being remembered and judged for her words because she stands out as a woman, and feels the pressure associated with it. As she explains,

> in my past I have experienced some things where, when you are the minority in a group you typically stand out. People remember you more, right?... which is not always a good thing, because you could have an average performance, but because you're in the minority your…performance…has a higher likelihood of being remembered than, say, the guy next to you having an average performance. (Jem Interview #1, p. 13)

Here, Jem wants to speak out and believes she should be true to herself because her central activity values being authentic is a trait of being a good officer. Yet the anxiety of her words being remembered more because she is a woman weigh heavily on her will to act and forces her to consider what she says and how she says it. Jem is caught between using her voice as a way she participates in becoming an officer yet moderating her voice because she finds in military education that what she says will be remembered and possibly used as a measuring stick regarding how she is perceived as an officer. In contrast, Jem believes men can be average in their performance and voice and no one will notice. This moderation of Jem's voice is constituted by gender as Jem believes women are held to a higher performance standard and expectation than men.

As a result, Jem admitted that being over-prepared academically and professionally was a learned response and action to this contradiction. As Jem stated, "I need to make sure that, to the best that I can, that if my performance is what's remembered that it is not a failure, if I can help it" (p. 13). Therefore, she over-prepared to achieve this. Jem appeared to alter her action in response to this norm by adding yet another mediating tool, over-preparing, to her activity system. Through this additional action, I do believe Jem resolves this contradiction. However, Jem's activity continues to

be constituted by gender as she feels she must counterbalance the rule regarding minorities being remembered for what they say and do. This rule will continue to disrupt Jem's actions as she moves from the military academic environment into the operational setting of her flying squadron. A CHAT diagram of the interaction between Jem's central activity and her secondary military education activity is in figure 9.

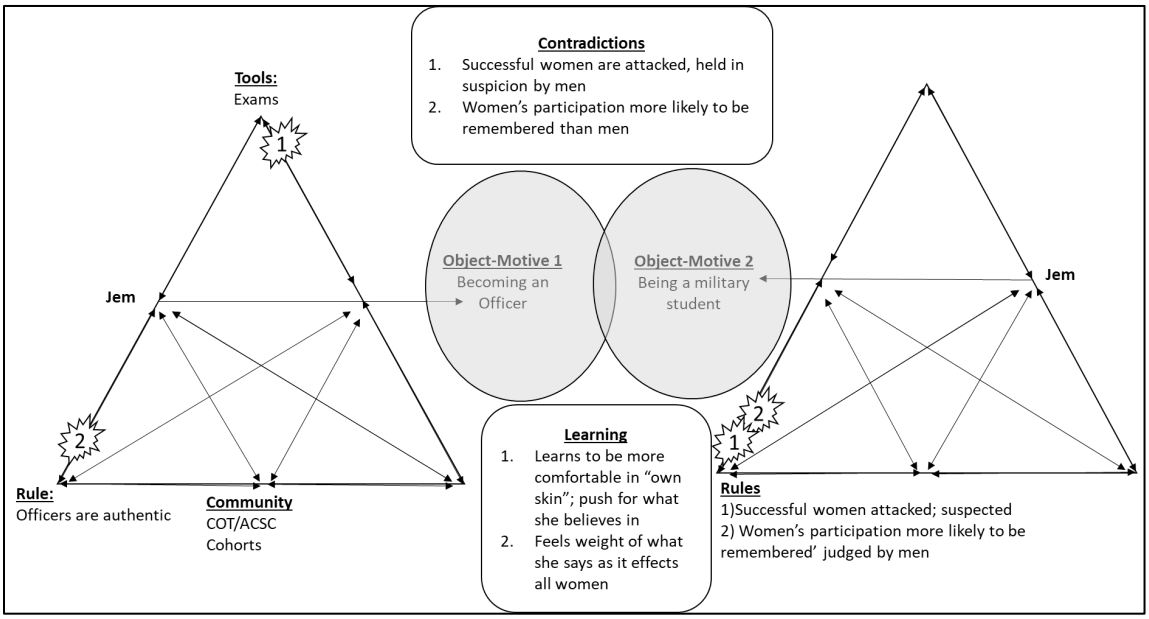

Figure 9

Jem's Interaction between Central Activity and Secondary Activity of Military Education

Secondary Activity: Participating in Flying Squadron

Participation in an Air Force flying squadron allowed Jem to experience several actions that helped shape her central activity of becoming an officer. Women are a minority within most flying squadrons as Jem stated, women make up less than ten percent of its members. During my interviews with Jem, she discussed contradictions around four main experiences that were formative to building her overall activity of becoming an officer. They were: 1) disrupting the unwritten rule that pilots are not emotional around others, 2) being accused by men of providing sexual favors to get

recognition, 3) observing the inequality between men and women in valorizing work/life balance, and 4) the unwritten rule or norm that a masculine-type persona, or "work-person" must be utilized at work to be accepted. The four main contradictions in Jem's central activity of becoming an officer in relation to her secondary activity of participating in her flying squadron were: aviators are stoic, women succeed only because of the promise of sexual favors, only men are valorized for placing family over work, and women must develop a male persona to be accepted. The contradictions are elaborated below.

Contradictions in Secondary Activity: Participating in Flying Squadron

The first is a quaternary contradiction between Jem' central activity of becoming an officer and the norm within the secondary activity of being in a flying squadron that states women aviators are not supposed to be emotional. Jem disrupts this norm as being emotional is a part of who she is and how she participates as an officer. She states,

> I do think that there, um, maybe is a perception to be, uh, I don't know if stern is the right word, but, like, I don't know. Stoic. Something along those lines, uh, as a woman in aviation in the Air Force (Jem Interview #1, p. 7)

Since Jem is a minority member of the flying squadron, there was an overwhelming possibility for her to be scheduled to fly with an all-male aircrew. Jem recalls the tension on the aircrew's faces as they had "never flown with a woman before". At this point, Jem feels the contradiction between the stoicism expected of her by the squadron norms and the all-male crew's presumptions regarding how she would behave.

Jem disrupts this contradiction and inserts a couple of new tools, voice and humor, to mediate her activity as an officer aviator and change the expectations the

aircrew had of her actions. Jem recalls that the men did not know how to react to Jem's presence, and Jem was uncertain how to react to them as well. The rule of being stoic taught her to remain professional and not show any emotion regarding the situation. However, Jem went against that inclination and sought to bring the aircrew at ease with her humor,

> I was like, "Okay, well, and you know what? It'll be like flying with anybody else." And you could tell…there was a certain level of awe in their recognition of the situation, and wanting to poke fun at how bizarre that sounded, and, but not wanting to offend me…so we kind of joked, like, you know, "Maybe I'll try not to cry today, or maybe I will, you know? Women things, I don't know." (p. 7)

Jem admits an uneasiness in her decision to employ new tools as she says, "Is my joke going to land or is it going to be dead in the water?" (p. 7). Here, Jem is both being shaped and reshaping her environment. She is both constituted by her environment, but open to new possibilities of how she, as an officer, leads her aircrew. Jem's voice and humor were successful in discovering not only new possibilities for her, but also for her all-male aircrew to see that aviators do not always need to be stoic. After recalling this story in our interview, Jem muses on the formative power that incident had on the way she would carry herself as an officer in the future. She says, "I've had a few personal and professional experiences that I feel I've really learned from, both positive and negative experiences…I think I am more comfortable in my skin, now, at this point" (p. 8). As Jem not only observes this contradiction throughout her career but is also comfortable enough to implement a "resignifying process" (Butler & Scott, 2013, p. 13) by learning

and using new tools to mediate her behavior toward her overall motive and activity of being an officer.

The second contradiction observed is the contradiction between a belief among some male officers that women only succeed because of their sex and not based solely on their performance. Again, this goes against Jem believing that performance alone is the key to succeeding in the military. This contradiction was identified early in Jem's career in OTS when men were threatened by the success of the women in their OTS class. At that time her operation was to avoid confrontation whenever possible, "if I had to interact with them, then I made sure it was very public, um, and very short" (Jem Interview #1, p. 4). However, during her time in the male-dominated flying squadron, this rule was verbalized plainly by her male cohorts when they stated, "It's probably just 'cause one of the commanders wants to f--k you" (p. 9) after hearing of a successful opportunity given to Jem. Jem is confronted with one who believes that Jem's success in the military is not due to her job performance, but due to a promise of sexual favors with her leadership.

In this moment, Jen recalls using a different operation than avoidance and walking away. Jem actually walks into this confrontation and addresses it boldly and frankly, "And I was like, Oh, yeah. I know, it clearly couldn't possibly be because, like, I am okay at public speaking or because I know anything about my job…" (p. 9). When asked what his response was to her walking into this confrontation, Jem says the man just, "walked away" (p. 9). By Jem using the new tools of voice and walking toward the contradiction and confrontation, the man became the one avoiding and walking away, instead of Jem. Jem told me she changed from avoiding to confronting the officer because, as she says, "I'm willing to take a little heat" (Jem Interview #3, p. 25). Jem has

been an officer for a while and is willing now to confront those who making jokes and devalue her success.

The third contradiction observed in Jem's activity of becoming an officer was between the squadron's values and the accepted/expected division of labor: men were being valorized for prioritizing family over work while women were expected to be the family caregivers, not the men. Jem used the illustration of the male officer assigned to lead a group project who left during the presentation because an emergency had come up at home. The male leaders excused the male officer and applauded him for stopping his work to care for his family stating, "he's trying to be a good dad" (Jem Interview #2, p. 33). Jem sees a double standard in the roles and expectations of the men and women in the squadron: the squadron sees the roles of men as workers and women as family caretakers. In the eyes of those praising the male officer, the male officer is going above and beyond his normal responsibilities. However, as Jem points out, if any woman were to do the same, leadership would not be supportive, as she affirms, "If I was the lead on a project like that, I would've gotten a serious disappointment talk from them…if that had been a woman, somebody would've made a comment about her childcare" (p. 34).

Although Jem identified this contradiction, it does not appear that she has resolved it, but admits it is something that the military continues to work though, "this is not a military thing, but I think it is still a, a societal thing that we are, you know, working through" (p. 36). She gives an example of how deep this contradiction goes as she tells me of a Woman's Initiative Team (WIT) within the military that she participated in to discuss childcare changes. She says, "there was a telecom that we were on that seriously had like 80 people, and there were like three dudes on the call" (Jem Interview

#3, p. 14). Jem uses this example to explain the military mindset about roles for men and women. She participates in a teleconference about childcare in the military, yet only three men are on the call. The assumption here is that childcare issues are women issues. She adds, “that speaks to our kind of DOD culture as a whole, as to how that looks” (p. 14). Jem learns through this contradiction that although men and women are given the same opportunities in the flying squadron, women are still looked at as being in the primary caregiver role. This will continue to create a contradictive experience for women in the military. Yet Jem does not see this just as a military problem, but as the bigger cultural-historical context of the patriarchal society we live in. Just as women are constituted by the military, the military is, in many ways, constituted by its society and becomes a reflection of it.

The last contradiction observed is the unwritten but understood requirement that in order for women to be accepted in the flying squadron, they must develop a male persona. While Jem does not follow this rule, she sees many of her women peers subjugate themselves to this unwritten requirement in order to be accepted. She states,

> I have definitely seen more women come in there, like, ‘well, I have to act as if,’ you know, ‘I like beer and I don't mind watching football’, and what other male stereotypes can I throw out to seem, uh, make me more accessible to the group? (Jem Interview #1, p. 21)

Jem is not describing women who actually enjoy “beer and football,” but who must act as if they enjoy the stereotypical male activities in order to gain social acceptance.

Jem is clearly describing the way the culture inscribes itself on the individual and attempts to shape the individual into a particular kind of being (Davies & Gannon, 2005).

Jem sees her peers doing this and feels "frustrated [and] sad" (Jem Interview #1, p. 22) because, in her mind, these women are being inscribed into a culture and not exercising their agency as women who to choose to say, "you guys are all super dudes, like, and that's fine, but I really enjoy watching *The Kardashians* and shopping for makeup" (p. 21).

Jem admits to being a participant in this culture when she was a younger officer (p. 22). However, she sees this participation as playing a role, which she admits is, "really exhausting to pretend so much" (p. 22). Not only that, Jem believes that in pretending for long periods of time, one can lose sight of one's true self and become "isolated" or even self-betrayed, as she states, "when you're never yourself, can you really rely on a friend? Do you have a friend at that point, or do you just have acquaintances that know a persona?" (p. 23). To Jem, this is the real cost of losing your identity in a culture by letting the culture inscribe itself on the individual. The culture consumes so much that there is no individual left to be or become. This clearly goes against what it means for her to become an officer, her authenticity. Jem reveals more about her struggle and feeling like she was losing her identity. She says,

> I started realizing um, that I was giving a lot of ownership about me, my beliefs about myself…to these external entities. I was giving them a lot of power…so there was a part of me that was just like, I need to, I need to reclaim some of this power for like my…mental health (p. 18)

Here, Jem understands the weight that the organizational culture can have on an individual. Jem felt like she was losing a part of herself, so she began to resist its influence. Jem mentions part of her shaping this activity came through journaling her

thoughts and feelings (p. 18) as a way to dissect her internal versus external causes. As she journaled, she would ask, “So this is how I'm feeling right now, and these are some variables…What of these variables have I…ingested...and what have others” (p. 18). This exercise and action allowed Jem to see the external influences from the organizational culture and learn not to “give ownership” (p. 18) to it in her life. Jem also fully realizes this contradiction is not just confined to the military. She understands that many women live with personas they create and faces they wear for their particular setting. However, the important aspect for Jem remains, “the degree to which those faces pull away from…your true character” (p. 21). Figure 10 illustrates the interaction between Jem’s central activity of becoming an officer and her secondary activity of participating in a flying squadron. Next, I will discuss Jem’s participation in the Air Force fitness test.

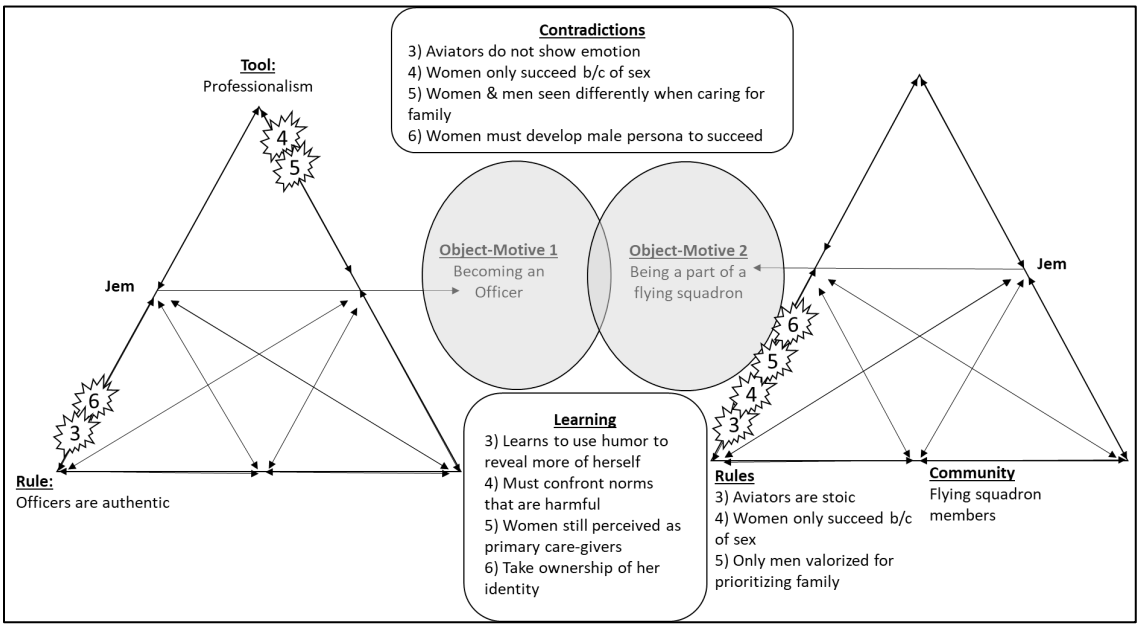

Figure 10

Interaction between Jem’s central and secondary activity (flying squadron)

Contradiction in Secondary Activity: Air Force Fitness Test

Jem's experiences with the Air Force fitness test have also been formative in her overall activity of becoming an officer. The Air Force fitness test consists of four categories: the waist measurement, one-minute sit-ups, one-minute push-ups and a 1.5-mile timed run. Points are awarded per category and added together, with 100 points being the highest score one may achieve. The Air Force rewards high scores by allowing members who score 90 or above to have an "excellent" score and only required to take the test once a year. Those who score between 89.9 and 75.0 pass the fitness test but must retake it after six months. These scores are called "satisfactory" by the Air Force.

Jem admits that she is not a good runner, as she states, "I am not a runner, running is very hard for me" (Jem Interview #2, p. 24). Therefore, Jem's strategy that she employs is to work towards an "excellent" score (90 points or greater) and focus on the fitness categories in which you are strongest. Jem says, "find your easy workarounds and work to your strengths and still get to the finish line. There's 100 ways to skin a cat" (p. 25). Jem concentrates on eating right and using other physical fitness strategies to maintain her fitness. Not only does she use this strategy on herself she also advises and mentors several other military members to develop a similar mentality. However, there are several male officers who disagree with this tactic and question her integrity to tell subordinates not to aim for 100 percent always and "reach for the finish line" (p. 25). To them, Jem adds, the only excellent goal is 100 points and to reach for anything less is a question of a lack of integrity (p. 25). Yet for Jem, she encourages herself and those who work for her to exercise, work and even to "liv[e] in that range as well" (p. 27). Jem

believes this mentality is more inclusive and "encourages a certain level of diversity…in thoughts and capability and vision" (pp. 26-27). She adds,

> that's just not real life…. If you only expect like this black and white textbook version of perfection then you never get involved in like the artistry of it. Right? You never, you, you have this one way, and then you're boxed in. (p. 22)

For Jem, absolute perfection in fitness, when there is a clear range of excellence, is not only not real, but it also limits our ability to solve problems creatively and be more inclusive with our solutions.

Through the experiences during the Air Force fitness test, Jem observes another contradiction between taking the Air Force fitness test and its unwritten rule of perfection as the only goal for military officers. Here, Jem is confronted with her own inability to adhere to that rule, as she admits that she is not a good runner. Therefore, Jem creates and uses another rule which fits her and keeps her within standards,

> Sometimes you have to find some work around…So I watch my diet, I do normal workouts and stuff…And then I, you know, write on my hand when I run, 'this is my no kidding failure time' and my goal is always shorter than that...but 'here's my 85-point time. Here's my 90-point time'…And you know, I don't need to get 100, but I'm definitely going to meet the standard (pp. 24-25)

Jem still keeps the excellent standard in sight, but she does not pressure herself to meet a loftier standard emplaced by the military culture.

Jem's rules of fitness work arounds and being able to live within the "excellent" range, not only opens up new possibilities for her, but also for others she advises and leads. Jem encourages those who work for her to "liv[e] in that range" (p. 27). Jem

believes the military will be a better organization by adopting this norm as it is more inclusionary and promotes a diversity of thought that the military will need to solve complex problems facing the world today. Jem appears to have resolved this contradiction as her fitness mantra she employs is, "find your easy workarounds and work to your strengths and still get to the finish line. There's 100 ways to skin a cat" (p. 25). Figure 11 shows the interaction between Jem's central activity and the secondary activity of participating in the fitness test.

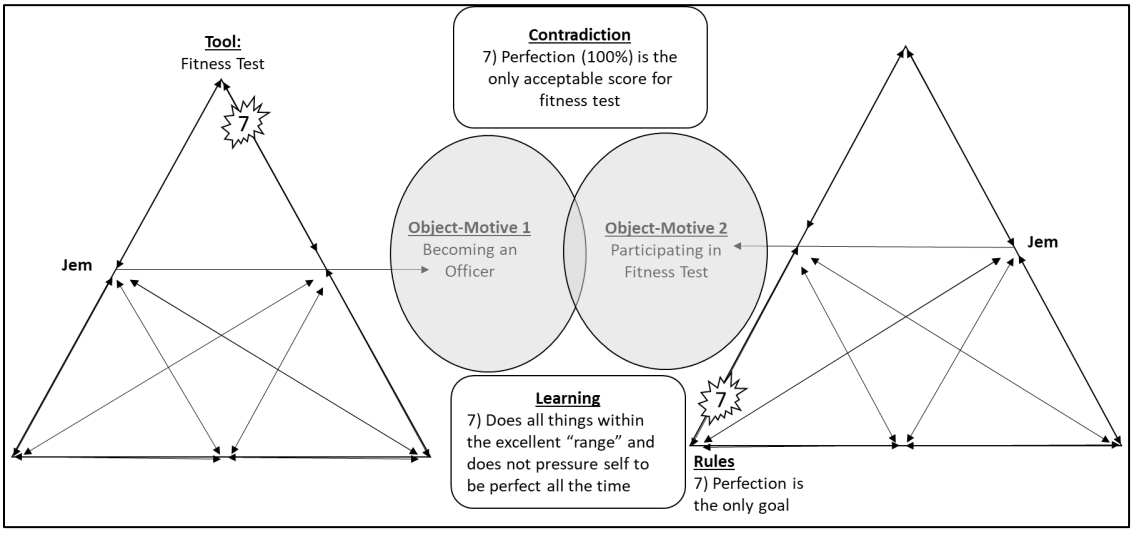

Figure 11
Jem's interaction between central and secondary activity (fitness test)

Jem's becoming an Officer Activity System

Analyzing Jem's activity system of becoming an officer reveals that gender greatly shapes her activity through several goal-oriented actions that occur within her activity when they interact with several secondary activities. Jem is constituted by some of the rules and tools identified, yet Jem has also disrupted and reshaped some as well. There are several contradictions within this activity with which Jem must contend. She has resolved some, yet others she has only identified its constitutive nature to shape how

she acts and believes. Again, as Roth and Lee (2007) make clear, this dichotomy is possible within the same activity. Both exist together within the activity as the subject both accepts and disrupts the elements within it. This is made possible due to the evolving nature of Jem's subjectivity within the organization as well as her time spent as a member of it. Jem's becoming an officer activity analysis can be seen in figure 12.

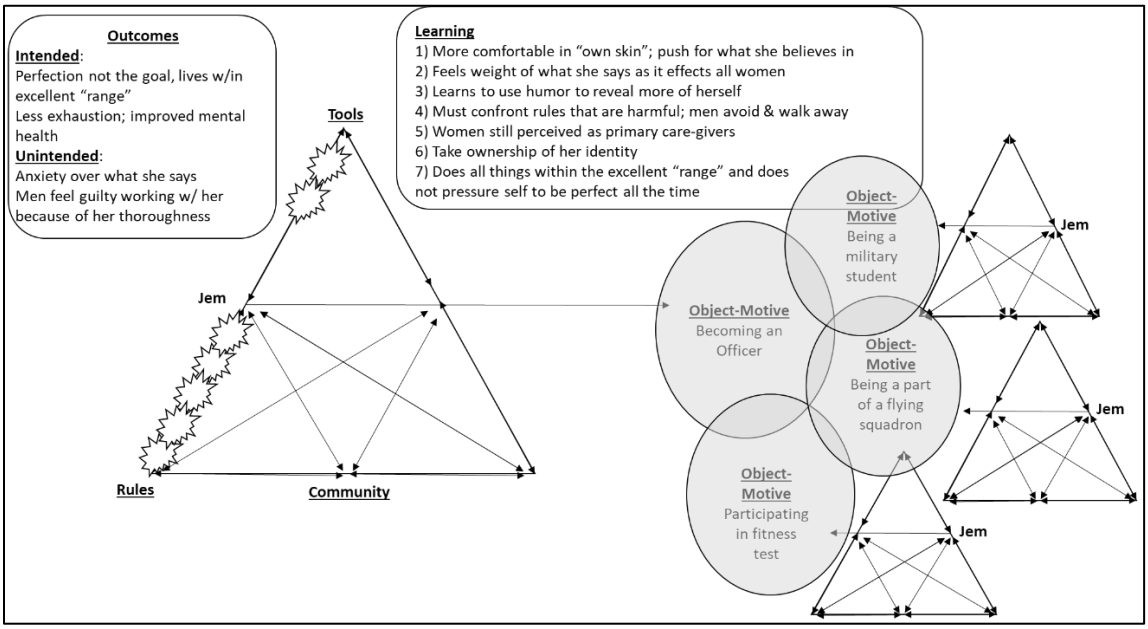

Figure 12
Jem's becoming an officer activity system

Within this activity are the narratives that Jem believes have most shaped her activity of understanding what it means to be an officer and her journey to identify as an officer within the organization.

These narratives include several secondary activities that interact with her central activity of becoming an officer. These are her military educational experiences at OTS and ACSC, her experiences participating in the flying squadron, and her experiences participating in the Air Force fitness test. The horizontal and vertical divisions of labor

are depicted with an (H) and (V), respectively. Did the analysis reveal changes, to include learning, in Ruth's activity, and what were the intended and unintended outcomes?

Learning in Jem's activity system

The object-motive of Jem's activity of becoming an officer stems from her belief of what an officer should be like. To Jem, officers are authentic and hold themselves and others to a high standard. There is a physical stereotype of what an officer looks like, but becoming an officer requires one to work towards more than just physical expectations, as she says,

> what I believe an officer should be, does not have to do with your, does not predominantly have to do with your physical characteristics… it has to do with how you treat others, how you hold yourself, um, your expectations of others, holding a standard, um, communicating, uh, how you receive constructive criticism, how you try to implement change, how you offer constructive criticism, how you try to assist in external change. (Jem Interview #2, pp. 21-22)

Jem values this internal work of authenticity, fairness, and humility as integral to becoming an officer, and as more important than having the physical traits typically associated with looking like an officer. It is these values that Jem disrupts within the system that seek to constitute her. Jem has learned rather than avoiding and walking away from these contradictions, to walk into the middle of them and use her voice to disrupt the narratives that negatively shape her, and other women, to being officers they do not want to be.

Regarding not using her voice earlier in her career, Jem states, "I have a portion of this blame because I just sat there and now I'm like whining about it in private" (p. 5).

Initially walking away, Jem's new actions of confronting situations that seem contradictory to her by using her voice and humor are some of the more important actions Jem has learned within her activity of becoming an officer. She also realizes she is at a point in her career where she is more comfortable in her own skin and confident in her journey as an officer. As such, she feels that the pressure to always be perfect is unattainable for all endeavors, so she works to find the range of excellence that both she and her organization will accept. Jem has also learned to take ownership of the core of who she is and not let the organization tell her otherwise. She has had to learn this balance over time as she did feel the pressure to develop a male persona while participating in her flying squadron. This resolution has found a happy medium in Jem's mind. It is not that she does not value excellence, performance, and perfection anymore. They just have their proper place within Jem's mind and central activity. Jem states,

> it's not that I don't want to perform….but my self worth is a little less tied to the Air Force than maybe it has been previously. And so I feel a little more comfortable poking at some things that I think are wrong that maybe in the past I wouldn't have (Jem Interview #3, p. 7)

However, there are still some not-yet resolved issues as Jem continues in her activity. She still feels the weight of what she says when she is around men as it may have an impact on how they perceive all women in the military. She also is still resolving cultural perceptions of men versus women as primary care givers.

These opportunities to learn and develop her activity has led to both intended and unintended outcomes. Because Jem has learned to be more comfortable with herself, she is able to find her excellent range for anything she accomplishes. This has led to less

exhaustion and a better mind health state for her as she now has found a balanced approach to achieving her central activity of becoming an officer.

However, some unintended outcomes from the interaction of these activities are that Jem finds some male officers avoiding her because they do not want to disappoint her when she is leading a project. Because Jem feels she must over-prepare, she admits to me that men have told her they didn't want to work with her because they did not want to let her down. She says,

> He's like, "I genuinely have a fear about disappointing you right now, and that's why I want to change groups." I was kind of floored… And then another guy who I had worked with in a different group, in a different class overheard the conversation and he was like, "I have not worked harder in the entirety of this year than I did when I was in the group with Jem because I didn't want to disappoint her because I know how much work she puts into every class." (p. 10)

Jem is caught off guard that men are trying to avoid her because of her work ethic action that was a result of her feeling the weight of her words and work because she was a woman. This shocks Jem as she relates it to me and was something she was not expecting. Because of this, she also now feels guilt that she may come across to some men as too prepared and too much of a perfectionist. This is ironic as Jem seeks to find balance in her work pursuits and does not accept that perfection is the only goal for every pursuit. These unintended outcomes may spur new actions for Jem as she continues to learn how to participate in the activity of becoming an officer.

Luna's Case: "Girls can be doctors too"

Luna is a pseudonym she gave herself as a huge fan of the Harry Potter series. The character is one of her daughter's favorites, since she is a little different and sometimes excluded from the other characters yet possesses a strength of character and confidence about who she is. Luna is from a small town in New Hampshire. Luna stands about five feet, one inch and has an energetic personality and a warm smile (which will become important later). She comes from a long line of family members who have served in the military as her dad fought in Vietnam, her uncle fought in Korea, and her cousin attended West Point and was commissioned into the Army as an officer. Regardless, Luna did not pursue the military straight out of college but instead went to work as a pharmaceutical representative. However, Luna recalled that the events of 9/11 compelled her to leave her pharmaceutical job and join the military. Luna had thought about becoming a medical doctor, but she knew that would incur a large service commitment through the military. So, she got accepted to attend the US Air Force's Officer Training School (OTS) to see if the Air Force was a good fit first. Upon graduation from OTS, Luna was assigned as an acquisition officer. She pursued this career for a few years but continued her dream to attend medical school. After two years in the military, Luna was finally accepted into medical school and became an Air Force doctor focusing on pediatric medicine.

Luna has always felt like the smart one of her group, and because of that has tended to feel a bit of an outsider. She said, "I've always been the quote unquote smart kid, right. And so I was kind of always ostracized growing up because I was the smart kid" (Luna Interview 1, p. 19). Luna was also diagnosed with Attention Deficit

Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) as an adult, which she believes shapes how she interacts with others. Luna recalled,

> I was not diagnosed with ADHD until I was in medical school. Um, looking back, it kinda makes a lot of sense why like that...It's not because I wanna show off that I'm smarter than you, it's I literally am so excited, I know the answer. I just want you to spit it out, but other people don't see it that way, they think that you're bragging. They think that you're a show off. So it was very hard even in high school to feel accepted…(p. 19)

From a young age Luna wanted to feel accepted and used her intelligence to participate in the group. Yet, it was her intelligence that, Luna feels, pushed her away from the group. Even though this is a challenge to Luna, she still feels like her intelligence defines her.

Luna remembered the first time her intelligence was put to the test in medical school. She stated,

> when I went to medical school, it was kinda hard because everybody was the smart kid and all of a sudden I was not the smartest of the smart kids, which was a huge hit to the ego, the first couple of times I felt things…it was very humbling and it was a good thing. I'm glad it happened, um, made me a better person. (p. 19)

So, even though Luna still defines herself as intelligent, she has learned from medical school which has transferred to the Air Force to be aware of other people's intelligence as well and also be aware of the possibility of her own lack of knowledge in some areas.

Luna's Introduction

Luna's experiences of becoming an officer are where I focused my examination regarding how gender shaped her beliefs regarding how officers behave as she participated within the military. Specifically, I looked at which actions and secondary activities helped shape Luna's perceptions of gender within the military, as well as her subjectivity to it. These actions help illustrate how Luna's beliefs about gender shape how she participates within and is constituted by the military system in her journey of becoming an officer. Specifically, it is in the contradiction of both seeing self as a part of the cultural structure, yet also identifying self as specific and unique to that structure, that I focused my attention. It was in these CHAT-spotlighted contradictive spaces that I observed Luna both interpreting and being interpreted by her social environment. By observing actions within, and secondary activities interacting with, Luna's central activity of becoming an officer I was able to identify contradictions within these activities, and resolution of those contradictions, that helped me determine how she "disrupt[ed] the signifying processes through which she constitutes herself and is constituted" (Davies and Gannon, 2005, p. 313), which led to learning new actions and possibilities within her activity.

As stated previously, Luna's journey of becoming a military officer began when she made the decision after the events of 9/11 to leave her career as a pharmaceutical representative and pursue becoming a military medical doctor. Several overarching themes stood out in Luna's observations and interviews regarding what she values: a love for military service, excellence in academics, and leaders who can balance their professions and family lives. The experiences that most shaped Luna's estimation of what

it means to be an officer occurred as she observed the differences between her body and the bodies of men in uniform, her struggle balancing her work and family life as a dual-military family, as well as her military academic experiences in the classroom at ACSC. [Dual military families refer to families where both spouses are in the military. The dual military assignment process is one where multiple assignment teams find the best fit career-wise for each member, while attempting to station them close in proximity to each other to keep families together.] Body awareness is a part of Luna's central activity of becoming an officer, as it does not have a clearly defined object-motive. However, both dual-military and military education are secondary activities that each have object-motives that interact with Luna's central activity is ways that produce both contradictions and learning.

In this analysis, I first observed Luna's activity system of becoming an officer, specifically focusing on narratives learned during her time in training and key events throughout her career. These events were her body awareness, participation in dual military assignments and attending military education. I secondly observed the contradictions listed in table 4 within this activity system. Lastly, I determined if and how these contradictions were resolved to see if learning and/or expansive learning (Engeström, 2014) took place, and if other intentional or unintentional outcomes were created. Table 4 lists a summary of the three main narratives that interact with Luna's central activity: body awareness, participating in dual-military assignments, and attending military education.

Table 4

Luna's Summary of Secondary Activities and Actions that Interact with Central Activity of Becoming an Officer

Action within Central Activity: Body Awareness	
Action	When Luna runs, her physical body creates negative bodily attention. Wore double bras; changed the way she runs to bounce less
Contradiction	***Rule: good officers are physically fit and*** ***Tool: running as a major component of fitness test***
Resolution	Luna is still being shaped by this contradiction
New Actions	Luna has found alternate fitness methods to stay in shape mainly with the stationary bike.
Learning	Luna learns that her physical body can place her at a disadvantage when participating with other men
Action	Even though Luna wears a doctor's lab coat, she must explain to patients that she is a doctor.
Contradiction	***The uniform creates equality for both men and women***
Resolution	Jem is using her voice and humor to resolve this yet continues to be shaped by this contradiction daily.
New Actions	Luna uses her voice and humor to say it is okay for women to look like women in uniform and for women to be in certain roles that were generally occupied by men.
Learning	Luna believes it will take time for people to be comfortable seeing women in uniforms and roles that were generally held by men.
	Rule-Producing Activity: Participating in Dual Military Assignments
Actions	Luna initially grieves but quietly accepts that leadership is not giving her competitive assignment choices because she chose to keep her family together.

Table 4 (Continued)

Contradiction	***In dual-military assignments, men are given more opportunities for key positions because women are viewed as caregivers***
Resolution	Luna is still shaped by this contradiction but has learned to use new actions to disrupt the secondary activity.
New Actions	Luna pokes and pushes back because she is confident in her abilities and feels the military is wasting her talents.
Learning	Learns she must sometimes push back against leadership when they assign her the caregiver stereotype and take career decisions out of her hands
Rule-Producing Activity – Attending Military Education	
Actions	Luna initially embraces role but grows weary of it over time.
Contradiction	***Women are viewed as caretakers within the classroom***
Resolution	Luna is shaped by this contradiction while attending ACSC.
New Actions	Luna uses her position and voice to instruct her flight, but believes her male cohorts must be "spoon fed" and do not respond to her leadership. Luna feels tired and frustrated leading to short and sarcastic responses to cohort.
Learning	Luna learns that even though assigned as the flight leader, she felt being a woman negatively impacted her ability to lead her peers.

Contradictions in Action within Central Activity: Body Awareness

Luna experienced two main events that shaped how the awareness of her body impacted the way she views being an officer: running and the military uniform. Luna's first experience with being aware of her body occurred during her initial officer training at OTS as a new lieutenant. Luna remembers an uncomfortable experience while at OTS that involved a mandatory running event that included both men and women. The event was to prepare officer candidates for the Air Force fitness test. Running is very much a

part of the daily actions of being in the military. It is one of four components built into the annual fitness test required by all military members and it is also the component with the most scoring weight attached to it. Therefore, being able to run and run well is seen as an important aspect of being in the military.

As Luna discusses those moments that have most shaped how she views herself as an officer. She recalls,

> I got pulled aside at one point because when I was running for PT one day. I got brought aside by one of our upperclassmen and she asked me if I was wearing a bra because it had been brought to her attention that I was quote unquote bouncing all over the place and they did not believe that I had any type of like undergarment on and it became a big thing. (Luna Interview #1, p. 3)

Luna is new to the military and used to excelling academically and being singled out for her intelligence. Being academic and intelligent is an important aspect of how Luna believes she must be as an officer. However, in this situation she is singled out for her body's reaction to running, which is beyond her control. Luna recalls being questioned by a woman leader but knew that the questions originally came from male leadership and were simply relayed by the woman. The men in charge even gave suggestions,

> at one point they told her that I would have special permission to go to the [store] to buy something else. Um, they said, "Maybe she could bind herself." I'm like, "So you want me to not breathe?" And it literally started going up and it ended up and I don't remember what level she was, if she was the squadron commander or if she was, you know, OTS like, but it ended up being [relayed by] a female 'cause it was a male that brought it up. (p. 4)

This male leader never addressed Luna directly, but would go through other women to relay his messages. Luna states,

> he never addressed me…directly. It was always through other people. And so he would say stuff to other females to get them to say stuff to me because he wouldn't bring it up to me directly. Like he knew that he shouldn't be saying something. And I think the only thing that came out of it was after that, like every time I ran, I was very self-conscious, um, about running and I hate to run like literally I've always hated to run. (p. 4)

Luna was already concerned about her performance, as she admits to not being a not a good runner (Luna Interview #3, p. 2), however, the male leader's comments put a spotlight on Luna's physical body and brought Luna more anxiety about the way she looked.

The second experience that illustrates how Luna's physical body has helped to shape her activity of becoming an officer is seen in how she views the military uniform. She talked about the comments from male officers about the first time they saw her without her uniform on, "I'm thinner than they think I am, chest is bigger, uh, like, you know what I mean? There, but there's always some sort of comment about my physical appearance" (p. 14). Since part of Luna's expectation of the military is that you are seen and valued for your performance and not your physical appearance, she does not understand the attention given to her body and notices that men do not receive similar remarks when they are out of uniform.

Conversely, while dressed in a long, white doctor's coat working at Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital, some patients do not accept that Luna is a doctor. When they see

her, they say, “I haven't seen a doctor all day” (p. 16). Most of the time Luna is deeply frustrated by this, as she explains,

> I've been in here three times or I'll walk in, in my long white, and like I never wear my white coat... in my long white coat, "Oh the nurse is here." "I'm not the nurse, I'm the doctor." "Well, you're not a real doctor." I have an MD behind my name.” (p. 16)

Here, Luna wears another uniform (long, white coat) signifying who she is (a medical doctor) and one that distinguishes her from others in the hospital. Others still do not see the uniform. She believes these actions are gendered as she sarcastically mentions “girls can be doctors too” (p. 16) to some of her patients, signifying that Luna feels gender has a role to play in their disbelief in her ability to be a medical doctor.

I observed two contradictions associated within Luna’s experiences within body awareness, specifically regarding her running and uniform wear. First, there appears to be a secondary contradiction between the unwritten rule that states that in order to be a good officer one must be physically fit and the tool of running as a fitness component used to measure an officer’s fitness. In one of Luna’s first experiences with running in the military she learned that the physical act of running focuses men on her body and not her performance. Prior to this experience, Luna is used to being evaluated based on her intellectual performance and she is also used to favorably standing out because of her performance.

As the male leaders in OTS focus on her body and not her fitness performance, this shapes the way Luna feels about her body and, therefore, her ability to physically perform in the military. Luna desires to be a good officer and is not used to the attention

being on her body, not on her performance. Even though Luna still hates to run, she understands the close link between running and the military identity, “it is funny that, like, because I think the running is such a part of, like, that military identity and I don't like it” (p. 15). So, there was a part of Luna that never liked running, yet she admits that every time she runs, she thinks about that experience at OTS. When asked how she is resolving those issues, she admits, “not well” (p. 5). She adds, “You run when you can’t and you potentially hurt yourself for an ideal that doesn’t make sense” (p. 5). Here, Luna discusses the rule about running even “when you can’t” because, to the military, running is an important component to the fitness test and, therefore, important to being a good officer. Luna feels that rule applies even as you get older, and your body begins to wear down.

As Luna has aged, her ability to run has diminished even further due to medical issues with her hip. She still feels compelled to stay in shape and look like she is physically fit in her uniform, but her ability to run is greatly reduced. She has been through multiple surgeries on both her hip and shoulder (p. 5), resulting in her being on a medical profile, which exempts her from certain aspects of the fitness test. Yet, Luna knows that being on a medical profile and being exempt from certain aspects of the fitness test are not looked at favorably by some. She says,

> I know certain people, like if you have a profile, you're not going to like, you know, get certain jobs, you're not going to do, like, they look poorly on you because of that. It's like, I'm 42 years old, I've been doing this awhile and guess what? You all broke me. Like, if you don't like this, like, it ain't my fault. (p. 5)

So, Luna does not believe she should be looked at differently because she is on a medical profile and, therefore, not able to take the whole fitness test. Yet she understands there are many in the military who do not agree.

Therefore, Luna has found alternate ways, apart from running, to stay in shape and has experienced great success with programs offered by her stationary bike. She wants to be physically fit and look good in her uniform but is working toward being able to decouple the fitness with running. This allows Luna to still equate running with being a good officer but create new solutions to substitute running with other activities. So, Luna is greatly shaped by this experience, even though a contradiction exists between the rule of the importance of running and being a good officer and the tool of the running component of the fitness test.

The second contradiction in Luna's activity system is a primary one within the tool of the uniform serving to make men and women look equal. Luna's expectations about joining the military centered around her belief that uniforms can be made to look good on women, yet still provide a sense of equality. She does believe the uniform serves a functional purpose first and foremost, as she admits, "it's supposed to be a uniform to be functional. It's not supposed to make us look feminine and pretty" (p. 19) yet she goes further to admit the uniforms make women look bad. Added to what she learned at OTS regarding how her body did not fit well into the uniform, Luna believes that uniforms are made to fit men, not women, and can sometimes serve as a negative distracter to men (Luna Interview #3, p. 8). When asked how we should fix this, Luna's reply is [speaking of men who are distracted by feminine-looking women in uniform], "That's on you!" There's nothing wrong with looking like a woman in the military" (p. 8). Luna believes

how uniforms fit on the body should not take away from who one is as a woman. When asked if the uniforms should serve to de-gender military members, she said, “I think that the uniform, like it, it shouldn't have to defeminize someone” (Luna Interview #3, p. 3). Luna believes the tailoring of uniforms for women’s bodies makes them more “fit” and therefore more appealing to wear. Regarding the Navy uniforms, she added, “the Navy's uniforms are much more tailored. The Navy's uniforms are much more feminine than a lot of the other [services]” (p. 4). Here Luna associates a uniform tailored to a woman’s body as being more “feminine”.

Yet, when she is working at a hospital clinic and wears the doctor’s lab coat, Luna does not experience the uniform serving in a way to make gender disappear. Even though Luna wears a coat and a nametag signifying her status as a doctor, some of her patients do not believe Luna is a real doctor. Luna is very much aware of this cultural response to her gender and tries to combat it with humor. She is also very much aware that it is informed by what one is used to seeing, as her children mention when seeing a male doctor, “Oh, boys can be doctors?” (p. 17). For Luna’s children, all they have seen are women doctors. Yet for some of Luna’s older patients, they are not used to seeing women doctors, even when the uniform makes it plain to them. Luna understands it will take time for people to be comfortable with the change. She explains,

> even when I was in medical school…it's that traditional role, right…males were typically doctors, even though that's not the case anymore. We have lots of male nurses and lots of female doctors…And so I think with the younger generation, they're seeing a lot more of that. (p. 17)

Even though Luna has the same uniform as a male doctor, she knows that it will take patience and time for everyone to see men and women in those uniforms equitably. Luna's desire to look tailored in her uniform is what Kathleen Ryan (2014) discusses as a part of a long history of the military to use the uniform to "entice women" (p. 419) to join the military, which was first seen during World War II. She explains the importance of a "chic" (p. 420) looking uniform, in the eyes of the wearer, as building a psychological "protection" (p. 420) for the wearer. A chic-looking uniform, she added, served to give the woman confidence, a sense of belonging, and "the authority to act in a certain way" (p. 420). Luna's frustration with her uniform stems from her belief that she does look fit in her uniform, and, therefore has the authority to act in certain ways. Yet, others in the hospital challenge that authority and her position as a doctor. Figure 13 illustrates this second-order contradiction within her central activity.

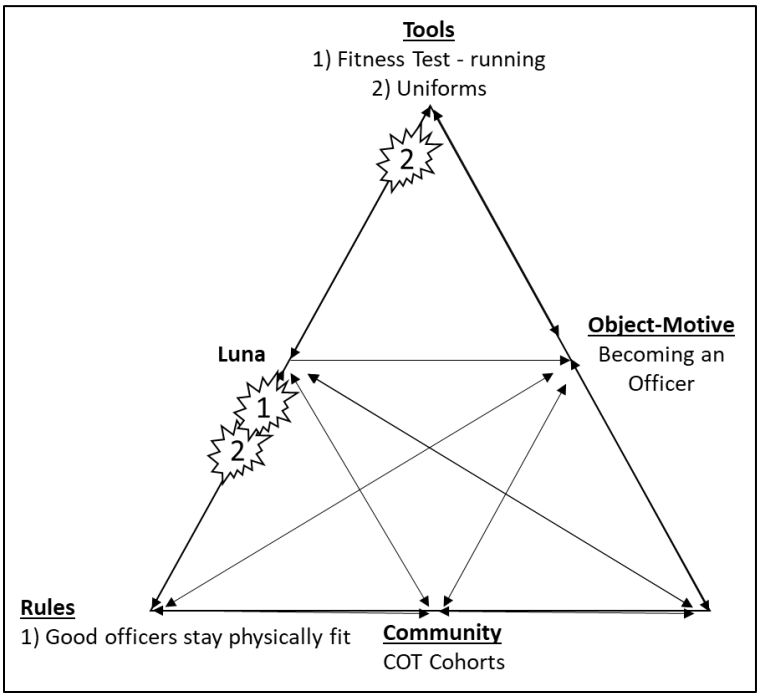

Figure 13
Luna's Interaction within her Central Activity of Becoming an Officer

Contradiction in Secondary Activity: Dual-military Assignments

Luna's experiences dealing with dual-military assignments have also helped shape her activity of becoming an officer. A dual-military family is one in which two military members are married to each other. In most cases, the couple is in the same branch of service, but sometimes couples marry outside their own branch. This can create a logistical challenge to leadership in trying to ensure both military members are given the right career opportunities while trying to keep the family together. Sometimes it works and sometimes it does not. Key career advancement opportunities present themselves to one or both members, and one of the two must decide to "follow" the other during their next assignment. When a military member is being hand-selected into a key career position it is sometimes referred to as being "pushed.. Conversely, when the other member must find a less-suitable job in order to keep the family together, this is often referred to as being "pulled."

Luna and her husband are a dual-military family, and she believes it has greatly shaped the way she views being an officer and participating within the military. As Luna explains,

> And as a dual military spouse, it's super frustrating because I don't know if I can apply for certain jobs or where I can go. And my [leadership] are like, "Well…we've kind of looked," and I know you haven't, you're basing it based on my pediatrics, not based on anything else. And so I think we've gotten really frustrated over some of that. And my girls have been moved. This is my oldest, uh, third school in four years. Next year, it'll be her fourth school in five years. Next summer will be our third move in three years, our fourth move in five years.

> And so trying to get our children some sort of stability…is really, really frustrating and hard, but moving every single year has just been super rough and yeah. And at least the last one could have been prevented, but they just didn't care. (Luna Interview #1, p. 8)

Luna feels like her leadership do not listen to her regarding her career choices. She believes they are more used to the man in the dual-military family being pushed into good career advancement opportunities. When I asked if the man is the one normally pushed into a job and the woman normally follows, she says that it is inferred that it's the woman who, "was going to have to take a knee basically" (Luna Interview #3, p. 11) and defer her career for her husband. Luna desires to stay close to her family, yet she also wants to be considered for competitive leadership positions. She feels she is both able and confident to tackle key leadership positions,

> I can do my job and I'm damn good at my job. And I think that I have that confidence where, you may not think that I'm the best at this or whatever, but you're gonna come to me if you need me. Right? (Luna Interview #1, p. 18)

Yet, she is seen by her assignment team as a dual-military woman officer who is focused on her family, "well you're dual [military] and you said you just wanna stay together" (Luna Interview #1, p. 8).

I observed a quaternary contradiction between the secondary activity of participating in dual military assignments and the division of labor that expects the man to most likely be "pushed" into high-profile leadership positions and the woman "pulled" alongside him. The contradiction is seen in the expectation that in order to keep families together, the woman will most likely have to sacrifice her career in order for the family to

stay together, even though she may have earned the opportunity to be chosen for key positions. This is because the military sees placing women in key leadership positions as a liability as they may become pregnant, which may cause others on the team to pick up their workload. This is also due to the military culture viewing the woman as the primary caregiver.

Luna felt this sentiment very deeply during our first interview as she believed her leadership assignment team labeled her as a "family before job" officer. This troubled Luna because she is a medical doctor and has spent several years going to school and practicing her occupation to be one of the top in her field. She says, "I know that I'm really good at my job...Like, I know I'm a good officer" (p. 18). With her statement, Luna also connects being a good doctor with being a good officer. Both are connected in Luna's mind. Luna is not conceited in her proclamation, but she knows she can do her job and do it well and being sidelined by the military is a waste of her talents.

Yet Luna also is fully aware that being a dual-military family impacts both men and women. However, Luna believes that women are not "pushed" as much as the men into these high-profile, demanding jobs because of women's liability to get pregnant and focus on their family. Luna disrupts this by telling me her experiences during medical residency,

> Like even in residency, like people were like, oh no, if that person has a baby, then we all have to pick up, you know, their shifts or whatever, which literally wasn't true, because like for me, at least they moved all of my stuff around. So, like I did all my inpatient rotations either before or after so that it wouldn't be an issue. (p. 12)

So, Luna disrupts the logic behind women being a work liability by using her past experience during residency to show others that women can be both professionally minded, yet still have a family. Luna still desires to remain with her family and be family-oriented, however, she also wants to be recognized for her professional accomplishments and ultimately wants to make the choice herself, instead of having the Air Force choose family over career for her. For her latest assignment, Luna initially silently accepts what her leadership tells her. However, after thinking about it she becomes vocal and questions her leadership's decision regarding her latest assignment.

I believe this contradiction to be resolved in Luna's mind. Between our first and second interviews, Luna received a different assignment. She told me she was handpicked for this assignment. She believed she was not being sidelined by the Air Force and her talents as a medical doctor are being recognized and not wasted. Luna even admitted to incorporating a new action of "poking" and "pushing back" to get what she wants. Luna mentioned she learned the art of pushing back to get what she wanted with her dad, and she also employed it prior to coming into the Air Force when she was a pharmaceutical representative. As we talked during our second interview, she explained that she received a job interview three weeks earlier and was told by the person currently in the position that, "apparently this is your job to lose" (Luna Interview #2, p. 23). She was told that selecting her for the job was a "unanimous decision" and that she was "100% handpicked" (p. 24).

So, after Luna's school assignment at ACSC, she will be the one in her dual-military family being "pushed" while her husband will be the one being "pulled.". Luna's new "pushing" action assisted in her getting this new and challenging position. She is

both confident and excited and she told me, “I got what I wanted” and “I know I can do it” (p. 25). Even though Luna believes her family time will “take a hit” (p. 25), she is pleased that her leadership assignment team is letting Luna make those life choices between family and profession. Luna understands that in a dual-military family most likely one person is going to be pushed and the other is going to be pulled. She questions why it is assumed most of the time that the man should be the one “pushed” and the woman “pulled.” Even though Luna has decided to have a family while being an officer, she believes key job offers should still come her way because she is a good officer and doctor. If she chooses to decline the job, that is her choice. Figure 14 illustrates this interaction.

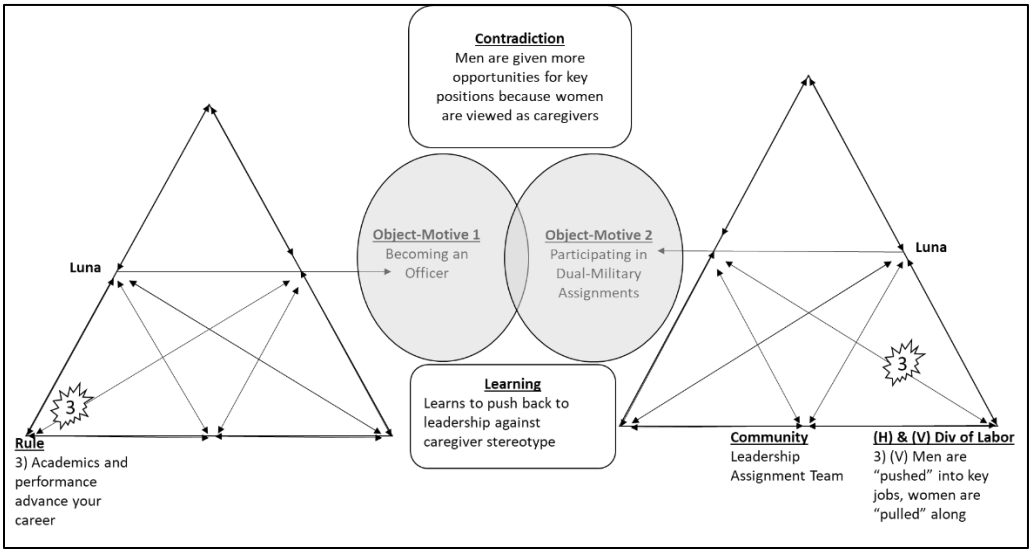

Figure 14
Interaction between Luna’s central and secondary activities (dual-mil assignment)

Contradiction in Secondary Activity: Participating in Military Education

Within the ACSC classroom experience, there are two illustrations that serve to spotlight how Luna learns to participate. The first deals with her cohort of twelve students of which she has been designated the title of Flight Leader for administrative

purposes and the second, although related, involves how she participates in classroom discussions while being masked due to COVID restrictions.

First, when Luna first arrived at ACSC, she was designated the Flight Leader of her cohort of twelve. This is a standard practice and is mainly used for administrative purposes as a way to help the students communicate effectively between the faculty and students. Flight leaders are selected based on the date they were promoted to their Major rank, so it is based on an officer's seniority. Luna was the designated flight leader for her group of peers and she instantly felt like it ostracized her from the group. She already felt like an outsider because she is a doctor, so being selected as the leader made things worse. Regarding her role she said, "I'm the doctor, I'm the, you know, odd one out and I am also the very vocal one and so, and I'm [also] the flight leader" (Luna Interview #1, p. 22). Here, Luna is talking about the participation dynamic in the classroom, and she speaks of being designated a flight leader in the same manner as speaks of being a doctor, namely as the "odd one out."

The second way Luna's participation in the classroom helped shape how she learns to become an officer is directly related to the COVID restrictions of mandatory mask wear in the ACSC classrooms. Luna commented several times about the lack of mask wear or the incorrect method of mask wear of her ACSC cohort, "They can't even wear a mask correctly or stay apart from people" (p. 22)., Normally Luna was the one coordinating socials and working to bring people together. However, because of COVID and social distancing restrictions, Luna did everything she can to stay away from large crowds of people.

As a secondary activity, I see a quaternary contradiction between participating in military education and Luna's central activity of becoming an officer. Specifically, this contradiction is between the rule that women in the classroom are typically the caretakers coupled with Luna's role as the flight leader over her classroom peers, and the tool of professionalism in Luna's central activity of becoming an officer that expects a certain amount of professionalism in officers after they have been in the organization for several years.

As stated previously, Luna did not compete for this position, but was selected as Flight Leader because of her seniority. Throughout our interviews, Luna has never expressed that she was not pleased with her role. However, toward the second and third interviews, it became more obvious that Luna was getting tired of the growing lack of responsibility male students displayed in paying attention to Luna when she communicated important schedule and assignment information. Rather, Luna increasingly felt the need, and a growing expectation, to "spoon feed" information to the men in her class. Luna felt that gender roles played a part in some of this irresponsibility as she commented to them "your spouse does it for you" as one of the causes for their lack of attention to the information Luna disseminated throughout the academic year. Luna does not believe if a man was in the role of Flight Leader, the other men within the cohort would act this way. Yet, because of established gender roles of women being the caretaker, men may tend to feel like someone else will tell them where to go and what to do. As Luna says, "I definitely think there are some people who just expect that I am going to tell them what they need to do, where they need to be" (p. 14).

Another way Luna introduced me to this contradiction has to do with the social distancing guidelines for their behavior both inside and outside of the classroom. As Flight Leader, it is Luna's responsibility to not only inform her cohort of important information, but to also enforce the rules. During this academic year, ACSC rules were clear regarding the limitations of social gatherings and the appropriate mask wear during these events. Luna told me of a time she went to a social gathering, only to find no one following the rules. She said, "You know, we went to a flight thing the other day. I was the only person who had a mask on, the only one." (Luna Interview #1, p. 22). Luna was not sure that if the Flight Leader were a man would the cohort behave in a similar way, but it does cast doubt and discouragement on Luna's ability to participate with the group. Figure 15 illustrates this interaction between activities.

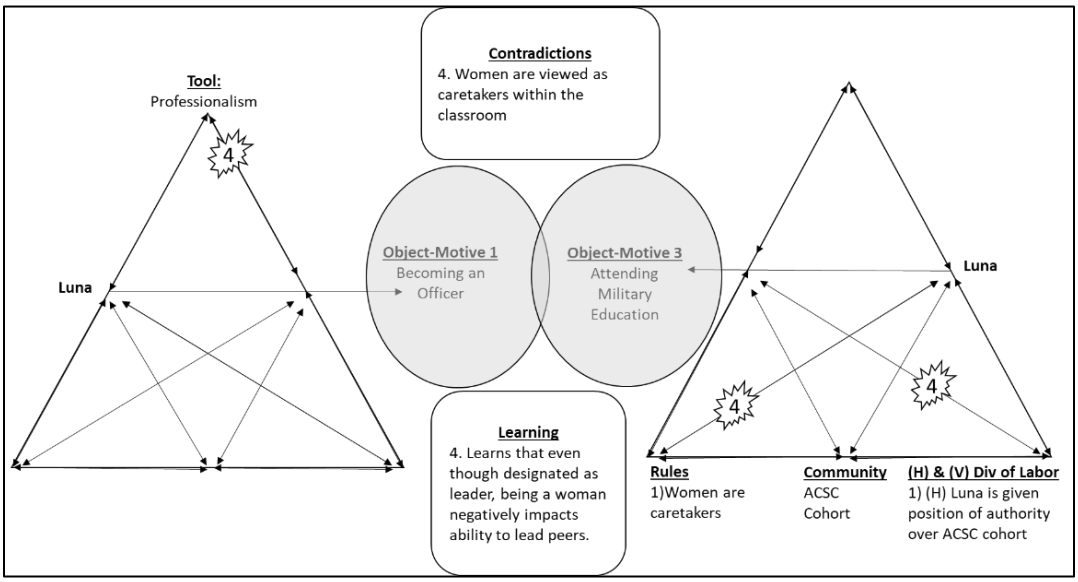

Figure 15
Interaction between Luna's central and secondary activities (military education)

Luna's Becoming an Officer Activity System

Luna's final activity system consists of interactions between two secondary systems (participating in dual-military assignments and attending military education) and

within her central activity system regarding the tools of the fitness test and uniforms as a way to measure how one participates as an officer. These interactions created several contradictions that led to new actions, as well as learning and unintended outcomes for Luna. Her becoming an officer activity system reveals that Luna continues to be shaped by these actions and secondary activities, yet they also show she has helped to shape what becoming an officer looks like to her. As a medical doctor Luna feels she must actively shape her participation both because of her occupation and because she is a woman. The illustration of Luna's final activity system is in figure 16.

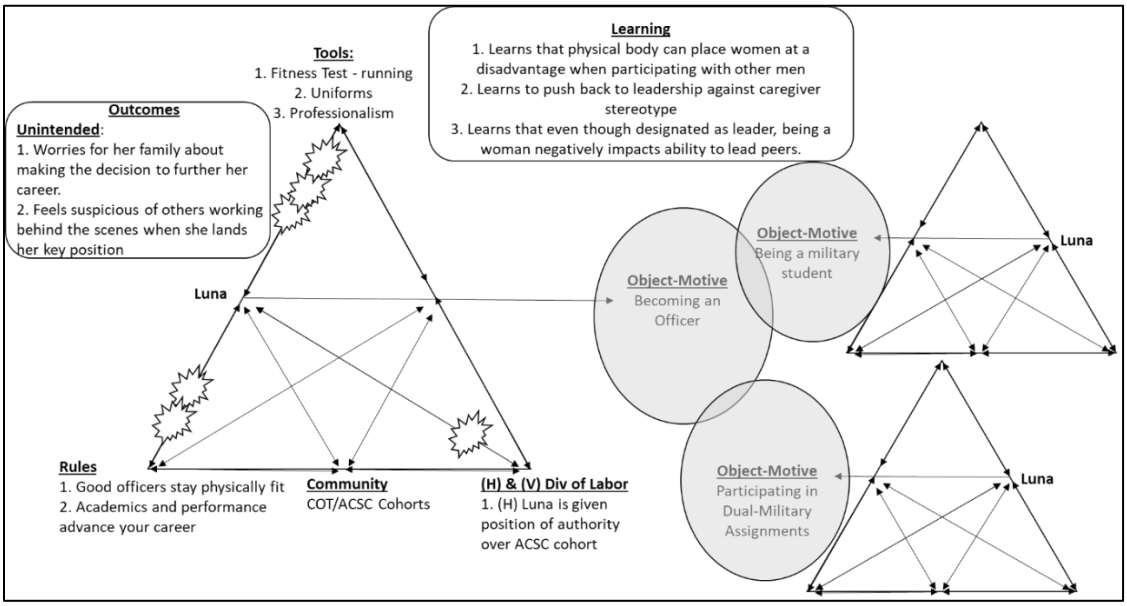

Figure 16
Luna's Becoming an Officer Activity System

Learning in Luna's Activity System

Within the secondary contradiction between the norm stating that running well is associated with being a good officer and the tool of the running component of the fitness test, Luna is not only aware of this contradiction, but she employs new rules to disrupt

this contradiction. Luna's dislike for running makes her feel separated from the Air Force culture as she admits,

> I'm not the one who can go out and run those 5Ks, run those marathons, I do feel like it's always put me in a different class in the military...Like, people look down on me because I'm not like my husband who can just go out and flipping run. And it makes me so...even when I could people are like, "Oh." [gives judging look] And I'm like, but I don't like to run. Like, I rode horses, I liked to play golf. Like, you know…I love my new, I just…ordered a Peloton bike (p. 19)

In this admission, Luna feels ostracized for not doing what typical military members do. Her culture shapes an expectation for her to meet. However, Luna does not try anymore to alter her running stride or put on multiple bras to lessen the "bouncing." Rather, she employs her own fitness habits to meet the intent of the fitness test. She proudly states, "I have my own things" (p. 19) and realizes the connection between being a good officer does not have to be connected with running. However, this realization has taken time to materialize, and Luna still admits to being shaped by this rule.

Regarding the shape of her body, Luna disrupts the early negative effects that running, and her fitness outfit had on her. Luna realizes that being a good officer does not have to mean that you look a certain way in your body or do certain things with your body. She says,

> And I know that I'm really good at my job. And so I think that that's, kind of, where I've taken it. Like, I know I'm a good officer…I know I'm a good person, you know, and I know I'm a good example. So yes, maybe that's not my strong point, but the military is more than being able to run a 5k. (p. 18)

In the above quote, Luna disassociates being a good runner from being a good officer. In this way her surroundings and culture has taught her one thing, but she has struggled with it (and in some ways, continues to struggle) and has learned a new action to disrupt that rule.

Regarding her dual-military assignment secondary activity, I observed that Luna is resolving this contradiction by adding new actions. At first, Luna felt shaped by her environment and helpless, feeling that her assignment team was not expecting her to want to be pushed into an important assignment since she had previously indicated that keeping her family together was important to her. Yet her new action of "pushing back" proved to be effective in this case. Even though Luna is a little nervous about juggling the responsibilities of a very demanding job with her family, she simply wanted to be able to make the decision between job and family for herself.

Regarding Luna's secondary activity of attending military education, I observed that Luna has employed some new actions that may reinforce, but also disrupt, the norms that women are caretakers. Since Luna used social activity to get closer to her group, and since COVID social distancing restrictions have limited this action for Luna, she employed new actions to get to know her flight better and to ingratiate herself with her cohort. She stated,

> So I've been making random people, like, they're not random but, like, I crochet so I've been, like, crocheting baby booties, and hats, and mittens for anybody who's had a baby. I've been making macaroons and bringing them into class, like, trying to do other things to make people feel, like, appreciated and try to be a part. (Luna Interview #2, p. 20)

Even though some may see this as a reinforcement of the caretaker role, Luna uses this action for a specific purpose. She even puts herself in uncomfortable positions to maintain camaraderie with her flight. She adds,

> so I went out with our flight the other day. This was the first time that I had been in a restaurant…eating in a restaurant since March (laughs). So it was very uncomfortable. And, you know, like, I, but I did it, you know? I realized I was the only person, so if I was not actually actively eating or drinking, I had my mask on. (Luna Interview #2, p. 19)

She knows that she needs to make an effort. Even if, as a doctor, she believes limiting social distance is the best practice, as the flight leader she goes against this in favor of participating with the group.

Lastly, I observed two unintended outcomes of Luna's activity system, especially regarding her secondary activity of participating in dual-military assignments. As Luna pushes to get her leadership team to let her make the decision regarding a key leadership position, Luna finds out her team did exactly what she asked. Even though Luna was pleased with the result because the decision was hers, she still felt the weight of having to decide between job and family. When I asked if this is what she wanted, she says, "It is, it is. And I- and I know I can do it. It's just, I think it, unfortunately it is gonna probably take a- a hit personally" (Luna Interview #2, p. 25). Luna wanted to make the decision, but now that she thinks about the impact to her family, she feels the true weight of it.

Another unintended outcome of this same activity is that now Luna is suspicious why her leadership team changed their minds. She says, "So it's very weird. I have no idea what's going on…I feel like there's gotta be somebody involved. And I, like, I really

do, like, I feel like there's got, I have somebody in my corner somewhere" (p. 27). It is difficult for Luna to believe that this change in response from her leadership team was not influenced by some anonymous, outside source. This was unintended because Luna changed her actions in this situation to get a different result. Now, she is not confident whether or not the result came solely from her new action. In other words, she questioned whether it was a structural change or an individual one affecting only her.

Barbie's Case: "[Stop] the little bits"

Barbie's grandfather moved to the United States from Denmark and always wanted to serve in the military, but for medical reasons was unable. Regardless, from an early age Barbie associated people who join the military in a negative light. She says, "the only people that went were like, the bad kids. Um, I knew two. And, I know that's a terrible thing to say" (Barbie Interview #1, p. 2). Barbie wasn't close to anyone who was in the military, but when she heard that her grandfather wanted to join when he was younger, she wanted to honor his family name. She adds,

> the last couple months that I had with him when I'd go visit him, he... you know, he'd talk about all the things that are really important in your life. Things you wish you could have done, things like that, and the military was the one thing he always wished that he could've done 'cause he just loved his life in America. And so, I just wanted to get his last name in the military, and so I was just gonna go enlist, do a week and a month here and there, and then the recruiter got me. I'm still active duty. But, his name's in the military. (p. 1)

So, even though Barbie had no previous connection to the military, nor did she view it favorably, her desire to honor her family's heritage moved her to join.

Even so, her immediate family was not excited about Barbie joining. She recalls speaking to recruiters “silently” (p. 2) and keeping it from her family. She tells me that it surprised her that her mother was supportive of her decision, but that was not the case with every member of her family. She says,

> I did tell my mom, and she surprised me, she was 100% supportive, and absolutely loved it. Um, but I had other family members that weren't, I had an uncle that said "No daughter of mine will join the military," and things like that. I had people try to talk me out of it, and, um... so I just kept it pretty quiet. (p. 2)

When asked if this was due to gender, Barbie does not believe it was. Rather, she felt the sentiment with her family was that joining the military was a last resort and not something to be valued. She said, “I got the impression that it's where you go when you don't have anything else to do. You know, when you can't get into college” (p. 2). There was a perception by Barbie’s family that joining the military was not a significant achievement. This is an important aspect to Barbie’s central activity of becoming an officer because family and making her family proud is something that Barbie values greatly.

Barbie also values professionalism. Being professional, seeing successful women and being dependable in your job are all things Barbie values highly and shape her actions as she pursues becoming an officer. She was also not afraid of joining a male-dominated organization like the military, because, as she described it,

> I never liked wearing dresses...I just never felt like I fit in with the makeup, and the hair, and those type of girl stereotypes. I was more the... a sports girl

stereotypes with the...athletic side. Um...and I never was the cool kid in school. And so, just not fitting in with the cool crowd. (p. 4)

Barbie's comfort zone outside of the typical girl stereotype caused her to feel like the military might be a place she could fit in.

With her family name to uphold, her pursuit of being a woman professional, and her confidence that she is comfortable living outside the girl stereotype, Barbie decides to begin her journey of becoming an officer and attends OTS. There are three significant, secondary, activities that interact with and help construct Barbie's central activity of becoming an officer. Those are: attending military education, participating in her flying squadron, and participating in an investigation that she initiated. These are not the only narratives that help shape how Barbie participated, but they were certainly formative.

Barbie's Introduction

Barbie began her activity of becoming an officer with several formative values that shaped her activity: family, dependability, professionalism, and success or in other words, valuing family, and being a successful and dependable professional. Since Barbie did not have much interaction with the military prior to joining, her values were challenged as she began to participate in the military and the secondary activities mentioned above, military education, flying squadron, and the investigation, all had significant shaping outcomes to make Barbie who she is today. Yet, through our interviews it is also clear that Barbie has shaped some of those activities through new actions and increased agency.

When I analyzed the data, the central activity for Barbie was her passion to become an officer. Her central and secondary activities all produced actions that created

quaternary contradictions within her central activity system. In some cases, these contradictions were resolved to produce learning within the activity system. A summary of this case is included in Table 5.

Table 5

Barbie's Summary of interaction between central and secondary activities

Secondary Activity: Attending Military Education	
Action	Barbie performs her best to stand out during training
Contradiction	***Women's participation is highlighted only based on physical appearance***
Resolution	Barbie is still being shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Barbie recognizes this contradiction but does not attempt to blend in
Learning	Barbie understands that because of her physical body, she will not be able to blend in and go unnoticed. She accepts this and does not believe she has any control over it.
Action	Barbie is initially unaware of how she is being discussed by trainers
Contradiction	***Women are more likely to be talked about by men***
Resolution	Barbie is both shaping yet still being shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Barbie works with woman roommate to control their words and actions so that the men trainers will have little to say about them.
Learning	Barbie learns that men will talk, but she can control the narrative.

Table 5 (Continued)

Actions	Barbie initially believes that the trainer/trainee relationship will be professional. Therefore, she does not notice when men trainers try to be alone with women trainees. Also, at OTS Barbie stayed close to fellow woman trainees.
Contradiction	***Male trainers purposely try to be alone with women trainees***
Resolution	Barbie is being shaped by this contradiction, but also learns new ways to navigate around it.
New Actions	Barbie avoids situations where she will be alone in social settings with her male trainers. She finds friends in the places they travel to hang out with instead.
Learning	Barbie learns that she must employ whatever strategies she can to avoid situations where she is alone with her male trainers.
Actions	Barbie is self-conscious of the way she looks in her uniform that is meant to deemphasize gender.
Contradiction	***Even in the flight suit uniform used to deemphasize gender, men see women as physical objects.***
Resolution	Barbie is still being shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Barbie works harder to be noticed for her work and performance.
Learning	Barbie knows the Air Force is working on uniform fit issues for women and she is grateful of those changes, yet for her the way to get past those issues is for her to focus on being the best at what she does.
Actions	Barbie experiences this initially during OTS with roommate; believes all women stand up for each other
Contradiction	***Women within military support each other***
Resolution	Barbie continues to be shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Barbie understands that the organization requires a level of social participation, Barbie controls how much she is comfortable giving.
Learning	Barbie learns that she must be the one to control her level of social participation and the impact that could have on her professionally.

Table 5 (Continued)

Actions	Barbie does not feel like she can embrace this rule because she is a woman
Contradiction	***Air Force values a family first culture***
Resolution	Barbie both shapes and is being shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Barbie only assigns work to dependable officers when leading a project and assigns a deputy in case she must tend to family matters
Learning	Barbie still sees inequity between men and women in this rule. However, she has learned to prioritize her time more and deputize others to not have to tend to family matters during the workday.
Secondary Activity: Participating in a Flying Squadron	
Actions	Barbie is silent and tunes it out at first because she does not want to be known as the one who complains.
Contradiction	***Air Force values a family first culture***
Resolution	Barbie is both being shaping by this contradiction and is also reshaping its constitutive effects.
New Actions	Barbie learns to speak out about these issues with men and receives some apologies and positive feedback from men. She learns to speak when she sees it happening with other women.
Learning	Barbie learns that it is okay to say, "that's not okay to say." However, there is a balance of what and when to speak and what you want to be known for.
Actions	Barbie initially tunes it out.
Contradiction	***Men can say inappropriate things toward women without repercussions***
Resolution	Barbie is both being shaping by this contradiction and is also reshaping its constitutive effects.
New Actions	Barbie speaks up and encourages other men to speak out and stop the inappropriate words from their male cohort.

Table 5 (Continued)

Learning	With the earned respect borne out of her exemplary performance and after seeing other women impacted by this behavior, Barbie learns she must stop "the little bits" if the larger culture is going to change.
Secondary Activity: Participating in Formal Complaint	
Actions	Tries to resolve issue without the system.
Contradiction	***Complaint processes meant to protect women, protect men instead.***
Resolution	Barbie is shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Barbie gets more vocal and mentions the results of her complaint to other male leaders.
Learning	The complaint system protects high-ranking men, so she concentrates on speaking out to her peers
Action	Tries to resolve issue without the system.
Contradiction	***High ranking men can say inappropriate things toward women without repercussions***
Resolution	Barbie is shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Barbie gets more vocal and mentions the results of her complaint to other male leaders.
Learning	High ranking men's words may be ignored if they had a good intent.

In the proceeding paragraphs I identify the contradictions within Barbie's activity systems and determine if and how these contradictions were resolved to see if learning and/or expansive learning (Engeström, 2014) took place and if other intentional or unintentional outcomes arose.

Barbie's Activity System – Becoming an Officer

Barbie shared with me several experiences that were very formative in shaping her understanding of what it means to become an officer. These are her military training

experiences of Commissioned Officer Training School (OTS), Navigator School and Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), her flying squadron experiences, as well as a pivotal investigation that took place during her career. Below. I focus on the contradiction I found in each of these activities.

Contradictions within Secondary Activity: Attending Military Education

The first contradiction I observed is with the rule that women, regardless of their performance, will be highlighted and singled out based on their physical appearance. Barbie observed this first at OTS, but the rule was reinforced in navigator training. This is a contradiction to Barbie because it is shaped by gender as men easily blend into the environment in the training setting, as well as women who are not physically attractive. Even though Barbie understands blending in will cause less attention with her male trainers, she added, "I mean, I was also there [at OTS] to be an officer. I wasn't there to blend to some extent, but, um, in a training environment, (laughs) military training environment, you really want to blend. So I…would have, if I could have" (Barbie Interview #3, p. 8). Since she understands that blending in has to do with appearance and not performance, Barbie accepted this because she has no control over the way she looks, even though she remains conflicted by it based on her belief that officers remain professional.

The second contradiction I observed is with another rule in the secondary activity stating that women will be talked about by men regardless of their performance. This has similar aspects to the previous contradiction as it is easier for men to blend in and go unnoticed. Barbie noticed this at OTS and was thankful for a roommate who understood this rule as well. She said,

> thankfully I had the roommate that I did because we were a strength in, in having each other…and we were all very, we were both very keenly aware that we were gonna get talked about…It was just how were we gonna decide what we get talked about for (Barbie Interview #2, p. 6)

Barbie knew she would get talked about because she was a woman. That was beyond her control. However, what was within her ability to shape was what they were able to talk about. Both Barbie and her roommate understood this norm and lived within its boundaries, yet they found ways to control and navigate their way through it by working together to control the narrative as best they could. This new action is one that Barbie carries with her today, controlling the narrative.

The third contradiction I observed was with another norm that Barbie experienced that male trainers at navigator training purposefully want to get women trainees alone during long-distance training flights. This contradicted Barbie's belief of the professionalism of officers. Barbie had learned at OTS having women around her was critical to her survival in the military training environment. As mentioned above, Barbie learned in OTS that all it took was just one other woman to be with her at OTS to help Barbie survive. Barbie added,

> I don't think people understand just how important it is to have just one person. You know, if, if my roommate and I, hadn't been roommates at OTS…I can't help but think that a lot of it is because of where we started….just encouraging each other. (Barbie Interview #3, pp. 13-14)

That experience was during Barbie's first experiences in the Air Force, and it formed the way she viewed how to survive in the training environment. Barbie's learned action was

to find just one other woman for strength. Yet at navigator training, male trainers purposely desired to get women trainees alone during cross country missions, taking away the action that Barbie had learned in OTS. However, rather than being shaped once more by her new environment, Barbie chooses to employ another action, avoid being alone with male trainers as much as she can while on their missions. Barbie recalled,

> I totally just, like, blocked all of that, and I just remember every cross-country, like, just crossing my fingers that I knew somebody else there so I could have an excuse like, "Oh, I'm gonna see this friend from college," or "Somebody's gonna meet me..." And, or to go with someone else…that had something else to do that would kind of keep you safe. (Barbie Interview #2, p. 11)

Barbie changes her actions in this new environment in response to male trainers taking away her ability to remain "joined at the hip" with another women trainee. Her new action is to avoid the situation, but it still has a similar outcome of controlling the narrative regarding what the men are talking about. Here, Barbie is shaped by her new environment, yet learns a new way to navigate around it.

The fourth contradiction I observed in Barbie's activity of becoming an officer while in training is in the norm that some male trainers have of seeing women as physical objects even in the uniformity of the flight suit. Barbie experienced this contradiction during navigator training. The flight suit is worn by both men and women aircrew members and is a way to deemphasize gender and create uniformity between men and women. Yet, Barbie experienced the expectation that her male trainers expected to see her undergarments through the flight suit. She says, "I had an instructor that like as, if I was walking to the restroom and was the only one in the hall, he'd say things like, "You

need to wear a thong. I need to make sure that I can see a thong through that flight suit." (p. 11).

This is a part of Barbie's experience she has tried to suppress. After our first interview, Barbie emailed me and asked if she could tell me a few more stories during our second interview. When we got to the second interview, she said, "I definitely was treated differently. I just hadn't thought of it" (p. 1). She told me she spoke to her husband and he remembered more of these experiences than Barbie. She continued, "Cause I was talking to my husband and he was like, "Do you not remember any of that?" (p. 15). These contradictions are so egregious that Barbie forgot those past experiences while at training and admits to only remembering because her husband reminded her. I did not observe Barbie wearing her flight suit very often while she attended ACSC.

Even while the Air Force is talking about changing the fit of the flight suit for women who are pregnant, when asked, Barbie prefers to stay with the standard one. She says,

> I would have fought for that, where I was…the only one that's had a baby in that squadron…It would have been this stink that that one person made and it wouldn't be the movement that it is now…so…I borrowed a bigger flight suit from a guy and I looked like I was wearing a baggy ... (laughs) But you know what? It wasn't a good look, but I got my job done and people knew I was working hard. (Barbie Interview #3, p. 19)

Barbie cares more about being respected for her work than for how she looks in a flight suit. However, she is still appreciative about what the Air Force is doing for women. She continued,

> Um, I do think though that it's, I think it's great. Um, I think that they are addressing some things that they might not seem like a whole lot until you're in an isolated place where, like that little bit can make you feel like, "Oh, this organization cares. They want me to show up at work everyday. I, I still want to be a part of this." (p. 19)

For Barbie, not noticing the flight suit, but instead noticing the work and contributions made is a way that the men in her squadron make her feel like she is part of the organization. She agreed that the flight suit does not look good on women. However, she does not think the focus should be on looks, rather the performance. She said,

> Um, and I totally get it because the maternity options were so hideous that that's the reason I kept wearing a flight suit. (laughs) Um, so yeah, it would have been nice if they had a better fitting one, but ... I just was never all that picky about it, mostly because I couldn't be. (p. 19)

In order to participate and become the officer she thought she should be, Barbie did not think she should focus on what she wore. Therefore, her action regarding wearing a flight suit while pregnant was to not raise the issue, but to resolve it by simply finding and wearing a larger men's sized suit.

The fifth contradiction observed is in the rule that women participating within male-dominated organizations support each other. Barbie observed this contradiction during her navigator training experience. Relating back to her experience at OTS, she survived that environment by relying on her woman roommate, whom she said was "joined at the hip." This was necessary to endure being called-out and talked about by the male trainers. However, at navigator training Barbie experienced similar taunting by a

woman, who instead of acting as an ally of Barbie's situation, acts to provoke. Barbie recalled,

> my squadron commander's wife had a thing for me and she called me ... What did she call me? [name omitted]. Yeah, that was her little pet name for me. It was [name omitted]. And she used to go up to my husband and ask if she and her husband could take me back to their place so that the three of us could do whatever she likes to do. And it was, it was so humiliating and so embarrassing, but it's also my squadron commander, who I had my final check ride in that squadron with as a student. (Barbie Interview #3, pp. 11-12)

Barbie encountered her training squadron commander's wife during a social event. Instead of the woman supporting Barbie she attempted to exploit her, like the male trainers during Barbie's cross-country missions. Barbie did not know what to do, as she further explained, "And so you, it was just like I, I, I was stuck between a rock and a hard place" (p. 12). Barbie is stuck. She must participate to succeed, but she does not know how far to go. These are internal negotiations that play out in Barbie's mind. I asked her how she negotiated her participation level during these situations. She responds,

> there was definitely the rules and I…in like 80% of the way I played the game I showed up, I could have just not showed up at all. Um, but I did show up and I went to a point I would say...and then I was done. (p. 16).

Barbie negotiates how much she will participate. By going 80% she still recognizes the need to participate and be shaped by her environment and the rules governing it. However, she understands through her experiences that she must temper the amount and shape her own pathway to participation.

The sixth contradiction observed was within a recent rule emphasized during military education stating the Air Force culture embraces a "family first" attitude. Recently, the Air Force has reemphasized the value of its members spending time with their families (Gipson, 2017). This has not always been the case, as a recent RAND study points out (Chu et al., 2010), so it is difficult for some service members to understand and embrace the shift in priority.

This change in focus on the importance of family is the crux of what Barbie is talking about and where, as a woman, she observes a contradiction within the rule that values family first within the Air Force. She observes men being praised and encouraged for taking time for their families during the workday, while Barbie feels like women are not looked at equally when attempting to do the same. Their presence is required during the workday regardless of the family issue, while men are afforded more leniency. These contradictions are observed while Barbie attends ACSC, but there are other examples that reinforce this contradiction in Barbie's mind that will be expanded upon later.

As I observed Barbie in the ACSC classroom I noticed two men who had to leave in the middle of working a project to take care of family appointments. When I ask Barbie about this, she responded sarcastically, "Oh, yeah, because they're embracing…the Air Force culture…but if a woman tried to do that, it would be detrimental to her professionalism." (Barbie Interview #2, p. 29). We discussed this further, and I asked what she has learned to do in these situations. She responded, "the other thing I always do when I lead is I pick a deputy, the first thing. Like, "If I have something that comes up, can you just take off where I left off?" (p. 28). Barbie understands and has come to learn that work needs to be done during work time and

family errands can wait. However, emergencies come up, so she plans for the worst by choosing someone who can take her place if she needs to leave.

Another way Barbie deals with managing work and family is to prioritize her time. She says,

> I have blocks of time in my head and I don't mind like the "shoot the s--t" moments and drink a beer, but I have to allocate it that way in my head. And so I don't want to do it during the two-hour work thing. I don't want the two-hour work thing to take four hours. I want two hours of work and then two hours of this. (Barbie Interview #3, p. 22)

Here, Barbie knows what her family schedule is, and therefore, participates at work in a different manner. This drives Barbie to be more focused when working and not extend two-hour projects into four-hour ones. This also tends to frustrate her as she observes socialization to be an important part of work in the Air Force culture. She says, "I'm, I'm trying to, to be fluid and flexible now (laughs)" (p. 22). Yet Barbie understands her responsibilities to her family after work and that is what drives her to participate at work the way she does. The fact that the Air Force culture has shifted toward a more family-focused organization should be good news to Barbie. Yet, that is not what I heard from her during our interviews.

Barbie understands there has been a cultural shift in the military toward a willingness to accept parents who must attend to family matters during the workday. However, she does not feel comfortable participating fully in this action. She admits that the Air Force is honestly trying to give these options to all of its members, however, she adds, "And even, I feel like this setting [ACSC], they really mean it though when they

say it. And I'm still not comfortable enough to say like, "I have to duck out. I gotta go pick my kids up" (p. 29). The issue with Barbie is not the rule itself, but its applicability to women. Barbie notices a difference in the way men are treated when they leave work during the day to take care of family matters compared to women. She knows she can, but still will not participate. She adds, “I, I definitely could. I don't know if I would” (p. 30). An illustration of the interaction between Barbie’s central activity of becoming an officer and her secondary activity of attending military education are captured in figure 17.

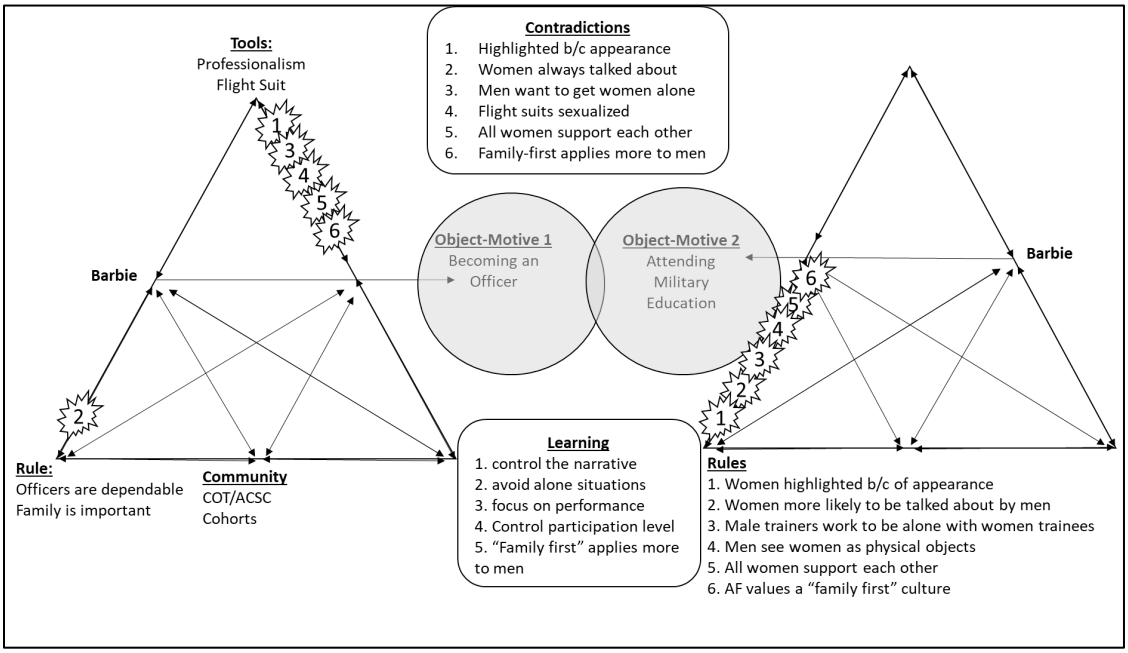

Figure 17
Interaction between Barbie’s central and secondary activities (military education)

Several of Barbie’s beliefs while attending ACSC were formed in her other experiences as a member of her flying squadron. Those experiences will be discussed next.

Contradictions in Secondary Activity: Participating in Flying Squadron

As a weapon's officer on an aircraft, Barbie is used to being in the minority in her flying squadron. She told me there are normally two or three women in a squadron of 100 personnel. Similar to her time spent at ACSC, Barbie experienced categorization because of being a woman at the squadron. She said,

> With females, especially in that small of a group, um, they're always categorized. So, I've always been the one with kids. Everywhere. I'm the only one that's ever had children, so I've always been that. Um, there have been, you know, "You're the married one," or "you're the this one," or... or, you know, negative things also. (Barbie Interview #1, p. 8)

Barbie also noticed these categorizations of women never have to do with performance, only attributes or characterizations of their personal lives, like being a mother. Barbie got frustrated by these categorizations because they do not reflect who she is as an officer. Barbie said, "I wanted to be known for being good at my job, not the one that has kids" (Barbie Interview, #2, p. 35). When Barbie participated within the squadron, she wanted to be known for being a professional and one who has mastered their occupation. She did not want to be seen only as a mom. This led to contradictions as Barbie tries to participate.

There are two main contradictions within the experiences Barbie has shared of her squadron experiences. These contradictions have been mentioned before, but they serve as more examples that shape how Barbie has learned how to participate within the Air Force. The first contradiction is also a quaternary one between Barbie's central activity of becoming an officer and her secondary activity of participating in a flying squadron.

Specifically, it lies in the rule stating that the Air Force is a family first culture. As stated previously, this contradiction was explained before in the context of Barbie's training experiences at ACSC. However, her experiences in the flying squadron have also shaped how Barbie views how women are treated in the military when they are pregnant. Barbie was pregnant while she was a member of a flying squadron and felt as if squadron members treated her pregnancy as a "disease." This compelled Barbie to ensure she worked behind the scenes to get back into the cockpit after she was pregnant. This required multiple waivers, meetings with her leadership, and long hours, which, she recalls, most men in her squadron did not see. Regardless, when talking to her male counterparts about time spent in the squadron, they treated her time as if it did not count because of the time off she needed while pregnant.

Barbie believed these attitudes and actions to be motivated by gender as she observed different standards set between men and women. When we talked about taking time off during the workday, she said,

> I work with, um, a lot of males that have children, but I'm the only female that's ever had children in the workplace. I've never worked with another female that has children…but, I know plenty of males that will leave, you know, early on a Tuesday to watch the kids so their wife could go to a hair appointment, or to, um, a dentist appointment…And, there, was never a question about a male leaving to go support in that aspect. Um, but I felt like I could not take my children to their, you know, six month appointments for shots. Um, or even, you know, to get my hair done. Guys go get their hair done, I realize it doesn't take as long. But, uh, I...

> I just would never spend my work time to go do that. Whereas males, it... it's part of their lunch a lot of times. (Barbie Interview #1, p. 12)

Barbie sensed a different standard for women when they worked in the flying squadron. Her time spent during her pregnancy was counted against her, so she felt the same about time spent away from the squadron during the day. I asked if men went through this also. Barbie continued,

> but it had it brought up by a flight commander if I should put on the [flying] schedule since I was gonna be gone for, you know, an hour to take my daughter to get shots, or this or that, it would be brought up…I absolutely know that it was not brought up when males would go home so their spouse could do the same thing. (p. 12)

The fact that men's time away from work was not questioned, while her time was questioned and devalued, was contradictory to Barbie's experience. However, Barbie also knew that she must balance how much she voiced her complaints about these inconsistencies as she added, "it's just that balance of kind of what you want to be known for… then how far across a line it is if you're willing to" (p. 12). Barbie admitted that while she was a younger officer, she did not speak up for herself because she wanted to balance her participation and acceptance in the squadron. However, she continued to explain her thought process,

> And, honestly, I didn't speak up for hardly any of this as an individual, but when I saw it with other people is when I spoke up and was like, "I can actually help this, and I can make some of these changes." (p. 13)

It is only when Barbie is a little older and sees the same inconsistencies in younger women officer does she intervene and speak out.

The second contradiction I observed in Barbie's activity is another quaternary contradiction within the rule in the secondary activity stating that men can say anything inappropriate in the professional setting without repercussions. This was evidenced in Barbie's story about a squadron social function "roll call" when her squadron commander did not stop men from saying something inappropriate to Barbie about her pregnancy. Not only were these comments unprofessional, but they were also demeaning and disrespectful to Barbie and her husband's family. Again, when asked about the incident Barbie "hated it," but also said she "tuned it out" because she needed to be careful how much she objected.

Another aspect of this contradiction was the indictment that men put on women for not accepting the way men talk about them. Barbie noticed that instead of men being reprimanded for saying inappropriate things about women, it is the women who were chastised for not being "cool" around men and allowing them to talk inappropriately. Barbie said,

> And instead of a behavior change, we're the ones that get the, 'Oh, you can't make jokes like that. She's not cool.'" And it's just like, "No, this has nothing to do with me being cool. This has to do with this person being appropriate." (p. 46)

This is where speaking out and culture change become important to Barbie, because she sees a difference when a man tells another man they are being inappropriate, versus a woman telling a man the same thing. Barbie adds, "we have a lot of males that feel the

same way…but they're just as bad when they won't speak up 'cause it's a lot different when one of the other guys like, "Dude, not cool," than I'm like, "Hey, not cool."" (p. 47).

As Barbie has progresses in the military, she has begun to change the actions of ignorance and acceptance into one of voiced opposition. Because of her hard work above and beyond most in her squadron, she believes she has the confidence and respect to speak out when she sees something not right. She has a desire to change the culture in the "little bits" that she can affect and even talks about speaking out to her commanders when she sees inconsistencies. She says, "hopefully it planted a seed that he's like, "I don't know why I do that."" (p. 37). I asked her if she was glad she spoke up. She said yes. I then asked why. She responded, "Um, 'cause it's kind of out of character for me" (p. 38). Regardless, of whether or not Barbie believed that speaking out was in her character, it was an action she has learned she must take in order to participate in the activity of being an officer as a woman.

Looking back at her time in the flying squadron, Barbie believed she earned the right to speak out. I asked if she thinks things will change. She believes they will. I then asked her how. She said, "I stopped the little bits that I could for sure…I think it can be stopped" (Barbie Interview #3, pp. 25-26). She stopped and thought a while before continuing, "but I think it takes someone in the community to call that culture bad, to get buy-in because otherwise it's someone not in the community telling you what your culture is, and there's not buy-in" (p. 26). Barbie believes that little changes, little conversations between men and women of the same rank is what it's going to take in order for the culture to change. She does not believe sweeping policy changes are the answer, as she adds, "I think the Air Force knows that there are some things that need to

go away. Um, but the Air Force mandating this is not acceptable just makes it be done in darker corners." (p. 26). And that is what Barbie is concerned about the most, policy changes that appear to favor inclusivity toward women, but exclusive male culture that continues to thrive in the "darker corners." Barbie's interaction between her central activity and this secondary activity are illustrated in figure 18.

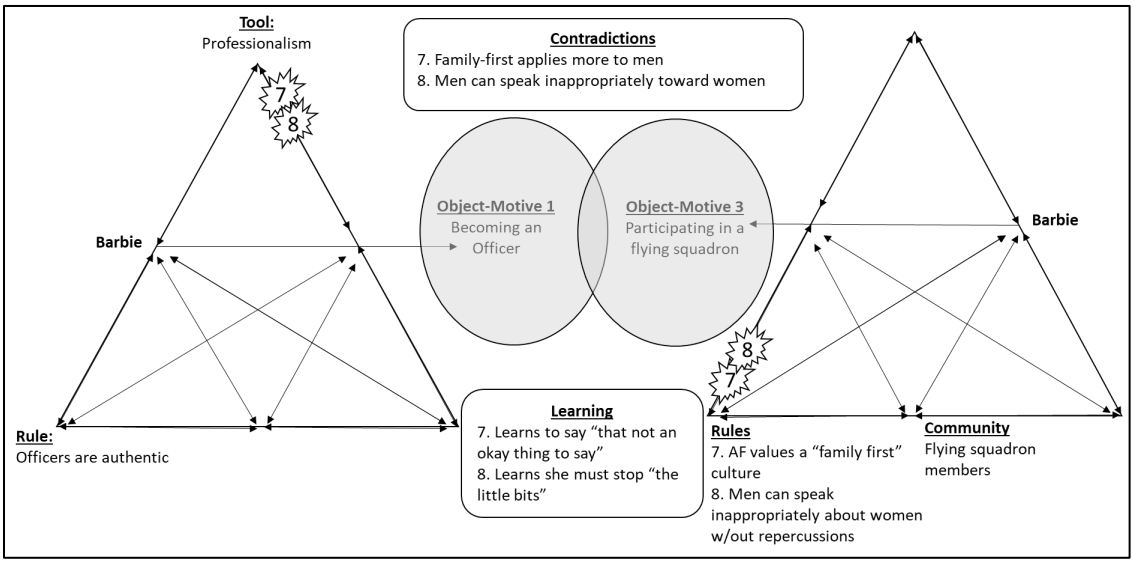

Figure 18
Interaction between Barbie's central and secondary activities (flying squadron)

Contradictions in Secondary Activity: Participating in Formal Complaint

Another experience that was very formative to how Barbie has learned to become an officer was when she was involved in filing a formal complaint against one of her male leaders. As stated previously, Barbie has done well as a professional in the Air Force. She has worked extremely hard to get to where she is and, although she and her family have made sacrifices, Barbie has learned to balance work and family life well. That is why she was shocked to hear her leadership's response when she requested a job that would place her away from her family for a year.

Barbie's job request made its way up the leadership chain for approval at the general officer level and it was at that point when she received an unexpected response. She explained,

> this person said that I shouldn't go, I shouldn't be selected for this opportunity in this job because I had young children and because I have husband that's not in the military and might not understand. And so a really good thing for my career was in question because this person decided to impose his wife's and their kids' lifestyle on me. (Barbie Interview #2, p. 49)

After all the sacrifices Barbie has made with her family to be viewed as a professional, her leadership still did not see her as a professional, but as a mom. Barbie continued to say this leader had nicknames for women in uniform and called them "mama bears" (p. 54). Barbie recalled these were the words he used in an email to his staff about Barbie. She added,

> This guy didn't even say it in person. He emailed the staff…saying, you know, "I don't think she should be considered for this position," after I was finally requested for it. He said, "She's got young children and her husband's a civilian and doesn't understand, (p. 51)

She felt because she made the decision to have a family, she was discriminated against by not being considered for opportunities that placed her away from her family. She said, "I'm getting punished at that point" (p. 49)

Barbie attempted to address this on her own by going to the general officer's executive officer. She said,

> I went to his executive officer and I said, you know, "I'm betting he has no idea he's saying this, but if you could just… you could just say, 'Maybe you're not aware you said this, but you called all the staff as mama bears, and wives, and this and that.'" Whether he said anything or not, I'm, I don't know (pp. 53-54)

Barbie told me just since this was a career-ending decision, she had to raise it up to another level. She recalls,

> I went to my squadron commander and my [leadership], and they just completely dismissed it. They're just like, "He'll be out of here in a couple of months." You know, "If it really bothers you, you can go do something about it, but there's bigger fish to fry." (p. 54)

It is at this point that Barbie decided to file a formal complaint against the general officer. She told me that since it was against a general officer her complaint went all the way up to the Secretary of the Air Force's Inspector General's office (p. 49) in the pentagon.

The investigation takes five months to complete and finally, Barbie received a phone call. She said,

> and that this was really out of the ordinary for me to get a phone call, but the IG [Inspector General] wanted, wanted me to get a phone call because it was that important to him. Like, "Okay." Then, I'm still, like, waiting. And he's like, "We decided that it was unsubstantiated." (p. 51)

Barbie did not understand the findings at all and asked the Inspector General for clarification. She said to me,

> And I don't understand how it's unsubstantiated. It's a black and white email. (laughs) He says, like, he doesn't recommend me because I'm a mom. And after

> lots and lots of interviews, they said that undoubtedly, like, zero doubts, this man speaks... 'Cause he, he never speaks about staff. He speaks about wives. He doesn't even call them wives. He calls them mama bears. He's just like, "They're just these defenseless creatures that support male officers." And every person they interviewed agreed that he said things like that, but agreed that his intent was not bad. (p. 51)

This final adjudication frustrated Barbie. Even though his words “mama bear” were unprofessional and demeaning to working women, the IG did not believe the general officer spoke with mal-intent and, therefore, would not be reprimanded.

In the end, Barbie finally got the assignment approval from the general officer. Barbie adds, “he ended up pushing my name for school, but the push was, was not a push. It was like, "I'm doing this 'cause I was told to" (p. 51). Even though Barbie was finally able to be considered for this opportunity, she is also a little afraid of the repercussions of speaking. When asked if she thinks there will be repercussions in the future for speaking out, she said, “Yes. And I think that that person could still be very influential over it and [I am] definitely a little worried” (Barbie Interview #3, p. 33).

I observed two main contradictions within this theme that add another level of complexity regarding how Barbie was shaped in her overall activity of becoming an officer. The first contradiction was a quaternary one within the secondary activity of participating in a formal complaint. The contradiction was similar to Ruth’s case, that men protect men during the complaint process and is seen in the division of labor of men investigating other men regarding women’s issues.

As Barbie explained the journey of her filing a complaint, she highlighted that she attempted to resolve her issue at the lowest levels and did not immediately use the formal complaint system. She said, “I didn't have faith in the system and I didn't want to file complaints against him 'cause I just figured it'd be more work for me and nothing would happen” (p. 50). She did not have faith in the system itself and thought it would take more work than it was worth. Yet even though she did not want to use the system or thought that it would not help, she used it anyway. She added, “when you have systems in the Air Force to stop behaviors like that and then just like, "Well, I think he meant well."” (p. 50). Barbie used the system at hand because it was all she had. When I asked how the system can be improved, she added, “That's what I'm not sure of. That's probably also why I'm also a little more vocal” (p. 50). Here, Barbie knows she must use an imperfect mechanism (working within the system), along with other mechanisms, like her voice, that are more under her control in order to change the system. By working with what Barbie believes is a flawed system, she is attempting to help make improvements to it. When making the decision to use the formal complaint system, a male commander gives her this advice, “You have to, you have to do something….you don't even have to do it for you. You have to do it for anybody else that falls under his command.” (p. 50).

Barbie’s main contradiction with this activity is in the division of labor within the secondary system that has men investigating issues that are relevant to women. The Inspector General’s office told Barbie that the complaint was unsubstantiated, when she sent the investigating team emails of his discriminatory words and they interviewed several witnesses who corroborated Barbie’s concerns. In the end, the Inspector General

found the allegations unsubstantiated because of intent. As Barbie put it, the investigator's claim stated "Well, I think he meant well" (p. 50). Barbie added,

> I don't know how you expect me to lead and encourage people to go use this system when this wasn't even my feelings about what someone said about me…This was an email that he sent to a three-star's [general officer] office." (p. 51)

Barbie was wondering what kind of message it sent to other women in the military who were working diligently to balance work and family life yet based on a general officer's belief that all women were "mama bears" and needed to stay at home, might be overlooked for jobs that could enhance and further their careers. Barbie believed she experienced the full impact of men protecting other men through this experience when dealing with formal complaints.

The second contradiction I observed in the narrative of Barbie's formal complaint was a quaternary one within the secondary rule that states high ranking men can say inappropriate words to women without being reprimanded. This is related to the other contradiction Barbie experienced while participating in the flying squadron. This further solidifies her belief that there are two different standards for men and women, and this belief greatly shapes how Barbie learns to participate to become an officer. Barbie's confusion was in the unequal treatment by the general officer, made clear through his email response, as to why she should not get an opportunity to compete for the job. This response was clearly shaped by gender in Barbie's eyes as she says, "that would never happen with a guy. There is no way a guy's been offered an opportunity and they're like, "Well, you've got young children and a wife." (laughs)" (p. 49). Barbie's point was that

for men, family matters did not enter the conversation when thinking about applying for certain job opportunities. The assumption, then, is that men have already considered these factors before applying. Barbie believes the same consideration should be made for women.

These two contradictions are very powerful tensions within Barbie's activity system of becoming an officer. They illustrate sometimes frustrating solutions that are inherent to the overall institution, but also pathways for Barbie to make things better for those women who choose to learn how to become an officer after she has completed her journey. The illustration of Barbie's central activity interacting with her secondary activity of participating in the formal complaint process is shown in figure 19.

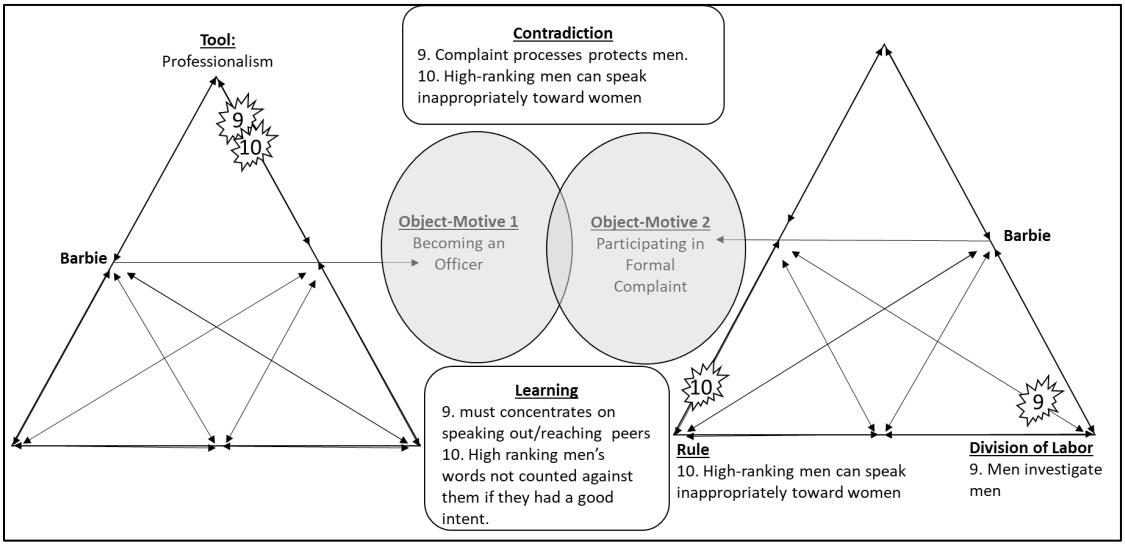

Figure 19
Interaction between Barbie's central and secondary activities (formal complaint)

Barbie's Becoming an Officer Activity System

Barbie's becoming an officer activity system consists of interactions between the three secondary systems of attending military education, participating in a flying squadron, and participating in a formal complaint and is illustrated in figure 20. These

interactions created several contradictions that led to new actions, as well as learning and unintended outcomes for Barbie. Her activity system reveals that Barbie continues to be shaped by these secondary activities, yet they also show areas where she has helped to shape what becoming an officer looks like to her by interacting with those secondary activities. This interaction has been formative for Barbie as she has both learned from them, and also learned new ways to interact with them. This learning has also led to both intended and unintended outcomes.

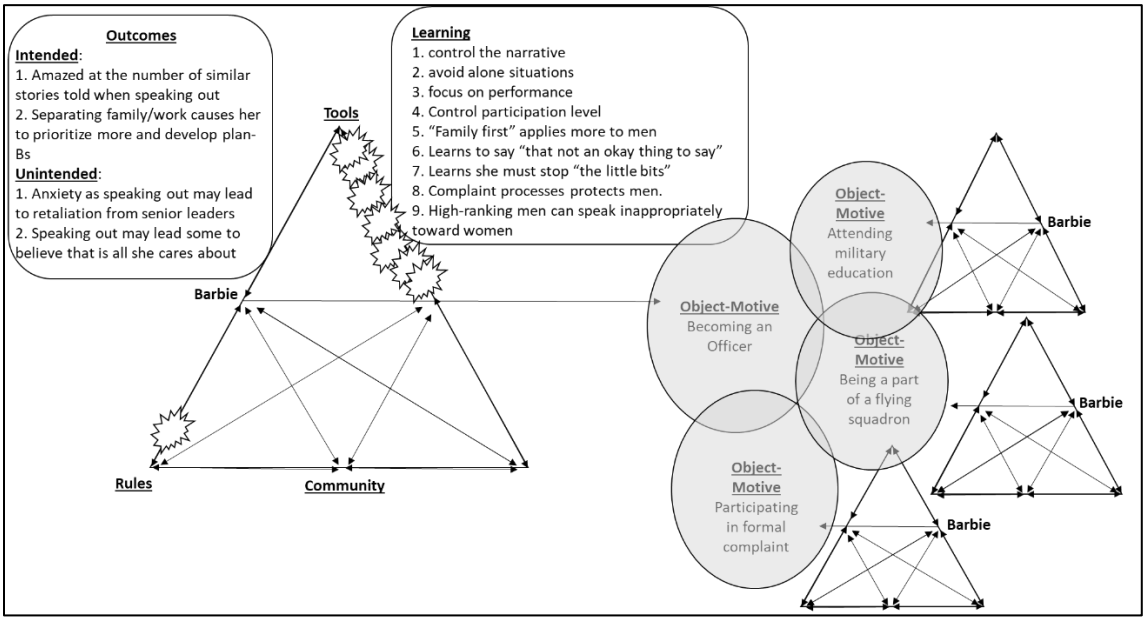

Figure 20
Barbie's Becoming an Officer Activity System

Learning within Barbie's Activity System

As Barbie recalls how these secondary activities shaped her, she struggles with the desire to mentor others. When I asked how she felt about mentoring others, she admitted she wanted to say, "It sucked when I went through it, suck it up" (Barbie Interview #2, p. 20). However, she was very thankful that things had improved for women in the military, so she tries to not be upset when she thinks back at her

experiences. She said, “Yeah, I need to be thankful for that…and thankful that the road is different for people going through it…and not bitter about the stuff that I had to go through. (p. 20). Barbie learned several key truths through these experiences, and they helped shape what becoming an officer looks like to her.

Barbie has learned to control the narrative. Men are going to talk, but her performance and pursuit of excellence speaks volumes to the men she works with. After spending several years within the flying squadron, Barbie knew that her performance spoke the loudest among her male peers. She also learns how to control her amount of participation when it comes to social settings. Initially, the pressure is there to participate socially as much as one would participate professionally. Barbie learns this is not necessary, so she controls the amount of time she spends with her male cohort. Even though Barbie’s actions speak loudly, Barbie has also learned that her performance has given her authority to use her voice. She learns there are times to say, "That's not an okay thing to say" (p. 38).

Barbie also learns some lessons that continue to shape her. First, she learns that men, more than women, can take advantage of the family first culture of the Air Force. This is most likely due to men viewing women as caregivers and not needing to be told to take time away from work to care for family. However, Barbie sees double standards with this rule and never takes time away from work to care for her family. Barbie is also shaped by the contradiction she sees when men say inappropriate things and are not reprimanded. Both her flying squadron and complaint activities reinforced this contradiction. Barbie has not yet resolved this and is still being shaped by it. Instead of focusing on changing and shaping large programs, Barbie now focuses on stopping the

little bits. When asked about this, she says, “so I, I stopped the little bits that I could for sure…I think it can be stopped” (Barbie Interview #3, p. 26). I ask her how. She continues, I think it takes someone in the community to call that culture bad, to get buy-in” (p. 26). Barbie says that large policies alone are not going to change the culture of the Air Force in the way it treats women. She says it simply pushes the behavior into “darker corners” where policies cannot be exposed. Rather, Barbie believes it will take buy-in from both men and women saying “this is not okay” for the culture to change. Barbie believes that will occur in the everyday “little bits” that occur within the activity system. Barbie is okay with shaping her system this way and shaping her activity one “little bit” at a time.

There are also several outcomes from this interaction that occur, both intended and unintended. Regarding the intended outcomes, Barbie is thankful for her time at ACSC. As she begins to talk about these issues, she is amazed at how many women have similar stories. If she had not have spoken out, she would never have heard that other women are going through similar struggles and issues. Barbie also sees her ability to plan ahead and consider options is a direct result of her feeling like she could not mix work with her family. This forces Barbie to always prepare for contingencies, even though her male counterparts do not appear to do the same.

There are also two unintended outcomes from Barbie’s interaction with her secondary activities. First, involves the anxiety she feels after speaking up during her formal complaint. She felt like she exposed a high-ranking officer making inappropriate comments, and even got the assignment she initially wanted. However, now she feels anxious about potential retaliation in the future for speaking out. Secondly, Barbie learns

to control how much she speaks out because she does not want to be the officer that is known only for that. Barbie has worked hard to be a professional and to achieve excellence. Yet she feels that speaking too often or complaining about women's issues may overshadow all the work she has done.

Alex's Case: "there's a deeper calling inside of me"

Alex (pseudonym she gave to herself as a playful name when shortened that can be either a man's or woman's name) is from Texas. During her interviews, she recalled after high school not having a lot of money for college, so she enlisted in the Air Force Reserves. From there one of her enlisted leaders encouraged Alex to go back to college and apply for ROTC to become an Air Force officer. She recalls this as a pivotal moment of someone believing in her as she says,

> [a] senior enlisted [high-ranking non-commissioned offer] came and, uh, pulled me underneath his wing and said, "Hey, did you know you can, you know, become an officer," and…I think from my background, um, a large portion of that I've realized is that, you know, somebody else believing in me is, like, "Oh really? I didn't know I could do that." So he said, "Hey, there's a little ROTC thing out there and I think that you could do that." (Alex Interview #1, p. 2)

Prior to Alex joining the ROTC program at her university, she had a living situation with her boyfriend that had recently gone sour. Again, Alex recalled one of her leaders in the military stepping up to help, as she said,

> I went into his office. I was just, uh, that just happened over the weekend so that Monday morning I go into his office and he also pulls me under his wing and he's like, "You know, you could do so much better than this." Like, you're…You're a

> good person, you're a good…girl, like, I hate to see this happen to you." And he rounded up, like, four or five people…and they stopped what they were doing and they went and moved my stuff. And for me, that was a huge changing point. (p. 3)

This was another illustration in Alex's mind of the selflessness and strong work ethic in the military that she was not accustomed to. They had an enormous impact on how Alex believed she needed to participate in the Air Force. She said, "I don't know any of you people and you're willing to do this for me….I was like, I need to do this whole Air Force thing 'cause…earlier I said, like, people were indifferent." (p. 3). It is these themes of selfless service, strong work ethic and speaking up for others that motivated Alex to attend college and join ROTC, which eventually led her to be commissioned into the Air Force as an officer.

Alex's Introduction

Even though Alex did not have any family members in the military, her early experiences observing other military members helping her out, greatly shaped Alex's view of what it means to be an officer. Because of this, Alex values using your voice to help others, a good work ethic and service to others as part of what it means to be an officer. However, through our interviews I determined that Alex's central activity of becoming an officer had also been greatly shaped and disrupted by the usage of the mediating tool of her voice, as well as the secondary activity of participating in the assignment system. These are not all the experiences that shaped Alex, but they were the most formative in her mind when we spoke together. Using those two themes, I employed CHAT to observe and describe Alex's overall activity of becoming an officer as shaped

by these actions and secondary activities. This included observing contradictions within her actions, resolution to those contradictions, as well as observing new actions or operations that may have constituted learning. A summary of this case is included in Table 6.

In the proceeding paragraphs I analyzed Alex's activity system of becoming an officer, specifically focusing on the action of using her voice within the central activity, as well as the secondary activity of participating in the assignment system. I then observed the contradictions within these activity systems. Lastly, I determined if and how these contradictions were resolved to see if learning and/or expansive learning (Engeström, 2014) took place and if other intentional or unintentional outcomes arose.

Table 6

Alex's Summary of Interaction between Central and Secondary Activity

Action with Central Activity: Using Her Voice	
Action	Alex feels like she cannot say what she would like to say for fear of seeming incompetent.
Contradiction	***Vulnerability seen differently in male leaders versus women***
Resolution	Not resolved; Alex is still being shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Alex holds back and keeps things to herself many times; forced to never admit mistakes in the presence of men.
Learning	Alex feels like she cannot mess up because her vulnerability shows incompetence.
Action	Alex loses sleep, becomes "unraveled" thinking about conversations she's had with men during the day
Contradiction	***Women must use their voice carefully to build relationships with men.***
Resolution	Alex is both shaping yet still being shaped this contradiction.

Table 6 (Continued)

New Actions	Alex believes that getting her words out there is better than being silent, as it spurs discussion and thought.
Learning	Alex learns to use her voice anyway because as a woman in the military she believes she has a "deeper calling" to speak out for women
Actions	Alex pleads with her boss to let her leave work to care for her sick child
Contradiction	***Family matters should not interfere with work***
Resolution	Alex is both shaping yet still being shaped by this contradiction, as she received disciplinary paperwork for her actions.
New Actions	Alex uses empathy to help her boss understand her situation.
Learning	Alex's words changed policy for organization. She is willing to make those changes to the detriment of her career.
Actions	Alex initially feels comfortable in class speaking up about issues important to her.
Contradiction	***ACSC classmates grow in support and understanding of each other as year progresses***
Resolution	Alex is still being shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Alex strongly believes in officers using their voice to help others and accepts pain and isolation from others to continue using it.
Learning	Alex learns that using her voice may isolate her from others but is still necessary to keep women's issues in the fore.
Secondary Activity: Participating in Assignment System	
Actions	Alex over-prepares her family home schedule to make sure it does not interfere with her work. She is visibly upset by the double-standard.
Contradiction	***Some leaders who control assignments believe only men work while women care for families***
Resolution	Alex continues to be shaped by (and is also shaping) this contradiction.

Table 6 (Continued)

New Actions	Alex lowers her career expectations to integrate work and family life
Learning	Alex does not believe she can have everything when it comes to work and family.

Alex's Activity System – Becoming an Officer

During our interviews, two main interactions emerged that helped shape Alex's perception of what it means to become an officer: the action within her central activity of becoming an officer of speaking out and the secondary activity of participating in the assignment system.

Contradictions in Action within Central Activity: Speaking Out

A central mediating tool Alex believes officers possess is the responsibility and the authority to speak up and make their voices heard for the good of their subordinates and the good of the organization. She believes this to be an integral aspect of being an officer. Since she is in the minority as a woman, she believes it is also important to build relationships with men through her voice, as they will be the main group she must work with.

While at ROTC in college, she didn't see it this way as she sought to maintain separation between the two worlds (military and personal). She didn't seek out unwanted attention from men and intentionally "watched her back" (Alex Interview #1, p. 11) when it came to relationships and friendships with men. Now, she sees relationships with men as an integral aspect of being an officer. She says, "these are friends that I need to work with, uh, and, and in the future, uh, we need to have that brotherly sort of, uh, camaraderie" (Alex Interview #1, p. 9).

Yet, as Alex and I talked about her central activity of becoming an officer she recalled four specific examples that have disrupted her tool of the importance of her voice. These examples will be expanded below and include when she has needed to show vulnerability as a leader, when she has needed to speak out against one of her peers, when she has needed to stand up to her superiors, and when she has spoken up for her beliefs. These examples have created contradictions for Alex and have reshaped her central activity of what it means for her as a woman to participate as an officer.

Alex believes speaking is a critical tool that embodies every officer's day-to-day activity and helps shape who they are. I observed four contradictions within Alex's central activity of becoming an officer and her mediating tool of speaking out. Those are found within her actions of showing vulnerability, confronting a male classmate, yelling at her boss, and speaking about women's issues to her ACSC cohort.

First, I observed a secondary contradiction between the rule that vulnerability is a useful instrument for leadership and her tool of speaking out. Alex's observed a difference between men who display vulnerability and are praised, versus women who displayed vulnerability were seen as weak, insecure, and incompetent. To Alex, this was shaped by gender, as she recalled a time when her male commander showed vulnerability during a meeting. She stated, "And he kind of sat in the front and, you know, uh, you could tell his overarching tone was- was always one of humility." (p. 28). Although this was comforting to Alex, she also stated that women would be perceived in a different manner if women acted similarly, "But I think if that was a female, you know, it would have been seen very differently." (p. 28). Alex instantly recognized the difference in the way a woman leader would have been perceived by subordinates, as she believes

vulnerability in women is seen as weakness which can lead to being attacked: “You say anything like that, like leave any chance for weakness essentially to, whenever you're gonna say you're gonna get attacked” (Alex Interview #2, p. 27). This contradiction does not appear to be resolved for Alex, because even as she explains this example, she does not believe a woman could say the same things a man would say and be perceived the same way. She explains,

> And even now as I describe that, I- I wonder if…if you're briefing a mission, you know, as well, and you come out the gate and then say, "No, yep, mess up here, here, and here…it's just seen very differently. It's just seen very differently from a female. You've got to be so much better than the guys in that respect. And you have to, like you can't mess up as much because, it's magnified so much more. (Alex Interview #1, p. 29)

As Alex thought about this situation, she wished she could open up and say what she would like to say to her subordinates, but her voice is constrained as a woman because of the perceptions her words may have. As a leader, she would like to say things in certain situations, but she is inhibited from being vulnerable because she is a woman. For example, officers often brief their subordinates about suicide and discuss strategies to assist others who are struggling with suicidal ideations. She recalled a time when she talked about suicide to her subordinates and felt it was restrained. I asked her why and she said, “Oh man, I wish I could just have this conversation and tell you that, you know, you need to open up, you need to be aware of these things.” (p. 29). Alex wanted to be vulnerable toward her subordinates but was afraid of the perception. To Alex, if men in

the Air Force wanted to open up and have a vulnerable conversation, they could. For women, this was not an option.

Secondly, I observed a primary contradiction between the norm stating women must be careful of the words they said to men because they must build relationships with men in order to participate well within the military organization. This contradiction dealt with Alex's fear of destroying relationships she had with men in the Air Force with whom she might need help from later. She said,

> I want to build up those relationships so when I am projecting my voice and my thoughts forward, I want them to be perceived with love, kindness, and support towards everyone else's ideas because I know that in the future, I will need, I will depend on their love, support, um, when it comes to conversations and social interactions. (Alex Interview #1, pp. 30-31)

Alex wanted to speak out freely once more, and believed officers had this responsibility, but tempered her words again due to the fear that she may have damaged relationships critical to her participation with men in the military. Another aspect of this manifested itself as Alex feared appearing incompetent when speaking to men. Because of this, she would judge her words more critically. She admits,

> When it comes to my profession, I will stay up in the middle of the night and mull over so much so that it, it really pulls at my self-esteem, unravels me as a person, and, and limits my sleep…I just didn't sleep 'cause I was thinking about how somebody else felt about me and took it so heart, took it to heart…I'm not gonna persuade every person that I meet that I'm good enough, you know? But that's gonna bug the crap outta me. (Alex Interview #1, p. 15)

Even though Alex admits she cannot please everyone, she will still become "unraveled" because of the fear of being excluded, devalued, or harming a relationship because of something she said. Alex sees the contradiction in this as she also admits, "that was not gonna be the case for my, you know, my bros, the guys" (p. 10). So, Alex sees this contradiction as shaped by gender, as women carry more of this burden that do men. Since men are the majority in the military, Alex believes they are not as concerned about building and maintaining relationships with other men.

Another example occurred during Alex's experience in the ACSC classroom, as Alex spoke out against a fellow student that she believed not adding value to the academic discussion. She said, "so one of the, one of the guys was…he really wanted to get down this…political debate where it didn't make any sense in, in the topic and the subject." (Alex Interview #2, p.3). Alex recalled that the person would not stop talking and was not adding to the discussion, in her opinion. Finally, Alex recalled that he said a few more inflammatory comments negatively impacting the entire class, prompting Alex to finally respond,

> I'm like, all right, that's it…I asked him a question and I said, well, I know that he hadn't watched the video or whatever, so I said, "Oh, but what did it say [in] the lecture [on video] about that?" Um, which I know he couldn't respond. And so I said, "well, he said this and that"…I explained what…the lecture had [said] and it allowed him to stop talking and us to move on…and so I felt like, unfortunately, I shut him…down. (p.3)

Here, Alex recalled reading both the students and the instructor and believed this student clearly had not prepared himself for the class by listening to the required lecture. Even though Alex voiced her thoughts, afterward she felt badly about her comments.

Specifically, after the incident when Alex spoke up in front of her ACSC classmate, she said, “so I took that really bad, um, really hard later. And I thought, well, did I just potentially damage this friendship with this person? Because you know, my annoyance with them, it, you know, now turns and reflect on me” (Alex Interview #2, p. 4). Even though it hurt Alex after she said it, she admitted to how difficult it is to control what she said.

This led Alex to explore new actions within this contradiction. Alex first admitted to being less careful with her words while at ACSC in an attempt to keep the conversation moving, regardless if what she said was correct. She explained,

> I have to voice my thoughts out loud…I have to hear myself say them because it, I just, it makes sense when it comes out of my mouth. Um, so I think in a group dynamic, you know, it doesn't, unfortunately I think the first thought usually directs people and it may not be the right case, but at least the movement is some sort of progress….Just the fact that you start moving in some direction is better than moving in no direction. So, I think that it's beneficial to some, to some degree now it may not, but I will happily accept the fact that, you know, hey, I don't always have the right answer…It is collectively better, so let's go with that, you know. (Alex Interview #2, p. 10)

Here, Alex went against her rule of tempering what she said in order to keep the conversation moving. She did not care as much about how others viewed her voice, as long as the conversation was "collectively better."

Next, Alex explored another new action while at ACSC, this time when confronted with a classmate who tended to counter everything she says. Alex recalled,

> there was another person in the previous group that would do that to me. Like, no matter what I said, it was like…He would counter me…it was always there every time, I would say something, uh, you know, no matter what I said it was, "well, actually"…and that was, that was kind of frustrated in some respects. (p. 12)

Alex felt like her words were being scrutinized unfairly in the classroom by her male classmate. Similar to the previous example, Alex used her voice to counter his actions. She said,

> so I started doing that back because I picked up on it. And, so I feel like I'm, so I feel like I'm so funny (laughs). Um, but, but again, that hurts my feelings that is going to affect me. And I don't wanna, I don't wanna leave the classroom feeling like I was just a d--k just to be a d--k. (Alex Interview #2, p. 12)

Even though Alex's male classmate was antagonizing her, Alex continued to feel the hurt her words may cause others.

Therefore, it is unclear whether Alex has completely resolved this contradiction, as it still hurt her emotionally when she spoke out against a man. She was still concerned about destroying a relationship she may have needed later on and how her words reflected back on who she was professionally. This concern is shaped by gender as when asked if men feel a similar concern about the words they say, Alex responded, "I don't

think so" (Alex Interview #3, p. 1). Regardless of the cost, Alex believes she understands her purpose in the Air Force a little better as one who must speak out on behalf of women. Alex explains in her own words, "I feel like there's a deeper calling inside of me to- to push forward and to be that, um, leader in, you know, creating a more diverse military." (p. 31)

The third contradiction observed involves a secondary one between the rule that family matters should not interfere with work and the division of labor that welcomes women into demanding military staff positions yet expects them to solve all family issues without impacting work. This contradiction was highlighted during Alex's time spent working on a Special Operations staff, which was very demanding on Alex's time and energy.

Alex's three-year-old son was sick one day, prompting Alex to request time off to care for her son. Her leader did not see things the way Alex saw them and offered a solution that Alex did not agree with. She tried to explain to him, "I cannot take this child to daycare because he has a fever, you know" (Alex Interview #3, p. 20). So, Alex's only solution was to go home and care for her son. Afterward, she was told that she inappropriately yelled at her boss, "I was told that I yelled at my boss. I didn't mean to, but I let him know in every light, like, "I need you to understand you know…I'm not gonna give my three-year-old to somebody" (p. 21).

Alex then attempted to explain her situation to her boss in an empathetic manner. She said, "Sir…remember when you were away at war, and your wife was at home. And she needed to stay at home, because your son was sick…can you think about me like that? Can you understand that this is the situation?" (p. 21). Alex attempted another

action by helping her boss build empathy for her situation. In doing so, Alex asked her boss to see her as a wife and mom, and not a professional. This was an interesting change of action for Alex, because her entire career of participating in the Air Force was driven by a desire to be seen as a professional and not a wife and mom.

I see this contradiction as moving toward resolution in Alex's mind as she stated she was willing to speak out to the detriment of her career. She revealed,

> I will speak up and say something, "Um, hey, this is not right. This is not, you know, cool or good." Um, and I can think of a couple scenarios, uh, you know, where I did speak up and I am- I'm going to speak up until it comes to the detriment of...I'm getting, you know, paperwork for- (laughs) for not shutting up. But I will go maybe to that point. (p. 17)

In the example above, Alex saw clearly what was right and wrong in this situation and was even validated by the commander's change of policy regarding family matters in her favor. However, she still felt the pain of the confrontation and knew that it may have been detrimental to her career. The pain of this contradiction was worth speaking up, in Alex's mind. Regarding tough subjects like speaking up against equality issues in the military, Alex says, "you know, some other stuff, it's definitely like, my opportunity to teach" (Alex Interview #3, p. 19).

However, there are still facets yet to this contradiction yet to be resolved, in Alex's mind. The main reason is Alex's belief that men do not have to juggle with family matters because they leave most of that work to the women. This was illustrated in Alex's talk with her Special Operations Staff leader when she attempted to have him empathize with Alex regarding being deployed and having his wife take care of the family. Her

boss' response to Alex's family illustration was, "I was at war. I was fighting" (p. 20). Alex saw this as an excuse for men to prioritize work over family, perhaps to the extent that they excluded themselves altogether from family matters when work was the priority. Alex does not ever feel that she can exclude herself from her family's matters, and, therefore, must learn how to juggle and manage both.

The fourth contradiction observed within Alex's central activity of becoming an officer was between the norm at ACSC that, as the academic year progressed, most classroom groups grew in their support of each other and understanding of each other's perspectives and the tool of voice for officer to help and lead others. As we speak throughout the year, Alex felt the opposite was true in her case as she felt more isolated than ever as the year draws to a close. During our third interview, occurring in early spring, Alex recalled several interactions with her classmates in a social setting where they did not agree or support Alex's viewpoints when it came to women in the military. However, this culminated in some of the peers in her class sharing mocking and humorous videos of women raising their voice against issues that, in the end, were identified by some to be insignificant. In the group text to all classmates it read, "Alex, is this you?" (p. 13). The point of the video was to point out in a stereotypical fashion how women tend to raise their voices before they fully understand the issue. Even though Alex understood it as a joke, she admitted, "I know they're just giving me crap, and trying to be funny. But to some extent, there's a little bit of truth in humor, you know" (p. 13).

Alex is attempting to accept and resolve this contradiction as she understands her speaking isolates her from the majority, but she remains compelled to speak out and

speak up. She is aware of the hurt feelings and her inner voice that constantly tells her to "not say that," but she believes she is in the Air Force to speak for women. She says,

> So, uh, maybe I'm too vocal about this stuff. And maybe I just- I can't help it, but I'm gonna tell you these things, and it's important for us to... I understand my- my place within society's growth and the military's growth to say, "Well, I'm sorry, I'm gonna be that person that... It reflects bad upon me, but if it makes, you know, anything better, than that's good." You know, that- that I'm here for some purpose. And I'm here, I'm doing a good job and I'm pushing society forward. And maybe in 50 years, you know- you know, your daughter or his daughter, you know, won't have a same, you know, tough time that I'm having because maybe there's more acceptance and all that. (Alex Interview #3, p. 13)

Yet, she continues to struggle with this contradiction. When asked if the pain and isolation make her want to shut up, she says, "sometimes…sometimes" (Alex Interview #3, p. 12). Yet it is that "deeper calling" that pushes Alex past the potential isolation that using her voice causes. Using your voice is an important tool that officers use to help others. Even though Alex is shaped by contradictions that disrupt that tool, Alex is determined to use it to improve conditions for women in the military. An illustration of these contradictions within Alex's central activity of becoming an officer are in figure 21.

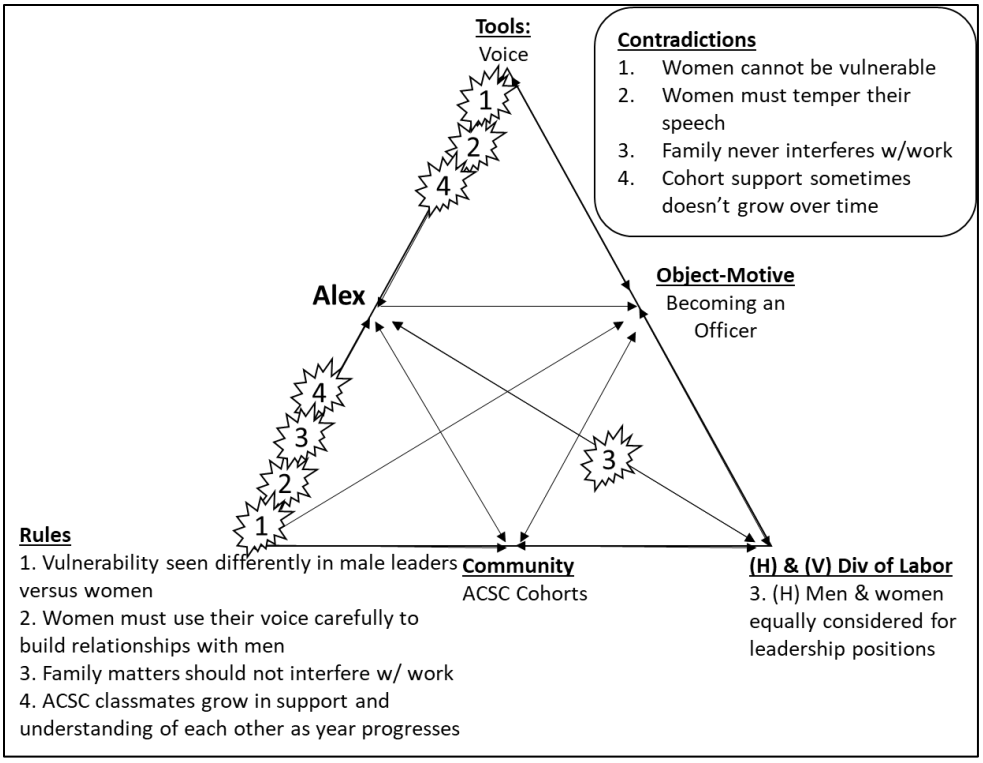

Figure 21
Alex's Central Activity interacting with Action: Using Her Voice

Contradictions within Secondary Activity: Participating in Assignment System

Alex relayed to me the process of participating in the assignment system as being very formative to how she viewed being an officer. As an officer, assignment teams work with leadership to place officers in positions and roles that benefit both the military and fit the officer's professional development needs. Officers normally have a voice in stating their assignment preferences, but those preferences may be overridden by the assignment team based on the overall needs of the Air Force. The assignment team tries to factor in personal issues, but that is not a primary consideration. The reason assignments become so important to officers is that certain assignments convey positive career progression. Conversely, not being selected for certain assignments signal career stagnation or that one may not progress in rank and responsibility much longer. Therefore, how the

assignment team, with the assistance of high-ranking officers, handle one's assignment indicates how they feel about an officer's ability to participate in higher levels of the military.

Throughout our interviews, Alex shared with me that she believed she has always been given similar opportunities as men during the assignment process and that she did not feel her gender inhibited her in getting the assignments she needed for career progression. However, she also told me that she encountered commanders that made her question her acceptance and how they felt about her as a leader. Specifically, she recalled as a young officer being told by one of her leaders that it was the man's role to work and the women's role to have a family. Alex recalled, "my Squadron Commander…a guy who sat me down and said, "No, no, no [Alex], you're gonna be the one that has the babies. Your husband's gonna be the one that works" (Alex Interview #3, p. 14).

This conversation had a profound impact on Alex and the way she viewed herself in the military and the opportunities she had participating in the military. Today, it has led to Alex feeling invalidated as a professional and questioning whether she was a good fit for the military. She still questions her worth and continues to struggle with the idea of getting out of the Air Force and having her husband support the family, while she remains a stay-at-home mom. She admitted to me, "I'm not worth it. You know, I'm not- this isn't- like I just happened to luck into it here" (p. 31). She believes her career and the assignments she's received has been more luck than anything else. She calls her husband the "golden child" as he is doing well working as a civilian lawyer in his law firm. She thinks about quitting the military and following his career. Alex made a request to her assignment team to remain in her current job, which would allow for some family

stability and her husband to remain in his job. She said it would be difficult to ask her husband to give up his job to follow her, even to the point of guilt saying, “I need you to stop, give up your livelihood, give up the thing that makes you a person” (p. 31). Because Alex felt like her leadership did not value her contribution to her career field and the fact that her husband was doing well in his profession, Alex seriously considered getting out and giving up on the Air Force.

In our last interview, Alex told me of a new assignment that just became available for her that will take her far away from her husband’s work. She said,

> So, that was the assignment that dropped. And I was like, "Nope, you know what, screw all this, I- you know, my husband is an attorney, he is- he- in [location]. He's making pretty- pretty d-mn good money, I don't need any of this, I don't need any of that." You know, going back to that negative, uh, exclusiveness. Like, "You guys don't even like me, I don't like it…you know, I'm out." (Alex Interview #3, p. 14)

This was an example of how the assignment process had powerfully shaped Alex’s view of her acceptance in the military. Alex felt that, based on this assignment, her input was being devalued, as well as is her potential to be promoted in the military. Alex decided to contact her leadership for an explanation. When Alex finally reached the leadership team regarding her new assignment, it was her former commander that told her “women have the babies.” She recalled the conversation with her former commander,

> “That's why I requested you Alex, you know, I want you to be…one of my commanders.” And I was like, "Oh, scoop out my heart. You believe in me! Really?" Oh...Man, so, it's so impactful, those little words…But it's funny

> because…the tune of my former…commander had changed. And he's like, "No [Alex], you're the golden child." I'm like, "Who are you? Because those were not the words that you used at me, to me, you know, four or five years ago." (Alex Interview #3, p. 15)

Alex noticed a change in her former leader's words and had hope. "I don't know, I mean, maybe- maybe things changed everywhere. So, anyhow, low and behold, um, I tried to get out because I didn't feel included, I didn't feel wanted." (p. 15). Not only did Alex see hope that leadership could change the way they viewed women in the military, but Alex's worth as a leader was also validated by being selected for this assignment. Alex believes her career is valued and that she still has something to give the Air Force. She reflected,

> I feel like some people, you know, look at me, you know, [with] stars in their eyes, and you know, okay, she's- she's gonna do a good job. And other people, they- they just don't even want me on their team. So, I'm like, I don't know how to... I will hold on so tightly onto the- the goodness…and I guess, still get punched, you know. Uh, uh, maybe that's the same way for guys. (p. 16)

Alex conceded that there will be some in the military who accept and promote her and there will be others who will think she has no value. Alex chose to hold on tightly to those who believed in her. Alex did not know whether men go through a similar struggle.

Within the secondary activity of participating in the assignment system, Alex observed a quaternary contradiction between the norm held by some male leadership that women have the babies and men go to work and the community of her assignment team whose job it is to see her potential as a leader and place her in future assignments that showcase her value to the Air Force. This contradiction was difficult to overcome by

Alex as she managed expectations of what she calls "work-life integration." When thinking through career decisions that will also impact her personal life, she believes that she cannot have everything, but must lower her expectations because she is a woman who must not only think about her career, but also her spouse and family's well-being. She says,

> So, I think as a female and as a woman…it's just- it's hard for us to continue to balance, to move forward…And so, at some point I'll have to stop fighting for- for... No, I'm not gonna stop fighting, but I have to stop looking so high. Because I know in order to make the amount of movement that I wanna make, it requires me to get to ranks, and jobs, and be in front of people. That I need to, uh, have these certain experiences, and you know, need to be in certain locations in order to have these experiences. And I have to have my husband and family to do that. So, that's a very hard pull on- on me, as a- as a wife and a- and a- and a mom. (p. 32)

Alex's struggle with agency in this statement is so clear as she fights inwardly, and through her words, to integrate work and home. She claims she must have her family in order to achieve what she wants in her career. She admits she cannot do it alone. She says, "at some point I'll have to stop fighting for...No, I'm not gonna stop fighting, but I have to stop looking so high" (p. 32). Alex explains the realization of her contradiction so clearly. For her to continue to fulfill her purpose of educating the military of women's issues, she will have to continue to participate in the military and not give up. Alex sees promotions and influential positions as necessary for her to be positioned to voice these issues to as many people as possible. Yet, she remains aware of the struggle this will

cause her family. She is also aware that to fulfill this purpose she may have to lower her career aspirations because she is a woman, yet she does not feel like men have to do the same, nor integrate work and life the way that women do.

I observed Alex to have reconciled this contradiction in her mind as she remains in the military and is determined to make it work with her husband, who is a successful lawyer, and her family. She incorporates a new tool of looking at her career through a "work-life integration" lens, as she feels strongly a calling to push forward women's issues in the military and is determined to stay as long as the military will let her, yet she remains aware of the sacrifices that her family will have to make because she has decided not to leave the military.

An illustration of how Alex interacts with this secondary system can been seen in figure 22.

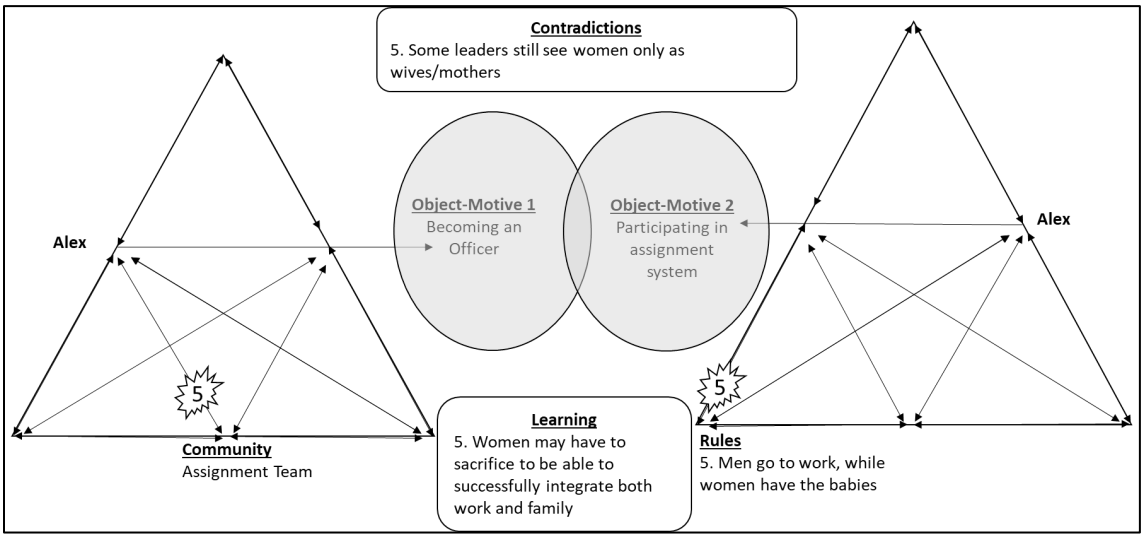

Figure 22
Interaction between Alex's central and secondary activity (assignment system)

Alex's Becoming an Officer Activity System

Alex's becoming an officer activity system consists of interactions between using her voice from within her central activity and the secondary activity of participating in

the assignment system. These interactions create several contradictions that lead to new actions, as well as learning and unintended outcomes for Alex. The final activity system reveals that Alex continues to be shaped by her central activity, yet it also shows areas where she has helped to shape what becoming an officer looks like to her by disrupting her activity system. This interaction has been formative for Alex as she has both learned from them, and also learned new ways to interact with them. This learning has also led to both intended and unintended outcomes. Figure 23 illustrates the interaction of Alex's activity system.

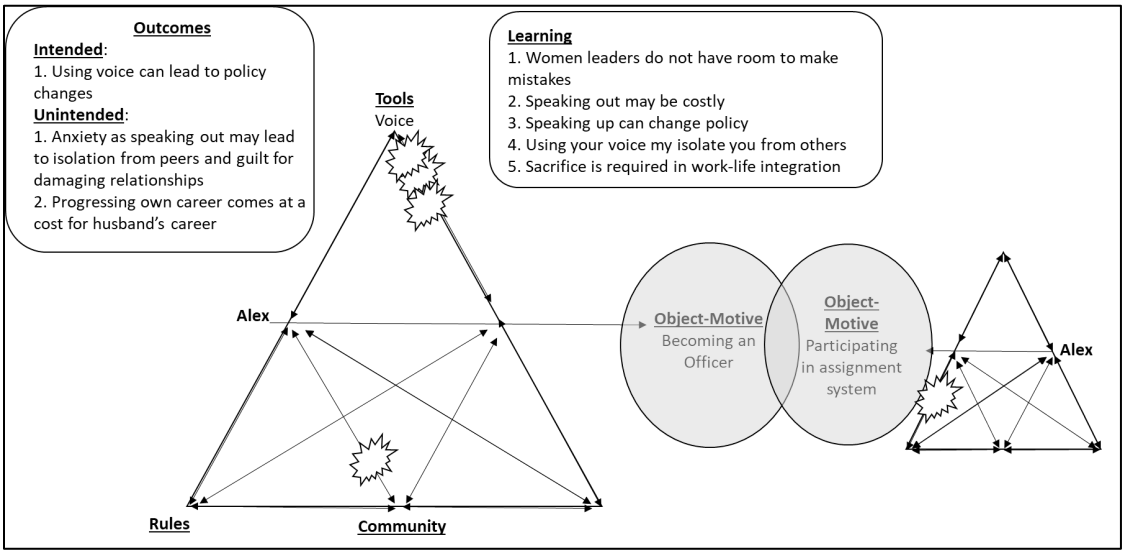

Figure 23
Alex's Becoming an Officer Activity System

Learning in Alex's Activity System

Alex continues to act within this activity system to reshape how it shapes how she participates within it. Alex has been disrupted by but also learns many things through this system.

First, she learns that women leaders have less room to be vulnerable and admit to their mistakes than men. While men use vulnerability to portray authenticity, women are

seen as weak and incompetent. This creates uncertainty for Alex as she desires to be authentic but must do so in a measured way because of how other might perceive it. Secondly, Alex learns that speaking out may be costly and detrimental to one's career. Even though it may constitute change within an organization, it may result in a view by others that you are not participating in a respectable manner. Alex experiences this while on staff and, even though her actions resulted in policy change for families, she still received disciplinary action because of her actions. Thirdly, using your voice may isolate you from others. Alex learns this from her cohort at ACSC who grow increasingly weary of Alex speaking about women's issues that concern her. However, she has also learned to be consistent and relentless if using her voice helps to keep it in the forefront of the mind of leaders. Lastly, Alex has learned that integrating her work and family lives come at great cost. Instead of just thinking about her career progression, she feels guilt over the sacrifices her husband has to make in his career.

Alex's new actions from these contradictions create outcomes that are intentional and unintentional. Alex's believe that officer's use their voices to help has created the unintended outcomes of isolation and guilt Alex feels when she speaks out about an important issue, she corrects a fellow officer, or she second-guesses her leadership style because of the way she might be perceived. Because Alex feels strongly that she is in the military to serve a greater purpose of furthering society, Alex has the unintended outcome of creating strife in her family and her husband must be the one to put his career on hold for her. However, using her voice while working on the Special Operations staff leads to the intended outcome of policy change regarding the care of families for an entire staff, yet it comes with a disciplinary cost of its own. Alex recognizes these outcomes, is

troubled, and sometimes conflicted by them. However, she believes she must stay in the military to make a difference for others who come after her.

Diana's Case: "One size does not necessarily fit all"

Diana is my sixth participant. She picks her alias as a nod to the Wonder Woman character's alias, Diana Prince. Here, Diana mentions her connection to the character as she balances the responsibilities of being both an officer, wife, and mother. When speaking of her responsibilities as a student at ACSC, Diana mentions how her class pitches in to clean up at the end of the day. While Diana would love to stay, she knows she must pick up her children from daycare. She tells me about one student who volunteers to clean the desks because his family is not with him. She tells me,

> He's like, "I will clean all the desks for everybody, just because I know you've got kids…you've got to drive home." Um, so my class has been very understanding of just that extra, you know, stress…and strain. And most people are, they're like, "How do you do it?" And I'm like, "I don't know. That's why I'm Wonder Woman: I just do it." (Diana Interview #2, p. 29)

So, Diana sees herself in this way and takes her responsibilities as officer, wife, and mother seriously. She adds, "I don't know...I have to. Like, I have to. Like, you don't, you can't not, you know, take care of kids, pick them up or feed them and all that stuff." (p. 29).

Even though Diana chooses an alias rooted in fiction, who she is as an officer and how she has learned how to participate as an officer is firmly rooted in reality. In fact, Diana's activity of being an officer is different from the other participants, because I found out during our discussions that who she is and how she acts is firmly rooted in her

family and upbringing. I am not saying the activity of the other participants are not also rooted in family, but Diana's ninety-eight pages of interview speak to her family upbringing, and the lessons and values she learned from her parents. These lessons and values are so strong in Diana's life they become a major shaping function in how she participates within the military.

Diana was raised in a military home. Her father was enlisted in the Air Force and was greatly influential in shaping how Diana acts as an officer today. When asked who her main influences were, she replies,

> I would definitely reflect back on my parents again. So, um, my dad retired as an E7 [enlisted rank – Master Sergeant], and he had a couple [of]... his captains or lieutenants, um ... So there was a lot of, "hey, when you're, you know, a new LT [Lieutenant – young officer] don't do blah, blah, blah….find a good senior NCO" [non-commissioned officer], and all that good stuff that everybody tells you. Um, so my dad told me that a lot. (pp. 19-20)

Even though Diana's father was not an officer, he instilled in her a respect for others based on what he had seen from the officers that supervised him. Before Diana learned to participate in the military from those who were already a part of the organization, Diana was shaped from the lessons taught to her by her father on how to act as an officer. This will become extremely important to Diana's activity of being an officer, as evidenced by our interviews.

A second experience from Diana's childhood that greatly shaped Diana's military experience was being raised in a multi-racial home. She said,

> My mom was from Pittsburgh, my dad's from New York. And he had a lot more of that mix, especially with like Hispanics, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans in New York…my mom …she came from a predominantly black neighborhood, but they both always made it a point with us…"Hey, these are your family and friends." (Diana Interview #3, p. 6)

Diana grew up seeing and respecting different perspectives and viewing the world through different lenses and her parents were integral to exposing Diana to this diversity. When talking about some of the lessons her mother taught her, she recalled her saying, ""you can't just judge somebody by what they look like." Like that was a lot of, um, just the underlying of our…upbringing" (p. 7). This greatly shapes how Diana learns how to participate as a black woman officer and it reveals the strength of her upbringing in helping to reshape her experiences in the military.

Another experience from her childhood that was very formative in the way Diana views how to become an officer involved the lessons learned growing up in different cultures while being a part of a military family. As Diana recalled seeing cultures different from her own, she said,

> I was like, "Hey, that's not how most of the world is. Like, most of the world isn't as privileged." And, um, my dad was military. We lived in Okinawa for seven years, um, which I consider, like, one of the best experiences our parents gave us. (Diana Interview #2, p. 12)

Diana could take different viewpoints and build arguments and understand multiple perspectives because of her time spent around other cultures. Diana viewed these experiences as invaluable to who she is and how they shaped her as an officer.

Even though Diana grew up in a military home, the military was not the original plan for Diana coming out of high school, Diana added,

> the biggest reason for me joining the Air Force kind of came down to my freshman year in college … I went to a small private school, and seeing like the soon to be seniors or the seniors getting ready to graduate not really knowing what they were going to do next. Um, the amount of debt that they kind of had or that they knew they were going to come with, you know, after school, and the uncertainty of what they wanted to do to pay those bills, I was like, "Well, that kinda sucks. (laughs) Um- um, what's something that I can do?" (Diana Interview #1, p. 1)

It was only when her father suggested the military as an option that Diana decided to pursue it. She says, “And so my dad was like, "Hey, why don't you think about, you know, ROTC or something?"” (p. 1). Diana eventually joined the ROTC detachment at the University of Texas at San Antonio. She recalls that her parents fully supported her decision by adding, “There's structure. You'll travel a little bit. Um, so they were very supportive and pretty excited” (p. 2). Diana recalls positive experiences during her training within ROTC. She even recalls having more women than a typical ROTC detachment. She says, “Like the number of females, um, were a lot higher than I think most of the ROTC detachments were…it was great. It was nice having people that could like commiserate with you through PT tests or pushups” (p. 3). Not only that, Diana also had the privilege of seeing women in leadership roles while at ROTC. She adds,

> I think it helped us to…support each other to kind of work through…uniform requirements and making sure ... you know, all those things that you kinda have to

> do. Um, our commandant [ROTC commanding officer]…when I was there was also a female as well. Um, so that was nice to see a woman in that leadership position. (p. 4)

So, Diana had both strong influences from her family, as well as positives experiences in ROTC training before becoming an officer that helped shape how she learned how to be an officer while in the military.

These two formative examples, especially regarding her family, greatly shape how Diana acts within her activity system of being an officer. Below I discuss three main themes within her activity system of being an officer that shape Diana's actions: mentoring others, how she feels about standards, and her respect for communication. Outside of her family, these three themes help shape how Diana learns how to be an officer.

Diana's Introduction

Diana's central activity of becoming an officer is heavily influenced by growing up in a multi-racial, military home where they lived abroad around several cultures. Diana highly values officers who value others, especially those who work under them. This is a strong aspect of who Diana believes she should be as an officer and she learned this from her parents. Valuing others is an action that was primarily learned growing up, but one that is disrupted as it interacts with her experiences in the military. There are other secondary activities that have also served to shape Diana's experiences: participating on a leadership staff and participating in deployments.

In the proceeding paragraphs I first describe Diana's activity system of becoming an officer, specifically focusing on the interaction of participating on a leadership staff

and deployments, as well as her action of valuing others within her central activity of becoming an officer and will secondly observe the contradictions within these activity systems. Lastly, I determine if and how these contradictions were resolved to see if learning and/or expansive learning (Engeström, 2014) took place and if other intentional or unintentional outcomes arose. Table 7 is a summary of the interaction between Diana's central and secondary activities.

Table 7

Diana's Summary of Interaction between Central and Secondary Activity

Secondary Activity: Working on a leadership staff	
Action	Diana ignores their behavior and believes they will not change.
Contradiction	***Men can address women any way they please and are not corrected.***
Resolution	Diana is both shaping yet still being shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	It is only when she sees it happening to a fellow woman colleague that she mentors her to speak and confront the male officer
Learning	Diana believes only the younger generation will listen and create a more inclusive environment
Secondary Activity: Participating on Deployments	
Action	Diana believes women can be just as physical as men
Contradiction	***Physical preparation is more important than mental***
Resolution	Diana is both shaping yet still being shaped by this contradiction.

Table 7 (Continued)

New Actions	Diana accepts bodily differences between men and women and that most men are more physical.
Learning	Diana accepts physical differences between men and women but does not see them as a disqualifier for women to contribute to the military mission.
Actions	Diana feels the pressure to obtain a certain fitness score to show she is ready to deploy
Contradiction	***Fitness test as an accurate tool to determine deployed readiness***
Resolution	Diana is still being shaped by this contradiction
New Actions	Diana focuses on her ability to perform her job well while deployed, instead of a fitness test number
Learning	Diana learns to assess her readiness to deploy through the knowledge of her job, not on a fitness test score
Actions	Diana still reminds husband of family appointments when deployed; works with guilt as friends outside military believe she has a choice to leave
Contradiction	***Deployed personnel can focus on job only***
Resolution	Diana is still being shaped by this contradiction.
New Actions	Seeing other women going through similar circumstances allows her to feel more comfortable about leaving family.
Learning	Diana learns she will never stop being a mother, wife, and officer
Actions within Central Activity: Valuing Others	
Actions	Diana avoids using this rule as it conflicts with her belief in valuing others
Contradiction	***Men will be heard and respected when speaking aggressively, while women will be perceived as emotional and irrational***
Resolution	Diana is still being shaped by this contradiction, but also shaping its effects.

Table 7 (Continued)

New Actions	Diana uses this at ACSC but struggles with how she feels afterward; She feels she is acting not true to herself, so she rejects this rule.
Learning	Diana is more concerned with other women watching how she treats others, so that means sometimes one must reject common cultural rules.

Contradiction in Secondary Activity: Working on Leadership Staff

Diana shared several examples of her time spent as an executive officer on a leadership staff. Specifically, she mentioned a story during her time working for a general officer that made a profound impact on how she has learned to participate as an officer. Diana told me it was normal practice for retired general officers to call the office to speak with the general in charge. Diana recalled,

> So, [name omitted] would call, and I never had the privilege of talking to him, but our secretary…had the privilege of talking to him a couple of times. And so, (laughing) our deputy...would be like, "Okay, you know, hey. He's going to call. He's a little bit old-school, he's a fighter pilot." He would always stuff like, "Chicks love fire..." Or, "Chicks dig fighter pilots who do whatever." Like, fill in the blank. (Diana Interview #2, p. 18)

Diana laughed as she told me this story because of how this retired, fighter pilot spoke about women. To Diana, it was outdated and did not fit with the way the Air Force treated women. Diana laughed about it, but as she continued, she revealed not everyone found it funny. She said,

> [the secretary] got off the phone one day and…I could, could tell that she was a little flustered. I'm like, "Why are you upset?" She's like, "I just got off the phone

> with [name omitted]," and I was like, "Oh, Lord. What did he say this time?" And he basically told her that "You all", meaning women, "Make good a, um, secretaries, and flight attendants, and nurses," or something. And, [the secretary] is probably 57, 58, and she, and she was upset. Like, she was appalled, and she went to the [general] and she's like, "Sir, you have to talk to him." (Diana Interview #2, p. 19)

When Diana first told me this story, her reaction was, “every time he would call he would kind of say something, not meaning any harm or anything” (p. 19). It appeared as if Diana was condoning this behavior in the retired fighter pilot. Yet as she continued, I got a better indication of her thought process. She said, “So, I know there are still people that kind of have that, um, mindset. Um, but hopefully, as the generations go on, it will, like, that mindset will, you know, die off” (p. 19). Diana understood that some men would not change their ways, so to speak up to them was a fruitless endeavor. Diana added, “I don't think people, most of the time, are saying things or doing things to be sexist. Um, I think that's just maybe how they, like, and were raised” (p. 20). So, Diana focused her attention on changing the mid-set of the younger generation.

Diana illustrated this while working in the same office, this time with a younger administrative woman officer, who was about eight years younger that Diana. She told of a similar incident as the one above that occurred with another retired, fighter pilot. Diana said,

> she [younger administrative officer] set me aside one day, and she's like, "I need to ask you something really serious about [name omitted]." I was like, "Okay. Like, what?" And she's like, "He keeps calling me "young lady"."

> (Laughing)…and I was like, "Okay, so why does that bother you, that he's calling you young lady?" She's like, "I don't know, but why can't he call me [name omitted], or ma'am, or whatever?" Um, so she was really perturbed about this, and…she's like, "Do you think he's doing it, um, like, on purpose?" (Diana Interview #2, p. 21)

Even though Diana laughed about it when she told me, she realized this was another good mentoring moment for a younger officer. Diana was used to being called these names by older men and was willing to let that generation "die off." As she reflected on this, she added, "But that was... that was just, like, an interesting thing to me, because I didn't make anything of it, and it had been, I had been there for a year before she got there" (Diana Interview #2, p. 21). However, for the sake of this younger woman who looked up to her, Diana decided on a different approach and encouraged her to say something about it. Diana added, "She said, "I'll talk to him about it and just see." And, um, so she did and he's like, "Okay, I didn't mean to offend you. Like, that was not my intent at all." (p. 21).

When I asked if she spoke up and mentored because the other officer was a woman she did not think so. To clarify this, she shared a few stories regarding her son. The first story revolved around a lesson she taught him during Halloween one year. She said,

> my daughter was Spider-Man for Halloween, um, and one of my friends was like, "Oh, you're like Spider-Girl, and she's like, "No, I'm Spider-Man," and she's three. So, (laughing) we watch a lot of superhero stuff in the house…but so, I'm trying to teach her, like, "Hey, you want to be Spider-Man? You can be whatever you want to be." And at the same time it's having that conversation with my son that,

> "Your sister can do whatever she... she wants to wear your Power Ranger, be the red Power Ranger, she can be the red Power Ranger or she can be the pink Power Ranger."… so trying to instill that in them. (Diana Interview #2, pp. 16-17)

Diana understands that having both a boy and a girl gives her an opportunity to show both of her children perspectives from the other side. She waits for teachable moments to speak up and mentor them. From her childhood experiences, she knows how influential family can be in shaping values. However, sometimes those teachable moments do not come easily, but you still must be able to find those mentoring moments.

One such moment occurred as her son was getting ready for bed and passing by the television as Diana was watching a show while working out. She recalled,

> I usually don't watch it with my kids around, but I had it on and my son said, "Mom, why does he sound like a woman?" And so it took me a minute. Like I was riding my bike and we haven't had this conversation yet. Um, he's seen a couple of people that look like transgender, but he's never really asked me before. And I'm like, "Well, you know, sometimes just people sound like that and that's just how he talks. So that's just how he is… You know, he thought about it for a minute. And then he was like, "Okay." And then he, you know, went on with his day. (Diana Interview #3, pp. 5-6)

Diana was not ready to speak to her son about that topic that moment. Yet, as Diana recalled this story to me, it was similar to the way she spoke up to others in the military. She explained,

> it stuck out to me because, um, again, one, we hadn't had that conversation before and two if maybe that... If maybe this this will come to him at some point in the

> future where if he does meet, you know, a gay kid that has a higher pitched voice, he can know that, "Hey, that's just who that person is." Like he's not gonna have to make fun of them or do any weird, or they make them feel uncomfortable. (Diana Interview #2, p. 6)

Diana continued to tell me the impact of discussing different perspectives may not have an immediate impact, but it may down the road. So, even though this was a good story to tell about her son, Diana was saying it in the context of the way she decided to speak to and mentor women officers younger than her.

From her experience working on leadership staff, Diana noticed that she made a conscious effort to mentor those younger than her, but also chose to ignore and wait out those older than her. As evidenced above, Diana views mentoring the older generation as not a fruitful endeavor. She believes how a person was raised greatly shapes their ability to be changed and consider other perspectives. This belief greatly shapes how Diana mentors, as well as who she mentors.

I also observed a quaternary contradiction between the norm within the secondary activity of working on a leadership staff stating that males address women any way they please and are not corrected by leadership. Even though some women in the military may find these actions by men shocking and unsettling, they are often never confronted nor corrected. Diana confirmed this by saying she was used to the behavior and did not confront it for two reasons. First, she assessed that these men do not mean “any harm” (Diana Interview #2, p. 19) by it and that they addressed all women in the same manner and did not single anyone out (p. 21). Secondly, Diana admitted she was waiting for them to “die off” (p. 19). She admitted there was no way to change their behavior because it

was the way they were raised and has led to their beliefs about women. This is another example to illustrate how Diana believes the way one is raised greatly shapes how one learns to participate within an organization, and it may not be just the organization itself doing the shaping.

When speaking of this incident, Diana's actions were two-fold. She mentored a junior officer to not let it bother her and to wait for the older man to "die off" (p. 19). However, she also encouraged her mentee to say something back to the old man when he called her "young lady", which took him by surprise. To Diana, there was more value in saying something to the younger officer, than to the older man.

While mentoring her son, Diana's actions were the same as when she was with her mentee. Is it easier to mentor those younger and those for whom you are responsible, as opposed to speaking out toward this older man? Is not speaking out against the older man a form of action learned from the organization? Diana acts in a contradictory manner at work when addressing her younger mentee versus not addressing the older man. She does not admit to this contradiction, but it is illustrated by her two actions toward mentoring younger women versus speaking out toward older men. This is illustrated in figure 24.

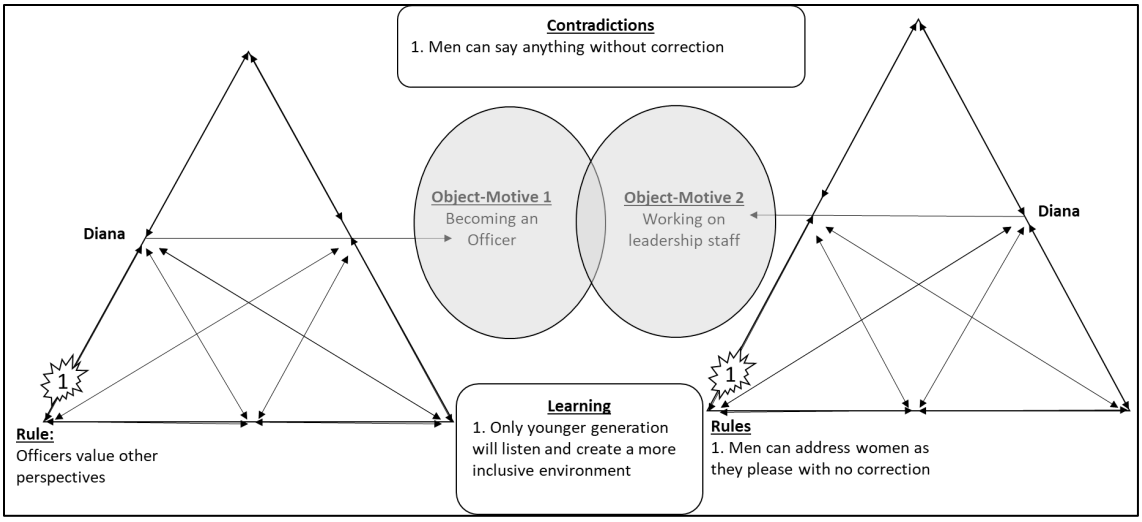

Figure 24
Interaction Between Diana's Central and Secondary Activity (Leadership Staff)

Contradictions in Secondary Activity: Participating on Deployment

To Diana, standards in the military are important because they entail requirements that all military members (men and women) are measured by equally. Yet when speaking of deployments, and the fitness test designed to show one's readiness to deploy, Diana admitted that applying universal standards does not work every time. Diana wrestled with the idea that standards making deployment opportunities equal to both men and women should not be extended to the fitness test that assesses if one is ready to deploy. Diana wanted equality when it came to deploying, but also wanted her femininity considered when leadership decided on fitness standards. This created what appeared to be a contradiction in Diana's mind, but one that she understood and navigated through as a woman in the military.

Deployments to foreign nations in support of military or peace-keeping operations are a normal part of being in the military. As stated in chapter two, women's roles and proximity to these areas have increased with the easement of restrictions on women in

combat zones. Most women in the military today expect to deploy just as much as the men. There are very few deployment locations and positions that are restricted only to men. Yet these equal standards and opportunities to women have the potential to also create inconsistencies in the way some people see women who deploy.

As a personnel officer, Diana is required to deploy is support of operations and has volunteered to do so during her career. While she is glad combat restrictions for women have been lifted, she still feels the judgment from others when she deploys. She says,

> you get all kinds of extra questions and looks [from those outside the military when you say], "Hey, I'm going on my fifth deployment, you know, in (laughs) 10 years" or something. [It is] definitely [viewed as] different...in the public eyes. (Diana Interview #1, p. 24)

Diana notices that others view her differently when she says she is deploying. She says she gets extra questions and looks from people, meaning that when men deploy it is more natural for most people to accept that as opposed to when women deploy. I ask why she thinks this way and she responds,

> they think you have a choice, that I can like say, "I can't deploy because I have kids." And…like I have kids and I have a family. Like they don't understand ... At least with some of the civilians that I've talked to when I've told people I'm deploying, they don't understand…that we don't have different options. (Diana Interview #1, p. 24)

As stated previously, Diana is happy to participate in deploying just as much as the men do. She is perplexed that others outside the military would expect her to have specialized

treatment because she is a woman. She adds, “Like they think because you're a woman in the military there's different treatment or opportunities or options that you have, as opposed to a man in the military…Like I'd go to jail. I have to go.” (Diana Interview #1, p. 25). Even though Diana jokes about it in a negative sense, she likes the standardization of men and women being equal in this area, even if it is costly to her family.

Regarding how the Air Force standards for deploying, and the fitness test to measure one’s readiness to deploy, have shaped how Diana learned to be an officer, I observe three main contradictions: physical fitness is valued over mental fitness, fitness test is a good indicator of deployment readiness, success while deployed, deployments allow military members to focus on the job and not worry about home life. All three are quaternary contradictions between Diana’s central activity and the secondary activity of participating in deployment.

The first is between the norm that some men have during deployments stating that the physical should be emphasized more during deployments than the mental aspect. Diana does not see the need to make every issue as black and white as that rule requires. This appears to contradict Diana’s zeal for standards in the military that she spoke about in our interviews. For example, regarding deployment opportunities, Diana favors equality for both men and women. She says, “this is part of what we signed up for” (Diana Interview #1, p.25).

Yet, when it comes to the fitness test, Diana views military standards differently because of the unique abilities exhibited by men’s and women’s bodies. I ask Diana if she feels less of an officer because the fitness standards for women are lower than for men.

Diana: No.

Kyle: How do you reconcile that?

Diana: Reconciling it with the fact that just physically men and women's bodies are different. (Diana Interview #2, p. 23)

Diana accepts the bodily differences in both men and women, not as a disqualifier, but as traits that help to make men and women uniquely qualified for service in the military. She adds,

> I was a physical trainer way back when I was in college, um, and I just know that what a man can do a woman usually, most... I would maybe say, um, like 75%, maybe 80%, can't.” (Diana Interview #2, p. 23)

Diana accepts that men usually have more physical abilities, but that does not make up the majority of what being an officer is about. Diana argues that there is a mental capacity and baseline that the organization must also consider before going with one physical standard for men and women. She adds,

> so I really see the mental capability is basically start at a baseline even field, um, but the physical capability, they're just different. And that's, so I see them very separately, um, which is why I think I'm able to say, "Okay, we can mentally do the same jobs and get to the same level of expertise, but our bodies physically cannot, um, usually do the same things." (p. 24)

Diana thinks the military overemphasizes physical toughness when mental strength is just as important to an officer and provides added capability to the military organization.

Secondly, I observed a contradiction in the norm that the fitness test is a tool to prove one’s readiness for a deployment. This contradiction challenges the tool of the fitness test as an accurate measure of one’s ability to be an officer and be successful when

deployed. The fitness test has been mentioned as a tool in other participant's stories. In Diana's experience, she questions the reasons why some put enormous weight on the score itself. When I asked Diana if men tended to place more value on the actual test score, she responded,

> I do think that some people put too much value on the number… I think men put more weight on the score because of how the, because of what we're assessing on, um, and the ability for a man to do that easier than a woman. (Diana Interview #2, pp. 15-16)

Diana believes men focus on fitness test scores because they know they have a greater physical ability to achieve higher scores than women, for the most part. This score, then, is used to calculate how well you fit in with the organization and becomes connected to your abilities as an officer. Diana counters this belief stating that several factors weigh into a physical fitness score and those factors vary from year to year. She says,

> there are multiple reasons for why someone may have the set number that they have. So, um, I had a…reoccurring shoulder dislocation from 200 to 2005…I finally got it fixed at my last base. So on and off, they finally got it fixed…you see this, you know, up and down inconsistency in my record. (Diana Interview #2, p. 15)

Diana relayed to me that because of her injury, her fitness score had fluctuated from year to year until she was able to finally get it fixed. Is this oscillating fitness score indicative of how effective she is as an officer? Diana would firmly say no. Yet, because men tend to perform better than women on their test, this norm connecting the effectiveness of a deployed officer to the fitness score still exists in the military. Diana adds, "the physical

fitness test is probably not the best way to say whether somebody is capable of deploying…and if they're actually healthy." (Diana Interview #2, p. 25). I asked her to expand on that and she said, "your physical fitness is not directly correlated to your ability to do your job stateside, or your ability to do your job...deployed… Because, (laughing) I deploy and do pretty much the same thing" (p. 26). Here, Diana admits to performing the same duties while deployed as she does when she is not, thus disrupting the argument that the fitness test serves as a good proof of one's readiness to deploy.

The third contradiction I observed is between another norm stating that during deployments one can just focus on the job and not worry about family matters. Diana had made it clear throughout our interview that she saw deployments one of the reasons she was in the military (Diana Interview #1, p. 25). However, as Diana prepared for one of these deployments, she also received several questions regarding her son, who was 15-months old. People questioned why Diana was deploying and made her feel as if she was not a good mother. She said,

> I think that person just was a little bit concerned and really it was, they don't understand, you know, that it's not a volunteer thing that you don't really have a choice with anything you do when you're in the military. (Diana Interview #3, p. 13)

I asked her if she felt guilty about deploying and leaving her son. She stopped and thought about it for a while, then said no. She continued,

> I think I felt the guiltiness, like when I first got assigned the deployment, so at that point…I don't want to go. And my self-wallowing and you know, all that feeling bad that I'm going to leave my kid. But I had people on that deployment…some

people that had like five or six months old baby. Um, and you know, they were really, really small, a lot smaller than my son was. (Diana Interview #3, p. 13)

In Diana's experience, the guilt of deploying and leaving behind family came from both external and internal sources. Yet, seeing others who were also leaving their families helped Diana get through the guilt and focus on her job while deployed. Yet Diana admitted that even though being deployed should be a place to not think about, and worry about, family, she still did. She sometimes wished she could just focus on her job while deployed as she understood the deployment rule. However, Diana never stopped being a mom and worrying about her family even when she was deployed. I asked if her husband (who is in the military also) similarly worried about family when he deployed. Diana said, "not necessarily the worry that they needed to be taken care of…He's like, "Oh, you're there to take care of them." Like (laughs) yeah." (Diana Interview #3, p. 13). Diana never stops acting as a mother even while deployed, while she believes men do not carry this responsibility. This is illustrated in figure 25.

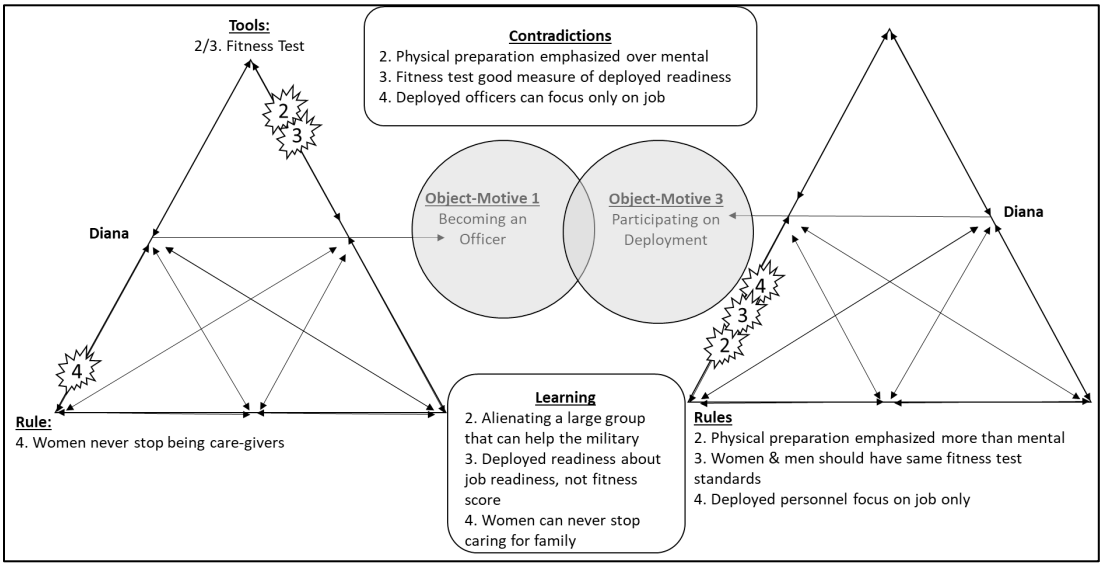

Figure 25

Interaction between Diana's Central and Secondary Activities (Deployments)

Contradictions in Action within Central Activity: Valuing Others

Valuing others was the third and strong theme firmly embedded within Diana's journey in learning how to become an officer. This was a theme that appeared to be a strong and constant undercurrent in everything that Diana did, both at work and at home. This theme was something she learned at an early age growing up in a military family stationed all across the globe. Diana said, "a lot of it comes from my parents for sure" (Diana Interview #3, p. 19) when discussing the importance of being empathetic and respecting others when communicating with them. She talked about growing up with multi-racial parents and how they intentionally showed Diana the value of other perspectives. Diana recalled,

> a lot of it stems again from just living in Okinawa for such a long time and meeting so many different people….we were homeschooled, so we were part of the Okinawa Christian Home Educators Association…and again, it was a lot of different people from different backgrounds that were part of this school group and part of this family of, you know, raising their kids and teaching us all these things and helping us learn together. So pretty much as far back as I can remember, my friends and my circle around me had been people of all different colors. (p. 6).

Diana and her siblings were introduced early to other perspectives and other people groups. She also went to school in that environment and was accustomed to differences being a part of what it meant to learn from others. She learned to embrace these differences and not be afraid or discount them.

As Diana learned how to become an officer, I observed a primary contradiction, within her central activity of becoming an officer, with the norm that men will be heard and respected when aggressive with their voice, while women will be perceived as emotional and irrational. Diana still struggles with this rule as it goes against the way she learned how to value others as central to how officers should act.

Diana explained this as she told me about a time in her ACSC class she felt she was forced to speak out against one of her classmates. She shared a story about a discussion with a classmate who, in Diana's mind, was presenting an argument from a narrow point of view. Diana told me that she responded, "Well, I think you're wrong" (Diana Interview #1, p. 27). However, right after that she mentioned,

> like after I got home I was like, "Man," I was like, "Was that too mean? Like should I apologize to him? Like did he take it the wrong way?" 'Cause I was like, "No, you're wrong, and this is why." (p. 27)

Here, Diana felt compelled to speak out against a classmate who spoke from a narrow perspective, as she said, "Um, I think maybe with that one it just was so forceful, like, almost, almost at the point of being rude, and like, you never want to be rude to someone or discount somebody" (Diana Interview #2, p. 11). Diana told me she got upset when her classmate presented his perspective without accounting for any others.

Diana's sharp response to her classmate is what she has learned from the military. You must speak out confidently when you present your perspective to others. To Diana, it is almost as if the loudest, and the one with the sharpest tongue, is the one whose voice is heard and valued. This is learned from the military and is not a part of how Diana was

raised. As we spoke further about this incident, she wondered if he would have felt badly if he said something similar. Diana stated,

> Like should I apologize? I didn't mean to offend him." Like I'm thinking all of this stuff in my head after. And I'm sure a man would have never thought any of that. Like he would've just said it and been done with it." (Diana Interview #3, p. 27)

So, Diana remained conflicted about her response. Even though she understood that not everyone will have similar experiences and perspectives, she still struggled with being respectful and valuing others when confronted in these situations.

Another formative example of the contradiction of valuing others came when she went with her boss, a woman, to an executive leadership meeting on an Air Force base. At the meeting, the person in charge of the Sexual Assault Prevention (SAP) program spoke negatively to Diana's boss in front of everyone in the meeting. Diana recalls,

> I saw…our wing SAP…basically calling out our squadron commander, um, in front of, like, you know, a wing staff meeting. It was like, "Oh, the FSS [Force Support Squadron] has blah-blah-blah." (Diana Interview #2, p. 14)

Diana told me she was only a spectator in this meeting and saw the exchange between the two leaders. She also mentioned that the SAP coordinator is also a woman. As she continued with her story, she mentioned struggling with knowing when to speak out in those situations. Although she has learned from the military that the loudest one in the room is typically whose perspective will be valued most, she was still conflicted at seeing this incident and told me of her conversation with her boss after the meeting. She continued her story,

> And, my boss was, like, livid. She didn't say anything back, which was probably really good (laughing), but the walk back across the street to our building, like, I could hear her, you know, vent all of her frustrations. (p. 14)

Diana told me this story as a way of examining ways to value others even if we do not agree with their perspective. She said, "I feel like there's better ways to approach, um, or to agree to disagree" (p. 15). Similar to her story about her ACSC classmate, she believed we can even show value toward others in her responses even when we disagree with their perspective. This continues to contradict what Diana observes in her military experience.

From a young age, Diana believed that most in the military held similar views. Yet, as Diana shared with me her story of responding to her ACSC classmate, as well as her observation of a heated exchange during a leadership meeting, these examples continue to shape how Diana conducts herself as an officer and how she wants people to view her. Even when Diana participates in speaking out toward her ACSC classmate, she feels that action to be contrary to who she is, as she worries about offending him.

This can also be seen in her recollection of the leadership meeting when she observed a woman leader speak out toward another woman leader. Diana respected her boss for not causing a scene and becoming emotional. This is where Diana admitted the motivation of her actions, and inactions, were shaped by being both a woman and black. When asked why she thought it important to show restraint in that situation, Diana responded, "so it wouldn't seem…petty. And would it only be petty because she was a woman" (p. 22). Diana learned that others in the military connect being petty and emotional in one's responses as associated with being a woman, and these responses are not met with respect and value. Therefore, Diana still struggles with being very measured

with her words even when she believes others are speaking from a narrow perspective. She adds,

> I want to make sure that the next girl that coming after me that has the opportunity to do, you know, everything that I can do. Like she has the same opportunity and that you're not the person that shuts something down because of something you did or said, or, you know, God forbid you got too emotional about something. (Diana Interview #2, p. 23)

Therefore, Diana observed a contradiction stating that men can be loud and aggressive regarding their perspectives, yet when women do the same, they are labeled as "emotional" and their voice is devalued. Yet, the way Diana is perceived by other women is more important to her, so she ultimately rejects this rule.

Added to that is Diana's struggle with the intersectionality of her race and gender. We went further in this discussion because I wanted to know how she believed she was possibly devaluing herself by her words. She added,

> I think you sometimes wonder…"Hey, would that same situation have gone down the exact same way if the players were two men or a man and woman." Like you think about that, like you can't really, you can't really not think about it. (p. 22)

Since this is a recurring theme with the other participants, I asked if she felt if the way she responded was going to either reflect positively or negatively on women and if that was even a part of her thinking. She responded, "I would say as a black woman, yes, it does. Maybe not as a woman as much" (Diana Interview #2, p. 22). This was the first time Diana mentioned her race outside the context of how she was raised. It is important to Diana as is the complex way she views herself and how she participates in the military.

Because her race places her in an even smaller minority in the military, Diana finds herself being even more careful to value and include others and present herself in a way that does not disadvantage other black woman officers who come after her. An illustration of this is in figure 26.

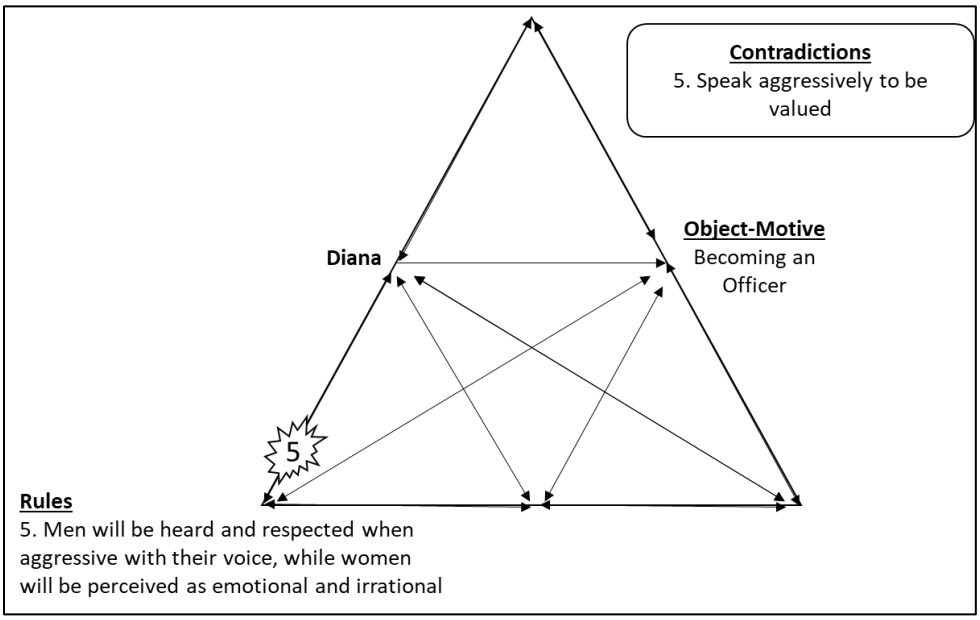

Figure 26
Interaction of Action within Diana's Central Activity (Valuing Others)

Diana's Becoming an Officer Activity System

Diana's becoming an officer activity system consists of interactions between the actions within valuing others from within her central activity and the secondary activities of working on a leadership staff and participating in deployments. These interactions create several contradictions that lead to new actions, as well as learning and unintended outcomes for Diana. The final activity system reveals that Diana continues to be shaped by her central activity, as well as this secondary activity, yet they also show areas where she has helped to shape what becoming an officer looks like to her by interacting within her activity system. This interaction has been formative for Diana as she has both learned

from them, and also learned new ways to interact with them. This learning has also led to both intended and unintended outcomes. Figure 27 illustrates the interaction of Diana's activity system.

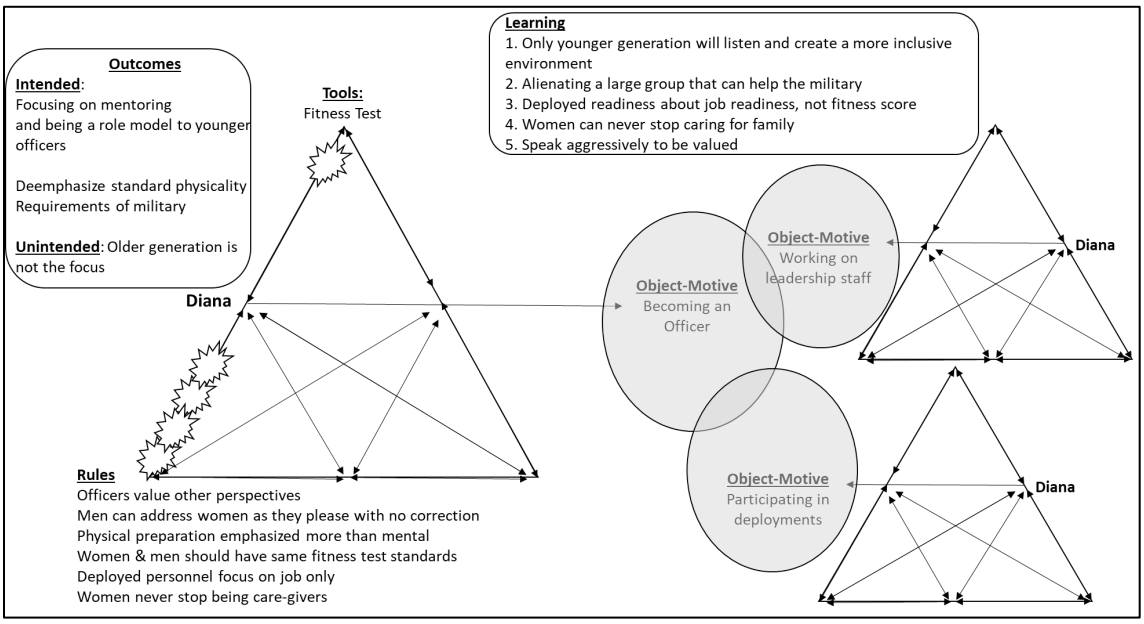

Figure 27
Diana's Becoming an Officer Activity System

Learning within Diana's activity system

Diana has learned a lot about becoming an officer from her family and those lessons are still firmly embedded in Diana's activity today. Yet, the military has also shaped Diana and taught her how to participate as an officer. Diana has rejected some rules, like speaking aggressively, as they do not align with her actions of valuing others. Even though she may perform these learned actions, they do not feel a part of who she is or who she wants to be as an officer. Diana also believes the way some of the older men in the military speak about women will never change, so she learns to focus on shaping the younger generation to be more inclusive and careful how they speak to others. Diana also learns, through her secondary activity of deploying, that her mental acuteness is at

many times more important than her physical fitness, when performing her job in a deployed environment. This gives her a more educated perspective when confronted by those who view physical fitness as a measure of deployed readiness.

As Diana changes her actions and learns how to participate in the military, intended and unintended outcomes emerge. Diana's dedication to being a mentor to those who go after her means that she is focused on the next generation of officers and those younger than her. She feels emboldened to speak out. Yet in so doing, she admits her focus is not on the older generation as she does not believe they can easily change their behavior. She intentionally alienates the larger group to focus on mentoring the smaller one, yet one that will shape how women are viewed in the future.

Another intended outcome of Diana's activity is a focus on job performance, and not physical fitness, as a measure of excelling as an officer. Since Diana's job is mostly behind a desk, Diana argues that the physicality of the fitness test does not fit every occupation and should, therefore, be deemphasized where it makes sense. As Diana says, "one size does not necessarily fit all" (p. 18), and by keeping the emphasis on a standard physicality, we run the risk of excluding many people who could make the military great.

Chapter Five – Implications

My case study of six women in the military was grounded within the Critical Military Studies theoretical framework which deconstructs traditional military gender definitions "showing where they fail, are negotiated or are resisted" (Basham & Butler, 2017, p. 60). I used agency, as defined within Post-structural Feminism, to examine the ways in which the social and cultural aspects of the military organization inscribed itself on my participants and helped shape their participation. CHAT was also used to observe their activity of becoming an officer holistically and looked for contradictions within their participation to determine how their environment shaped their learning, as well as how they learned to shape their environment. The central questions of this study were:

1) How do women's perception of military gender beliefs and practices shape how they learn to participate within the military?

and,

2) How do women officers' participation and experiences within the military environment help reshape gender beliefs and practices?

This chapter will provide an overall discussion and then addresses the similarities, differences, and observations found from my data, as well as the implications of the findings.

Discussion

In recent years, the military has commissioned several studies to examine the impact on women in the military as a gendered minority group. The U.S. Air Force employed the RAND Corporation to study these issues and report back to military leaders. Since 2014, RAND has completed several studies regarding women in the Air Force (Lim et al., 2014; Keller et al., 2018; Matthews, 2017; Miller et al., 2018; Schaefer

et al., 2018 and Schulker et al., 2018), to include retention, sexual assault, integration of women into training programs, and diversity. These studies have been helpful in spotlighting the major factors that lead to women leaving the military or unequal promotion rates between men and women. The studies were focus-group or survey-based and provided several overarching themes, including family and personal considerations (citations of the Rand reports), career considerations (citations of the Rand reports), or work environment issues considerations (citations of the Rand reports).

These RAND studies have also provided recommendations to the military, such as providing more resources for childcare, providing sabbatical time, and giving women with children greater career flexibility and educating leaders on prevention of sexist work environments (Keller et al., 2018). However, they conclude that barriers to women participating in the military may be due to women choosing careers with fewer promotion opportunities, women feeling like they must work harder than their male counterparts, or tensions that are inherent with dual-income family situations (Keller et al., 2018). RAND also readily admitted that their current research "has not fully explained these differences" (Keller et al., 2018, p. 59) regarding why women separate from the military sooner than men.

Similarly, the Department of the Air Force Inspector General (DAF-IG) conducted a recent disparity study (2021) investigating if disparity existed for women and non-whites or people of color within the Air Force. The report defined disparity as, "disparity exists when the proportion of a racial-ethnic or gender group within a subset of a population is different from the proportion of the majority group subset or the general or existing DAF population" (p. 1), and this is how I will use the word subsequently. Not

only did the study find there were disparities, but some of the themes they found are also highlighted in this study, namely being forced to behave like men to be successful, working harder than men to prove they are competent, and the challenge of maintaining work/life balance (p. 8). Since the DAF-IG study validates some of the same themes found in this study, ignoring the impact the military culture has on women is no longer an option. However, the DAF-IG disparity study conceded that its goal was to identify the existence of disparities, not to examine their causes (p. 3), therefore deeper investigations like my study need to take place regarding how women learn what it means to participate in the military in order to determine root causes.

In its recommendations section, the DAF-IG study mentioned, "Systemic, effective, and lasting solutions to the disparities highlighted in this report will require relentless follow-through by all stakeholders, dogged emphasis by senior leaders, and most importantly, accountability" (p. 196) and calls on the Air Force's Diversity and Inclusion Task Force to begin making more detailed and lasting recommendations.

This study complements both the RAND and DAF-IG studies as it used naturalistic inquiry, a method not widely used in military studies, to investigate why and how women struggle to participate in the military and how gender norms shape their participation. This also provides a template for further inquiry of the impact of military culture on women. This study shows not only is this possible, women want to tell their stories and affect change. This inquiry provided depth into some of the issues that surveys have uncovered, but it also provided a deeper understanding of the weight of these issues by addressing how gender beliefs and practices in the military shaped women's participation, and ultimately, their decision to leave or stay in the military. This study

revealed several contradictions within women's participation due to gender beliefs and practices held within the military culture. These contradictions had to either be resolved or accepted by my participants. Many of my participants experienced similar contradictions, which I will detail below. Along with the similarities, I will also discuss differences in my case studies, as well as the efficacy of agency and CHAT used in this study.

Similarities

There were several major similarities found within the contradictions my participants experienced while participating in the military. These similarities are important to note for future action as they could reveal potential patterns of gendered activity against women as they participate in the military. First, uniforms, meant to take the focus away from gender, served to intensify gender differences between men and women and made several participants feel less a part of the military. Luna's discussion about her fitness uniform and working in her doctor's coat were examples of what Ryan (2014) documented as the psychological "protection" of a uniform not working in her case. This protection, made possible by the uniform, should provide a sense of authority to act and belonging in a group, yet is not experienced by Luna, as she is spotlighted for being too "bouncy" in her fitness uniform and unnoticed as a medical doctor in her coat. This contradiction, experienced continually by Luna, shapes the way she participates and how she has accepted feeling in the military culture.

Second, several participants revealed that to be accepted as a member of the organization, they must manage both the quantity and quality of their participation. If they participated too much, they were seen as difficult to work with by other men in their

organization. If they participated too little, they were perceived as not committed enough to the organization by men. This was observed by Ruth, Luna, and Alex while at ACSC, Jem in her flying squadron, Barbie at her initial training, and Diana in her support squadron. This action was highlighted by my participants as gendered because they did not believe men had to mediate their participation in this manner. This has the potential to create more division between men and women in the military working environment, creating long-term impacts on military cohesiveness and discouraging inclusivity.

The third major similarity involved women's performance within the military and how it was valued. Within the military, performance within an occupation, such as pilot or medical officer, is used to establish a member's value. However, in the case of most of my participants, excellence in performance was not seen as valuable, but was met by hostility and barriers by men. For example, Ruth believed in order to be accepted by her male cohorts at ACSC she had to perform more academic work than they did. However, she told me she felt like she needed to accomplish this work behind the scenes and consciously not draw attention to herself so that she would not be labeled as difficult to work with. Jem experienced hostility from men when she scored well on a test in a training class. When participating, Jem mediated her participation because she felt women's activity was more likely to be remembered. Yet, later in her career, when Jem is given an opportunity to excel over her male peers, one of them jokes to her that it was only because of the promise of sexual favors that she got the opportunity.

The fourth main similarity deals with policy and procedures instituted to protect all members of the military organization, that are actually in place to protect male leadership instead. Ruth provided a clear illustration of this when she initiated an

investigation against a male leader, only to find the investigation team and leader working against Ruth to silence her. Ruth had to use different methods outside the investigation process (use of a recording device) in order to correctly resolve her grievance. Barbie experienced a similar contradiction when she filed a complaint against her male leader who thought because she was a woman, she was not suitable for a competitive position. In both cases, the women were trying to use the processes established by the organization to file complaints, only to find barriers put up by those in leadership who were charged with managing those investigation processes to advantage and/or protect male leadership.

The fifth similarity dealt with the feeling that in order to be a good officer, one must be stoic. This was felt by most of the participants. Particularly, Ruth experienced it during coursework at ACSC when discussing leadership strategies with men. Her male cohorts believed that emotions were not needed to lead others, while Ruth insisted that emotions are useful in certain situations to enhance your leadership. Jem experienced this as a pilot when her all-male aircrew were hesitant about how to respond and react to her jovial demeanor when they first met. When faced with having to address suicide in her squadron, Alex moderated her verbal response to her subordinates and did not add an emotional response because she felt the men in her squadron would not respond positively to her vulnerability and question her leadership.

The sixth similarity involved the perception these women officers had that men were praised for putting their families over work, while women, because of their assigned role as caretakers, were expected to care for their families, but put work first during office hours. Both Jem and Barbie felt this as they participated in their flying squadrons.

While they over-prepared to ensure their families were taken care of through the use of contingency plans, fellow male squadron members would be praised for dropping their work at the last minute to care of their families during the workday. Alex's recollection of raising her voice to her male boss because she needed to leave work to care for her sick child, only to be told no, was a prime example of this contradiction. Barbie's story of her male colleague who left during a team presentation to handle a family issue without informing anyone is another example of the different expectations put on women versus men. Both Barbie and Jem said they knew the military culture had changed recently to accommodate a more family-focused attitude. However, they believe that this applies only men, not them because of their gender.

The seventh similar contradiction is tied to the one above but involves the perception that only men are given key job opportunities because women are still seen as primary caregivers. This is illustrated in Barbie's attempt to be considered for a key job that would advance her career, only to be passed over for consideration because her leadership did not believe she would be able to handle being away from her family. Luna experienced this being married to a fellow officer. Her assignments team assumed her husband would be considered for the key jobs and not her. Alex was told by her leadership that men work, and women care for families. Luna was told by her assignments team that because she wanted to be with her family, she would not be considered for certain competitive medical positions. These examples illustrate similar experiences from women serving in unrelated career fields in the military and serve as a reminder of a cultural message that is impacting many women in the military.

The eighth major similarity is most of the participants' motive to mentor other women. All of the participants mentioned this as an important aspect of who they are as officers and what their responsibility is as women in the military. Staying in the military to be an example to future women was a driving factor for most. Ruth describes it as, "the good apples have to stay, because when all the good apples leave, then we are stuck with just the bad apples" (Interview #2, p. 16). Barbie talks about, stopping "the little bits that I could for sure…I think it can be stopped" (Barbie Interview #3, pp. 26). Jem encourages her mentees to seek excellence within a range and to "liv[e] in that range as well" (Jem Interview #2, p. 27). Luna loves to remind those who do not believe she is a doctor that, "girls can be doctors too" (Luna Interview #2, p. 16). While Alex says, of staying in the military and mentoring others, "there's a deeper calling inside of me" (Alex Interview #3, p. 31). Lastly, Diana mentions the importance of mentoring a younger woman officer in dealing with older, male fighter pilots.

The ninth similarity was found in the severity of gendered experiences found in the flying community. Both Jem, Barbie and Alex are all in the flying community within the Air Force, which is heavily male-dominated and perceived to be masculine. Both Jem and Barbie shared stories of their experiences within their flying squadrons that were more intensely gendered, and sexually based, that what the other participants experienced. That is not to say that the other women's experiences were not equally contradictive, but the illustrations shared by both Barbie and Jem from their flying squadron experiences were so profoundly disturbing, that Barbie had blocked some of it from memory. This preliminary data shows that women who participate in careers with a higher male population and a masculine culture (ex. flying community in the Air Force)

experience more vivid examples of gender disparity, as opposed to those in support careers. This could suggest that groups within a structure that have a stronger male population and masculine identity, also have an established culture resistant to outsiders like women from joining their group. Therefore, addressing the issue through policy changes would have little impact in changing the culture, which is what Barbie suggests in her third interview.

Differences

Along with similarities, there were also some unique aspects of each case that were not duplicated across the six participants. First, a part of Jem's central activity involved an observation that women in the military must develop a male persona in order to be accepted. Jem was the only participant to discuss it in the context of staying true to herself. She mentioned several times that in the process of learning how to become an officer, she did not want to lose her identity. Here, she recognized the inscribing forces of the organization and chose which ones she chooses to be shaped by and which ones she rejects or reshapes.

Secondly, Alex experienced dwindling support from her ACSC cohort as the academic year progresses and noticed the more vocal she got regarding women's issues the less she was supported by her closest group of officers. This was not the case with other participants at ACSC who shared with me good experiences in the ACSC classrooms of discussions regarding women's issues and military culture. Ruth, Barbie, Jem and Diana all reported positive, fruitful discussions with their male classmates during the ACSC academic year and saw their classroom as a place where honest and open conversations occurred regarding women's issues in the military.

Bridging Theory and Practice

When I analyzed my findings and looked for areas where theory intersects with, and disrupts practice, I make the following observations regarding the efficacy of using post-structural feminism's definition of agency and CHAT in the study.

First, agency, as defined within PSF, does a good job explaining the contradictions found within my participant's central activity. As Davies (2000) writes, a post-structural view of agency forces us to first, "examin[e] the ways the social inscribes itself on the individual" (p. 312) to determine how power structures, "shape us as particular kinds of being" (p. 312). This awareness of how we are constructed socially is a critical step in questioning its legitimacy and efficacy in our lives. Through interviewing and observing my participants, it was apparent these women were aware of how they are being shaped. Some were still working through this process, while others had resolved this shaping and looked for reshaping actions within their activity. Yet in these cases, identifying and questioning these cultural inscriptions was the first step toward these women building agency as participants in the military.

Agency also worked well with CHAT in this study as it welcomed the messiness of contradictions as a part of human experiences. This is highlighted in what Davies (2000) describes as the "dual aspect of subjectification" (p. 12), which is viewing the contradictive nature of human activity as both "difficult and important" characteristics within post-structural theory. The participants were able to articulate the contrast between seeing themselves as perfectly woven within the social and cultural fabric of the military, yet also able to identify and signify themselves as specific and unique. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) further explained this dichotomy well by saying of the subject, "You will

be [both]…interpreter and interpreted" (p. 159). As illustrated by my six participants, it was in the identification of areas where they both shape and are being shaped by the military culture that they were able to find contradictions within their activity. This gave the interpreted the potential to be the interpreter and discover new action possibilities within their activity. Therefore, it is possible to observe both occurring within their activity at the same time. This description of agency best describes the experiences of these military women. As they participate within the military, they understand what is shaping them, and, at times, are subjected to it. Yet at the same time, they are also learning actions that will serve to reshape their activity.

CHAT was useful in describing the activity of women's participation in the military. I found several strengths and observations in its application in the military environment. First, using CHAT to observe and analyze military activity worked well because most formative activities discussed by my participants also served the central activity of learning how to become an officer. All six of my participants had a similar central activity of becoming an officer, with subordinate activities that shaped the central one. Even though their subordinate activities were diverse and took place throughout different periods in their careers, they were all still subordinate to the motive of the central activity of becoming an officer and were used to shape and disrupt how they learned to participate in their central activity.

Secondly, CHAT is described in chapter three as the mediated, dialectical relationship between the learner and the world. The findings describe six different, yet at times similar, relationships they have with the military. Even though most had similar experiences as they interact and experience the military, they learned how to participate

within their environment differently. CHAT was a good framework to capture the myriad inputs from the social and cultural environment without diminishing the uniqueness of each subject's experiences.

Thirdly, through observing my six participants, I was easily able to see the role structural power had, and still has, on shaping their central activity. Most participants felt this power more persuasively early in their careers. This was also highlighted as they discussed who they believed they could mentor and influence, versus who they believed were not worth mentoring. Most understood the older military powers would not, or could not, change, yet they were more open to discussing and advocating for changes with their peers or younger members.

Fourth, as stated previously, one of CHAT's strengths is to foreground women as the subject of the central activity. CHAT provided a descriptive framework to describe the cultural and social impacts of an activity on a specific subject. The activity system was the primary unit of analysis, with the subject moving toward the object (motive) influenced by the contributions of all the elements within that activity. As stated previously, the activity was understood through the actions and motives of the subject, bringing the subject's perceptions and interpretations to the fore. Thus, using CHAT in this study helped me clearly illustrate how my participant's experiences and actions were uniquely shaped and impacted by their environment.

Fifth, one of CHAT's principles is its historicity. That means transformations in the activity are observed over long periods of time. This could explain the policy and procedural changes my participants discussed without also observing commensurate cultural changes. With CHAT, only over long periods of time can one observe the

impacts that changes to policy, tools or division of labor can have on one's participation within an activity system.

Sixth, in Diana's case I was surprised at how strong her family and upbringing influenced her motives as she joined the military and learned how to become an officer. Diana grew up in an interracial, military home and lived in several places outside the US. During our initial interview, Diana spoke about her family often and related the way she acted as an officer now to the lessons she learned as a child with her family. Twelve years into being an officer, Diana still holds tightly to her family influences. She is fully aware of the influences the military organization has on her, and she admits to being somewhat shaped by her organizational culture. However, Diana made it very clear to me that she was grounded in motives and beliefs that she brought with her into the military and did more reshaping than being shaped. To me, this was interesting while using CHAT to observe the impacts her personal history brought into the history and culture of the military. Since her personal history and culture being raised in a multi-racial home is such a strong part of her historicity, it would be interesting to observe women in the military who also identify strongly with their racial background.

The last observation involves the policy and procedural changes that most of my participants discussed regarding women in the military. Several were discussed ranging from the implementation of maternity flight suits to the relaxing of the hair standards for women. Even though these were visible changes that my participants welcomed, most did not mention these changes as significantly impacting organizational culture. In CHAT, several conditions within the system can have an impact on the activity, with rules

(policies and procedures included) being a part of the system. However, my participants describe a culture that is entrenched and immovable by policy.

Most barriers remain visible to women learning how to participate in the military, yet most of these same barriers remain hidden to men. Only in exposing and removing these hidden barriers can the military begin to address the issues that continue to impact its culture. These implications will be discussed below and involve shifts in military leadership, policy, military education, and culture.

Implications and Future Research

Over the past several years, the U. S. Military has made great strides in eliminating barriers to women who desire to serve within its ranks. Yet, many hidden barriers remain, as this study, and many others before it have highlighted (DAF-IG, 2021; Lim et al., 2014; Keller et al., 2018; Matthews, 2017; Miller et al., 2018; Schaefer et al., 2018 and Schulker et al., 2018). I see several implications of this study regarding how the U.S. Air Force, and the military, can begin to break down those barriers and create a more inclusive force for women who want to serve. They involve advocacy from military leadership, continued changes in policy, updates to military education and shifts in military culture.

Military Leadership

In most military structures, senior leadership plays a pivotal role in setting the tone of an organization regarding how they accomplish goals and support each other. Most of my participants did not believe current senior leadership fully understood or advocated for women and the disparity they navigate around while participating in the military. Most of that was due to the belief that senior leaders were men who held to an

antiquated view of women's roles while serving. While Diana's solution was extreme as she waited for them to "die off" (Diana Interview #2, p. 19), others thought it important to see more women in senior leadership roles. Several RAND studies (Keller et al., 2018; Schulker et al., 2018; Lim et al., 2014) discussed the impact of a lack of women's presence in higher military ranks. For my participants, seeing other, higher-ranking women was important to their decision to stay in the military. This was not just to have a woman role model to look up to, but to also have an advocate who would be at the highest levels speaking on behalf of women.

Therefore, the first implication of this study is to look again at senior leadership demographics and determine if there are cultural or social reasons more women are not being selected for these positions. Once that is accomplished, the military needs to ensure those selections are based on qualifications that embody other leadership qualities that help foster inclusivity, like empathy and self-awareness.

Secondly, military leaders need to embrace accountability for women's issues, regardless of who needs to be held accountable. If the Department of Defense has removed barriers to women serving in any career field, then leadership should also work to remove the cultural barriers that go with those decisions. As stated previously and experienced by my participants, policy changes alone will not change culture. There must also be a resolve by leadership to ensure the policy is fairly and judicially implemented and accepted across the military services down to the lowest ranking person. Holding those accountable who do not embrace this shift, needs to be modeled at the highest levels.

Policy

As stated previously, policy changes alone are not enough to shift the military to a more inclusive culture for women. However, there are changes to policies that can be made to address specific areas that have the potential to provide an unfair ruling against women. Ruth described her investigation team as being comprised of all men (Ruth Interview #1). In cases where an investigation involves women's issues, could a policy include a mandated woman leader's presence, or a woman leader in charge of the investigation? These shifts would be a step in the right direction to learn from past mistakes and foreground the importance of creating fairness to women in the military.

Another policy change involves initial military training, as most of my participant's gendered experiences that greatly shaped how they learned how to become an officer came during their initial training school. When we spoke, they had about 10 years' experience within the military they used to reshape what they learned during their initial training experience. A policy change regarding the inclusion of disparity awareness training within the curriculum upon entry into the military could have a positive impact on women's initial experiences and set the groundwork for a change in culture. Including more curriculum about creating an inclusive culture from their initial training schools could be an important step in reshaping how women participate.

Military Education

Military education is recurring and experienced throughout every service member's career. It provides a good setting with academic freedom to engage in cultural discussions. Most military educational schools are also equipped with the time and educational professionals to include organizational cultural studies within their

curriculum. As stated previously, the inclusion of disparity awareness training within the curriculum across all aspects of military training (from entry level through senior leadership schools) could have a tremendous impact on women's initial experiences, as well as allow for honest and open discussions, like those my participants had while at ACSC.

Specifically, for ACSC, most of my participants found ACSC a beneficial institution to discuss issues of culture and gender roles in their 12-person cohorts. ACSC's centralized curriculum format could be easily modified to introduce cultural issues into their instruction.

The reception of this instruction should, wherever possible, include cohorts with better representation by women. As stated previously, most 12-person ACSC cohorts include two women and ten men. My participants shared with me some of the trepidation they experienced trying to explain their experiences yet feeling they could be silenced based on their limited numbers. Most of my participants expressed good conversations coming from one-on-one conversations where they did not feel outnumbered. If ACSC is going to be an institution where rich conversations about the cause of disparities occur, then women must not feel like they are outnumbered. Hiring more women professors could help mitigate this, as well. ACSC's length (nearly one year's worth of instruction) and its point during an officer's career (roughly 10 years into one's career) uniquely equip it to accommodate and provide the necessary experiential context to those conversations.

Culture

This research highlights that learning how to participate as an officer in the military is a socially learned activity. The military has policies and procedures in place to

standardize its participant's outcomes and behavior, but the military culture teaches how one participates to become an accepted member of the military. In essence, since men are the predominant military members and impact military culture, they are the ones who teach everyone one else how to become an officer. If the military wants to address issues of gender and race disparity in the military, changing policies will only go so far in addressing cultural issues. As Barbie (Interview #3) was quick to note, "the Air Force mandating [gender equity] is not acceptable just makes it be done in darker corners…I think it takes someone in the community to call that culture bad, to get buy-in" (p. 26).

Certain sub-cultures that exist within the military are more prone to have stronger cultural identity, and, therefore, more resistant to policy and cultural changes. These sub-cultures must be identified by the women who are experiencing them. Using a combination of strategies put forth above in leadership, policy, and military education changes, they should be brought into compliance regarding disparity awareness.

Future Research

Future research should include women from other branches of the military as their experiences could be different from women in the Air Force. What are the similarities? What are the differences? Similarities could point to a larger military cultural issue, while differences may point to strong sub-cultures built within each service branch of the military. Doing similar multiple case studies of women in these services may shed light on how women learn to participate within a culture that actively shapes them, and how they also learn to disrupt and reshape those cultures through their participation. To that end, CHAT would be a useful framework to study the social and cultural aspects of the military as its central activity of being or becoming a military officer remains

foregrounded throughout a member's career. Yet at the same time, several subordinate and temporary activities flow in and out of a subject's experiences which prove to help shape and define the central activity for the subject. Since the military experience is so varied from one member to the other, and their experiences are so transitory, CHAT would be a useful heuristic to show how these subordinate activities move in and out of a subject's understanding to shape their overall interpretation of the central activity of being an officer.

Conclusion

Over the past several years, the U. S. Military has made great strides in eliminating barriers to women who desire to serve within its ranks. Yet, many hidden barriers remain. This preliminary, qualitative study of six women officer's experiences provide a good template to investigate how women learn to participate in their gendered environment. These women have learned to adapt and sometimes reshape their environment in order to survive. If the U. S. Air Force intends to formulate policy regarding the removal of barriers, it needs to also address hidden, cultural barriers that remain in "darker corners" and are deeply rooted in the cultural expectations of what it means to be a member of the military forces.

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Appendix A

GUIDE FOR INTERVIEW(S) FOR: Removing All Barriers: A Case Study of Women's Participation in Military Academia

Interview Procedure

You are being asked to participate in a study seeking to describe the female officer perspective within the military academic environment. The purpose of this study is to examine women's perspectives on gender beliefs and practices and how those beliefs and practices may or may not impact the learning environment. This is a semi-structured interview. You will be asked a series of open-ended questions. You may choose not to answer all the questions. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with the line of questions or the interview itself, we will cease recording and, if desired, end the interview. The procedure will involve taping the interview, and the recording will be transcribed verbatim. Your results will be confidential, and you will not be identified individually.

Guiding Research Questions

My primary research question is: How do women's perception of military gender beliefs and practices shape how they learn to participate within the military classroom environment?

My secondary research question is: How do women officers' participation and experiences within a military academic environment help reshape gender beliefs and practices within the military?

INTERVIEW ONE PROTOCOL

Guide for Interview(s) on the experiences and narratives of Women Officers participating and learning at Air Command and Staff College. Interview One Objectives: Background, Identity, Initial ACSC Seminar Experience. The goal is to complete interview #1 before September 2020.

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____ **Place:** _____

Interviewer: _____ **Interviewee:** _____

The interviews for this study will be semi-structured life history interviews. The following questions will serve as a guide for the interviews, with questions to be covered with participants in bold followed by possible prompts.

Questions *potentially skip for time*

1. Background Information: I first want to ask you a little about your background…

a. Your alias you'd like us to use

b. Do you have a nickname or callsigns?

c. How old are you?

d. Where were you born?

2. What were your reasons for joining the Air Force?

a. How supportive were your friends when you made the decision to join the Air Force?

b. How about your family?

c. How many women were in your accession group? Were you in the minority? What was that experience like?

3. What was your experience like in joining (ROTC, OTS, Academy)?

4. How long have you been in the Air Force?

a. Have you been an officer the entire time, or did you start out enlisted?

b. Was there ever a time when you thought about getting out of the Air Force? Why?

5. What is your primary job in the Air Force?

a. Have you done your primary job the entire time, or did you move around to different jobs?

b. What is the male/female ratio in your career field?

6. Tell me some words you would use to describe or define who are (your identity)?

a. At work, how would you like to be most identified as?

b. At home?

c. <*If there is a difference between a. and b., ask why*>

7. How has being an officer in the military changed the way you view yourself?

a. Do you see this change as good or bad?

b. In what ways?

c. Do you see this more of a change or a growth regarding who you are? Explain.

8. Who or what taught you what "being an officer" looks like? (any people or examples that symbolize this for you)

a. Any people or examples that taught you the opposite?

b. Are you still in contact with these people? Why/Why not?

9. How has your experience as a student been so far at Air Command and Staff College?

a. How are your classes?

b. How do you like them?

c. What was your first impression meeting your seminar?

c. Who did you hang out with most at ACSC? Did you seek them out?

e. How many female officers were in your seminar?

f. How many male officers?

g. At school, how would you like your colleagues to see you (officer? professional? fellow student? etc.)

10. What is your perception of gender beliefs and practices in the military and how do they shape how you participate in class?

a. How do you feel about the gender apportionment of the seminar?

b. How do your classmates' gender affect how you perceived or interacted with them? Why or why not?

c. Did you wish there were more females in your seminar?

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INTERVIEW TWO PROTOCOL

Guide for Interview(s) on the experiences and narratives of Women Officers participating and learning at Air Command and Staff College. Interview Two Objectives: Identity, Ongoing ACSC Seminar Experience. The goal is to complete interview #2 in the Nov 2020 timeframe.

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____ **Place:** _____

Interviewer: _____ **Interviewee:** _____

The interviews for this study will be semi-structured life history interviews. The following questions will serve as a guide for the interviews, with questions to be covered with participants in bold followed by possible prompts.

Questions

1. How has your experience as a student been so far at Air Command and Staff College?

a. How are your classes?

b. How do you like them?

c. Now that you know your seminar colleagues better, how has your impression changed?

d. Who do you hang out with most at ACSC? Any changes? *<If changes ask why>*

e. How would you like your colleagues to see you (officer? professional? fellow student? etc.) Any changes? *<If changes ask why>*

2. Do you think women and men learn differently? In what ways? [ask different ways]

a. How did you feel being in a predominantly male classroom environment impacted your learning? (probe for both positive and negative effects)

b. How can it be improved?

3. Who are you learning from the most in your seminar? Why? Least? Why?

a. Who is learning the most from you in your seminar? Why?

4. What role (if any) do you think gender beliefs are playing in your school experience? (probe for both positive and negative effects)

a. Describe some experiences so far where you believe gender beliefs and practices impacted your learning how to participate in the seminar environment.

b. Describe some gender beliefs you have regarding women's and men's roles/responsibilities in the Air Force.

c. Where did you learn these beliefs?

d. Has the Air Force changed these beliefs? How?

e. Do these beliefs

5. The Secretary of Defense in 2015 opened up all occupations to women in the military. In his memo he stated the Department of Defense had, ""effectively remov[ed] the remaining

barrier to the integration of women into all military occupational…career fields within the U.S. military" (Department of Defense, 2015, p. 1).

a. What barriers to you think remain in place regarding women in the military?

b. Are any of these barriers visible in the military academic environment? If so, where?

****

INTERVIEW THREE PROTOCOL

Guide for Interview(s) on the experiences and narratives of Women Officers participating and learning at Air Command and Staff College. Interview Three Objectives: Identity, Ongoing ACSC Seminar Experience, Participation and Learning Experience. The goal is to complete interview #3 in the Feb 2021 timeframe.

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____ **Place:** _____

Interviewer: _____ **Interviewee:** _____

The interviews for this study will be semi-structured life history interviews. The following questions will serve as a guide for the interviews, with questions to be covered with participants in bold followed by possible prompts.

Questions

1. How has your experience as a student been so far at Air Command and Staff College?

a. How are your classes?

b. How do you like them?

c. Now that you know your seminar colleagues better, how has your impression changed?

d. Who do you hang out with most at ACSC? Any changes? *<If changes ask why>*

e. How would you like your colleagues to see you (officer? professional? fellow student? etc.) Any changes? *<If changes ask why>*

2. Who are you learning from the most in your seminar? Why? Least? Why?

a. Who is learning the most from you in your seminar? Why?

3. What role (if any) do you think gender beliefs are playing in your school experience? (probe for both positive and negative effects)

a. Describe some experiences so far where you believe gender beliefs and practices impacted your learning how to participate in the seminar environment.

b. Describe some gender beliefs you have regarding women's and men's roles/responsibilities in the Air Force.

c. Where did you learn these beliefs?

d. Has the Air Force changed these beliefs? How?

e. Do you feel like the Air Force's beliefs regarding men's and women's roles/responsibilities are changing? How?

4. What does it mean to you to be identified as a Woman Officer? [identify yourself as Woman Officer]

a. Do you feel like your participation within the seminar is valued?

b. Can you tell me a defining experience as a Woman Officer in the military?

5. Would you please share any experiences you have had in which your identity as a Woman Officer was a privilege?

a. How did you feel about those experiences at the time?

b. How do you feel about them now?

6. Would you please share any experiences you have had in which your identity as a Woman Officer was a disadvantage?

a. How did you feel about those experiences at the time?

b. How do you feel about them now?

7. Looking back at this year as an ACSC student, in what ways did being a woman put you at an advantage participating in the classroom? Disadvantage?

8. Did you feel like your input was valued by your seminar throughout the academic year?

a. Why/Why not?

b. What factors do you believe led to this?

9. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

Thank you for participating in these interviews! I appreciate you taking the time to do this. I may contact you in the future for the purpose of follow up interviews. Again, let me assure you of the confidentiality of your responses. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by telephone at 334-953-2860.

Appendix B

Field Observation no. **Date:** **Location:**

Event:	
Participants:	
Environment Description:	

Time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

***categories to use if given enough time while observing, else they will be completed immediately after observation**

*# times participant responded to open question from instructor

Comment agreeing with instructor:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Comment critiquing instructor:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Asking for help/clarification:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Offered personal opinion/example:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Other Descriptive Notes: **Reflective Notes:**

*# times part. responded to direct/redirected instructor's question

Comment agreeing with instructor:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Comment critiquing instructor:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Asking for help/clarification:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Offered personal opinion/example:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Other Descriptive Notes: **Reflective Notes:**

*# times part. responded to comment from fellow student

Comment agreeing with student:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Comment critiquing student:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Asking for clarification:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Offered personal opinion/example:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Other Descriptive Notes: **Reflective Notes:**

*# times part. gave personal opinion to class w/out prompting:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

*# times part. interrupted instructor

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

*# times part. was interrupted by instructor/ students:

#/time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Other Descriptive Notes: **Reflective Notes:**

Appendix C

Lt Col Kyle Bellue
Adult & Higher Ed Doctoral Candidate
University of Memphis
Women and the Military
"How do gender beliefs shape how women officers learn to participate in the military?"

Research Questions

- Primary: How do women's ***perception*** of military gender beliefs and practices shape how they learn to participate within the military?
- Secondary: How do women officers' participation and experiences within the military environment help ***reshape*** gender beliefs and practices?

"Are gender beliefs/practices a barrier to learning how to belong in the military?"

Critique of DoD Policy (2015)

"Risk Rule"

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
ACTING UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS
CHIEFS OF THE MILITARY SERVICES
COMMANDER, U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

SUBJECT: Implementation Guidance for the Full Integration of Women in the Armed Forces

In January 2013, the Department of Defense eliminated the "1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule," effectively removing the remaining barrier to the integration of women into all military occupational specialties and career fields within the U.S. military. At that time, the Military Services and United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) were directed to develop plans to implement the change in policy. Specifically, the Military Services and USSOCOM were instructed to prepare for full implementation by January 1, 2016, or submit an exception to policy if they recommended that an occupation or position remain closed to women.

"…do other barriers exist?"

Qualitative Study

- Multiple Case Study
- 4 – 8 volunteer participants
  - **(3-4) 1-hr interviews throughout the year (on-line available)**
  - (1 - 3) classroom observations (COVID Permitting)

Are you interested?

- kyle.bellue@au.af.edu
- 571-991-9716
- Rm 149B, (Deputy Chair, Joint Warfighting Dept)

Appendix D

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

My name is Kyle Bellue and I am an Higher Education doctoral student at the University of Memphis.

I am doing a research project to better understand how women officers learn how to participate in the military academic setting.

My primary research question is: How do women's perception of military gender beliefs and practices shape how they learn to participate within the military?

My secondary research question is: How do women officers' participation and experiences within a military environment help reshape gender beliefs and practices?

The participants of this study will be:

ACSC students,

women,

member of the U.S. Air Force,

between the ages of 30-35

willing to be observed in the classroom and interviewed

able to balance both being a student and being "researched".

I will be conducting my study at Air University during AY21, off base, and possibly on-line, if social distancing conditions warrant. The actual address and name will be kept confidential. I will not reveal it in my publications.

Also, in any transcribed, written, or published material based on this research, I will

use aliases for you as well as the names of any individuals or any businesses, organizations, and institutions mentioned during my observations. I will never reveal specific addresses in my typed/transcribed notes, writings, and publications based on this research.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in up to **three to four (4) one-on-one interviews that will last about one hour each.** To best honor our conversations, I will record the conversations on a digital recorder to help me when transcribing the interview on paper. I may need to ask you to participate in a follow-up telephone interview (30 minutes to one hour) later to ensure that I accurately interpreted your statements. **You will also be observed while in the classroom between 1-3 times throughout the academic year (COVID permitting).**

There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort. You are at no point required to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

The purpose of this research is to investigate gendered beliefs and practices and determine how those beliefs and practices help shape how you learn to participate within the military setting. As such, gender beliefs in your academic experience will be closely observed and explored. If you decide to participate in this study, you might learn more about yourself by participating in this study. You might get a better understanding of your life experiences and might realize that others have had similar experiences as you have. This research might also provide a better understanding of the cultural experiences of being a woman in the military.

Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored and secured on my computer in a password protected file and/or locked file cabinets. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

You have the right to ask questions about the research. Please contact me, Kyle Bellue, at (phone number) with questions or concerns about this study. You may also call Dr. Edith Gnanadass (my academic advisor) at (phone number) if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant. Refusal to take part in this research will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise or are entitled.

There is no cost to you for participating.

Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

Do you have any questions?

Do you think you would like to participate in this study?

Appendix E

Initial Coding

Code
Supportive ldrs are why I stay in AF
Strong Work Ethic
I'm going to get unwanted attention
Know I need to be friends w/ men
Cautious
Supporting each other
I live in two worlds
careful of actions/speech/perceptions
my professional climb is more tricky than men's
I wanted to leave all the time
Altruism not compatible w/AF
higher standards
Seen as Professional
Seen as Professional
Unravels me
Sleepless nights
Someone saw potential in me
You wanna hold your cards close to you
Caretaking at home
just let me do it
Cautious
Some think I shouldn't talk b/c I'm a woman
Because if I don't get it, then I know that somebody else in my
Vocal
Doubt
relationships w/men crucial
have more control at home
AF is a testosterone atmosphere
Identity outside military
Control the narrative
Avoidance
Ignore/Overlook
Overprepare
moderate participation
Women expected to take care of family
Humor

Speaking up
Stop the little bits
Address the culture
Theme - Policies meant to protect women, protect men instead
Theme - Men can say what they want without repercussions
Speaking up
AF is a testosterone atmosphere
job is challenging
I'm good at my job
I'm comfortable around men
Blend In
women are categorized
women not seen as professional
Ignore
Blend In
Over Prepare/Work
Supporting each other
Confidence
Vocal
I'm just as good as the men
Seen as Professional
careful of actions/speech/perceptions
higher standards
Cautious
Being a Mom
work is sometimes survival
Authentic at Work/Home
Ignore
I don't look like an officer
Visible Women Leaders
relationships w/men crucial
I must diminish my femininity
Support from Women
Mentoring younger siblings in ROTC
Pushing/Encouraging younger women cadets
PT test easier for women so stop complaining
There should be one standard
Dual-mil struggling career & family
Keeping Family Together
Strong Work Ethic

Ambitious
Need to be aggressive
Vocal
Confidence
Classroom levels the playing field
Avoid - Strategy
Self Worth not tied to Air Force - Strategy
Don't know I'm doing it - Strategy
men fear disappointing women - over prepare
men fear disappointing women - over prepare
Don't know I'm doing it - Strategy
Struggle with identity
Writing - Strategy
Struggle with identity
women minority at OTS
don't see gender
Ambitious
attacking the threat
accused of preferential treatment
Cautious
Cautious
afraid of social aspect of military
Support from Women
I'm just as good as the men
Vocal
strategy to deal with men not knowing how to work with women
not knowing if strategy will work
I'm good at my job
comfortable being a woman
success is not as important to me now
learned from the past
Work/Family Balance
performance isn't always the most important thing
woman minority in squadron
Male commander mixes her up with another woman
Strong Work Ethic
assertive personality
Reels back her participation
she herself as caretaker
feels anxious about feeling dumb
low performance remembered

minority makes your performance remembered
I don't look like an officer
higher standards
different standard
careful of actions/speech/perceptions
Used to being the only woman
strategy in classroom
self conscious about running
Expected to keep same physical standards
Family and career balance not possible
leadership doesn't care about family
ignores my voice
Keeping Family Together
People don't listen to / see me
Ambitious
Family and career balance not possible
I can adapt
\Cautious
relationships w/men crucial
Intelligent
Work/Family Balance
Not Hiding Femininity
I can be both a woman and strong
Confidence
I can be both a woman and strong
sometimes people's comments to me are creepy
I can be both a woman and strong
People don't listen to / see me
How I think leaders see me\A: unqualified b/c of gender
Confidence
People think I'm bragging b/c I talk a lot
I'm smart
Intelligent
I'm smart
How I think leaders see me\A: my partipation didn't matter
Cautious
Vocal
People don't listen to / see me
People don't listen to / see me
Some people see me as caretaker/mother

Seen as the mother of the flight
Vocal
Cautious
Cautious
Can't monopolize conversation
Cautious
Used to being the only woman
Expected to keep same physical standards
Expected to keep same physical standards
Expected to keep same physical standards
I'm smart
Need to be aggressive
Over Prepare/Work
ppl look down on medical officers
Not qualified to have inputs
medical officers aren't real officers
medical degree sometimes a hindrance
Identity
Identity
Identity
Identity
see the world & travel
Identity
need for change
Serving in military for Dad
Identity
see the world & travel
Identity
Being an officer - not enlisted
Identity
Minority
No us vs them
Work Treatment
everyone worked together
Work Treatment
Minority
Work Treatment
Identity
Work Treatment
not line/not men means you're less
I must over-prepare

Over Prepare/Work
must work harder than men
Strategy
Performance
Supporting each other
help others be prepared
Over Prepare/Work
Strategy
Over Prepare/Work
Strategy
I must over-prepare
I need to prove I'm worthy to be here
I'm good at my job
I'm worthy to be here
I must over-prepare
Over Prepare/Work
Take on extra work
Strategy
Performance
women do the work
Over Prepare/Work
Strategy
relationships w/men crucial
Sports only way to participate
Work Treatment
Performance
Women organize social events
Identity
Work Treatment
women are motherly
Work Treatment
motherly to review papers
Work Treatment
toxic leader
help not available
unfair system
protected officers
protected officers
my word has less weight than mens
Work Treatment
Work Treatment

Minority
Work Treatment
Minority
Work Treatment
Supporting each other
Solo Status
You have no one
Stereotype Threat
Work Treatment
Minority
Solo Status
No one believes you
People don't listen to / see me
I never complain
careful of actions/speech/perceptions
Performance
I'm a great performer
Identity
I'm good at my job
Work Treatment
Minority
need to get away from Org
Work Treatment
Minority
hostile environ toward women
AF is a testosterone atmosphere
lost hope in AF
Work Treatment
I'm good at my job
I have credibility
Identity
Performance
Strategy
I advocate for the silenced
Supporting each other
advocating for others
I give voice to the voiceless
Advocate for others
Identity
Work Treatment
Performance

Supporting each other
Performance
Hard to stand up for others
difficult when everyone else not looking at problem
Identity
I must stand up
Supporting each other
right is not easy
careful of actions/speech/perceptions
Minority
Performance
I'm good at my job
Hard worker
organized
Identity
I'm good at my job
I'm good at my job
Identity
Good time manager
Identity
empathetic
Cautious
Strategy
watch what I say at work
Being a Woman - careful with my words
Being a Woman - too emotional
careful of actions/speech/perceptions
Don't show too much emotion
Identity
Cautious
Strategy
Cautious
Strategy
Performance
direct women are labeled
Stereotype Threat
Performance
Cautious
Strategy
"added layer"
How am I presenting myself?

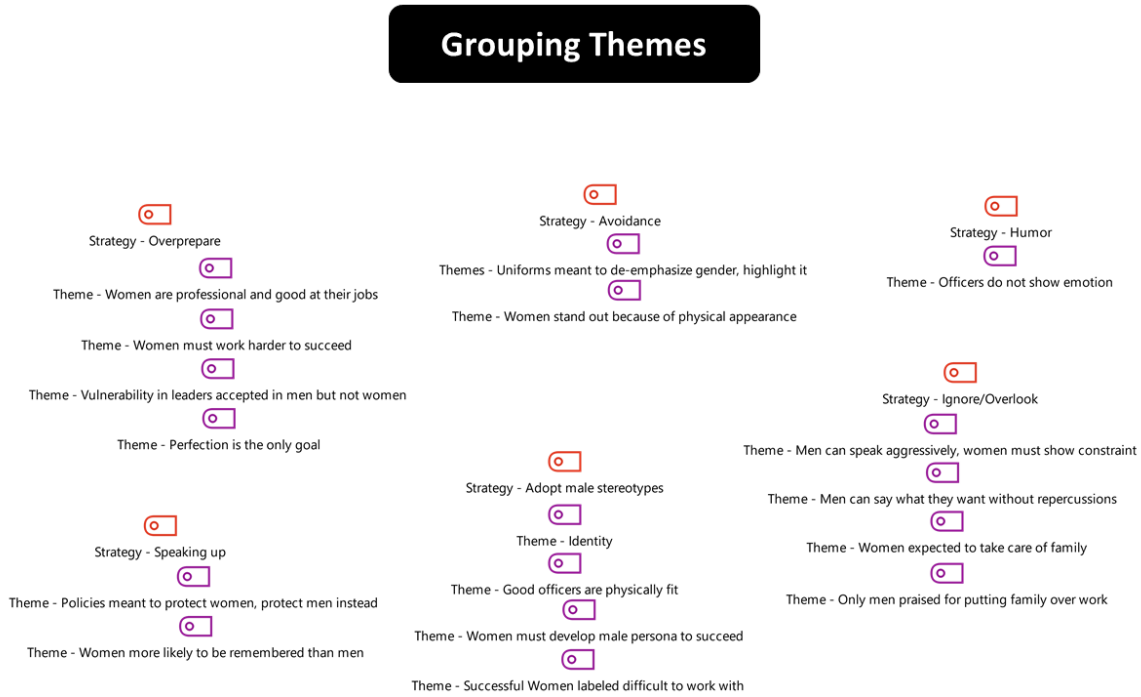
careful of actions/speech/perceptions
Strategy
Cautious
Being an officer - professional
Being a Woman - professional/hard working
Identity
Performance
I must over-prepare
I must work harder
Being a Woman - being a mom
Strategy
Work Treatment
Higher Standard
am I being judged for being a mom
double-standard
higher standards
Being an officer - long hours/hard work
Being a Woman - hard worker/more hours
I don't look like an officer
I don't do what most women do
Identity
Performance
women can be harsh on women
Work Treatment
Being an officer - inspiring/caring for each other
inspiring women
phenomenal women
Work Treatment
caring for your female tribe
Advocate for others
Work Treatment
Strategy
Support from Women
Better together
Women Relationships
enduring relationships
Strategy
Work Treatment
Visible Women Leaders
Work Treatment
women mentor models

Being an officer - mentor
Visible Women Leaders
Supporting each other
Work Treatment
women mentor models
Be a mentor to someone
Stereotype Threat
Strategy
hesitant to speak in class
Cautious
Don't have much to add because I have questions
Strategy
Cautious
Solo Status
Stereotype Threat
Minority
Men can speak even when they don't know
Work Treatment
AF is a testosterone atmosphere
bias against women in classroom
Stereotype Threat
Identity
medical for women not valued
Being a Woman - don't get football references
Work Treatment
Solo Status
Need to know football if I'm going to participate
Being a Woman - don't get football references
Work Treatment
Being a Woman - typical female
Typical woman doesn't know sports
relationships w/men crucial
Stereotype Threat
Strategy
Cautious
medical for women not valued
Being a Woman - labeled as emotional
Being an officer - being judged
Work Treatment
Used to being the only woman
Minority

Identity
Used to being the minority
Being a woman - Used to being a minority
Minority
shocked by seeing other women
Being a Woman - Uniforms degender
Work Treatment
Minority
sports talk can alienate women
Solo Status
Being an officer - speak only when it's pertinent
Don't show too much emotion
careful of actions/speech/perceptions
Cautious
Stereotype Threat
Strategy
Being a Woman - measured responses
Cautious
Minority
Don't over-participate
careful of actions/speech/perceptions
Strategy
Being a Woman - labeled as overbearing
Strategy
Stereotype Threat
Don't be overbearing
careful of actions/speech/perceptions
Cautious
Being an officer - caring for others
Don't show too much emotion
careful of actions/speech/perceptions
Being an officer - non-emotional arguments
Being a Woman - measured response
Cautious
careful of actions/speech/perceptions
not speaking is my defense mechanism
Strategy
Stereotype Threat
Stereotype Threat
Strategy
I'll lose credibility if I say something wrong

Higher Standard
Visible Women Leaders
other perspectives
Minority
Stereotype Threat
AF is a testosterone atmosphere
Only woman officer's perspective for some
Being a Woman - being a representative
Stereotype Threat
Identity
heavy weight being only female
Minority
Being a Woman - laying the groundwork
Women are capable
Visible Women Leaders
trailblazing women

Appendix F


Grouping Themes
Strategy - Overprepare
Theme - Women are professional and good at their jobs
Theme - Women must work harder to succeed
Theme - Vulnerability in leaders accepted in men but not women
Theme - Perfection is the only goal
Strategy - Speaking up
Theme - Policies meant to protect women, protect men instead
Theme - Women more likely to be remembered than men
Strategy - Avoidance
Themes - Uniforms meant to de-emphasize gender, highlight it
Theme - Women stand out because of physical appearance
Strategy - Adopt male stereotypes
Theme - Identity
Theme - Good officers are physically fit
Theme - Women must develop male persona to succeed
Theme - Successful Women labeled difficult to work with
Strategy - Humor
Theme - Officers do not show emotion
Strategy - Ignore/Overlook
Theme - Men can speak aggressively, women must show constraint
Theme - Men can say what they want without repercussions
Theme - Women expected to take care of family
Theme - Only men praised for putting family over work

Appendix G

Title	PRO-FY2020-544: Removing All Barriers: A Case Study Investigating of Women's Participation in Military Academia
Researcher(s)	Kyle G. Bellue, University of Memphis
Researchers Contact Information	(571) 991-9716, kgbellue@memphis.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The box below highlights key information for you to consider when deciding if you want to participate. More detailed information is provided below the box. Please ask the researcher(s) any questions about the study before you make your decision. If you volunteer, you will be one of about 4-8 people to do so.

Key Information for You to Consider

Voluntary Consent: You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to participate or not. There will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled if you choose not to participate or discontinue participation.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to examine women officer's perspectives regarding gender beliefs and practices within the military and how those beliefs and practices help shape women's learning experiences.

Duration: It is expected that your participation will last throughout the entirely of ACSC AY21.

Procedures and Activities: You will be asked to be interviewed four times during the AY, as well as let me observe a seminar classroom setting prior to each interview. You will be asked questions regarding your participation in the seminar discussions, as well as how you learn to participate with your seminar classmates. **The purpose of this research is to observe gendered beliefs and practices in the classroom and investigate how those beliefs and practices help shape how you learn to participate within the classroom setting. As such, gender beliefs in the classroom experience will be closely observed and explored.**

Risk: Some of the foreseeable risk or discomforts of your participation include bringing up past unfavorable personal experiences during the interview process. As a participant, you will have the right to not answer any questions that they deem too sensitive to discuss. Also, if I sense any cues from the participant regarding any stress or emotional pain, I will halt the session, stop recording and, if needed, reschedule the session.

Benefits: Some of the benefits that may be expected include adding to the

scholarship regarding gender and the military and could be useful in spring-boarding ideas for future studies for the military. You also might learn more about yourself by participating and, therefore, be better able to shape military gender beliefs and practices as you progress within the military. Lastly, this research might also provide a better understanding of the cultural and gendered experiences of women officer students attending Air University, which would assist instructors to see the benefits of diverse perspectives when using discursive teaching methods.
Alternatives: Participation is voluntary, and the only alternative is to not participate. As a student, if you decide not to take part in this study your choice will not affect your academic status or grade in this school.

Who is conducting this research?

Kyle G. Bellue (Lead Investigator, LI) of the University of Memphis, Department of Leadership is in charge of the study. He is a doctoral student and is being guided by his Faculty Advisor, Dr. Edith Gnanadass. There are no other research team members assisting during the study. No members of the research team have any significant financial interest and/or conflict of interest related to the research.

What happens if I agree to participate in this Research?

If you agree you will be asked to participate in four (4) hour-long interviews and be willing for the researcher to observe your seminar classroom during instruction prior to those interviews. As a participant you will have the opportunity to review the transcripts of your interviews to ensure your information was not misrepresented or mistranslated.

No identitfying information about any participant will be gathered during the interviews and the observations. This informed consent document is the only time we will be keeping any personal identifying information about you. However, none of your personal identification information will be linked to the data you provide during the study, as you will be asked to go by an alias.

During the interviews, all participants will be asked to answer questions on the interview protocol. However, if any participant is uncomfortable answering any questions, they can skip any question and can stop the interview at any time. Here is an example of some of the questions you may be asked:

How has being an officer in the military changed the way you view yourself?

a. Do you see this change as good or bad?

b. In what ways?

c. Do you see this more of a change or a growth regarding who you are? Explain.

What role (if any) do you think gender plays in your school experience? (both positive and negative effects)

a. How do you feel about the gender apportionment of the seminar?

b. How do your classmates' gender affect how you perceived or interacted with them? Why or why not?

c. Did you wish there were more females in your seminar?

The observations will take place in the seminar rooms within the ACSC building on Maxwell Air Force Base. Interviews will take place at a public establishment off the base, or somewhere other than the ACSC academic building. In the event of **restrictions** due to COVID-19, observations and interviews can take place on-line using team meeting software.

The intent is to observe you in a classroom setting four separate times during the year, and then interview you after these observationa. These activities will be evenly spread out throughout the AY. The goal is to observe/interview each subject in September 2020, November 2020, February 2020, and April 2020. The dates may be subject to change. All interviews will be audio recorded for the purpose of transcription afterward. No photography or video recording will be used in the observations or interviews.

Analyses of these transcripts will be made and you will have an opportunity to review the analysis to ensure the interpretation of your information was not misrepresented.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

Information collected for this research will be used as part of my doctoral dissertation collection and analysis. Since this study is being completed on an Air Force installation, this study is supported by the DoD and the DoD will have access to study records to ensure the safety of the subjects and regulatory compliance. The DoD will use Air University's IRB staff to monitor this study to ensure safety of the subjects and regulatory compliance. I may publish/present the results of this research. However, I will keep your name and other identifying information confidential and only use the alias you provide me to connect you with your data. The information collected for this research may be shared and used for future research by the researcher.

How will my privacy and data confidentiality be protected?

We promise to protect your privacy and security of your personal information as best we can. Although you need to know about some limits to this promise. Measures we will take include:

Interviews will be done in a private, one-on-one setting with the researcher and the participant

Confidentiality of your data will be protected, as it will reside on a University of Memphis OneDrive folder only accessible to me and my doctoral advisor (Dr. Edith Gnanadass). The data will only be stored there during the duration of the study and will be deleted afterward. There will be no transferring of the data to any other database.

Individuals and organizations that monitor this research may be permitted access to inspect the research records. This monitoring may include access to your interview and observation data. These individual and organizations include:

University of Memphis Institutional Review Board

Air University Institutional Review Board

Dr. Edith Gnanadass (researcher's advisor)

What are the risks if I participate in this research?

The risk or discomforts of participating in this research include:

- Data collection will consist of one-on-one semi-structured interviews with my participants as well as participant observations in the classroom. Interview questioning will focus on barriers to learning and being a part of a group in the academic setting and will not focus on traumatic personal experiences. Mitigation: Participants will have the right to not answer any questions that they deem too sensitive to discuss. Also, several safeguards will be in place to ensure participants do not feel pressured to respond or respond in a certain way.

- Participants are students first, therefore, if they participate in the study it may decrease the time needed to spend on their academic workload. Mitigation: participants will be able to remove themselves from the study at any time in order focus on their studies.

- COVID-19 restrictions might be an impediment to face-to-face interviews required for my data collection. Mitigation: I will use AF-approved on-line meeting systems (i.e. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc.) to complete the interviews, if required. If required, I can also do my observations on-line as well.

- Emotional and mental stress related to having a loss of confidentiality due to being a part of this study. Mitigation: By using an alias throughout the study and keeping the data you share with me in a private drive, as well as your consent forms locked within my office, I hope to assuage your fears and give you the confidence knowing that your information will remain private.

Having said that, I will work to ensure risk to every participant of the study is minimized in every way.

What are the benefits of participating in this research?

Participating has no known direct benefits to you. However, we do believe that this study will add to the scholarship regarding gender and the military and could be useful in spring-boarding ideas for future studies for the military. Secondly, you might learn more about yourself by participating and, therefore, be better able to shape military gender beliefs and practices as they progress within the organization. You might get a better understanding of your own life experiences and might realize that others have similar experiences as you. Thirdly, this research might also provide a better understanding of the cultural and gendered experiences of women officer students attending Air University, which would assist instructors to see the benefits of diverse perspectives when using discursive teaching methods. Fourthly, examining gender beliefs and practices of women officers within military academia will help describe how these factors shape women's view of themselves as officers, as well as show how women officers help to reshape gender beliefs and practices within the larger military community.

What if I want to stop participating in this research?

It is up to you to decide whether you want to volunteer for this study. It is also ok to decide to end your participation at any time. There is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you decided to withdraw your participation. Your decision about participating will not affect your relationship with the researcher, the University of Memphis or Air University. If you feel the need to withdraw from the study, simply contact me and I will withdraw your name from the study. I will also destroy your signed consent form and the data we collected so far, if you so choose.

Will it cost me money to take part in this research?

There are no costs associated with participation in this research study.

You do not give up your legal right by signing this document

Will I receive any compensation for participating in this research?

You will not be compensated for taking part in this research

Who can answer my question about this research?

Before you decide to volunteer for this study, please ask any questions that might come to mind. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, _Kyle Bellue___ at _____ or my advisor, Dr. Edith Gnanadass, _____. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Institutional Review Board staff at the University of Memphis at 901-678-2705 or email irb@memphis.edu. We will give you a signed copy of this consent to take with you.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT (The statement of consent should not be separated on multiple pages)

I have had the opportunity to consider the information in this document. I have asked any questions needed for me to decide about my participation. I understand that I can ask additional questions through the study.

By signing below, I volunteer to participate in this research. I understand that I am not waiving any legal rights. I have been given a copy of this consent document. I understand that if my ability to consent for myself changes, my legal representative or I may be asked to consent again prior to my continued participation. Your name will not be used in the writings of this study, but an alias of your choice will be used instead.

As described above, you will be audio recorded while performing the activities described above. The audio recordings will be used for collection and analysis of my personal experiences while in the seminar classroom at ACSC. Initial the space below if you consent to the use of audio recordings as described above.
____ I agree to the use of being audio recorded.

Name of Adult Participant	Signature of Adult Participant	Date

Researcher Signature (To be completed at the time of Informed Consent)

I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of her questions. I believe that she understand the information described in this consent and freely consent to participate**.**

Name of Research Team Member	Signature of Research Team Member	Date

Appendix H

From: irb@memphis.edu <irb@memphis.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, July 8, 2020 7:39 PM
To: Edith Gnanadass (gnnadass) <E.Gnanadass@memphis.edu>; Kyle G Bellue (kgbellue) <kgbellue@memphis.edu>
Subject: PRO-FY2020-544 - Initial: Approval - Exempt

Institutional Review Board
Division of Research and Innovation
Office of Research Compliance
University of Memphis
315 Admin Bldg
Memphis, TN 38152-3370

July 8, 2020

PI Name: Kyle Bellue
Co-Investigators:
Advisor and/or Co-PI: Edith Gnanadass
Submission Type: Initial
Title: Removing All Barriers: A Qualitative Case Study Investigating How Military Gender Beliefs and Practices Help Shape Women Officer's Participation and Learning within Military Academia
IRB ID **:** #PRO-FY2020-544
Exempt Approval: June 28, 2020

The University of Memphis Institutional Review Board, FWA00006815, has reviewed your submission in accordance with all applicable statuses and regulations as well as ethical principles.

Approval of this project is given with the following obligations:

1. When the project is finished a completion submission is required

2. Any changes to the approved protocol requires board approval prior to implementation
3. When necessary submit an incident/adverse events for board review
4. Human subjects training is required every 2 years and is to be kept current at citiprogram.org.

For any additional questions or concerns please contact us at irb@memphis.edu or 901.678.2705

Thank you,
James P. Whelan, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair
The University of Memphis.