3-21-2024

Diversity in the South Carolina Army National Guard Warrant Officer Corps

Alana Alamon-Scott
Walden University

Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Alana N. Alamon-Scott

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Nicole Hayes, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Jeffrey Bumgarner, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2024

Abstract

Diversity in the South Carolina Army National Guard Warrant Officer Corps

by

Alana N. Alamon-Scott

MPA, Walden University, 2022

MS, Kaplan University, 2013

BA, Morris College, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

April 2024

Abstract

In a 2018 military demographic report, 10% of all warrant officers were female and 10% of soldiers were African American in the Army National Guard. According to this data, the Army National Guard boasts a majority of male White soldiers, including warrant officers. With the national shift to embrace a more diverse and representative culture, the Army has responded with diversity and inclusion policies along with the creation of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. However, representation is lacking, selection for military assignments and career progression to senior positions has historically featured adversity, and course reservation restrictions for primary military education include hidden obstacles. The purpose of the qualitative study was to understand the impact of representation on four female African American junior warrant officers while pursuing senior warrant officer positions in the South Carolina Army National Guard as well as why no member of this population has ever achieved the position of command chief warrant officer. Utilizing one-on-one interviews, this study illuminated the lived experiences and perspectives of female African American junior warrant officers to understand career progression tactics, military assignment selection, and primary military education course selection within the organization. This is significant for positive social change as the senior Chief Warrant Officer Five of state organizations advise the commanding general on all warrant officer matters, including female African American warrant officers.

Diversity in the South Carolina Army National Guard Warrant Officer Corps

by

Alana N. Alamon-Scott

MPA, Walden University, 2022

MS, Kaplan University, 2013

BA, Morris College, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

April 2024

Acknowledgments

When I began my doctoral journey, the coronavirus pandemic was at the peak of its assault across the national landscape. Finding balance in a new telework environment, managing course requirements, completing a military course, monitoring my high schooler's academic performance, assisting my older son's navigation of his work-life balance, completing a permanent change of military duty station move with new active-duty requirements, along with a robust committee schedule for my service organization was a lot to contend with. However, I would like to thank my family for their constant support and encouragement throughout this process, specifically my sons, Rashaun and Tristan. I love you both sincerely.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the U.S. Army, U.S. Army National Guard, and U.S. Army Reserve, warrant officers are the technical experts, quiet professionals, and focused leaders of their respective branches and situated between commissioned officers and enlisted soldiers in the rank structure. Currently, there are 18 branch specialties for Army warrant officers. While the U.S. Army established the senior warrant officer advisor to the chief of staff of the Army in 2014, the senior warrant officer position of command chief warrant officer was established in 1996 by the U.S. Army National Guard Bureau (Dawkins, 2016; U.S. Army Public Affairs, 2020).

While detailed historical records for the South Carolina Army National Guard warrant officer achievements have not been maintained through the years, it appears that the trend for command chief warrant officers of the South Carolina Army National Guard has been White men specializing in the aviation branch. The Army National Guard Race and Ethnic Diversity Comparison Report for the South Carolina Army National Guard revealed that 34% of Soldiers are African American and within the warrant officer population, 5% are African American females (Army National Guard G1 Database, 2021). While the South Carolina Army National Guard warrant officer cohort is widely diverse, only one female warrant officer has achieved the senior role, which was during the tenure of Commanding General T. Etson Marchant from 1979 to 1995. To date, no other female or minority warrant officer has achieved this senior position.

Due to this lack of representation, this study's purpose was to explore the lived experiences and perspectives of female African American junior warrant officers in the

ranks of chief warrant officer 2, chief warrant officer 3, and chief warrant officer 4

currently serving in the South Carolina Army National Guard to ascertain whether

obstacles exist in career decisions, military assignments, and primary military education

selection in pursuit of the senior warrant officer position despite the lack of diversity and

representation. Within this chapter, the background of the phenomenon will be shared

along with the problem statement, purpose, and research question to frame the study.

Next, the selected theoretical framework and nature of the study are briefly discussed

along with key definitions used throughout this study. Subsequently, assumptions, scope,

delimitations, and limitations are concisely discussed. The chapter concludes with the

significance of this study and a summary.

Background

The inception of South Carolina Army National Guard dates back to the 1600

colonial era with the passage of the first militia law which gave rise to the South Carolina

National Guard (Church, n.d., para. 1). The initial purpose in formulating this order was

for men to protect their homes and families from attacks by the indigenous people.

However, at the inception of the American Revolutionary War, the directive expanded to

include supporting the Continental Army's efforts to defeat British Soldiers. The Militia

Act of 1903 effectively divided the mustered men into the reserve militia and the

organized militia from which the reserve militia would be restructured with the authority

to receive federal support, federal funding, and a name change to the National Guard

(Donnelly, 2001). In 1908, the act was amended to give the president of the United States

the authority to set the length of federal service, authorize mobilizations outside of the

United States, and increase federal funding (Donnelly, 2001). In 1916, the National

Defense Act was passed to assert federal control over state military forces, double armory

drill requirements, extend summer training, and require Guardsmen to take both state and

federal oaths (Donnelly, 2001).

Over the years with the contemporary evolution of the U.S. Army, the U.S. Army

National Guard, and the U.S. Army Reserve, enlistment of minorities and women have

gained acceptance to include enlistment within the warrant officer ranks. Specifically in

the warrant officer ranks of the South Carolina Army National Guard, with the exception

of one female warrant officer in the early 1990s, the senior warrant officer position has

been and continues to be held by a White man. But the warrant officer cohort is widely

diverse, comprised of minorities and women along with the pool of White male warrant

officers.

Specific to the Army warrant officer corps, which was officially established by

War Department Bulletin Number 43 in July 1918, military history reveals usage of

warrant officers in the British Naval structure as early as the late 1400s (Warrant Officer

Historical Foundation, 2015). While historical records are not readily available for the

warrant officer corps in the South Carolina Army National Guard, it is presumed that Eric

Seymore was the first soldier to commission as a warrant officer when he enlisted in the

South Carolina Army National Guard as a helicopter pilot in 1972 (King, 2014).

Additionally, during his tenure as the adjutant general of the South Carolina National

Guard, General T. Etson Marchant pinned Nadene Mahon as the first female warrant

officer and later, he appointed Janice Ready as the first female command chief warrant

officer (Goff, 2022; Thompson Funeral Homes, n.d.). Today, the South Carolina Army National Guard has an enlistment of 252 warrant officers, with 31 being female, 10 of whom are African American (Army National Guard G1 Database, 2021).

Though the U.S. Army publishes regulatory guidance on promotions for officers and enlisted soldiers to the next rank for both active and reserve components, in the South Carolina Army National Guard, male White warrant officers seemingly ascend to senior positions without issue. Aside from the one female warrant officer's ascension to command chief warrant officer in the early 1990s, the disparity continues to exist in the selection of career enriching assignments and military education, affecting who receives consideration for esteemed positions. Thus, this study was conducted to examine the career paths of the warrant officer cohort in the South Carolina Army National Guard to understand selection for command chief warrant officer. Specifically, this study seeks to explore the experiences and perceptions of female African American junior warrant officers to understand the impact of lack of representation at senior levels in the pursuit of command chief warrant officer. Mindful of the small demographic available, studying female African American junior warrant officers will provide focused insight on assignment opportunities, promotion selection, and primary military education course selection within the obvious lack of diversity and representation in the senior warrant officer role.

Problem Statement

The research problem is the fact that the South Carolina Army National Guard has never had a female African American command chief warrant officer. Currently, military

officials have recognized the existence of unconscious biases and deep-rooted socialization while countering with immediate implementation of diversity and inclusion policies (Floyd, 2020). However, the coined term and widely used "military colorblindness" continues conditions for diversity efforts to be passive, usurped, or ignored altogether (Boyd, 2021, pg. 45). Current demographic data reflect a robust warrant officer population in the South Carolina Army National Guard with a small fraction representing female African Americans. Thus, this problem impacts currently serving female African American warrant officers because representation is lacking, selection for military assignments and career progression to senior positions has historically featured adversity, and course reservation restrictions for primary military education include hidden obstacles. There are many possible factors contributing to this problem, among which are lack of mentorship, promotion barriers, and apathy that may transition into lack of interest. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem by examining the effects of diversity and representation in leadership positions, specifically the senior warrant officer position of command chief warrant officer, while understanding the lived experiences and perspectives of female African American junior warrant officers currently serving in the South Carolina Army National Guard.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to understand the marginal diversity and representation impact on female African American junior warrant officers while pursuing senior warrant officer positions in the South Carolina Army National

Guard in addition to exploring why no member of this population has ever achieved command chief warrant officer. Utilizing one-on-one interviews, this study illuminate the lived experiences and perspectives of female African American junior warrant officers to understand career progression tactics, military assignment selection, and primary military education course selection within the organization.

Research Question

How do female African American junior warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National Guard navigate career progression to senior roles in spite of lack of diversity and representation?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

For this study, Abatecola et al.'s (2020) evolution on Hambrick and Mason's (1984) upper echelons theory was used in exploring the research problem and purpose of the study. This theory identifies attributes contributing to the studied phenomenon, which continues to exist despite contemporary efforts. Under upper echelons theory, selection of the senior warrant officer has not been reflective of the organizational warrant officer cohort.

A widely studied theory focused on top to bottom organizational management structure, this theory is synthesized into a framework of four key elements necessary for examining top managerial positions and subsequent influence on the organizational members. The framework was constructed from foundational features incorporating and expounding upon modern aspects, including sociodemographics. The updated theory postulates that moderators such as managerial discretion and executive job demands

influence the decision-making process. Recognizing the five factor model and Myers-Briggs personality test as contributors to the psychological variables and cognitive process of those in management positions, this theory delineates the hubris of the senior position. A major proposition of the theory is that younger managers are prone to take more risks than older managers.

Theoretical Relation to the Study

Abatecola et al.'s (2020) contemporary theory was constructed to consolidate and modernize precepts of upper echelons theory synthesizing a present-day framework serviceable to all organizations seeking to explore organizational behavior and performance. This theory links fragmented theoretical contributions with the construction of a model amalgamated for precise focus on managers. Within the framework, this theory outlines components of managerial attributes as a contributing factor to influence organizational culture and behavior. Relating to this study, Abatecola et al.'s theoretical framework outlines features necessary for investigating organizational leaders and assessing organizational members. In the South Carolina Army National Guard warrant officer cohort, historical and present leaders have been White and male. Through the lens of this theory, managerial discretion has been significantly favored for one race and gender. Applying diversity and representation, this theory will present a better understanding of military opportunities and intersectionality for female African American junior warrant officers in pursuit of senior warrant officer positions.

<center>**Nature of the Study**</center>

The nature of this study was qualitative with narrative inquiry approach. By

implementing narrative inquiry, this study features narratives for further understanding the phenomenon. Qualitative research is consistent with exploring lived experiences and perspectives. Further, narrative inquiry does not draw shared meaning from individual experiences but brings an understanding of experiences within the construct of the phenomenon (Burkholder, 2016). Therefore, to understand why no female African American warrant officer has ever achieved senior warrant officer positions and the senior office of command chief warrant officer in the South Army National Guard, it is essential to employ a qualitative narrative study. The population identified for this study is female African American junior warrant officers currently serving in the South Carolina Army National Guard in the ranks of Chief Warrant Officer 2, Chief Warrant Officer 3, and Chief Warrant Officer 4. The sampling method will be purposeful across the identified population to best ascertain data in response to the research question. The data collection tool was individual interviews, and open coding was done for data analysis.

Definitions

African American or Black: Individuals born and raised in the United States with ancestry associated with African descent.

Army enterprise: The U.S. Army, the U.S. Army National Guard, and the U.S, Army Reserve. This term refers to the active and reserve components of the U.S. Army.

Army National Guard: One of two reserve components of the U.S. Army with suborganizations within each of the 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia.

Career progression: In the Army enterprise, this is the act of progressing from

one rank to the next which requires completion of primary military education, ability to pass the fitness test, and selection for assignments with special duties.

Command chief warrant officer: In the Army National Guard and its suborganizations, this the senior warrant officer advisor to the organization's commanding general. Duties include talent management and warrant officer career advisement.

Currently serving: In the Army National Guard, currently serving includes those Soldiers who serve as Active Guard Reserve (AGR) and those who serve part time who are termed as "MDayers" (Man Days). Part time is typically military duty one weekend a month and 2 consecutive weeks within a year.

Diversity: According to the Department of Defense (DoD), diversity is "all the different characteristics and attributes of the DoD's total force, which are consistent with DoD's core values, integral to overall readiness and mission accomplishment, and reflective of the Nation we serve" (DoD, 2018b, p. 13).

Female: Biologically, the gender with two X chromosomes and the ability to reproduce offspring, and having known female genitalia, such as ovaries, uterus, fallopian tubes, and a vagina.

Inclusion: According to DoD, inclusion is "valuing and integrating each individual's perspectives, ideas, and contributions into the way an organization functions and makes decisions" (DoD, 2018b, p. 14).

Junior warrant officer: Typically, warrant officers in the military rank of chief warrant officer 2 and 3. In some organizations, chief warrant officer 4 is considered a

junior warrant officer rank.

Lived experiences: Occurrences and actions of an individual with direct involvement that can provide a first-hand account.

Military colorblindness: According to Dr. Boyd, military colorblindness is "a common military cultural phrase used to ignore race and dismiss race-related incidents: 'I don't see color, I only see green'" (Boyd, 2021, p. 45).

Racial microaggression: "Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (Mills, 2020, p. 45).

Representation: The practicing ability of a senior individual to influence and encourage those within his/her demographic to aspire for elevated positions of authority.

Senior warrant officer position: In the Army National Guard, these are advisory positions, such as senior personnel technician or senior safety advisor. In the Army National Guard and its suborganizations, this is typically the command chief warrant officer.

Soldiers: For this study, soldiers refer to individuals who have enlisted in the U.S. Army and are currently serving in either the active or the reserve components. Soldiers include commissioned officers, warrant officers, noncommissioned officers, and junior enlisted soldiers. Each identified group of soldiers has a distinctive rank structure, promotion timetable, and associated primary military education schedule.

Unconscious bias: The known and/or unknown partiality shown to a person or

people.

Warrant officer: The rank group between commissioned officer and noncommissioned officer. Warrant officers are technical experts of their branch, self-aware, and adaptive professionals of the U.S. Army. Pay grades are W1 through W5. Ranks are Warrant Officer 1 through Chief Warrant Officer 5.

Warrant officer cohort: In the Army, warrant officers are labelled as the "quiet professionals" and as a result of the professionalism and high expectations, the warrant officer cohort is the collection of warrant officers currently serving and those who have served in the Army.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Assumptions

The warrant officer structure includes five levels with chief warrant officer 5 being the senior level. Additionally, there are 18 specialty branches for warrant officers, such as aviation and judge advocate branches. Typically, chief warrant officer 5 soldiers serve at senior leadership levels as strategic planners, key advisors to commanders, and organizational talent managers for warrant officers. The command chief warrant officer in the South Carolina Army National Guard has historically been a White male warrant officer. Previously, assignments, career path, primary military education selection, and experiences of warrant officers, specifically minority and female warrant officers, have not been explored. For this study, some assumptions include ill-advised assignments, poorly constructed promotion packets, or delayed selection process for primary military courses. These assumptions are necessary to frame the context of this study as one or all

adversely impact a female African American junior warrant officer's ability to progress through the ranks and ultimately achieve the senior warrant officer leadership position.

Scope and Delimitations

The specific aspects addressed in the study are diversity and representation. These factors are significant in understanding female African American junior warrant officers' capability to achieve the senior rank. For this study, excluded populations are White male warrant officers, White female warrant officers, African American male warrant officers, and other warrant officers. Based on the outcome of this study, it is perceived that transferability will be relevant to the other demographic warrant officers and other suborganizations of the Army National Guard.

The theoretical framework selected is based on Abatecola et al.'s (2020) modernized upper echelons theory, which delineates characteristics of organizational leaders and associated effect on the organizational members. Mills's (2020) resilience theory also imparts coping strategies following negative outcomes. Additionally, based on concepts from Shanahan et al.'s (2018) theory of the narrative policy framework, it is key to capitalize on the role of narratives while understanding the policy process. Therefore, the focus on how female African American junior warrant officers function and progress within the organization is beneficial for all Army warrant officers. Employing narrative inquiry and providing space for lived experiences and perceptions, the narrative policy framework makes the argument that narratives provide enriching relevant data within the innerworkings of the phenomenon and explain how individual narratives play an integral role in creating or modifying diversity and representation

policies in the South Carolina Army National Guard and presumably, the U.S. Army as an enterprise.

Limitations

Potential concerns with trustworthiness include interview site agreement, coordinated approval with South Carolina Army National Guard for interviewing, and possible difficulty recruiting participants for interviews. In seeking interview locations, local libraries have study rooms available for interviewing managed by an automated reservation system. However, if virtual interviews are conducted, an undisturbed location was essential for both interviewer and participant. Next, coordination with the South Carolina Army National Guard was avoided since advertisement was not required, and interviews were conducted outside of military duty hours and away from military installations. Additionally, a daily journal was utilized to capture my bias, perspectives, and opinions, as I am a researcher with Walden University and a chief warrant officer in the South Carolina Army National Guard which may pose a potential challenge. Some ethical challenges that may develop following the interviews of the purposeful sample could be the creation of a hostile work environment, diminished work relationships, and increased bias toward the sample population. Thus, it was imperative for the participants' privacy to be protected, and confidentiality maintained. Each participant was assured that identifying information will not be included in the study to maintain confidentiality. To confirm that each participant's trust was gained and maintained, each participant was provided with an overview of how their interview would be reported in the research study and provided a copy of her interview for review.

Significance

In a 2018 military demographic report, 10% of warrant officers were female and 10% of all soldiers were African American in the Army National Guard (Mattis, 2018). According to the statistical data presented, the Army National Guard has an abundance of White male soldiers, including warrant officers. Statistical data also reveal that there are 300 warrant officers in the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 5 in the Army National Guard, which represents .08% of all warrant officers (Nigrelle, 2016). Further, 17.2% of the soldiers in the Army National Guard are female, of who 16.2% are African American, 68.9% are White, and 7.2% are Latin American women (Security Women, 2020). With the national landscape shifting to embrace a more diverse and representative culture, the Army has responded with diversity and inclusion policies along with the creation of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. For the Army enterprise, this is a significant gap considering current organizational efforts to diversify leadership positions to reflect the national landscape. As a result, it is anticipated that this study will inspire female African American junior warrant officers to pursue the senior warrant officer position. Once a female African American warrant officer achieves the senior warrant officer position, the South Carolina Army National Guard will be more reflective of the community it serves.

Summary

In summary, the U.S. Army as an enterprise is a widely diverse organization with recognizable representation of every demographic. Within the past decade, the need to formalize policy to ensure equitable treatment and ability for soldiers to progress through

the ranks was identified and implemented. However, the effectiveness of implemented diversity policy and whether disparities continue to exist in the assignments, promotion, and primary military education selection process are features yet to be understood. The upper echelons theory framed this study to investigate the leaders of the South Carolina Army National Guard, determine the effect on the warrant officer cohort of the organization, and champion diversity efforts by creating viable career paths for female African American warrant officers to senior roles. This research imparts the resilience of female African American junior warrant officers in an evolving organization despite cultural and behavioral challenges which parallel the American landscape. The goal of this study is to provide readers insight into perceptions and challenges of diversity and representation within the South Carolina Army National Guard, especially the warrant officer ranks.

In the next chapter, a comprehensive literature review will be shared along with literature search strategies. Next, the theoretical foundation will be examined along with previous application. Subsequently, major theoretical propositions, major hypothesis, and delimitation of assumptions will be reviewed. Finally, a literature review of key variables and concepts will be explored in relation to this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The evolution of the U.S. Army includes the development of a reserve force comprised of the U.S. Army National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve, acceptance of the enlistment of minorities and women, and the establishment of the warrant officer ranks. However, some improvements have been slow to notice or have faced obstacles. Specifically in the warrant officer ranks in the South Carolina Army National Guard, the senior warrant officer position has been held by a male White warrant officer despite the warrant officer cohort being widely diverse. While the U.S. Army publishes regulatory guidance to govern warrant officer promotions for both active and reserve components, in the South Carolina Army National Guard, only one female White warrant officer has achieved the senior rank and no minority or female minority warrant officer has received consideration for the esteemed position.

A broad overview of the literature available did not yield much regarding female African American U.S. Army warrant officers. Therefore, parallel studies in higher education and business industries were considered to provide enriching, relevant challenges faced by female African Americans in their rising to senior levels in their respective industries. Considering parallel studies helped illuminate common obstacles experienced by female African Americans that transcends industries, including the military, as well as provide countermeasures and coping measures employed to overcome these obstacles.

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to understand the marginal diversity and representation impact on female African American junior warrant officers

while pursuing senior warrant officer positions in the South Carolina Army National Guard to understand why no member of this population has achieved the position of command chief warrant officer. Current demographic data reflect a robust warrant officer population in the South Carolina Army National Guard with a small fraction representing female African Americans. There are many possible factors contributing to this problem, among which are lack of mentorship, promotion barriers, and apathy that transitions into lack of interest. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge by examining the effects of diversity and representation in leadership positions, specifically the senior warrant officer position of command chief warrant officer, while understanding the lived experiences and perspectives of female African American junior warrant officers currently serving in the South Carolina Army National Guard.

Within the subsequent section, a review of the literature search strategy employed for garnering the most relevant articles for this study is shared followed by exploration of the theoretical framework and literature review. From the literature, I discovered unique challenges experienced specifically by African American females in their selected industries, such as academia, business, and military. These challenges surpassed the "glass ceiling" as the contemporary "concrete ceiling" and intersectionality of race and gender, which may have been experienced by female African American warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National Guard.

Literature Search Strategy

The Army consistently favors collection of quantitative data, which yields enriching analytic material that leaders use to implement policies and procedures.

Operationally, surveys are disseminated throughout the enterprise soliciting responses on topics studied at military leadership courses with an unknown number of respondents. However, once responses are received, numerical value is applied to responses and broad viewpoints are developed as leaders fabricate resulting policies for a perceived better way forward. However, qualitative data has not been an attractive or sustainable feature of the disseminated surveys. While space is allocated for additional comments, many of the constructed policies and procedures are not fully reflective of the same. For the current study, a qualitative approach was selected to explore the lived experiences of female African Americans within the warrant officer ranks of the South Carolina Army National Guard.

Diversity and *representation* are terms that have been popularized to highlight the selection of women and minorities into leadership positions. Researchers have studied the differing leadership styles of men and women in various industries to explore emerging leadership techniques of women along with the rise in African American women leaders. Women tend to be relations-oriented in their leadership style, and men tend to be task-oriented, with women employing transformational leadership to become task-oriented as needed (Waring, 2003). Additionally, the ascension of Black women into leadership positions have specifically included the intersectionality of being Black and female while discounting, devaluing, or misinterpreting their specific experiences (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Black women continue to be underrepresented in the workplace and anger is given rigid, exclusive treatment in Black women versus other demographics in the workplace (Motro et al., 2022). Such treatment has perpetuated the "angry Black woman"

stereotype, which inhibits career progression for Black women. Further, while Black women are ascending into leadership positions across all industries, overcoming adversity and facing unique challenges for this population has been normalized (Chance, 2022). African American women leaders recognize, respond, and react to emerging sociocultural realities while subscribing to an interlocking system of oppression founded on race and gender (Stanley, 2009), as environmental racial microaggression is apparent systemically (Mills, 2020). Specifically in the military, *military colorblindness* is a cultural term used to dismiss racially charged incidents while giving ambiguous permission for subvert discrimination and racism to continue, which undermines military doctrine and continues to hinder any team building efforts which ultimately prohibits Black cadets from reaching their full potential (Boyd, 2021).

Library Databases and Search Engines

While the EBSCO Direct database was the preferred database, other databases provided rich articles for this study, such as Taylor & Francis Online, DOAJ, SAGE Journals, ProQuest Central, Gale Academic OneFile Select, and ScholarWorks. Each database is assessable through the Walden University library and contains many articles on a wide variety of topics. Additionally, Google Scholar was consulted for associated articles.

Key Search Terms and Combinations

Since the identified topics for this study are diversity and representation, major key terms employed were *African American*, *women*, *microaggression*, and *leadership*. Other key terms researched were *US Army*, *Army National Guard*, *warrant officer*,

career development, *career progression*, *veterans*, *US military*, *civil rights*, and *bias*. Combinations of the key terms included *African American women*, *Black Soldiers*, and *US Army officers*. Other key terms related to the Army are *military assignments*, *career progression*, and *apathy that transitions into lack of interest*.

Iterative Search Process

While not many articles on warrant officers serving in the U.S. Army exist, an iterative search was conducted for African American females, U.S. Army, diversity, leadership, and representation. Manipulating the order of these terms into multiple combinations yielded a wealth of literature to support the research topic and contribute to the growing literary collection for this study. Incorporating other key terms into the iterative search yielded more articles to support this study.

Treatment of Little Current Research

Currently, there is little research available on warrant officers currently serving in the Army enterprise. To further complicate matters, the Army tends to classify warrant officers and commissioned officers together as officers for statistical purposes. The challenge remains to distinguish warrant officers from commissioned officers. However, reducing the number of commissioned officers from the analytical data pool produced a broad number representing warrant officers. Once the number of warrant officers were obtained, gleaning racial and gender data within this population was the most challenging. Comparable to available analytics, little to no scholarly material is available on warrant officers or the demographic population of warrant officers in the Army. To navigate through this shortcoming, organizational parallels with corporate America and

higher educational environments were considered and determined to be applicable research for this study.

Theoretical Foundation

For this study, Abatecola et al.'s (2020) upper echelons theory was used to explore the research problem and purpose of the study. With the theoretical lens, I was able to investigate the historical and current warrant officer leadership of the South Carolina Army National Guard despite modern efforts to bring about diversity and representation. Since the warrant officer cohort is a small facet of the South Carolina Army National Guard, upper echelons theory is applicable to the study. Further, since the senior warrant officer position has been historically held by male White warrant officers, upper echelons theory provided a supportive framework of sociodemographic aspects, moderators, psychological variables, cognitive process, and environmental factors to understand this study.

Upper Echelons Theory

Focusing on a top to bottom organizational structure, this theory modernizes Hambrick et al. (1984) upper echelons theory and consolidates fragmented use by academic scholars. The framework incorporates key elements from the original theory as well as modern attributes lucrative to modern application. This theory postulates that socio-demographic factors contribute to the well-roundedness of organizational leaders. Moderators such as managerial discretion reveal both industrial and institutional elements of leaders' decision-making process in conjunction with executive job demands navigated through primarily with previous experiences. Further, personality traits such as

narcissism, hubris, and overconfidence are aspects that influence strategic decisions along with identification of cognitive factors. Finally, direct, mediation, and moderation environmental impact effect characteristics of leaders and their ability to lead. Stemming from literature available on upper echelons theory, this theory outlines characteristics to examine in leaders and the resulting influence on the organizational members.

Major Theoretical Propositions, Major Hypotheses, and Delineation of Assumptions

The presented theory poses attractive strengths with distinctive challenges and assumptions. Abatecola et al. (2020) modernization of the upper echelons theory intertwined socio-demographic factors, such as age, education, and group characteristics, into the primary premise of the framework along with global experience. Further, moderators are expressed as managerial discretion and executive job demands to explain the dynamic of power and management of challenges. Next, the theory expounds on psychological and cognitive influences of leaders on organizational members. Finally, environmental factors that attribute to the relationship between leaders and members with specific implications on external influential aspects such as familial connections and organizational titles are provided. Previous application of the theory extracted individual portions of the framework while Abatecola et. al. (2020) seamlessly joined the selections into a workable, enduring framework. While the theory hypothesizes that organizational leaders influence the behaviors of the organizational members, much time is spent exploring the leaders' behaviors and the influence on their decision-making processes and resulting performance of organizational members.

Literature and Research-Based Analysis

Initially Abatecola et. al. (2020) sought to amass the widely used fractional precepts of the theory into a modern framework utilizing the original concepts while implementing contemporary fragments in effort to create a complete, enduring, relevant theory. In the examination of organizational leaders, the framework outlines guiding factors to explore decision-making processes and organizational performance. The four guiding principles for the framework include socio-demographic features, moderators such as managerial discretion and executive job demands, psychological variables and cognitive processes, and environmental factors. For this theoretical framework, review of previously applied portions of the theory were inspected and thus, the inspiration for constructing the theory was created.

Rationale for Theories Selection

Relating back to this study, the selected theoretical framework set the conditions for examining the historical leadership of the warrant officer cohort in the South Carolina Army National Guard while exploring the organizational influence on warrant officers. As Abatecola et. al.'s (2020) theory postulates examination of the historical and current warrant officer leadership in the South Carolina Army National Guard will provide insight into career progression tactics and selection processes employed for warrant officers. Incorporation of diversity and representation themes within the parameters of this theory will highlight the mechanics of the phenomenon and, through application of the presented framework, present a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and perhaps identify a lucrative pathway for a female African American command chief warrant

officer as the senior warrant officer advisor in the South Carolina Army National Guard.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

Selection of scholarly articles utilizing the major key terms yielded a broad collection of literature ripe for succinct application to this research study. The selected key terms directly correlate with the identified topics of interest by incorporating associated context for practical relevance for the betterment of a facet within an organization and obvious scrutiny of African American women. The selected methodology for this study will be a narrative inquiry highlighting the identified population's experiences within the phenomenon. Research articles on narrative inquiry present a wide variety of methods to consider while yielding applicable themes and considerations fortifying the paradigm this present study seeks to understand.

Studies Related to Constructs of Interest and Chosen Methodologies

Academia presents a wealth of research articles on qualitative research and associated methodologies to develop themes for further comprehension of phenomena. Mindful of the research topics to be studied, a narrative inquiry was selected to explore lived experiences and perspectives of the target population of female African American junior warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National Guard. In a comparative narrative inquiry conducted by Blustein et al. (2013), researchers identified the importance of capturing the perspective of two societal groups while giving voice to their experiences and exploring coping strategies employed by the individual groups. By exercising interviews, Blustein gleaned relevant themes to augment the criticality of the study expanding current literature and providing credence for narrative inquiry.

Combined with Jean-Marie et al.'s (2009) study in higher education, Black women's ascension to the highest-ranking position have been challenged by racism, sexism, and limitations on authority and power exclusive to that office. Black women often forego breaking the "glass ceiling" for a "concrete ceiling" in order to advance and excel in leadership positions. Jean-Marie et al. used semistructured interviews to develop themes relative to the intersection of leadership, race, and gender. Thereby, narrative inquiry of female African American junior warrant officers will offer unique lived experiences to understand the phenomenon and provide useful strategies employed thus far in their military careers.

Consequently, in a study conducted by Mills (2020), environmental racial microaggression experienced by Black undergraduates in predominantly White institutions negatively impacted academic performance and disrupted academic opportunities in Black students. Environmental racial microaggressions are identified as microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Inevitably, predominantly White institutions are knowingly or unknowingly perpetuating hypercriminalization, underrepresentation, social isolation, and environmental distress in their Black students. While Mills (2020) identifies three tenets of resilience theory, the study focused on risk factors to decrease the probability of negative outcomes and effects on Black students by identifying compensatory and coping strategies and mechanisms to facilitate positive outcomes or recovery in the throes of risk. Derived from this study, exploration of these concepts within the construct of the warrant officer cohort of the South Carolina Army National Guard is worth studying.

Additionally, Boyd (2021) conducted a study at the United States Military Academy at West Point revealing ongoing racial and discriminatory practices against Black cadets. Boyd ascertained that White extremism at military institutions is systemically commonplace while invoking the concept of "military colorblindness" to provide White comfort in a diverse environment. While Boyd quoted Generals Hyten and McConville stating that "racism is a thing of the past" and "the Army doesn't tolerate racism," contemporary personal accounts collected by Boyd depict otherwise (Boyd, 2021, p. 46). As a means to position the military academy in alignment with the Army's Equal Opportunity initiative, Boyd shares that Black cadets are promised that racial aggressive acts will be investigated while Black cadets continue in the hostility and trauma their enrollment has created for them. Thus, understanding how "military colorblindness" impacts the careers of female African American warrant officers and whether systemic White extremism is experienced sparked interest for this study.

Relating back to the current study, the leadership of the South Carolina Army National Guard, to include the command chief warrant officer, has been historically male and White. The selection process for the senior warrant officer position nor has the career pathways for female African American warrant officers have not been previously studied and sets the conditions ripe for study. This study seeks to understand whether environmental racial microaggression or ongoing racial discriminatory practices have disrupted or thwarted the career progression of female African American warrant officers to achieve the position of command chief warrant officer and senior warrant officer advisor.

Approach to Problems in the Discipline

The beauty of narrative inquiry is the highlight of human interactions and experiences individually while understanding a phenomenon as opposed to linking the individual experiences to a shared meaning. Providing an invaluable space for narrative accounts, this approach contributes a humanistic lens and relatability to research study and adds value to narrative inquiry as a research approach. Further, collected narratives demonstrate the influence of the phenomenon on an individual level and the resulting implication which can be translated to global perspective and impact. Stanley (2009) imparts the little research availability on African American women in leadership positions may be deficient due to low number in this population, allied challenges such as job performance and evaluation, and lack of understanding in sociocultural experiences African American women face. The same could be true for female African American warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National Guard. Epps (2008) identified that leadership of African American women is constructed from enduring coping patterns in a predominate White environment and hiring educated African American women into traditional female occupations. For female African American warrant officers, the South Carolina Army National Guard could be perceived as a predominately White organization which piques the interest in coping strategies employed.

Justified Rationale for Selection of Concepts

Utilizing lived experiences and perspectives provides intuitive insight into the mechanics of the identified phenomenon along with deeper understanding. These lucrative perspectives will illuminate themes requisite to consider the innerworkings of

the phenomenon. In grasping how female African American junior warrant officers navigate through the organization's regulated structure and unspoken norms of the warrant officer cohort in spite of the lack of diversity and representation, narrative inquiry provides the inestimable ontology for recognizing the phenomenon at work, coping strategies put into practice, and potential techniques to circumvent the phenomenon. As Chance (2009, p. 44) highlights "Black people have and continue to face substantial adversity both personally and professionally." However, Milless et. al. (2022) illuminates the differing experiences among racial groups and associated stereotypes along with implication of a diversity threshold while identifying that ingroup representation is significant in guiding perceptions on diversity.

Studies Related to Key Concepts

Current literature of female African Americans in the military focus on personal grooming discrimination, driving purposes for enlistment, enduring racial discrimination within military assignments, and coping strategies such as self-group distancing. Specific to personal grooming, female African Americans soldiers have endured the Army's lack of understanding in African American hair texture and maintenance regardless of years of damage inflicted to conform to regulated professional haircare standards, specifically pulling hair away from the face into a bun. In exploration of enlistment, female African Americans have joined the military to escape domestic servitude, for better career opportunities, and to restrict the welfare gap from widening. Shifting to enduring racial discrimination, African Americans continue to be subjected to systemic racism in selection for military courses and deployment selection based on the characteristics of

their unit of assignment. Finally, female African Americans soldiers were included in a coping strategy study which explored both triggers and outcomes for female servicemembers, including self-group distancing. This study revealed that female African American soldiers tend to form ingroup bonds based on shared commonality of struggles. Available literature on Army warrant officers focused on the changing roles from technical experts to staff officers, system integrators and innovators, talent managers, and technical leaders.

In a parallel study situated in higher education, Chance (2022) studied challenges faced by Black women such as underrepresentation in a White dominant field while examining preparation for leadership positions of complex institutions. In this study, Chance explored the intersectionality of race and gender simultaneously with stereotypical threats and tokenism within higher education institutions. The results of the study revealed that the participants overcame adversity as a requirement to develop leadership skills necessary for career progression. Stanley (2009) classified the experiences of African American women as an interlocking system of racism, sexism, and social classism; all of which contribute to a multiplier effect that can adversely affect African American women's career progression and leadership capability. Mills (2020) identified the presence of environmental racial microaggression toward Black undergraduate students attending predominantly White institutions as grooming standard policies, hypercriminalization of Black students by campus police, and general social isolation. As a result, Black students suffer poor health, environmental distress, and fatigue.

Studies Related to the Research Question

The specific topics within the research question are diversity and representation. Jean-Marie et. al. (2009) identified that while Black women are ascending into leadership positions, there continues to be gendered racism. Employing critical race theory to understand the missing historical perspective of Black women, Jean-Marie et. al. illuminates subtle hostilities Black women continue to face along with racism and sexism in White dominated workplaces. To circumnavigate these obstacles, the study revealed that participants continue to be resilient and utilize collaborative leadership in the decision-making process.

While no literature exists on female African American warrant officers and their experiences, research is available on the African American experience in military service. As a result, exploration of how diversity and representation among African American servicemembers, specifically female African American warrant officers, is suitable for study. As highlighted in parallel studies situated in academic settings, inroads made by African American women are notable and remarkable. Focused investigation into the perspectives of female African American junior warrant officers may elucidate coping strategies in operation within a structured organization while seeking outliers as inspirational focus for career ascension, such as Honorable Kamala Harris, Vice-President of the United States; Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first African American female Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court; and Chief Warrant Officer Five Yolondria Dixon-Carter, the first African American female warrant officer selected as the Senior Warrant Officer Advisor to the Chief of Staff of the U.S.

Army.

Summary and Conclusion

The foregoing literature highlights topics of discriminatory practice, systemic racism, racial microaggression, and bias as distinctive and unique hurdles experienced by African American women in all industries. Simultaneously, there is available literature that explores coping strategies employed by facets of this population to marginally function and somewhat succeed within the identified constructs despite fleeting advantage and opportunities. Unfortunately, no literature exists on female African American warrant officers and their experiences. However, parallel studies highlight similarly situated African American women in leadership positions and challenges confronted. The application of existing literature in conjunction with the theoretical foundation for this research study contributes to the existing body of knowledge and expansion of scholarly treatment on narrative inquiry.

In the next chapter, a rationale for the research design along with the role of the researcher will be shared. Next, the methodology for the study with be examined highlighting instrumentation, data collection instruments, procedures for recruitment, and data analysis plan. Subsequently, issues of trustworthiness will be explored with the consideration of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reliability. Finally, ethical procedures will be conveyed along with mitigation for ethical concerns.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In the South Carolina Army National Guard, the trend for selection of the senior warrant officer positions have been male White warrant officers. Aside from one female warrant officer in the early 1990s achieving the command chief warrant officer position, the disparity continues to exist in the selection of who receives consideration for this position. The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to understand the impact of marginal diversity and representation on female African American warrant officers while pursuing senior warrant officer positions in the South Carolina Army National Guard in addition to exploring why no member of this population has ever achieved command chief warrant officer. Utilizing one-on-one interviews, this study highlights the lived experiences and perspectives of female African American warrant officers to comprehend career progression tactics, military assignment selection, primary military education course selection, and coping mechanisms operationalized over time.

In this chapter, a rationale for the research design along with the role of the researcher will be shared. Next, the methodology for the study will be examined highlighting instrumentation, data collection instruments, procedures for recruitment, and data analysis plan. Subsequently, issues of trustworthiness will be explored with the consideration of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reliability. Finally, ethical procedures will be conveyed along with mitigation for ethical concerns.

Research Design and Rationale

To better understand the phenomenon from which this study derives, the construction of a meaningful and impactful research question was formulated to adhere to

the core concepts to be studied: How do female African American junior warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National Guard navigate career progression to the senior role in spite of lack of diversity and representation? While the Army consistently favors collection of quantitative data generated from survey distribution, not much focus is placed on qualitative data, which is the driving force for this study to explore the lived experiences and perspectives of this targeted population.

Central Phenomenon of Study

The U.S. Army as an enterprise is an immensely diverse organization with minority and female soldiers represented in leadership positions. The Department of Defense recognizes racial and ethnic disparities within the service. The Army People Strategy (2019) noted that the total Army's readiness relies upon people and deliberate talent management systems employed. Thus, the selected topics are significantly aligned with initiatives of the Department of Defense and the U.S. Army.

Focusing on warrant officers, the warrant officer ranks include five levels with Chief Warrant Officer 5 being the senior level. Warrant officers are afforded 18 specialty branches, including aviation and judge advocate branches. Typically, chief warrant officer 5 soldiers serve at the senior leadership level as strategic planners, key advisors on warrant officer matters to commanding generals, and organizational career and talent managers for warrant officers. The senior warrant officer in the South Carolina Army National Guard has classically been a male White soldier. Because the career path and experiences of warrant officers, specifically minority and female warrant officers, have not been readily shared or explored, this phenomenon was selected for this study.

Research Tradition and Rationale for the Chosen Tradition

In the Army enterprise, quantitative data collection is consistently reinforced through surveys and evaluations. While attending military courses, soldiers disseminate surveys soliciting responses on various topics, such as command climate surveys and gender in the workplace surveys. Additionally, when drafting evaluation reports, an unspoken rule is to quantify work completed, such as the number of soldiers supervised, the number of actions completed, and number of equipment managed. In this organization, responses from surveys impact the construction of policies and data reported on evaluations determine a soldier's readiness for increased opportunities in leadership.

While the surveys solicit additional comments and evaluations provide brief narrative opportunities to address the soldier's performance and potential, often this qualitative data does not appear to be considered in the policy making process or provide the wholistic view of the person. Moreover, lived experiences and perspectives are collected informally with reflected changes occurring marginally and at a much slower rate. Foundational to this study, it is vital to explore the military assignment selection, career progression, and primary military education course selection for female African American warrant officers. Subsequently, it is worth exploring how the impact of minimal diversity with no representation for this population affects progression to the senior warrant officer position in the South Carolina Army National Guard.

Role of the Researcher

In a qualitative research study, typically researchers select a phenomenon to study

of significant, personal interest that will bring about the prospect of social change. At the inception of this study, my primary goal was to return to a research study initiated during my undergraduate program: the voting trends in the African American community with plans to expand how disenfranchisement adversely impacts the African American vote and diminishes the African American voice in state, local, and federal civic and political arenas resulting in apathy and low voter participation. As I progressed through my courses and concurrently became more engaged at the headquarters level of the Army National Guard, my interest transitioned to diversity and representation in senior leadership roles. In 2019, the Maryland Army National Guard made national news by implementing an all-female command team, which was a historic first for Maryland Army National Guard and the entire Army National Guard enterprise (Soucy, 2019). While African Americans have ascended to the general officer and command sergeant major ranks in the Army National Guard, there has never been an all-African American led command team. Specific to the warrant officer ranks with command chief warrant officer 5 being the senior position, my interest shifted to female African American warrant officers and questioning how many within this population achieved this senior rank. In the cohort of approximately 300 warrant officers currently serving in the Army National Guard, less than 10% are female African Americans (Department of Defense, 2019).

Definition and Explanation of Role

For my research study, my role will be interviewer and contributor. In the role as an interviewer, the constructed interview questions will be free of personal experience or

influence. In collection of data, the responses provided are required to articulate the personal experience and position of the interviewee. I intend to contribute personal experience as a female African American junior warrant officer in the South Carolina Army National Guard and perceived obstacles which may hinder or usurp efforts with my career progression. Additionally, I will maintain a reflexivity journal to capture my opinions and feedback during this process, including my contribution last so as to not distract from the data collected. In review of field notes and data collected, the researcher is afforded an opportunity to self-reflect and consider reflexivity.

Prior to conducting interviews, my role will need to be clearly defined and shared with interviewees to avoid ethical issues. As a member of the population to be studied, I anticipate an ethical challenge with my purposeful sample since I am the same demographic. Contrastingly, as a member of this demographic, I anticipate an immediate establishment of trust, familiarity, and a measure of comfort; each a requisite variable to yield valuable data to support my qualitative study. To resolve the ethical issue of workplace participation, I will remain flexible with time and availability while utilizing evenings and weekends convenient for the interviewees to participate away from their workplace and outside of military duty. Additionally, I plan to implement the snowballing technique to allow interviewees to refer other female African American warrant officers to participate and share their experiences.

Personal and Professional Relationships with Participants

As a female African American warrant officer in the South Carolina Army National Guard, I am casually acquainted with the research participants through my

attendance of the annual statewide warrant officer professional development events and drill weekends. Since I am the only legal warrant officer in the South Carolina Army National Guard, I have a professional relationship with one of the potential research participants since she is the statewide senior personnel technician. One of the potential participants was my classmate during warrant officer candidate school. While I have four female African American warrant officers in mind to participate in my study, I anticipate snowballing to include the other six female African American warrant officers which will assist in saturating the data collected.

Researcher Biases and Ethical Issues

Since my study will focus on an identified protected population: female, African American, and soldiers, it is imperative that my study is ethically sound, that I have informed consent of my participants, and that my study does not cause any harm to participants. I perceive a challenge to be the historical implication of female African American soldiers and their contribution to unit readiness. As the researcher, I will be transparent with participants, reviewing anticipated and probable outcomes of my research study while discussing potential impact to the sample. To ensure minimal harm, I will provide mental health, equal opportunity, and Inspector General resources to my participant pool.

<div align="center">

Methodology

</div>

To glean the most enriching themes to support the understanding of the phenomenon, conducting face-to-face interviews is the method of choice for data collection. Participant selection will be refined to selection of three or four female

African American warrant officers currently serving in the South Carolina Army National Guard. Since this is a small organization and privacy is critically important, interviews will be conducted outside of military duty working hours and away from military installations and armories. As opposed to posting advertisements for participation, informal verbal invitations styled as side bars will be the initial form of engagement followed by the formal invitation including the Walden University required documents for interviews. The selected methodology for this study will be a narrative inquiry. Research articles on narrative inquiry present a wide variety of methods to consider while yielding applicable themes and considerations fortifying the paradigm this present study seeks to understand.

Participant Selection Logic

In review of my research question and the study at hand, it is essential for my targeted sample to be female African American warrant officers in the rank of chief warrant officer 2 through 4 currently serving in the South Carolina Army National Guard which will also serve as the criteria for participant selection. The initial informal engagement is direct contact during drill weekend to inquire if a female African American junior warrant officer would be interested in participating in my study. This initial inquiry will be discreet and away from other soldiers.

Derived from data located in the 2019 Department of Defense Demographics Report, of the 807,602 Army National Guard Officers, 8,804 or 2.6% were warrant officers and of this number, 913 or 10% were female warrant officers (Department of Defense, 2019). Additionally, 3,777 or 3% identified as Black or African American

(Department of Defense, 2019). According to the National Guard Accessions Analytics, there are 252 warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National Guard of which 31 or 12.3% of the warrant officers are female and 10 are female African American warrant officers (Army National Guard G1 Database, 2021). With a sample size of four female African American junior warrant officers, the qualitative data to be collected will be representative of 12.9% of the female African American warrant officer population. Thus, it is ascertained that saturation will be achieved in describing the female African American warrant officer population.

Instrumentation

For this study, a purposeful sampling technique will be employed by initially identifying four female African American junior warrant officers who are in the rank of chief warrant officers 2, 3, and 4 in the South Carolina Army National Guard. The data collection instrument will be one-on-one interviews with the anticipation that this sample will produce connective themes to help understand the studied phenomenon. Outside of the sample, I have identified two female African American retired warrant officers who have achieved the rank of chief warrant officer 5; one in the California Army National Guard and the other in the Arkansas Army National Guard. Their contribution to my study will support or discard themes since their experiences culminates a successful military career and achievement of the senior warrant officer rank. Returning to my sample, following the interviews, I will work to identify themes and similarities in experiences among the warrant officers.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

To begin, I intend to directly approach female African American warrant officers in the ranks of chief warrant officer 2, 3, and 4 informally utilizing discretion. My initial approach strategy is to share that I am a doctoral student researching diversity and representation in the South Carolina Army National Guard with a specific focus on the warrant officer ranks followed by inquiring if she would like to participate in my study. Upon agreement to participate, I will send a formal invitation to each participant at their personal email addresses as opposed to their military email addresses. I will collect data derived from the interviews and impart the confidentiality of interview responses to the participants. While I anticipate one meeting with each participant at a time convenient to her for approximately one hour and a half, I plan to avail myself should any follow-up commentary be required. For recording purposes, I plan to use a voice recorder application on my cell phone to record face-to-face interviews and the recording feature on the video conferencing platform. My follow-up plan includes direct contact with the participants and snowballing recruitment of other participants who may meet the criteria of the research study of female African American junior warrant officer. At the conclusion of the interview, I plan to create a debriefing website for individual participants, thanking them for their time, and providing copies of their statements with their distinguished code. Finally, one week following the interview, I will reach out to each participant to determine if any changes have occurred within their workplace and provide resources as necessary.

Data Analysis Plan

Prior to constructing categories, themes, and codes, I plan to allocate time to self-reflect on the topic, revisit the purpose of this study, and critically analyze the research question. Upon further contemplation on the development of the proposed interview questions, astute adherence for the questions to align with the purpose of the study is essential for further understanding of the occurring phenomenon within the constructs of the warrant officer ranks. With the research study topics classified as diversity and representation, the meaningful formulation of interview questions will greatly support gleaning categories and themes garnered from responses.

Once responses are collected, the coding of the data will be within process and conceptual coding constructs. Process coding assists researchers in understanding human behavior with repetitious acts as well as responses to changes (Saldana, 2016). Saldana shares that conceptual coding allows researchers to take small things and apply them to the big picture. Application of process coding will lend to recognizing the phenomenon by conveying how it is ingrained in the conditioning of warrant officers of the South Carolina Army National Guard, such as qualification, aptitude, and skill are valued as more important than diversity. Application of conceptual coding will further expose the phenomenon on a smaller scale as it applies to the overall current diversity and representation efforts within the organization.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Potential concerns with trustworthiness include interview site agreement, coordinated approval with South Carolina Army National Guard for interviewing

soldiers, and possible difficulty recruiting participants for interviews. In seeking interview locations, local libraries have study rooms available for interviewing which is managed by an online reservation styled system. Next, coordination with the South Carolina Army National Guard will be avoided since advertisement for participants is not required and interviews will be conducted outside of military duty working hours and away from military installations and armories. Additionally, distinguishing my dual role as a researcher with Walden University and a chief warrant officer in the South Carolina Army National Guard may pose a challenge. To assist in mitigating this potential stumbling block, a daily journal will be utilized to capture my bias, perspectives, and opinions. Some ethical challenges that may develop following the interviews of the purposeful sample could be the creation of a hostile work environment, diminished work relationships, and increased bias towards the sample population. Thus, it is imperative that the participants' privacy is protected, and confidentiality is maintained. Since human participants are the subject of data collection, it is imperative that Institutional Review Board approval is received. Interview responses will be maintained on my personal laptop for storage with transcripts password protected. Once the study is concluded, responses will be deleted. Additionally, some other challenges to consider are the development of countermeasures to dissolve bias and overt instances of favoritism for those in the sample.

To establish credibility and dependability, triangulation will be utilized along with audit trails of the data collected. For transferability, it is my hope that the study results will be impactful to female African American warrant officers currently serving in the

Army enterprise, but specifically in the Army National Guard suborganizations. Finally, confirmability will be mitigated by the use of a reflexivity journal to maintain researcher bias and ensure responses are genuine as opposed to coached.

Summary

In the development of a refined focus for this study, I considered my military journey and the lack of diversity and representation in the South Carolina Army National Guard. In my military career, I have found myself to be the only female or African American in many units of assignment. Additionally, I ruminated on the leaders of the South Carolina Army National Guard, both past and present, and recognized two common features: White and male. For this research study, a narrative inquiry is presumed to yield enriching themes to support supplementary understanding of the foregoing phenomenon. Further, a narrative inquiry seeks to understand how a target population gives meaning in the management of phenomenon constructs by interviewing individuals who have direct experience with the phenomenon (Shafritz et al., 2016).

To accumulate the most enriching themes to support the understanding of the phenomenon, conducting face-to-face interviews is the method of choice for data collection. A qualitative design encourages the gathering of experiences which can be interpreted as data to support or disprove the research questions which is an attractive strength. In consideration of the researched topic of study, it would behoove the researcher to present a valid, reliable product. To ensure that my study maintains validity, it is key to remain mindful of my topic and research questions throughout the course of study. Certainly, I anticipate coincidences, but not to the extent that these events

overwhelm the study. Further, I will challenge myself to isolate personal biases on my research topic and compartmentalize those biases in a manner to not disrupt my research. It is my intention to finalize a valid, reliable dissertation that will contribute to the academic body of knowledge and perhaps broaden the discussion on representation for female African American warrant officers.

In the next chapter, the setting, demographics, and data collection along with the data analysis will be shared. Next, evidence of trustworthiness for the study in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reliability will be examined. Finally, the research study results addressing the research question will be discussed.

Chapter 4: Results

In the Army enterprise, warrant officers are the technical experts, quiet professionals, and focused leaders of their respective branches. In the South Carolina Army National Guard, the trend for selection into the senior warrant officer positions have been male White warrant officers. Today, the South Carolina Army National Guard has an enlistment of 252 warrant officers, 31 of which are female and from that number, ten are female African Americans (Army National Guard G1 Database, 2021). Aside from the one female White warrant officer in the early 1990s achieving the command chief warrant officer position, the disparity continues to exist in the selection of who receives consideration for the esteemed position.

This chapter provides insight into the interview process, to include the setting along with the limited demographics of the study participants. Next, the data collection from the interviews highlighting the evidence of trustworthiness is explored while yielding components of data analysis. Subsequently, the results of the data analysis will be imparted. Finally, a summary concludes this chapter rich with the study results along with a brief introduction of the concluding chapter.

This qualitative narrative study adds to the emerging body of knowledge by providing credence to lived experiences and actual perspectives operating within the phenomenon. Further, this study provides space and value to female African American warrant officers currently serving in the South Carolina Army National Guard while inspiring potential warrant officer candidates to pursue the position of command chief warrant officer. Ultimately, this study will provide an associated alternative start point to

correlate with current diversity, equity, and inclusion policies and practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study is to understand the marginal diversity and representation impact on female African American warrant officers while pursuing senior warrant officer positions in the South Carolina Army National Guard while exploring why no member of this population has ever achieved command chief warrant officer and senior warrant officer advisor. Utilizing one-on-one interviews, this study will illuminate the lived experiences and perspectives of female African American warrant officers to comprehend career progression tactics, military assignment selection, primary military education course selection, and coping mechanisms operationalized over time.

Research Question

How do female African American junior warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National Guard navigate career progression to the senior role in spite of lack of diversity and representation?

Research Setting

For this study, active membership in the South Carolina Army National Guard was a key element in dissemination of the invitations to participate in this study. Further, the focus of this study centered on female African American warrant officer experiences and perspectives. Following approval from the Institutional Review Board, a list of five potential participants was created. All five potential participants from the list were contacted through non-military channels: personal cell phones and personal email

addresses. Of the five, three responded and agreed to participate in the research study, and another potential participant was identified through snowballing. Positive contact with one potential participant was not successful, and the other potential participant identified through snowballing declined to participate due to perceived repercussions to her military career and heightened concern with anonymity.

Following receipt of consent forms from each of the four potential participants, individual interview times were mutually agreed to be conducted in the evening, outside of military duty hours and away from military duty locations. Conducting the interviews outside of military duty hours and away from military duty locations was vital for ensuring anonymity. One interview was conducted using a telephonic recording application, Audacity, and the remaining interviews were conducted utilizing a video conferencing platform, Ring Central, with an imbedded transcription feature which supported expedient delivery of the transcripts to the individual participants for review.

Demographics

The purpose of this study was to explore why no female African American warrant officer has never achieved the command chief warrant officer position in the South Carolina Army National Guard. Therefore, a participant pool of warrant officers currently serving in the South Carolina Army National Guard who are both female and African American was purposefully selected for invitation to be interviewed. This pool was deemed the requisite sample to glean further understanding into the foregoing phenomenon by exploring lived experiences and perspectives.

The selected participants have over 70 years of collective military service in the

South Carolina Army National Guard and have over 35 years of collective service as a

warrant officer. Each participant has at least one mobilization with operational experience

in a deployed environment overseas, such as supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. The

military occupational skill for each warrant officer derives from the 18 available skill

categories specific for warrant officers.

Data Collection

Prior to commencing data collection, approval was achieved from the Walden

University Institutional Review Board. Additionally, principles learned in the

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (2022) training course package, which

included assessing risk, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, were incorporated

during the data collection stage and strictly adhered to.

Seventeen interview questions were formulated to serve as a guide to understand

the participants' experiences as it pertains to the research question. Each question was

thoughtfully constructed to introduce the participants and permit her insight into the

innerworkings of the phenomenon. Further, the questions afforded an avenue to

understand the functionality therein and navigational responses by the participants.

Currently there are 252 warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National

Guard, of which 31 are female warrant officers representing 12% of warrant officers.

Within the female warrant officer population, there are 10 female African American

warrant officers representing 32% of the female warrant officers. From the female

African American warrant officer population, a list of five warrant officers was selected

to be invitees for the research study. To begin, the potential participants identified on the

list were individually contacted via text message on her personal cell phone to request her personal email address for transmission of the recruitment flyer and consent form containing instruction on how to consent to participate in the research study. Two invitees responded within 7 days via email with her consent form indicating willingness to participate. One invitee responded 2 weeks after the initial email was sent to her and returned her consent form agreeing to participate. The fourth invitee responded 18 days after she received the initial email and returned the consent form with her agreement to participate.

Following the agreement to participate, each participant was contacted individually via text message to determine a mutually convenient time to conduct the interview. Due to my location, face-to-face interviews were neither feasible nor practical. Thus, alternate methods, such as audio and video recording platforms, were utilized.

For the first interview, the Audacity recording platform was utilized. I used the speaker phone feature of the cell phone and the Audacity platform downloaded on my laptop. After discovering that Audacity does not have an embedded transcription feature, the video platform, Ring Central, was utilized. For the following interviews, the participants were sent individual links via text message.

Each interview was conducted after 6:00 p.m., after the conclusion of the military duty day. Three interviews were conducted while the participants were at home, and one interview was conducted while the participant was in her car traveling home after work. Again, it was important for the interviews to be conducted after the military duty day and away from the military duty location.

Each participant was interviewed one time for approximately 20 minutes. Mindful of the discussed data collection methods in Chapter 3, no variation in the data collection was sought or made. Additionally, in Chapter 3, identification of two female African American retired warrant officers who achieved the rank of chief warrant officer 5 to contribute to this study was discussed. However, contact with these retired warrant officers was not sought due to no previous membership with the South Carolina Army National Guard. Further, it was ascertained that their perspective would not adequately enrich the study of the phenomenon. Aside from this, no unusual circumstances were identified.

After the first recorded interview, the recording was manually transcribed along with a summary of each answer. After the second, third, and fourth recorded interviews, the transcripts were critically reviewed along with a summary of each answer. Each transcript with summarized answers was sent directly to the participant individually for accuracy and member checking. Member checking is a strategy to minimize observer effects by involving members of subject groups for feedback on accuracy of findings while sharing cultural ideas and perspectives needed to fully understand the phenomena being studied (Burkholder, 2016). Each participant reviewed her own interview transcript and summary. Each participant responded that the transcript and summary was accurate, and no change needed to be made. Following confirmation of the transcript and summary review, each summary was incorporated into the study.

Data Analysis

Following each interview, the recording was transcribed verbatim, and the

answers were summarized. Then the transcript with summary was forwarded directly to the individual participant for accurate capture of her answers and member checking. Once the transcripts and summaries were reviewed by the participants, the transcripts and summaries were returned to me for the next steps in the study process: data analysis.

Each summary was critically analyzed and manually coded by identifying significant words impactful to understanding the phenomenon, such as military service and leadership. Next, the coded words were sufficiently categorized in the development of themes. Choosing code themes and concepts can give a better understanding of the research problem (Rubin, 2012). For coding, process and concept coding were selected to uncover shared meanings in pursuit of comprehending the research phenomenon. Process coding assists researchers in understanding human behavior with repetitious acts as well as responses to changes and conceptual coding allows researchers to take small things and apply them to the big picture (Saldana, 2016). Process coding was selected to understand any underlying actions taken by participants within the phenomenon while concept coding was chosen to reassign the process codes into larger, wholistic conceptual implication.

In preparation for coding, each transcript was critically analyzed individually for recurrent words and word combinations that would satisfy the requirement for themes and codes. Care was taken to maintain participants' privacy, to acknowledge individual career progression tactics, and to provide a voice for individual perspectives on the lack of diversity and representation in effort to identify shared meaning in understanding the study phenomenon. Some commonly spoken word phases were "continued military

service," "career progression," and "would like to see a female African American warrant

officer in leadership positions."

From the words and phrases derived from the narrative responses of the interview

questions, three recurring themes emerged for organization, analysis, and incorporation

into this study: military service, gender disparity, and empowering gender equity. These

themes corroborated precepts of conceptual coding. From the identified themes, the

coding process yielded descriptive codes, such as warrant officer career and diversity,

which were woven together to reinforce shared meaning and further understand the

phenomenon. These codes lend to the parameters of process coding. See Table 1 for a list

of themes and codes.

Table 1

Themes and Codes

Themes	Codes
Military Service	Warrant officer career, strong Noncommissioned Officer support, broad knowledge base, continuing military career, mentorship, upward mobility, progression, full-time job placement (Active Guard Reserve program vs. Military Technician program)
Gender Disparity	Job functions, promotions, military course reservation, work transfer with perceived racist, marginal evaluation reporting, not taken seriously, money hungry, too emotional to be leaders
Empowering Gender Equity	Warrant officer ranks, command positions, identification of lack of diversity, more diversity in critical leadership positions, more Black females

As evidenced in Table 1, all participants are fulfilled in their warrant officer

careers and spoke extensively about opportunities afforded to them within their

respective military service. Participant 1 said her reason for becoming a warrant officer

was "based on [her] decision to be impactful in her military occupational skill."

Participant 2 stated her reason for becoming a warrant officer was "due to stagnation in her military career." Participant 3 became a warrant officer for "upward mobility opportunities in her career field." When Participant 4 considered becoming a warrant officer, she recognized the "limited promotion opportunities and competition with others in her career field for upward career progression." Additionally, following an encounter with "an adversarial enlisted superior," Participant 4 said she was "motivated to become a warrant officer so [she] could outrank her [the enlisted superior]."

Each participant shared her lasting impact on those she influences and enjoys the support shown to her by her enlisted soldiers. Participant 1 shared that during a deployment she was afforded the opportunity "to work with a civilian contractor that was good at sharing information" which was "most exhilarating to [her]" and resulted in her lasting understanding of her job function. Additionally, Participant 1 shared "for me, having a strong noncommissioned officer [support system] … on a daily basis … gave me the strength to want to fight hard every day." Participant 2 said that she "had several mentors in [her] military career and all of them were African American: enlisted, officer, and warrant officers." Each participant shared that she is an engaged member of her section and is relied on for her sound technical expertise.

All participants reported experiencing discriminatory challenges throughout their military career. Participant 1 stated "when it comes to promotions, you have to fight for what's yours and being a female, in my opinion, we have to look over everything twice because there are so many males in the warrant officer ranks and certain [military occupational skill] will take precedent." Participant 2 shared that after her unit was

reorganized, she was "laterally [transferred]… to [another] position under a [senior enlisted soldier] who was known to be really racist. [She] was not interested [in the position] and [the unit leaders] tried to command direct [her to work for the senior enlisted soldier]." Participant 3 said that "a lot of superior or just soldiers in general did not take Black females serious… they were too emotional or not good leaders." Participant 4 shared that despite her work in temporary full time capacity, she "was not hired permanently" because the senior stakeholder withheld the "full time authorized position for an [officer]."

All participants faced some version of gender or racial disparity in her military employment and one participant revealed difficulty with getting a reserved seat for a primary military education course. Participant 1 said that "[she had] been told not this year, but next year. So, then the question becomes what are you supposed to do; you went through your chain of command, you went through the training section, and they have all told you no or you can't go this year… You can always call [the military schoolhouse] and talk to… one of the education counselors and they can tell you if all the seats are reserved and they can go into [the military course reservation system] and put you in a stand-by seat for the class."

Another participant presumed that a marginal evaluation resulted from her race and gender. Participant 2 shared that her evaluations had been "spectacular" until she had a "rater of the opposite race… and [she] was the only warrant officer [being evaluated… without anything negative in her history… that made her wonder] could it be gender, could it be because [she is] African American."

Another participant believed that race and gender were factors that contributed to her being passed over while serving in the enlisted soldier ranks. Participant 4 stated that "while [she was] enlisted, [she] was on the top of the list for promotion to sergeant and inadvertently discovered that the two people under [her] were promoted before [her]. One soldier was a White female and the other was a Black male."

While each participant recognized the lack of diversity in the organization's leadership, each participant supported empowerment of gender equity and diversity in leadership positions. Participant 1 said she "would definitely like to see more females in the warrant officer ranks from each military occupational skill, not just African American females, but females from other ethnicities, too, because we're not just a shortage on the African American side but the other [ethnicities] too… [she] would also like to see more of [female warrant officers] in command positions because… warrant officers are now in command positions. We are now unit commanders; [there is] one or two here in the state of South Carolina that are in command positions so [she] would like to see a little bit more of that."

Participant 2 shared that she "would love to see more African American females in leadership roles throughout South Carolina National Guard, [meaning] the big time roles." Participant 3 stated that she "thinks it is well overdue. Females are just as capable. Black females are just as capable as anybody else to fulfill [leadership] roles." Participant 4 said that "as a female African American… we are primed for the position; we are ready for the position. It's just a matter of who is that person who can step up and do that job. [She thinks] it's a great thing and [is] excited to see just how future development goes."

Each participant overwhelmingly supported the rise of a female African American warrant officer into leadership positions. Participant 1 shared that she "[does not] see [female African American warrant officers rising into leadership positions] happening unless either a new Adjutant General with a new generational thought, with a new mindset of progression in the military, [or] without diversity is never going to happen." Participant 2 stated that she "believes that things are changing… [and] will eventually change for the better… we [have] always had that good ole boy system… [and] a lot of those are retiring." Participant 3 imparted the need for "definitely more Black females and more minorities. Also… it [would] be good to see some younger warrant officers as well. Also, more chief warrant officer 5 positions because [the positions are] very limited." Participant 4 said that she "would definitely like to see more African American females and more females of other ethnicities in the warrant officer ranks because the female perspective broadens the current perspective that is available to [the warrant officer cohort] now. This is a male dominated warrant officer cohort and the female perspective has value. It would be better to see more females get into those senior roles, especially for junior warrant officers because they will see that if she can do it, I can do it, too."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Initial trustworthiness concerns focused on interview location, approval from the South Carolina Army National Guard, and interview participation. The interviews were conducted in the evenings while the participants were home negating any issue with interview location. Since personal cell phones and personal emails were utilized,

approval from the South Carolina Army National Guard was not required since the participants did not use military equipment or military email addresses. Further, since interviews were conducted away from military duty locations, approval from the South Carolina Army National Guard was not required. The four female African American warrant officers who were invited, consented, and participated in the research study represent 40% of the female African American warrant officer corps which is significant to understanding the phenomenon.

Credibility

Credibility is based on prolonged engagements, persistent observation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, progressive subjectivity, member checking, triangulation, and reflexivity (Burkholder, et. al., 2016). From the interviews, audit trails were constructed to word phrases to develop themes and codes necessary to convey experiences and perspectives while gaining an understanding of the phenomenon in action. Triangulation was essential to glean the themes and codes while intertwining the narratives for shared viewpoints of the phenomenon. The participant pool was representative of the demographic identified as the focal point of the research study. Following the interviews, participants reviewed her individual transcript for accuracy and confirmation of salient points discussed.

Transferability

The initial intent of this study was to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of female African American warrant officers currently serving in the Army enterprise, specifically the South Carolina Army National Guard. While the perspectives

investigated within this study are exclusive to those currently serving in the South Carolina Army National Guard, it is possible for the mechanics of this same phenomenon to be occurring in other Army National Guard organizations, the U.S. Army Reserve, and the U.S. Army with similar lived experiences and perspectives shared among the female African American warrant officers. Further, this phenomenon could possibly be unconsciously and systemically functioning within other services of the Department of Defense. Thus, the findings of this study will provide a foundational starting point for researchers to peer into the lived experiences and perspectives of minority demographics, especially female African Americans.

Dependability

From the narratives, similar subsets of the overarching phenomenon were experienced by the participants demonstrating 40% of the female African American warrant officer population. Thereby, validating the ripeness for study of the phenomenon within the ongoing and current functionality. Audit trails and triangulation are reputable tools of dependability which were utilized throughout this study along with reflexivity journaling to mitigate researcher bias.

Confirmability

Throughout the data collection process, a reflexivity journal was maintained to annotate researcher bias and commentaries during and after the interview process. Boasting a robust journaling experience, reflexivity entries captured the researcher's experiences as well as perspective after each interview. The reflexivity journal provided an outlet for unique reflection while preventing these personal views and commentaries

to influence or sway the data collection process or disrupt data analysis. Thus, the researcher remained objective throughout the analysis of the data. Themes and codes were developed by critical review of the words and phrases found in transcripts. No software program was used to develop codes or categorize the data. The researcher was able to glean enriching themes following an intensive review of process coding. Once complete, the researcher derived thematic codes from the transcripts.

Results

For this qualitative study, narrative inquiry methodology was selected to illicit lived experiences and perspectives to arrive at a shared meaning to understand the current and enduring phenomenon. While phenomenology operates to collect narratives pointedly towards a shared meaning, the collected narratives were individually structured in a plausible format so that a corelated shared meaning would become evident without depreciation of individual experiences and perspectives.

Each participant collectively served over 15 years in the South Carolina Army National Guard with varying reasons for becoming a warrant officer: to be impactful in her career field, to offset career stagnation, and for upward mobility with greater career progression opportunities.

For each participant, the prescribed regulated promotion process in place for the U.S. Army organization was implemented: two years to promote from warrant officer 1 to chief warrant officer 2 and four years to promote from chief warrant officer 2 to chief warrant officer 3. One of the participants shared her experience of an additional two years to promote from chief warrant officer 2 to chief warrant officer 3 due to a military course

attendance during the promotion cycle which disrupted her promotion process.

All participants employ direct, involved leadership styles mindful of how best to connect with her audience. Each participant shared instances where following instruction, she imparted practical application of the instruction for deeper understanding of the training imparted alongside those trained. All participants are well educated, having attained at least a civilian bachelor's degree.

Each participant experienced some form of obstacles with her military career progression. One participant experienced difficulty early in her warrant officer career with a commander who did not understand the purpose of her role in the unit. Participant 1 shared that "sometimes [she] would face challenges by being female. [Her] male [coworkers were] not too quick to share information or share the job itself, especially if you are a female that will excel and don't mind getting in the dirt to get the job done. [The male coworkers] will ostracize you or keep you on the back burner. There were times [when male coworkers] wouldn't tell [her] something or where to go, but they knew the right answer all along."

Another participant shared that prior to becoming a warrant officer, she was assigned to work directly for an adversarial and racially insensitive senior enlisted White male which fueled her desire to become a warrant officer. Another participant shared that prior to becoming a warrant officer, she encountered an adversarial senior enlisted White female which caused her to recognize potential obstructions in her military career and other unknown potential adversarial conditions she would have in the enlisted ranks.

Regarding reserved seats in primary military education courses, one participant

shared that her requests for a reserved seat for a military course through her unit and the state training section were unsuccessful which caused her to contact the course administrator directly where the course was being offered. This tactic was ultimately successful for her. Another participant experienced marginal issues with getting a reserved seat for a military course. While the course is offered annually and is not a primary military education course, she explained, it is essential for her attendance to remain current with emerging topics within her military specialty branch. The other participants did not experience any challenges with reserving a seat for military courses. However, the other participants praised their unit training noncommissioned officers as being exceptionally helpful with identifying seat availability in primary military education courses and sending them notification of course dates.

While each participant recognized the disparity of females in the warrant officer ranks, there is a shared view that a major point of resolution would be for female African American warrant officers to seize opportunities when presented by being mentally and physically ready. Specifically, being mentally resilient and maintaining fitness standards by passing the Army Combat Fitness Test. Another shared perspective was for female African American warrant officers to be motivated and inspired by the lack of representation and step up as an example for junior warrant officers, especially junior female African American warrant officers, to follow. Thus, becoming a female African American warrant officer that junior warrant officers and noncommissioned officers could aspire to be.

Further, the data revealed that the participants would like to see more female

African Americans, more females, more minorities, and more younger warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National Guard. One participant shared that she would like to see more chief warrant officer 5 positions and opportunities. Specific to race and gender implications, the participants were candid with their personal perspectives. Two participants communicated that due to the limited number of personnel in their career field, any potential bias or efforts to usurp her career progression was not impacted by other warrant officers competing for the next rank.

One participant perceived that her annual warrant officer evaluation was met with a less than favorable review due to her being female, African American, and the only warrant officer in the section. She explained that she had received excellent reviews on her previous evaluations reflective of work ethic and achievements in her section. However, when she transferred to a new section, her new supervisor gave her a less than favorable review which she thought may have been a slight and would provide a poor reflection on her quality of work.

Another participant shared exposure to racial discriminatory challenges indirectly and ascertained that the overall sentiment was that female African American soldiers were not taken seriously, [female African American soldiers] only wanted money for civilian schools, and that [female African Americans soldiers] were too emotional to be selected as leaders.

While each participant is enamored with the idea of a female African American command chief warrant officer and senior warrant officer advisor, two participants believe that the current leaders of the South Carolina Army National Guard are

distressing warrant officer career progression, knowingly or unknowingly. Regardless, the overall sentiment is that this insertion into the warrant officer career progression will cause future ill will and disappointment among all warrant officers. During this study, it was learned that two factors determine the selection of the command chief warrant officer and senior warrant officer advisor: time in grade as a chief warrant officer 5 and selection by the commanding general of the South Carolina Army National Guard.

Selection by the commanding general supports the application of the upper echelons theoretical framework for further understanding. As stated in Chapter 1, the Abatecola et. al. (2020) theoretical framework outlines critical features necessary for investigating organizational leaders and assessing organizational members. The leaders of the South Carolina Army National Guard, along with the command chief warrant officer, have historically been White males. However, with emerging trends of embracing diversity and representation, the leaders of the South Carolina Army National Guard will become diverse in time.

For a warrant officer to pursue this senior position, the shared sentiment is that the selected warrant officer would need to know not only the functions inherit to the senior role, but the function of all warrant officer roles, to include personnel, equipment, budget, and policies affecting warrant officers. Accordingly, the command chief warrant officer would need to be well liked by the senior leaders and respected by the warrant officer cohort of the South Carolina Army National Guard.

While each participant shared that she would like to see more female warrant officers in critical leadership positions and one day serve as the command chief warrant

officer, one participant divulged that new opportunities are being created for warrant officers to serve in command positions, to include female warrant officers. Historically, command positions have been held by commissioned officers and this creation is revolutionary across the US Army enterprise. In consideration of the command chief warrant officer position, one participant considered her military career and concluded that she would not meet the time required to be a candidate for command chief warrant officer. The other three participants were unsure if she would be available for the senior position when the time comes.

Summary

Evidenced by the data, female warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National Guard are 12% of the warrant officer population. Female African American warrant officers make up 32% of the female warrant officer population. Facing obvious lack of representation for female African American warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National Guard, the data collection presented narratives identifying this challenge and enthusiastic support for the ascension of a female African American warrant officer to the senior role of command chief warrant officer.

While the data collection did not reveal any overt promotion barriers, selection to the senior role has been chosen by the commanding general of the South Carolina Army National Guard. Additionally, some female African American warrant officers have previously met their mandatory retirement date or 20 years of military service prior to eligibility for this senior position and opt to retire. Paralleled with career motivation for selection into this senior role, the participants believe that the overarching idea of a

female African American command chief warrant officer is a concept to be considered in the future and that the current leaders of the South Carolina Army National Guard are not readily available for a diverse change of this magnitude.

In the next chapter, the purpose and nature of this study will be revisited with a summary of the study findings. Analysis of the findings will be explained along with identified study limitations followed by recommendations for further study and potential for enduring impact for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Aside from the one female White warrant officer in the early 1990s achieving the command chief warrant officer position, the disparity continues to exist in the selection of who receives consideration for the esteemed position. While female African American warrant officers represent a small population within the overarching warrant officer cohort in the South Carolina Army National Guard, investigation of this population would provide meaningful understanding of diversity and representation implications. The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to understand the impact of marginal diversity and representation on female African American warrant officers while pursuing senior warrant officer positions in the South Carolina Army National Guard in addition to exploring why no member of this population has ever achieved command chief warrant officer.

From the narratives compiled during data collection, revelation of conscious and unconscious bias has intertwined throughout the military careers of each participant, such as Participant 1's fight for promotions and information from male counterparts, Participant 2's marginal evaluation report, and Participant 3's observation of other male soldiers' sentiment that Black females were not serious enough for leadership positions. While each participant expressed a sense of pride in her military career service, each participant conveyed awareness in the lack of representation that leads to an innate motivation to fill voids while empowering other demographic minorities to pursue senior positions. Participant 1 identified command leadership positions expanding to include warrant officers and believes that all warrant officers should position themselves to take

these presented opportunities to expand their experience.

Another perceived challenge focused on lack of interest derived from apathy; however, each participant shared interest in senior roles but felt time in military service or time in the warrant officer grade would cause ineligibility. Participant 1 said that although she is a senior leader in her military occupational specialty, she would not want to pursue the command chief warrant officer position due to her upcoming retirement eligibility. Participant 2 shared that due to her age, she would be retirement eligible prior to reaching the rank of chief warrant officer 5. Regarding promotion barriers, the participants did not share any substantive impediments with the promotion cycle due largely to the regulated promotion cycle implemented throughout the Army enterprise. Attendance in primary military courses appeared to pose minimal challenges due to unnecessary course registration delays, order of merit lists, and military occupational skill conversion for career progression.

In this chapter, the interpretation of the research study findings will be examined along with the limitations of the study. Next, recommendations for further research will be conveyed along with potential impact for positive social change. Finally, the study conclusion will be imparted capturing the importance of this study.

Interpretation of the Findings

In preparation for this study, a broad overview of the literature did not yield much regarding female African American warrant officers in the Army enterprise with regard to diversity and representation. Thus, parallel studies conducted in higher education and business industries were sought to illuminate relevant challenges faced by female African

Americans while pursuing senior levels within their respective industries specific to

unique struggles and obstacles experienced by this population. For instance, the data

collection revealed a team-oriented, transformational leadership style in the sample

consistent with Waring's (2003) relations-oriented leadership style exhibited by women.

The research sample shared a practical, hands-on approach when instructing new topics

to maximize the learning experience. Participant 2 shared that after instructing, she

provides hands-on, practical application to ensure her instruction was accurately received.

     Also consistent with the research, systemic interpersonal racial microaggression

has been experienced by the research sample (Mills, 2020), which has been termed as

"military colorblindness" (Boyd, 2021). Participant 2 shared an example of "military

colorblindness" when her employment placement transitioned under the supervision of a

male White soldier with known racial and gender insensitivities and silent among other

White soldiers, which stifles social change and diminishes contributions by minorities.

Participant 4 indicated that she found herself as the only female and only African

American in various meetings, which she found to be intimidating, but she countered this

by providing her unique perspective to broaden and expand discussions impacting

positive social change at senior levels.

     The data collection also revealed inconsistent depictions of the Army generals'

proclamation that racism is "a thing of the past" and not tolerated (Boyd, 2021).

However, Participant 4 shared that she was not selected for permanent employment due

to not being a commissioned officer. Additionally, Participant 3's observation of other

soldiers' mindset that female African American soldiers were too emotional for

leadership positions lends to the opposite of the generals' sentiment.

Further, the data collection aligned with the identification of a coping pattern in a predominately White organizational setting implementing ingroup representation (Epps, 2008; Milles et al., 2022). This ingroup representation was brought to light by Participant 2 and the development of her mentorship group who were all African Americans. Both Participants 2 and 3 named female African American warrant officers as identified mentors for their military careers, indicating social change at small group levels by empowering and inspiring female African American warrant officers. However, Participant 4 has had to look outside of the South Carolina Army National Guard for female African American warrant officers to mentor her military career, which supports social change on an enterprise, organizational level.

Based on Abatecola et al.'s (2020) upper echelons theory, sociodemographic factors experienced by the South Carolina Army National Guard leadership has been the foregoing component in selection of the command chief warrant officer. Since historical and current leadership has been male White soldiers, selection of the senior warrant officer role has reflected the same. Employing managerial discretion reveals apparent selection based on eligibility, maturity, and experience.

As gleaned from the data collection, female soldiers have been deemed too emotional or just not good enough for leadership roles, including female African Americans, as identified by Participant 3. Additionally, Participant 1 shared that selection of the command chief warrant officer is made by the commanding general of the South Carolina Army National Guard. Thus, the selected warrant officer reflects the

commanding general and his interest as opposed to enduring equitable distribution of racial perspective at the senior position, hindering social change in the South Carolina Army National Guard and diminishing representation at the senior level.

Limitations of the Study

Study limitations initially centered on interview location and my dual role as a researcher and female African American warrant officer in the South Carolina Army National Guard. To mitigate researcher duality, a reflexivity journal was maintained to capture bias and personal commentary following the interviews. Additionally, at the beginning of each interview, review of the consent form was completed, and the researcher role was explicitly explained.

Another limitation was the small sample size. However, the research sample of female African American warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National Guard represents 2% of the warrant officer population and 13% of the female warrant officer population, which is imperative to provide voice to the entire warrant officer cohort as opposed to exclusivity of the majority male White warrant officers. Further, this statistic highlights the impact of diversity and representation in the South Carolina Army National Guard warrant officer cohort.

Recommendations

This research study provided meaningful exploration into the military careers of female African American warrant officers currently serving in the South Carolina Army National Guard along with associated challenges experienced. For further research, it is recommended that research be conducted on the military careers of female warrant

officers of other demographics specifically and with other warrant officers of other

gender identifiers. Female soldiers such as commissioned offices and noncommissioned

officers can help explore diversity and representation disparities in addition to exploring

the experiences of soldiers of other demographics in the South Carolina Army National

Guard.

Further, investigation of the transition from the enlisted ranks into the warrant

officer ranks should be explored to provide relevant insight into the selection process of

female African Americans. Moreover, an in-depth review into the effectiveness of the

current diversity, equity, and inclusion programs along with mentorship programs is

recommended for additional study. Specifically, construction of programs to meet the

needs of all warrant officers regardless of military occupational skill might yield credence

to female African American warrant officer success in pursuit of senior positions. While

the focus of these recommendations center on the South Carolina Army National Guard,

these recommendations are timely and relevant with applicability across the entire Army

enterprise. Consistent with the national landscape, it is imperative to ascertain the extent

of racial disparity, gender disparity, and microaggression within the ranks while

constructing countermeasures to counteract such obstacles.

Implications

The national landscape and associated industries are shifting toward a more

diverse workforce providing space for expansion of the African American experience and

identifying the value of the African American cultural perspective. While the Army

Equal Employment Opportunity program has been in place, the Army enterprise has

made additional significant steps to ensure organizational reflection is consistent with the national landscape. Within The Army People Strategy (2019), supervisors are to place "the right people in the right place at the right time" (p. 2). As a result, senior roles are being broadly competed with racial favoritism weakening in favor of diverse experience and unique perspective brought to these roles.

Additionally, creation of mentorship groups provided consequential outlets as well as overall group support for empowerment and assistance in navigation to senior level positions for minority groups, including female African Americans. Construction of these groups boast membership across the U.S. Army, the Army National Guard, and the U.S. Army Reserve to raise inclusivity efforts across the Army enterprise. Specifically, within the South Carolina Army National Guard, the Women Influential Network was formally organized in 2019 as a professional mentoring program for minority females in the organization. Within the South Carolina Army National Guard, a male African American Brigadier General currently serves as Assistant Adjutant General and a female African American has served as the Senior Enlisted Advisor as a member of the South Carolina Air National Guard. Further, the current senior warrant officer advisor to the U.S. Army chief of staff is female African American, providing evidence against the premise that female leaders are too emotional, not good enough, or not prepared for senior leadership positions.

Conclusion

National leaders have recognized the value of broad experiences and perspectives unique to other racial groups to expand their purview and assist with management of

people from other cultures. This same recognition extends into the Army enterprise as well. As the nation continues to struggle with acceptance of race and gender, obstacles continue in the Army enterprise, more specifically, in the South Carolina Army National Guard. However, with the appointment of Chief Warrant Officer 5 Yolondria Dixon-Carter as the senior warrant officer advisor to the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, female African American warrant officers in the South Carolina Army National Guard now have visible representation of possibility within the Army enterprise. Along with completing requisite and optional military educational courses, female African American warrant officers should be prepared to seize every presented opportunity in her pursuit of senior warrant officer roles while encouraging new warrant officers and other female soldiers, expanding to and beyond female African Americans, to dispel myths of being too emotional or not leadership material.

References

Abatecola, G., & Cristofaro, M. (2020). Hambrick and Mason's "upper echelons theory":

Evolution and open avenues. *Journal of Management History, 26*(1), 116–136.

https://doi.org/10.1108/JMH-02-2018-0016.

Army National Guard G1 Database. (2021). *Current strength datamart*. Army National

Guard.

Blustein, D. L., Kozan, S., & Connors-Kellgren, A. (2013). Unemployment and

underemployment: A narrative analysis about loss. *Journal of Vocational*

Behavior, 82(3), 256–265.

Boyd, K. (2021). Put them in boots: Antiblackness in military higher education at the

United States Military Academy West Point. *The Vermont Connection, 42*(1), 42–

51.

Burkholder, G. J., Cox, K. A., & Crawford, L. M. (2016). *The scholar-practitioner's*

guide to research design. Laureate Publishing.

Chance, N. L. (2022). Resilient leadership: A phenomenological exploration into how

Black women in higher education leadership navigate cultural adversity. *Journal*

of Humanistic Psychology, 62(1), 44–78.

https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678211003000.

Dawkins, T. S. (2016). USASOC welcomes its first command chief warrant officer. *U.S.*

Army.

https://www.army.mil/article/150854/usasoc_welcomes_its_first_command_chief

_warrant_officer.

Department of Defense. (2018a). 2018 demographics: Profile of the military community. https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2018-demographics-report.pdf.

Department of Defense. (2018b). *Diversity management and equal opportunity in the DoD* (DOD Directive 1020.02E). https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/102002p.pdf.

Department of Defense. (2019). *2019 demographics: Profile of the military community.* https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2019-demographics-report.pdf.

Department of Defense Board on Diversity and Inclusion Report. (2020). *Recommendations to improve racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion in the U.S. Military.* https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/18/2002554852/-1/-1/0/DOD-DIVERSITY-AND-INCLUSION-FINAL-BOARD-REPORT.PDF.

Dreyer, B. C., Riemer, M., Spadafore, B., Marcus, J., Fernandes, D., Taylor, A., Whitney, S., Geobey, S., & Dennett, A. (2021). Fostering cultures of sustainability in a multi-unit office building: A theory of change. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.624311.

Epps, S. K. (2008). African American women leaders in academic research libraries. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, *8*(3), 255–272. https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.0.0001.

Floyd, G. L. (2020). Diversity and inclusion: The urgency of now. *Citizen Airman: The Official Magazine of the Air National Guard & Air Force Reserve, 72*(4), 10–11.

Jean-Marie, G., Williams, V. A., & Sherman, S. L. (2009). Black women's leadership experiences: Examining the intersectionality of race and gender. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 11*(5), 562–581. https://doi.org/10.1177/152322309351836.

Mattis, J. N. (2018). 2018 demographics: Profile of the military community. *USA Department of Defense.* https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2018-demographics-report.pdf.

Milless, K. L., Wout, D. A., & Murphy, M. C. (2022). Diversity or representation? Sufficient factors for Black Americans' identity safety during interracial interactions. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 28*(1), 103–111. https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000492.

Mills, K. J. (2020). "It's systemic": Environmental racial aggressions experienced by Black undergraduates at a predominately White institution. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 13*(1), 44–55. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000121.

Motro, D., Evans, J. B., Ellis, A. P. J., & Benson, L. (2022). Race and reactions to women's expressions of anger at work: Examining the effects of the "Angry Black Woman" stereotype. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 107*(1), 142–152. https://doi.org/10.1037/ap10000884.

Nigrelle, M. (2016). Texas Chief reaches the top. *Texas Military Department.* https://tmd.texas.gov/texas-chief-reaches-the-top.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and*

practice (4th ed.). SAGE.

Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2021). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual,*

theoretical, and methodological (2nd ed.) Sage Publications.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd

ed.). SAGE.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed). Sage

Publications.

SecurityWomen. (2020). Lack of diversity in the US National Guard.

https://www.securitywomen.org/post/lack-of-diversity-in-the-us-national-guard.

Shafritz, J. M., Ott, J. S., & Jang, Y. S. (Eds.). (2016). *Classics of organization theory*.

(8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Shanahan, E. A., Jones, M. D., McBeth, M. K., & Radaelli, C. M. (2018). The narrative

policy framework. In C. M. Weible & P. A. Sabatier (Eds.), *Theories of the policy*

process. (4th ed., pp. 173–213). Westview Press.

Soral, P., Pati, S. P., & Kakani, R. K. (2022). Knowledge hiding as a coping response to

the supervisors' dark triad of personality: A protection motivation theory

perspective. *Journal of Business Research, 142*(1), 1077–1091.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.12.075.

Soucy, J. (2019). Maryland Guard's all-female command team makes history. *U.S. Army.*

https://www.army.mil/article/220126/maryland_guards_all_female_command_tea

m_makes_history.

Stanley, C. A. (2009). Giving voice from the perspectives of African American women

leaders. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 11*(5), 551–561.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422309351520.

U.S. Army. (2019). *The army people strategy.*

https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/the_army_people_strategy_2019_10_11

_signed_final.pdf.

U.S. Army Public Affairs. (2020). U.S. Army selects senior warrant officer advisor to the

Chief of Staff of the Army.

https://www.army.mil/article/234297/u_s_army_selects_senior_warrant_officer_a

dvisor_to_the_chief_of_staff_of_the_army.

Waring, A. L. (2009). African-American female college presidents: Self conceptions of

leadership. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, 9*(3), 31–44.

WomensInfluentialNetwork. (2023). Mentorship, our goals, our mission.

https://www.womensinfluentialnetwork.org/.