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Career Ascension of African-American Men in the Army Warrant Officer Corps

James Joseph Williams
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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James Joseph Williams

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Career Ascension of African-American Men in the Army Warrant Officer Corps

by

James Joseph Williams

MPA., Strayer University, 2011

BS, Strayer University, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

March 2019

Abstract

The military and scholars assert that the military has created an organization that is based on merit. However, statistics show that African American military men are more likely to be subjected to the military's justice system, they are less likely to promote to the most senior enlisted and officer ranks, they are more likely to receive a negative discharge, and they are disproportionately represented on the military's death row. Despite these assertions, many African-American men succeed within the military structure. Therefore, this qualitative study was conducted to examine the stories of senior field grade warrant officer African American men to determine how they succeeded in a system where others face different problems. Data were collected through interviews with 10 African-American men in the army. Data analysis using Nvivo 12 revealed 9 themes related to motivation and resilience and occupational expectations: competence in primary functional areas, aspiration, overcoming barriers to promotion, proven leadership style, mentorship, educational opportunities, establish a career roadmap, excel through army promotion system, and faith. The findings of this study may provide policy makers, recruiters, and those aspiring to become Army warrant officers (WO) insight into what may help to increase the number of African-American men aspiring to become WOs. This study may also help guide the Army in being an organization where service members are judged solely based on merit.

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Dedication

Father, I thank you for instilling in me the fortitude to achieve this historic milestone in my life. I pray that this study will add value to my family, my community, my country, and our society at-large. Thank you for providing safety to those I love most. In my travels away from home soil, I find comfort in knowing that I dwell in the “secret place” of the Most High. Finally, Lord God, I thank you for reminding me that while I am a soldier in the U.S. Army, I also serve my Heavenly Father, for I am also a soldier in the Army of the Lord!

To my grandparents, Bertha Mae and Joseph (Joe) Willie Jackson, I dedicate this monumental achievement to the two of you. You both always said to me to aim higher. Grandma, you aptly named me your “walking computer.” Grandpa, with your third-grade education, your “X” signature, your work ethic, and your infinite wisdom, you will never know how much you motivated me in my quest for higher learning. I did it. RIP you two!

To all the men and women who serve or have served in the Armed Forces – thank you for your service! I want to pay special homage to all fellow Army warrant officers. I am so proud to serve with you as your brother in arms. It is both an honor and a privilege.

Finally, I dedicate this work to a true pioneer, author, and historian who led the way in researching the lives of African Americans serving in the Army Warrant Officer Corps. Farrell Chiles, CW4, U.S Army retired . . . I salute you, my friend. Thank you for inspiring me to take on this herculean task of giving a voice to the “quiet professionals.” In particular, those African-American men whose experiences have been muted from military history. Thanks to you and this research study, their voices will forever be heard.

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This dissertation project would not have been possible without the Walden University community. I want to thank you for your support. I would especially like to thank my Chairperson, Dr. Janet Hunter; Committee Member, Dr. Glenn Starks; and URR Committee Member, Dr. Michael Brewer (Dr. B). Special thanks to CW4 (ret) Jack Du Teil of the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Association (USAWOA). Jack, your belief in my study—priceless! I hope this work will add value to positive social change.

To the participants in this study, who shared their valuable time and experiences, I owe a debt of gratitude. It is because of your participation that allowed this project to unfold with the hope that it can be useful to assist others. I am thankful for not only your participation in this study but for your service and sacrifices to our country.

No group of people have been more important to me in my doctoral journey than the members of my family. To my siblings, Dewayne Williams, Gretta Williams, and Rochelle Williams-Moton. Thank you for always believing in your big brother. I also pay special tribute to the World's Greatest Mom, Joyce Ann Jackson-Williams. As a young single mother of four children, you have provided enough wisdom to receive an honorary doctorate. For that reason, this is your doctorate too—you've earned it. Love you, Mom!

Most importantly, I wish to thank my loving and supportive wife, Greta, and our son, James II. Greta, we have been on this path together since our very first date. Now, I am “Dr. Boo” (smile). You have been my rock, and very best friend, and I am blessed to share this with you. James, my son, you are my greatest gift, and I am so very proud of you. Thank you both for your love and unwavering support. Love you guys. We did it!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Chief warrant officer 5 (CW5) is the highest rank achieved as an Army warrant officer; it represents the top 1% of the Warrant Officer Corps (WOC). Attaining this level is not easy for anyone, so the few who are African-American men are a revered group. Understanding how to navigate this path may benefit actively enlisted minority groups with their career path and goals. Thus, I conducted this study to examine the traits and experiences of retired senior field grade warrant officers in the contemporary U.S. Army. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experiences of African American males who have achieved the status of senior field grade warrant officer (CW5) in the United States Army. Exploring this phenomenon of interest may provide decision and policy makers, as well as those aspiring to become Army warrant officers (WO), insight into what actions may help to increase the number of African-American men.

In general, equal employment and diversity programs have been successful in getting minorities into entry-level positions in higher numbers. However, these programs have been unsuccessful with influencing the number of minorities in senior management positions in organizations (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006; Ng, 2008). According to census data, soon most of the people applying for new jobs will be women and minorities. Organizations will have to rethink their recruiting and promotion policies to stay competitive and to bring needed personnel into their organizations (Corporate

Leadership Council, 2005; Ng, 2008; Ross-Gordon & Brooks, 2004). Likewise, the demographics of senior management should also reflect the overall organization.

According to the upper echelon theory, the demographics of the senior leadership of an organization reflect the overall organization (Ng, 2008). This concept formed the basis of the need for this research. If minorities make up a large percentage of the entry-level demographics of an organization, they should also constitute a proportional amount of the senior leaders of the organization. The focus of this research study was to collect and analyze data regarding the lived experiences of African-American men who achieved the rank of CW5 in the U.S. Army. The data collected and analyzed revealed themes that the participants attributed to their ability to succeed in achieving this milestone of a senior field grade warrant officer in the U.S. Army. This study is an exploration of this phenomenon from the perspective of African-American male officers who made it to the most senior leadership levels of the Army WOC.

Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, the problem statement that frames the study, the purpose statement, and the research question. The significance of this study as it relates to adding to the body of knowledge is addressed, and the rationale for the research approach is briefly discussed as well as key terminology and definitions of the terms that are central to the study. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks underlying this study are cited, and the chapter concludes with a layout of how the study is organized and presented.

Background of the Study

Although studies have been conducted on the underrepresentation of groups in the federal government (Johnson-Drake, 2010; Taylor, 2004; Wilkerson, 2008), these studies have been focused on woman and minorities, who are grouped together to represent all non-Caucasians. According to Riccucci (2009), most of the literature addressing occupational segregation generally groups people of color into one category. Although the integration of African Americans into the Army was successful, U.S. Army statistics show that African Americans do not participate evenly across officer career fields (Boyd, 2002). However, little has been documented about the contributions of African-American soldiers in the U.S. Army.

The history of African Americans serving the U.S. Army is a long and proud one. In 1776, Congress passed legislation that allowed Black men to enlist in the Armed Services. However, Blacks did not serve in the Confederate Army as combat troops; service was actively forbidden by the Confederacy for most of its existence, though sometimes slaves were used for camp labor (Aptheker, 1947). Other times, when a son or sons in a slaveholding family enlisted, he would take along a family slave to work as a personal servant (Aptheker, 1947).

The U.S. Armed Forces remained segregated through World War I, but many African Americans volunteered to join the Allied cause following America's entry into the war. By the time of the armistice with Germany on November 11, 1918, over 350,000 African Americans had served with the American Expeditionary Force on the Western Front. During this period, the first WOC began in 1918 as the Mine Planters. Most

African-American units were largely relegated to support roles and did not see combat. But African Americans played a notable role in America's war effort. For example, the 369th Infantry Regiment, known as the "Harlem Hellfighters," was assigned to the French Army and served on the front lines for 6 months. These members of the 369th were awarded the Legion of Merit (Gilmore, 2007).

During World War II, despite a high enlistment rate in the U.S. Army, African Americans were not treated equally. At parades, church services, in transportation and canteens the races were kept separate. However, many soldiers of color served their country with distinction during World War II. Over 125,000 African American served overseas during WWII. Famous segregated units, such as the Tuskegee Army, and the lesser-known but equally distinguished 452nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, proved their value in combat, leading to desegregation of all U.S. armed forces by order of President Harry S. Truman in July 1948 via Executive Order 9981.

The year 2018 marks the 100th anniversary of the Army WOC. Although the Department of Defense, especially the U.S. Army, has made significant gains in racial and ethnic representation, the most senior levels still do not fully reflect these gains (Kraus & Riche, 2006). However, little is known about the Army WOC. There have been studies that address African-American males in the public and private sector and as well the Armed Forces, but only in the capacity of commissioned officers. Currently, no seminal or recent studies have considered the underrepresentation of African-American males within the WOC or the possible causes for this disparity. A recent report by the Office of Personnel Management (2012) suggests that in 2030, minority representation

within the senior executive staff will not reflect the demographics of the federal government workforce. The federal government is no different from organizations within corporate America in that recruitment and retention of individuals from various backgrounds and ethnic groups helps to foster creativity and ideas and brings various lived experiences to an organization (Choi & Rainey, 2010).

The issues within this research study may be reveal possible discrimination, racism, or prejudice; I also sought to understand the upper echelon theory and the belief that representation of minorities within the executive rank should reflect the overall workforce. By providing equal access and opportunities to this group (equal to those in which White men experience), African-American men can have greater opportunities to achieve career progression at the senior ranks. This equity could include mentorship, training and development opportunities, leader development, career enhancement opportunities, and positions. This can provide African-American men with legitimate consideration as enlisted soldiers when applying for this competitive program of the WOC.

The central question under investigation was “How do retired African-American men describe their experience of attaining the rank of senior field grade warrant officer (CW5/W5) in the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps?” This study design intent was to address the underrepresentation of African-American males by focusing on the personal experiences of African-American male senior field grade warrant officers. I focused on the underrepresentation African-American males because data on the representation of African-American males in the WOC has not improved significantly, despite the adoption

of workplace diversity programs. I used a phenomenological design with a modified van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994). I investigated the lived experiences of 10 African-American males who are retired members of the senior field grade WOC in the U.S. Army. The areas of interest (participants' lived experiences relating to their socialization experiences and the impacts that those experiences had on their attitudes, behaviors, and career expectations) were examined, and common themes and patterns emerged.

Statement of the Problem

Over the past two decades, U.S. Army War College students have written several papers touching on the experiences of African-American officers as they relate to representation, promotions, influence, and culture (Smith, 2010). These papers are like a collection of monographs to look at social problems from a micro or meso perspective. Only Remo Butler's paper (1996), which was one of the first to be written, has received widespread attention. In it, he wrote, "the reason for Black officers falling behind their White peers was due to a debilitation inertia in the way young Black officers are mentored and a lack of common cultural understanding among both Black and White officers" (as cited in Smith, 2010, p. 33).

An area where lack of diversity causes the most concern is the field-grade level because of a drastic decrease in male African-American officers at this level (these pay grades correspond to the ranks of major (O-4), lieutenant colonel (O-5), colonel (O-6). Butler (1996) found that approximately 12% of male African-American officers were at this rank, but at the next higher rank, the percentage dropped by half. Butler found the

trend was the opposite for White officer's promotion to field-grade officer, and the percentage increased to 10%.

From a survey conducted at the U.S. Army War College at Carlisle, PA, Butler determined that the path to correct this deficiency was to (a) minimize the workings of the old boy network to get young Black officers quality assignments, (b) increase the quality of ROTC cadre by increasing the status of ROTC assignments, (c) provide quality mentoring for young Black officers, and (d) educate officers and senior leaders in cultural awareness.

Many scholars and military experts have asserted that African-American men are more likely to be subject to the military's justice system and are less likely to promote the most senior officers/warrant officer ranks, and they are more likely to receive a negative discharge. However, many African-American men do succeed in the military. I examined the stories of senior warrant officers (CW5) who are African-American men and determined how they say they coped and managed to succeed in a system where many others do not. The findings may guide the WOC toward being an organization where Army senior field grade officers are judged solely based on merit.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to add to the literature and gain an understanding of the lived experiences of African-American males regarding the impacts of their socialization experiences on their attitudes, behaviors, career aspirations and their successful accessions to senior ranks within the WOC. I wanted to gain an understanding of the experiences that African-American males endure in terms of

becoming senior warrant officers and to determine whether their experiences could lead to greater numbers of African-American males aspiring to and becoming members of the WOC. The literature and data suggest that minorities are currently underrepresented within the Uniformed Services (Rice, 2005; Riccucci, 2009), and the forecast for 2030 and beyond suggests that this underrepresentation will widen (Office Personnel Management, 2011).

However, there is a gap in the literature in terms of what influences the experiences of African-American males (Riccucci, 2009). Thus, the purpose of the research was to provide recommendations and suggestions based on the lived experiences of African-American men who have served in the WOC. The findings may help inform recruiters, human resource professionals, and policy makers within the Army which factors contributed to African-American males' successful acquisitions of the rank of CW5. The information may also assist other minority groups who are underrepresented based on lessons learned from the experiences of African-American males. This study could be expanded to both profit and nonprofit organizations interested in increasing the diversity of their managerial ranks.

Research Questions

The central question under investigation followed by two sub-questions are as follows:

Research Question 1: How do retired African American male officers describe their experience of attaining the rank of senior field grade warrant officer (CW5/W5) in the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps?

Subquestion 1: What are the experiences which shaped the achievements of African-American men serving in senior leadership positions in the Army Warrant Officer Corps?

Subquestion 2: What strategies do African-American men believe they used to reach the rank of senior field grade warrant officer?

Theoretical Framework

I chose to use a three-prong approach to frame this research. The upper echelon theory, McClelland's theory of motivation, and the resilience theory served as the theoretical and conceptual framework guiding this study on the underrepresentation of African-American men in the WOC. These theories also complimented the success strategies used for the participants selected in this study.

The echelon theory addresses the senior leadership and subordinate ratio within an organization. This will become important for the military community. According to census data, soon most people applying for new jobs will be women and minorities; therefore, organizations will have to revisit their recruiting efforts and promotion policies to stay competitive and to bring the needed personnel into their organizations (Ng, 2008).

A second theory important in explaining the promotion of African-American men in the WOC is the resilience theory. Masten (2001) identified resilience theory as the development of a coping method to overcome hardship. Resilience, from a social science research perspective, emphasizes the idea of bouncing back. Research has addressed how people bounce back from all types of trauma, crises, problems, and adversity (Henderson, 2012).

Finally, in the early 1940s, Abraham Maslow created a theory of needs. He identified that needs of individuals follow a certain order or hierarchy. Higher levels of need start gaining importance once the lower level need is satisfied. Based on this work, McClelland identified three motivators and the dominance of each explains the behavior and characteristics of each person. McClelland's theory of motivation is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of African American senior chief warrant officers in the United States Air Army who had achieved the rank of CW5. These participants also described the leadership styles they valued most when assessing the potential of future master chief warrant. Phenomenology was useful for this study because it allowed for expanding perspectives (Leiche, 2006). Phenomenology helped connect a worldview and reality, as told from the perspectives of the participants. Furthermore, it helped in understanding the lived experiences of participants through the development and formation of research questions as well as through information derived from interviews and recollections of the participants' experiences (Reiter, Stewart, & Bruce, 2011).

A qualitative method served the research purpose appropriately given the nature of the research questions, which were focused on the explanation rather than assessing relationships between numeric data. Therefore, a quantitative research method was not chosen for this study. A mixed-methods approach was not chosen because the historical demographic data for Army warrant officers divided by gender and ethnicity would not

have captured the lived experiences of the participants that could better promote social change. A qualitative method was chosen because it allowed the exploration and analysis of the lived experiences of people who have attained the rank of CW5 in the Army. The phenomenological approach also allowed me to look for common themes among participants who have experienced similar lived circumstances (Moustakas, 1994).

Definition of Terms

African American or Black: Terms used interchangeably to represent black individuals born and raised in the United States who share sociological history dating back to slavery and/or persons of African descent from outside of the United States (such as from Africa, the Caribbean).

Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB): A timed multi-aptitude test, which is given at over 14,000 schools and Military Entrance Processing Stations nationwide and is developed and maintained by the Department of Defense.

Chief warrant officer: In the United States Armed Forces, chief warrant officer refers to any warrant officer in pay grades CW2 and above.

Chief warrant officer 5 (CW5): The CW5 is a master-level technical and tactical expert. They primarily support brigade, division, corps, echelons above corps and major command operations. They have special warrant officer leadership and representation responsibilities within their respective commands. The CW5 rank is the top rank achieved in the WOC.

Experience: Jourard (1971) described experience as follows: “Experience refers to a process - to the flow of feelings, perceptions, memories, and fantasies as these occur

from moment to moment. The only person who can ever know a man's experience directly is the individual himself" (p. 7).

Mentoring: A dynamic relationship between an advanced career incumbent (mentor) and beginner (protégé) within the work environment that is designed to foster the career development of both (Grove & Montgomery, 2000).

Minority officer: An officer who is not a non-Hispanic, Caucasian male. This would include all women and all ethnic minority officers.

Motivation factors: The study of human behavior in relation to the nature of work; motivation factors include achievement, advancement, autonomy, and personal growth (*Motivation Factors*, n.d.).

Resilience: Resilience is being able to withstand, recover, and grow in the face of stressors and changing demands (AFI90-506, 2014).

Senior field grade warrant officer: A warrant officer who achieved the rank of CW5, the highest rank achieved in the WOC.

Technical services warrant officers: Warrant officers serving in all military occupational specialties except pilots.

Underrepresentation: Inadequate representation of a particular group relative to the group's overall population.

Warrant officer (WO): A warrant officer is an officer in a military organization who is designated an officer by a warrant, as distinguished from a commissioned officer who is designated an officer by a commission, and a non-commissioned officer who is designated an officer, often by virtue of seniority.

Well-being: Well-being is the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous.

Assumptions

There were assumptions made for the framework within which the data was collected and analyzed. The first assumption was that the participants interviewed were truthful, provided accurate information, and completed the interview to the best of their ability. The second assumption was that the participants wanted to see more minorities in these senior warrant officer positions in the Army; therefore, the senior field grade warrant officers would be willing to share their knowledge and experience. The third assumption was that there are no adverse consequences to the participants for participating in this study. However, I took appropriate steps to protect the identity of the participants. The fourth assumption was that the participants in this study would be in good health and would have the capacity to recall significant events and milestones in their ascension to the rank of CW5. The fifth assumption was that my experiences as a minority warrant officer would assist with connecting with the research participants to get accurate reflections of participants' lived experiences. The final assumption was that I would not interject personal biases when conducting analysis of the data.

Scope and Delimitations

Participants in this study included 10 African-American men who have retired within the last 10 years from the Army at the rank of CW5. Therefore, this study excluded men who are not African-American men and who are not retirees of the U.S. Army. To achieve at least 10 participants, a snowball sampling method was used. The study excluded other data collection instruments such as documents and archival records.

Limitations

The first limitation was that the study was limited to African-American men chief warrant officers. The second limitation was that only participants who served in the U.S. Army and retired were selected. The third limitation is that the findings do not necessarily generalize all African-American men chief warrant officers. Unknown factors may include family conflicts or personal hardships that may have hindered career progression. The fifth and final limitation was that I included only African-American men who retired at the rank of CW5; no other group participated in this study.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is that it provides understanding regarding the motivation and success strategies (resilience) employed by African-American men who have been successful in achieving the rank of senior field grade warrants in the U.S. Army. This study may help organizations and management researchers to acquire more knowledge of this understudied group of the military officer population: African American Army chief warrant officers at the highest rank.

This study may also help African-American men who seek to transition from enlisted soldiers to the ranks of a warrant officer to achieve further career success in their military career. The study may also help the Department of the Army understand the effect of having African-American men serve as senior leaders as well as role models in their communities. The significance of this study is not limited to the U.S. Army; it may have impact on the Air Force, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard as well because warrant

officers serve their mission at every level from operational, tactical, to strategic throughout the Department of Defense as well as the public and private sector.

The findings of this study concerning the motivation and success strategies of African-American warrant officers may also be valuable for individuals who are responsible for establishing mentoring programs in their organizations, networking opportunities, and conferences, particularly among the African-American military population. The findings may be equally important to women and other minority group of warrant officers as senior leaders who will directly benefit by knowing specific motivation and success strategies that yield to increase longevity, success, and fulfillment in their military careers.

From a leadership perspective, the results of this research can be used to make decisions on future policies to recruit and develop minority officers for senior positions in the Army and the Department of Defense. The new knowledge identified through this research could also be used by mentors to provide or instill minority officers with the attributes that have been successful in minority officers who advanced to senior leadership positions in the Army WOC. This study may also provide areas for future research in terms of becoming resilient and effective minority officers at the senior levels and ways to overcome the barriers that have prevented the proportional representation of minorities at the senior levels of the Department of Defense and organizations in the private sector.

Summary

It is the goal of this phenomenological study was to add to the literature and gain an understanding of the impacts of their socialization experiences on African-American men's attitudes, behaviors, career aspirations and their successful ascension to senior ranks within the WOC. Thus, I examined the stories of senior field grade warrant officers African-American Army men and determined how they say they coped and managed to succeed within a system that so many others do not.

The data collection instruments consisted of demographic surveys and in-depth interviews. The study participants were African-American men who served in the Army and retired at the rank of senior field grade warrant officer or CW5, which is the highest rank achieved in the WOC. Chapter 2 presents a review of literature as it relates to a historical background of the WOC. This includes history, rank structure, motivation, success strategies, and resilience, meritocracy, race, and leadership and mentorship.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Over time, America has reexamined the role of race and how inequalities are manifested based on race. Many organizations, both public and private, have for different reasons engaged in actions that are designed to remove barriers that are based on race. But although many organizations have articulated desires for more diversity and many have instituted diversity programs, most show little progress in creating organizations where African-American men are included in positions of higher power. These men still struggle to be included in the boardrooms where major decisions are being made. According to Department of the Army statistic data, the overall WO population makes up 3% of the total Army, of which 64% are White and only 17% are Black (Army Demographics, FY 18 Army Profile). African-American voices may likely be hidden in the data as well as their perspectives. Chapter 2 provides a historical timeline of the WOC as well as the theories to support this research.

Literary Search Strategy

Although there was a plethora of literature on career ascension of African-American male success with Army commissioned officers and senior executive staff, there was no literature to address the career progression of Army warrant officers. In this instance, my literary search strategy relied on the Army Warrant Officer Historical Society, the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Association, and documents written by officers of the Army War College.

ProQuest Central was the database of choice, and the following search terms were used as a research strategy for study topic: *African American OR black, Army, Males OR men, Officers, Race, Career progression OR Career ascension.*

Here are the keywords related to the conceptual framework or theory part of my dissertation: *auto phenomenology, Theory of Resiliency, Representative democracy, Social equity, McClelland Theory of Needs, and Upper Echelon Theory, and lived experience.* Both search types revealed parallel scholarly content that was crucial in moving forward to literature review research.

Theoretical Foundation

Hambrick's (1985) upper echelon theory, McClelland's motivation theory, and Masten's (1986) resilience theory were the theoretical framework for this phenomenological study. This section is organized in the following subsections: Upper Echelon Theory, McClelland's Motivational Theory, and Resilience Theory.

Upper Echelon Theory

Upper echelon theory is based on the philosophy that the principles, ideals, and experiences that people embrace influence the decisions that leaders make (Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005). To understand the decision-making process of an organization, it is important to understand the paradigm through which the leader interprets the world he or she experiences (Liao & Subramony, 2008). Rather than focusing on the traits of the person making decisions, a more accurate assessment would be made by studying that interaction between components of the executive leadership team (Manner, 2010). Another implication of the upper echelon theory is that someone

can arrive at a reasonable assessment of a leader's perspective on a subject and the organizational performance by examining the leadership teams' demographic characteristics. Rather than gender and ethnicity, this theory refers to aspects like executives' work experience, educational credentials, and affiliations to forecast what decisions will likely be made by a leader (Hambrick et al., 2005, p. 335).

In recent years, developments in the upper echelon theory have resulted in two opposing views. One perspective is that an executive can have an influence on the performance of an organization (Liao & Subramony, 2008). Stereotype threat suggests that if a person is in danger of confirming a negative stereotype associated with an ethnic or gender group, he or she gets nervous and performs poorly (Burnette, Pollack, & Hoyt, 2010). The opposing perspective posits that an executive cannot influence the outcome of an organization because there are processes that, once started, are too powerful for an executive to change (Manner, 2010).

Theorists concede that the level of decision-making empowerment given to the executive versus serving in a figure-head capacity, as well as the amount of job stress that comes with the position in an organization, determine the level of influence an executive has over the decision outcome or changes in organizational performance (Liao & Subramony, 2008). The more empowered executives are to make decisions, the greater an influence they can have on the outcome of the organization. An executive in a high-stress environment is more likely to make a premature decision based on experiences rather than assess the data provided with an open mind (Hambrick et al., 2005).

Two additional factors that influence the outcome of organizational decisions have been identified in recent additions to the upper echelon theory. The power distribution of the executive leadership team will influence how often a decision to accomplish a certain category or type action is made (Manner, 2010). If most of the executive leadership team comes from a background in a specific functional area, the expectation is that a substantial number of the decisions will cater toward this area because it is their strength (Liao & Subramony, 2008). The second area that affects the accuracy of the decisions predicted by the upper echelon theory is how the executive leadership team collaborates and shares information (Hambrick et al., 2005). If there is dysfunction between how the executive leadership teams interact to make decisions, it will influence the accuracy of the predictions of strategic decision-making and organizational performance influenced by the executives (Manner, 2010). This dysfunctional decision-making impacts minority representation in the organization. In a military structure, visibility and exposure to spaces for Black men may help to navigate their career path to senior level positions.

McClelland's Motivation Theory

According to McClelland (as cited in Stahl, 1986), human needs are formed over a based on an individual's experiences. McClelland claimed that motivation of an individual can result from three primary needs: (a) need for achievement, (b) need for affiliation, and (c) need for power (as cited in Stahl, 1986, p. 3).

Need for achievement.

McClelland's theory became well known when he was able to correlate need for achievement with levels of economic and business progress in several cultures (as cited in Stahl, 1986). McClelland's achievement motivation is driven by a need to succeed (as cited in Peterson, 2007, p. 62). McClelland claimed that individuals who have a need for achievement seek to achieve all objectives (as cited in Swenson, 2000). They also like to be recognized for their successes. Those who have a need to achieve define unambiguous goals and necessary actions to attain them (Peterson, 2007). Many individuals who need to achieve are willing to take calculated risk if it is going to bring about an optimistic gain. However, they avoid low risk because the achievement of the goal is not authentic due to the ease of accomplishing it (Swenson, 2000). High achievers also avoid high risk because they feel that positive results are developed based on luck and not because of their efforts (Swenson, 2000). One of the downsides of people who have a need for achievement is that they may not know when to end a task, give up, or accept not succeeding (Peterson, 2007). Rad and Levin (as cited in Peterson, 2007) further claimed that one of the upsides of a person who has a need for achievement is that he or she enjoys a challenge and is typically self-reliant.

Need for affiliation.

Peterson (2007) claimed that McClelland's affiliation motivation is driven by relationships and a need to work well with others. Individuals who are motivated through affiliation are drawn toward a friendly work atmosphere and will strive for team unity, team success, and commonality of team norms. McClelland claimed that individuals who have a need for affiliation look for welcoming relationships with other individuals (as

cited in Braden, 2000). They would rather play a fair game than battle with their team members. Affiliation seekers do their best to maintain and expand lifelong, trusting, and reliable relationships (Braden, 2000). McClelland felt that leaders who have a need for affiliation often decrease their ability to be fair and to make sound business decisions (as cited in Swenson, 2000). One downside to an individual who has a need for affiliation is that he or she may feel uneasy sharing concerns, but a person motivated by affiliation typically aids in developing a sense of unity in the work environment (Peterson, 2007).

Need for power.

Power motivation is driven by the ability to dominate and manipulate goals, direction, or decisions (Peterson, 2007, p. 62). McClelland claimed that those who have a need for power typically enjoy being in charge or heading up a group for personal satisfaction or for the betterment of the group (as cited in Swenson, 2000). People who must have power fall into two groups: personal power and institutional power. Those who have a desire for individual power want to demonstrate the process and convince others, whereas institutional power implies a person who enjoys directing the work of others to accomplish the objectives of the organization (McClelland, 1975). An advantage of an individual who has a need for power is that he or she is typically self-driven and requires minimal motivation when it comes to performing on the job (Peterson, 2007). A disadvantage is some individuals with this need tend to like to rule, control, and have overall influence of the task at hand (Peterson, 2007).

In Figure 1, each of the three needs from the theory are illustrated. The needs can be over or under-expressed, leaving the leader in a position of potential abuse or

insufficiency. In most cases, moderate to high ratings in these areas are desirable rather than excessively high or low ones. Moderate to high ratings allows room for expectation management.

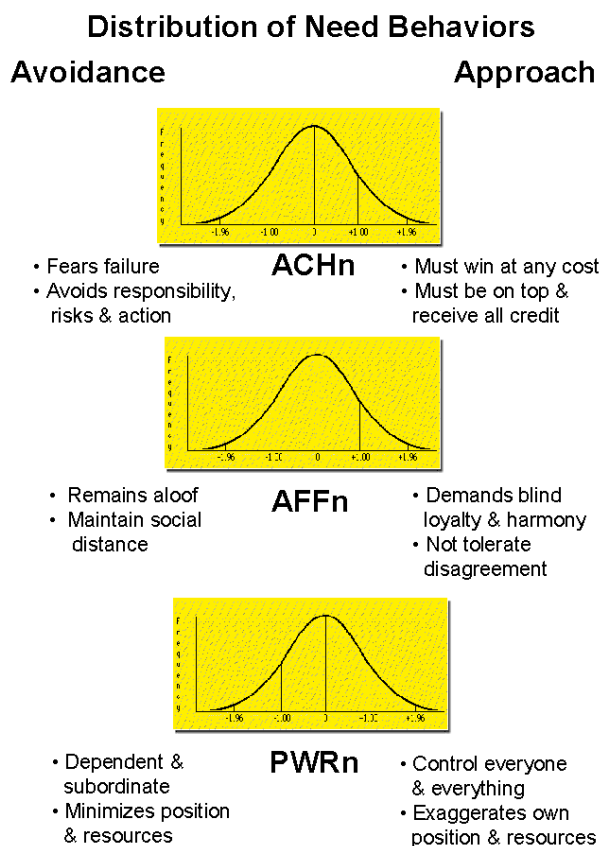


Figure 1. Distribution of need behaviors from motivation theory.

As depicted in Figure 1, managers in large organizations, power is most related to success, promotion, and accomplishment of objectives. Achievement and affiliation follow and are useful in creating a challenging and team spirited work environment. Greater career advancement and higher performance ratings are often related to both high power and achievement (Swenson, 2000). Another theory that builds on Swenson's work is the resiliency theory, which will be presented next.

Resiliency Theory

Resilience is studied by researchers from diverse disciplines, including psychology, psychiatry, sociology, and recently biological disciplines, including genetics, epigenetics, endocrinology, and neuroscience (Herrman et al., 2011). To date there is no consensus on an operational definition. However, Flach (2004) described *resilience* as the psychological and biological strengths needed to successfully master change within cycles of disruption and reintegration. Additionally, Terrisse (2000) defined *resilience* as a positive outcome of individual processes of social experiences cultivated by the connections within the environment. Finally, Earvolino-Ramirez (2007) described numerous uses of the concept, with one being defined as being able to recover and or adapt to change or adversity.

Although resilience is a characteristic in the brain, over time people learn impractical patterns, which become permanent in their neural circuitry (Graham & Hanson, 2013). However, with powerful, time-tested exercises, it is possible for people to reconstruct their core well-being and disaster-proof their brains (Graham, & Hanson 2013). Further, people cannot rebound from hardship, but they can navigate through it with resilience (Greitens, 2015).

Resilience building, from a socioeconomic perspective, and the ability to bounce back more rapidly, is a social and economic issue. The world is vulnerable to unexpected and dramatic shocks and stresses such as constant cyber-attacks, new strains of viruses, structural failures, violent storms, public disturbances, and repeated economic setbacks (Rodin, 2014). However, people, organizations, businesses, communities, and cities have

developed resilience in the face of otherwise disastrous challenges (Rodin, 2014). For example, schools can increase the number of resilient students by addressing students' negative perceptions of academics and themselves by offering emotional support, culturally relevant lessons, and promotion of academic ideals (Fergus, Noguera, & Martin, 2014). As people grow more proficient at managing disruption and more skilled at resilience building, they gain the ability to create and take advantage of new economic and social prospects that help to recover after misfortunes and grow strong in times of comparative calm (Rodin, 2014). By understanding the five stages of development—(a) sustaining health, energy, and positive feelings; (b) managing challenges; (c) attaining positive self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-concept; (d) practicing the skills and characteristics of extremely resilient people; (e) and developing an ability for serendipity—it is possible to learn to face adversity and overcome barriers (Siebert, 2005).

Resilience from a cultural adversity perspective is focused on difficulties toward progression. For example, Tolbert and Ellen (2015) described the perseverance against obstacles that threatened to disrupt ambitions for a sound education and professional career. From underprivileged beginnings, surrounded by negativity and segregated schools, Tolbert was left orphaned and penniless at an early age. Through resilience, despite a period of tense race relations and numerous obstacles, Tolbert became an African-American scientist, educator, and administrator, often in positions usually held only by men. Tolbert is a resilient role model with an inspiring message for individuals struggling against overwhelming odds (Tolbert & Ellen, 2015).

Career resilience.

Studies on the resilience of individuals have also extended to career and organizational resilience. According to Patterson et al. (2002), organizations are characterized as resilient if they are (a) just getting by, (b) getting back to status quo after experiencing adversity, or (c) getting ahead through consistent improvement or high performance. This thought aligns with the concept of survival, recovery, and thriving mentioned earlier. Therefore, the term *career resilience* refers to a person's resistance to career disruption in a less than optimal environment and the ability to handle poor working conditions while one is aware that these conditions exist (O'Leary, 1998). The career resiliency of a leader is critical for their survival, adaptation, and success. The challenge that leaders face is accepting the responsibility for doing whatever it takes to move ahead in the face of adversity. In essence, the resilient leader acts with courage about convictions in spite of the risks (Patterson & Patterson, 2001).

Organizational resilience.

Organizational resiliency refers to an organization's ability to create an environment that enhances career resiliency of their employees (Brock & Grady, 2002; Nishikawa, 2006). An organization committed to building resilient employees will foster openness in communication, encouragement of individual contributions for personal growth, and risk-taking with the promise of employee recognition and rewards (O'Leary, 1998). Resilient organizations structure and restructure themselves to attain a mission and support the optimal development of shared decision-making. They provide feedback, set goals, and have intelligence-gathering mechanisms (Nishikawa, 2006). They employ

people who react quickly and efficiently to change and perceive experiences constructively, ensuring adequate external resources expand decision-making boundaries, develop the ability to create solutions on the spot, and develop tolerance for uncertainty (Greene et al., 2002).

Howard and Irving (2013) found that leadership development is gained and shaped through the active engagement in hardship or obstacle. They argue that by overcoming obstacles, a person builds a competency to successfully deal with and bounce back from adversity. The research in this article implies that organizations have an invaluable influence on building their employees' resilience capacity through leadership development while reinforcing the resilience of the organization. Thus, it is essential for organizations to commit to fostering the resiliency of both the employee and the organization. While very little research currently exists on the topic of organizational resiliency, the recent surge of studies on "hardship and thriving" dictates a necessity for a more comprehensive understanding of how resilience can be fostered within organizations (Nishikawa, 2006). The overwhelming benefit for the organization that fosters resilience and thriving in its workplace is a more highly motivated workforce (O'Leary, 1998). As a result, there is a mutually positive outcome for both the employees and the organization.

Resilience training, from a team or community perspective, seeks to unlock the attitudes and behaviors that make highly functional teams that operate at levels that guarantee success. Resilience training seeks to unlock potential that lies dormant in all men and women. People are far more capable of much more than they believe they are.

This includes more accomplishment, more productivity, and more success. The key is to open a channel to that vast potential that lies dormant (Tolbert & Ellen, 2015).

The distinction between resilience and resiliency is imperative for the understanding of the concept each term. According to Bowen and Martin (2011), resilience is a method and resiliency is a result. Meaning, resilience is the process that mirrors our capability to continue on the road of life (purposeful role performance) in the function of development transitions, adversities, and positive challenges. Then to recuperate (get back on the road) when life incidents and conditions take us off the road (recover). Resiliency then is the result of the resilience process and is embodied by successful performance of life roles and is measured by the degree to which individuals to achieve a goal (Bowen & Martin, 2011). The rationale for including the concept of resilience is to examine its role and its relevance to the ascension of military rank structure. In the case of the Army WOC, ascending to the rank of CW5 as an African American may demonstrate resilience the result of a combination of motivation and success strategies used for career progression.

The three theories intent is to demonstrate how African-American men find their social space in navigating their career path to the highest level in the WOC. Depending on the motivation strategy used coupled with the environment, demographic will reveal in pathway to their success – a model that may be used in other organizational sectors.

Warrant Officer Corps: Early History

In 1775, the U.S. Navy with Congressional authorization constructed six Warrant Officer Positions (Boatswains, Surgeons, Gunners, Carpenters, Masters-Mates, and

Pursers) to help the Commissioned Officers lead the naval force of 13 frigates (Reilly, 1999). Nevertheless, the immediate official precursor to the modern military warrant officer program was the Army Field Clerk and the Field Clerk, Quartermaster Corps authorized by the Congressional Act of August 1916 (Oliver, 1983 & U.S. Army Warrant Officer Career Center, 2004). The U.S. Army Warrant Officer Career Center (2004) also stated that although they were initially considered civilians, they were later deemed to have military status. As a result, the military Act of Congress, July 1918, introduced the rank and grade of warrant officers and directed that warrant officers serve as masters, mates, chief engineers, and assistant engineers of each vessel in three authorized pay levels (U.S. Army Warrant Officer Career Center, 2004).

Little is known or published concerning Army chief warrant officer population. Consequently, the military community and others (Congressional Budget Office, 2002) often misunderstand them. In addition to their primary function as technical experts, chief warrant officers commanded detachments, units, activities, and vessels as well as led coached, trained, and counseled subordinates (warrantofficerhistory.org)

Throughout the years, warrant officers assumed duties as officer in charge or department head positions (Pham, 2002). Pham (2002) further stated, “The warrant officer ranks were created to fill technical, non-command roles” (p. 5). At some stage in their history, every military service had a warrant officer presence in their ranks. Warrant Officer Heritage Foundation (2004) confirmed the above and further stated that an official approved description of the warrant officer became,

The warrant officer is a highly skilled technician who is provided to fill those positions above the enlisted level, which are too specialized in scope to permit the effective development and continued utilization of broadly trained, branch-qualified commissioned officers. (p. 5)

Army warrant officers are progressed through a maximum of five military ranks or grades—Warrant Officer 1, CW2, CW3, CW4, and CW5—in their careers (Department of The Army Pamphlet 600-11, 1986). Here is an outline of the warrant officer rank structure:

- Warrant Officer 1: The technical and tactical experts of the Army. At the base-level rank, warrant officers primarily support operations from team or detachment through battalion. The Secretary of the Army appoints warrant officers.
- Chief warrant officer 2 (CW2): An intermediate-level technical and tactical expert. He or she supports levels of operations from team or detachment through battalion.
- Chief warrant officer 3 (CW3): An advanced-level technical and tactical expert. They primarily support operations from team or detachment through brigade.
- Chief warrant officer 4 (CW4): A senior-level technical and tactical expert. They primarily support battalion, brigade, division, corps, and echelons above corps operations.

- Chief warrant officer 5 (CW5): A master-level technical and tactical expert. They primarily support brigade, division, corps, echelons above corps and major command operations. They have special warrant officer leadership and representation responsibilities within their respective commands. The CW5 rank is the top rank achieved in the WOC. (<https://www.goarmy.com>)

The initial appointment to Warrant Officer 1 was by a “warrant” given by the Secretary of the Army. When promoted to CW2 and above, these officers are commissioned by the President of the United States, take the same oath, and receive the same “charges” as all other commissioned officers. (Warrant Officer Heritage Foundation, 2004).

The Army Training and Leadership Development Panel (2002) stated, The Army has relied upon warrant officers as its technically expert officer cohort for many years. The Objective [Future] Force, with its projected reliance upon modern systems and technology, will likely bring an expanded role for warrant officers. (p. WO-1)

Army warrant officers served in every area of military operations including but not limited to aviation, signal and information technology, intelligence, medical, supply, special operations, transportation, and maintenance (<http://www.usawoa.org>).

Furthermore, the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Career Center (2004) stated,

Warrant officers serve at all levels of the Army. Typically, junior warrant officers are assigned at unit level, whereas senior warrant officers are assigned at higher levels such as Battalion, Brigade, and Division, and to positions on the Army

Staff at the Pentagon. Warrant officers also serve at the Department of Defense, Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other military services (p. 3).

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Rank Established

In a 1988 message, the Army established that, pending submission and approval of the new rank of CW5 that Warrant Officers selected by a Department of the Army board and designate, as master warrant officer would be senior to all Warrant Officers in the grade of CW4. The master warrant officers continued to be paid at the W-4 pay grade. In December 1988 the first Master Warrant Officer Training Course graduated and the first thirty CW4s were designated as Master Warrant Officers.

In 1989, the U.S. Army Warrant Officers Association on behalf of the Army to the Congress submitted the Warrant Officer Management Act proposal. Then Congressman Charles Bennett of Florida submitted the proposed legislation to the House. Upon review, the Senate Armed Services Committee Report on the FY 1990/1991 Defense Authorization Bill referred the package to the Department of Defense to evaluate the proposal for consideration in the 1991 bill. The Army was requested by the Defense Department to chair a special ad hoc committee to research and prepare the requested report for the Congress. The committee initiated deliberations on September 22, 1989. Committee participants included representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Force Management) and from the personnel departments of each of the military services, the Reserve components, and the Coast Guard. The Committee's report was issued on 30 November 1989. The Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management &

Personnel) forwarded the Defense Report to the Chairmen of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees on 9 March 1990.

In 1991, the Congress considered the Warrant Officer Management Act proposal and it was incorporated into the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1992. Six key provisions were enacted based on the Warrant Officer Management Act as signed by the President in December of 1991:

- A single promotion system for Warrant Officers.
- Tenure requirements based on years of Warrant Officer service.
- Establishment of the grade of CW5

Warrant Officer Corps: A Century of Service (1918-2018)

The official birthday of the Army Warrant Officers Cohort is July 9, 1918. Prior to that time, Warrant Officers were not commissioned officers, rather as civilians. The Judge Advocate General later determined that Warrant Officers held military status (<https://www.warrantofficerhistory.org>).

An Act of Congress on 9 July 1918 documented the founding of the WOC in the Army by establishing the Army Mine Planter Service as part of the Coast Artillery Corps. Implementation of the Act by the Army was published in the War Department Bulletin 43, dated 22 July 1918 (<https://www.warrantofficerhistory.org>). Highlights of the first one hundred years include:

- On May 12, 1921, a distinctive insignia consisting of an eagle rising with wings, was approved for Warrant Officers.

- In 1941, Public Law 230 authorized appointments up to one percent of the total Regular Army enlisted strength. This law also established two pay rates for Warrant Officers, warrant officer junior grade (W-1) and chief warrant officer (W-2).
- With the activation of the 99th Pursuit Squadron (March 15, 1941) and with the forming of the 66th Army Air Forces Flight Training Detachment (July 1941), African American Warrant Officers performed in key positions, contributing to the success of their organizations, and making a significant impact on the heritage and legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen.
- In January 1944, the appointment of women as Warrant Officers was authorized.
- During 1948 and 1949, competitive examinations were held to appoint or select for appointment approximately 6,000 regular Army Warrant Officers.
- In 1949, the Career Compensation Act brought about two new pay rates for Warrant Officers. The designations of warrant officer junior grade and chief warrant officer were retained; the grade of Chief Warrant Officer was expanded with the addition of pay grades of W3 and W4.
- In April 1960, the Warrant Officer Program was outlined in Department of the Army Circular 611-7. This document covered utilization policies, criteria for selection, and instruction for conversion to the then new Warrant Officer Military Occupational Specialty system.

- In 1966, the Army conducted a review of Warrant Officer career progression and the first Warrant Officer Professional Development Program was published in Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-11.
- The U.S. Army Warrant Officers Association was founded in 1972.
- In August 1985, the final report of the Department of the Army Total Warrant Officer Study was forwarded to the Army Chief of Staff. This first-ever DA comprehensive analysis of the Total Army warrant officer program provided the opportunity to capture current strengths of the program and build upon those to develop management and training systems that focused on the Army of the 90's and beyond.
- In February 1992, the Warrant Officer Management Act provisions went into effect.
- On October 1, 1992, the first active Army Chief Warrant Officer was promoted to CW5.
- In 1996, the U.S. Army Warrant Officers Association undertook a U.S. Army Warrant Officers History Book to tell the story of the Corps.
- In September 1999, the Chief of Staff, Army, chartered the Army Development System (ADS) XXI Task Force to examine the enlisted and Warrant Officer Personnel Management Systems.
- May 23, 2001 was the first time a Warrant Officer was presented with the prestigious General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award.

- On July 18, 2002, the Army Training and Leader Development Panel Reports on the Warrant Officer Study - The Report and recommendations were released on August 22, 2002 after briefing to and approval by the Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Army.
- On March 28, 2003, the U.S. Army Warrant Officers Association Scholarship Foundation was incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- The Warrant Officer Historical Foundation was founded on May 29, 2003.
- On January 1, 2006, the book *WARRANT – The Legacy of Leadership as a Warrant Officer* was published.
- From June 7 to 11, 2010, the first Warrant Officer Summit was held at the U. S. Army Warrant Officer Career College, Fort Rucker, Alabama. Invitations were limited to the most senior leaders of the WOC.
- In 2011, the first Warrant Officer graduated from the National Defense University, better known as the “War College.”
- On March 14, 2014, the Chief of Staff, Army, created a new position for an Army Staff Senior Warrant Officer.
- On June 10, 2015, MILPER Message 15-166 announced the initial Military Occupational Specialty 170A Warrant Officer Cyber Branch Voluntary Transfer for Active Duty Warrants.
- On June 26, 2017, the first African American Warrant Officer was inducted into the Order of the Eagle Rising Society joining a group of nineteen other distinguished Warrant Officers.

- On July 9, 2018 – 100th Birthday of the Army WOC.

(<https://www.warrantofficerhistory.org>)

African Americans in the Warrant Officer Corps

According to Chiles (2015), in 1996, a U.S. Army Warrant Officer History Book was undertaken by the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Association to tell the story of the WOC. However, the book did not include a chapter on African Americans, nor did it highlight significant contributions of African Americans to the WOC. In 1998, Chiles, Army Warrant Officer Historian and retired CW4, pioneered the challenge of researching data on African Americans who served in WOC. According to Chiles,

I contacted the Retired Officers Association and placed an ad in its monthly magazine, “The Military Officer” seeking African Americans who served in World War II. I received several responses, but I did not get any closer to my “Army First.” (p. 3)

Chiles (2015) met with representatives of the Army Historical Society and had no success. According to Chiles (2015), he reread his personal copy of the Warrant Officer History Book and went through past articles from 1993 through the present issue of the Warrant Officer Association (WOA) Newsliner Magazine. Chiles looked for any information and leads that assisted him with his research. To date, Chiles has found no official records of African American Warrant Officers prior to 1940. However, he highlighted in research the following contributions made by African Americans after 1940 from his publication, *African American Warrant Officers: In Service to our Country*:

- The first African American warrant (Boatswain) in the United States Coast Guard was Joseph C. Jenkins – September 1, 1942.
- The first African American warrant officer in the United States Navy was Warrant Officer (Boatswain) Charles B. Lear – February 1944.
- The first African American warrant officer in the United States Marine Corps was James E. Johnson – 1959.
- The first African American warrant officer in the U.S. Army - unknown. (p. 3)

Notable Achievements

African American Warrant Officers have performed significant roles in the history of the Warrant Officer Cohort. Their achievements and contributions have been widely recognized but have not been published. Below are a few of the notable contributions made by African-American men serving in the capacity of senior field grade officers (CW5) (Chiles, 2015),

- **CW5 Robert Wimberly** – First African American appointed as Command Chief Warrant Officer (New Jersey National Guard).
- **CW5 Joe Williams** – First African American promoted to CW5 in the Army Reserves.
- **CW5 George Marshall** – First African American appointed as Command Chief Warrant Officer (CW5) in the Army Reserves (77th Regional Readiness Command, New York).
- **CW5 Ulysses Allen** – First African American to reach the rank of CW5 in the Florida National Guard.

- **CW5 Charles Caulk** – First African American to make CW5 in the U.S. Army Signal Corps.
- **CW5 Lloyd Dillard** – First African American Assistant Commandant (CW5) at the Warrant Officer Career Center.
- **CW5 Raymond Benson** – First African American promoted to CW5 from the 63d Regional Readiness Command, California.
- **CW5 Eddie E. Mallard** – First African American appointed as the Command Chief Warrant Officer for Military Intelligence.
- **CW5 David Williams** – Appointed on 14 March 2014 by the Chief of Staff of the Army, CW5 Williams served as the first Army Staff Senior Warrant Officer. CW5 Williams was the first African American appointed to this most senior position in the Army WOC.
- **CW5 Rufus N. Montgomery Sr** – On June 26, 2017, CW5 Montgomery was the first African American Warrant Officer inducted into the Order of the Eagle Rising Society joining a group of nineteen other distinguished Warrant Officers. In 2007, CW5 Montgomery was inducted into Quartermaster Warrant Officers Hall of Fame (Distinguished Member of the Quartermaster Regiment – DMOR).

Meritocracy: Fact or Fallacy

During the phenomenological research study, the researcher serves as the primary instrument in the qualitative data collection process. The experiences of this researcher may or may not be similar to the participants that were used in the study. The researcher

has lived the experiences of ascending to the promotional ranks of the Army WOC. Like many black Army officers, the researcher also dealt with adversity and had to overcome obstacles in the military to achieve senior field grade warrant officer status. In order to overcome such obstacles demonstrated competence, self-confidence, physical appearance and results had to be measured against as all other candidates being considered “promotable” to the next rank.

The United States Declaration of Independence asserts, “All men are created equal.” The Constitution that followed from such assertion codified into law and into the fabric of American society that African-American men would not be included in “All men” and that equality of opportunity would be denied to them, first by law and many decades later, by practice. The effect of such actions is the existing gulf between the life chances available to African-American men and their fellow white male citizens.

Accordingly, when reviewing the state of meritocracy, it is necessary to examine those processes that may be facially egalitarian, but which may in fact place African-American men at a disadvantage. Meritocracy—the view that getting ahead is based on individual merit—tends to be embraced by most Americans as how the system should work. However, most Americans believe this is not how the system actually works (Huber & Form, 1973; Ladd, 1994). McNamee and Miller (2004), in referring to the meritocracy myth, argue that while merit affects who ends up with what, the impact merit has on economic outcomes is vastly overestimated in the American Dream ideology.

Many researchers and scholars who suggest that merit is the determinant of success in the United States also argue that hard work, as a part of merit, is a major factor

in determining success. However, a closer view of this assertion reveals evidence in the other direction. Whether “hard work” is defined as the amount of energy expended, the number of hours worked, or the physical exertion used, the literature shows that hard work is not an effective determinant of achievement. The large amounts of money accumulated in the US come not from working, but from owning (McNamee & Miller, 2004). Furthermore, there is a significant body of literature that shows that many poor people work hard and value work (Gould, 1999; Wilson, 1996). Thus, hard work, as a factor of merit, cannot be an effective determinant of career success.

If merit is not the determinant of career success in the United States, does that mean that overt acts of discrimination are the primary causes of the achievement differentials between African-American men and white men? While discrimination is certainly cited as one major factor, the literature indicates that other factors collaborate to create the disparities. Among these is the impact of the non-merit advantages bestowed upon some by inheritances. Whites are four times as likely to receive inheritances as African Americans. Moreover, while the typical inheritance for whites is \$10,000, the typical inheritance for African Americans is about \$800 (Shapiro, 2004).

Additionally, inheritance provides means of social and cultural capital. Many people who are born into privilege are endowed with powerful friends who have access to resources. Those within these circles have a unique way of navigating their social space. Thus, in addition to being well connected, those who aspire to become a part of this circle of the powerful must also understand the rules governing expected manners and deportment. Those who are born into privilege and high social status are trained at an

early age in the cultural norms of those in high status (McNamee & Miller, 2004). This is important because historically, the African American population served in subordinate roles and viewed as a caste society. The idea of ownership had to come from within by freeing oneself both mentally as well as physically.

The term “meritocracy” assumes a certain level of objectivity and fairness in the current military performance evaluation system. Officer performance in the Army is measured with the Officer Evaluation Report (OER) (Hosie & Griswald, 2017). In Army regulations, if not in practice, the report is supported by a series of counseling sessions between rater and ratee that scope job responsibilities, identify accomplishments and areas to improve, and provide a contract of performance expectations. At the end of the rating period, the individual’s direct and senior level raters (Hosie & Griswald, 2017) assess an officer’s performance and potential. Although the Army regularly updates the format to increase objectivity and induce variability among ratees, the process remains fundamentally susceptible to human subjectivity. Unfortunately, the objectivity and fairness assumption is probably unjustified (Hosie & Griswald, 2017).

Achievement Scores and Tests in Black and White

The military’s entrance test examination, ASVAB, plays a huge factor in potential Blacks joining the military and for those who have joined the military; their ASVAB scores must be high enough to be granted a chance for officer commission. Larry and Amy’s 1999 article, (pg. 113) “Changes in the black-white gap in achievement test scores,” speaks volumes on the subject. Larry and Amy’s article describes the importance of achievement test scores. Larry and Amy, 1999 (as cited by Lee, 2013) believe that test

scores play a pivotal role in economic outcomes. In this literature review, the theme is that the ASVAB was created for selecting and sorting new recruits to fit certain jobs.

However, Lee sought to understand, “How much of the racial difference (gap) can be attributed to social-class differences between blacks and whites?” Larry and Amy (as cited by Lee, 2013) suggest that Blacks are underrepresented and nearing a slow similarity with whites. Even though this article is quantitative in nature, there are numerous qualitative values hidden within this literature. During previous research, “researchers have reported a consistent and statistically pattern of differences in the performance of blacks and whites on mental tests” (Larry & Amy, 1999, p. 113). Lee (2013) addresses reasons for the Black-White gap in test scores. Dissimilar social classes, differences in family structure, and discrimination of Blacks are the three main reasons for the disparity in scores. The relationship between economic outcomes and promotion is that the jobs that are not only a need for the military but are transferrable to the civilian sector places blacks at a disadvantage in having low test scores.

This article is an effective literature review for understanding the importance of the achievement test scores. Lee (2013) suggests that the grand narrative hidden in this article asked one question: Are ASVAB test scores halting Black enlisted soldiers from meeting military requirements? The question explores whether Black enlisted soldiers are more at a disadvantage in high school than their White counterparts are. Trust (n.d.) argues that the educational process and achievements are not the same. He believes that it is possible for a particular ethnic group – Blacks – to make progress but still obtain lower grade averages.

African American Men and Mentoring

A study by Robinson and Reio (2012) examined 359 African-American males in the business world. These authors sought to examine the relation between mentoring and job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Robinson and Reio found that African-American males who were mentored had higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The challenge with the factor of mentoring, however, is that it is defined differently from study to study. For this study, mentoring is defined as a strategy used to garner the success of African-American men in their career progression as warrant officers. According to Raabe and Beehr (2003), if an organization seeks to improve job satisfaction and organizational commitment, the role of mentor may best be performed by supervisors and coworkers, rather than formal mentors who are assigned from higher up in the organizational hierarchy. Raabe and Beehr (2003) further noted that a mentoring relationship involving supervisors and coworkers should be focused on specific outcomes for the mentee. Such outcomes might include developing a plan for areas in need of improvement, career counseling, or working on specific projects together.

Raabe and Beehr (2003) suggested that more formal mentoring relationships were perceived by mentees as not being highly focused on specific mentee outcomes, possibly due to mentees not fully trusting the motives of the senior leader assigned as a mentor. Again, this issue of trust between mentor and mentee is in need of further examination. As presented above, the subject of mentoring and its effectiveness has been explored in the literature (Butler, 1999; Chao et al., 1992; Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Lundquist, 2008; Philpott, 2000; Quester et al., 2007; Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Robinson & Reio, 2012).

However, despite the use of both formal and informal mentoring in the military, there has been little empirical research on the effects of such mentoring and a near complete lack of research into mentoring African Americans (or other race or ethnic minority groups) within the military officer corps.

Race and Leadership

Numerous leadership theories, including the great man theory, and the elite theory, implied that leaders possess some attributes that make leaders superior in some manner to those that they lead (Harter, Ziolkowski, & Wyatt, 2006). In organizations, the expectation is that the best-qualified person who applies for a job will be selected; there should be a similar expectation for leadership selection (Sy et al., 2010). Selecting, evaluating, and promoting leaders should be a process in which there is equality. Equality implies that everyone that applies for a position has an equal opportunity to get the position or promotion. However, this ideal is difficult to realize because of the human bias of the evaluator that assesses a person's performance and potential based on experiences (Choi & Rainey, 2010).

According to research, race can have three effects on organizational leadership: it can impede leaders, offer an opportunity for development, or be an untapped area for affecting change (Harter et al., 2006). According to social identity theory, how a person is identified affects how he or she is perceived by others, how he or she evaluates others, how he or she is evaluated, and the leadership attributes that he or she responds to best (Ospina & Su, 2009). Exposure to images of negative stereotypes of an ethnic or racial

group in the media impact how people perceive the leadership abilities of people depicted negatively in the media (Dalisay & Tan, 2009).

In a 2011 study, comparing President Barack Obama's leadership style to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is perceived "honesty, forward-looking, inspiring, and competence" were the four traits identified as most important to followers (Quader, 2011, p. 32). Of the traits, the authors found to be significant, President Obama was perceived as being stronger than Secretary Clinton in the areas of honesty, forward-looking, and inspiring (Quader, 2011). According to Shogan (2009), the ability to have others feel what you feel is a leadership trait that President Lincoln mastered, and President Obama leveraged in the 2008 election.

In a 2012 study comparing the leadership traits of President Obama to Senator McCain, President Obama was perceived as being a more effective leader because of his "charismatic leadership style" and his perceived advantages of height and fitness (Green & Roberts, 2012, p. 12). In a study comparing voters' evaluation of the leadership abilities of presidential candidate Jesse Jackson, "70 percent of Blacks and only 20 percent of Whites agreed that Jackson would provide strong leadership" (McIlwain, 2007, p. 69). McIlwain cited the demographics of southern states in relationship to how many people in them voted for Jackson and how they rated him in terms of leadership qualities, the results are clear: Southern states and/or those with large African American populations accounted for the highest leadership ratings and largest vote totals for Jackson (McIlwain, 2007).

If race affects the evaluation of a leader at the senior most positions of the United States government, it is reasonable to conclude that race affects the evaluation of a minority officer's leadership abilities at the senior officer positions in the military. According to Schyns (2006) when a black candidate and a white candidate with similar qualifications apply for the same promotion "the white candidate will have an advantage, as implicit leadership theories probably contain more of the characteristics that a majority leader is supposed to possess than a minority leader is expected to exhibit" (p. 191). (Offerman et al, 1994) believe that minorities are often considered less dedicated to their profession than white members are which puts them at a disadvantage when it comes to promotion. "In addition, there may be differences between implicit leadership theories and the actual traits and behavior of an individual who belongs to an ethnic minority (as cited by Schyns, pg. 191). Race or ethnicity also can be used to inspire others to achieve more than they originally thought possible (Ospina & Su, 2009). In addition, race can be used to facilitate followers connecting with leaders to pursue a common objective because they have something in common with the leader (Singh, 2007).

Black Male Leaders and White Male Subordinates

From a historical perspective, African-American men have not been groomed for leadership because of the positioning of White males prominently as leaders in business and politics (McIlwain, 2007; Rosette, Leonardelli & Phillips, 2008). Ward (2008) described how the positioning of Caucasians as leaders in the United States is based on the prevalence of whiteness and how the cultural norms of whiteness have determined the normative expectations in U.S. institutions. Being white has been the fundamental gauge

of acceptable leadership and has served as leadership's point of reference in the United States (Bell & Hartman, 2007; Grimes, 2002; Rosette, Phillips & Leonardelli, 2006; Sechrist & Stangor, 2001). According to Hogg et al. (2004), whiteness is a foundation of the prototype of leadership in the United States and in U.S. institutions.

Gawronski et al. (2008) found discrimination in the form of contemporary racism is prevalent in U.S. society. Contemporary forms of racism are more subtle and more difficult to detect because they are inherently indistinct (Cortina, 2008). Contemporary racism is a difficult obstacle to overcome by African American leaders because the influence and authority of these leaders threatens the leadership status quo that exists in U.S. institutions (Cortina, 2008).

Summary

Motivation drives, influences, and sustains the behavior required by an individual to reach desired goals (Hancock, 2004). Motivation provides subordinates the will to accomplish a mission on their own initiative when they see something that needs to be done. Army leaders motivate subordinates by more than words. The good leader leads from the front and fully understands and embraces the importance of being where the action is (U.S. Army, 1999). Motivation in the Army is observed through leading by example walking the talk. Military leaders do not just give inspiring and motivating speeches, they put their words into practice.

According to Kellerman and Rhode (2007), success strategies for both men and women include possessing managerial skills, high performance in high-visibility assignments, hard work, and demonstrated experience in competence and leadership. The

available literature on success strategies is primarily in popular literature rather than scholarly research. Success for the U.S. Army is achieved by maintaining a competitive advantage for both the military and the business community. The advance is maintained by having a diverse work force that draws on the diverse skills of the work force (Reyes, 2006).

The Army's ultimate responsibility is to win the nation's wars. Leadership in combat is the primary mission and most important challenge. A leader must demonstrate character and competence while achieving excellence to meet this challenge (Manning, 2004). As defined in *U.S. Army Field Manual 6-22* (U.S. Army, 1999), the organization requires a remarkable person who not only memorizes the creed but also lives the creed; this person is considered a true leader. To succeed, a leader should be competent in everything from the technical side to people skills. In viewing this from the military's point of view, being commissioned as an Army officer means embracing a wider range of responsibilities and achieving mastery of additional skills in different areas (U.S. Army, 1999). This doctrine ties into the competitive edge need for Army WOs to succeed in winning wars, but also the motivation to continue to ascend to the highest rank in their career, no easy task for anyone. However, for African-American men serving in the WO Corps, there are greater strategies needed in order to rise through the ranks.

This chapter presented an overview of motivation and success strategies, associative theories, and research conducted in this area. The review of the literature showed that while African American military officers in the U.S. Army have achieved gains, there is still a need to increase the percentage of these warrant officers serving at

the senior field grade level. This research will be useful in providing the desired outcomes that can serve as a model duplicated across organizational sectors. More importantly, the findings may inform policymakers, recruiters to reexamine their human capital management. Additionally, this research can provide a blueprint to soldiers who not only transition to the WOC, but also to use these strategies while at the same, have a sense of expectation management.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This phenomenological study was conducted on the perceptions of African-American men who served in the Army WOC and how they navigated their career path in achieving the highest rank of CW5. This study's intent was to capture the motivation factors and success strategies for achieving to understand participants' lived experiences. I used in-depth, semi-structured interviews to collect data; telephone interviews were conducted with all participants who were unavailable for face-to-face interviews. Each interview took approximately one hour to complete. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed with Nvivo 12 software, which helped to evaluate themes and codes. To ensure the ethical protection of research participants, I conducted the study following the parameters established by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (approval no. 06-04-18-0301113). Chapter 3 includes the research design, ethical considerations, instrumentation, data analysis plan, issues of trustworthiness, and impact on positive social change.

Research Design: Choice of Approach

Research Question

The central question under investigation followed by two sub-questions were as follows:

Research Question: How do retired African American male officers describe their experience of attaining the rank of senior field grade warrant officer (CW5/W5) in the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps?

Sub-question 1: What are the experiences that shaped the achievements of African-American men serving in senior leadership positions in the Army Warrant Officer Corps?

Sub-question 2: What strategies do African-American men believe they used to reach the rank of senior field grade warrant officer?

Phenomenological Research Design Rationale

A purposeful sample was used for the selection of African American male participants in the study. Purposeful sampling is based on researchers wanting to ascertain, comprehend, and obtain information, meaning they must select participants from whom the most can be learned (Patton, 1990). When selecting a sample size for a purposeful survey, the goal is to determine the appropriate number of observations needed for inclusion in the statistical sample (Patton, 2002). The participants were selected based on the criteria of being an African American male and having achieved the highest rank in the Army WOC—CW5.

Role of the Researcher

I served as a participant–observer by being a principal instrument in the qualitative data collection process. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which I transcribed, coded, analyzed, and interpreted. I ensured that all aspects of the research were held to conform to the National Institutes of Health (NIH, 2017) and Walden University’s IRB established guidelines for researching with human participants to ensure the ethical protection of participants. To do this, I completed my NIH training and obtained approval from Walden University before data collection.

Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the perceptions of 10 African American male senior field grade warrant officers serving the U.S. Army WOC. I also explored the personal attributes and factors that contributed to their promotion into highest rank in the Army WOC and their lived experiences. Participants took part in semi-structured interviews that were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo for themes and codes. The study followed Walden University's IRB guidelines to ensure the ethical protection of research participants. As I received the electronically signed consent forms from each participant, I set up telephone interviews with participants who were not available for face-to-face interviews and those employed outside Washington, DC. Interviews were audiotaped and were 30 minutes to 1 hour in length.

The audiotaped interviews, transcripts, and other data will be kept secured in a locked file cabinet and computer with password protection. Only I had data access, and data will only be shared with the dissertation supervising committee and will be maintained per Walden University's guidelines. Participants were given my contact information and the contact information of the dissertation committee chair in case they had any further questions or concerns about the research. Participants were also provided with contact information of the Walden University representative with whom they could talk privately about their rights as participants. Participants were e-mailed a summary report of the research findings after completion and approval of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers must adhere to a code of ethics that provides participants with privacy, confidentiality, protection from harm, minimal risk and the ability to revoke their participation in research at any given time (American Psychological Association, 2013). Participants in research must fully understand their roles as participants, the risks that may result from participating, and the assurance they will be treated with respect and dignity (American Psychological Association, 2013). The individuals in this study were provided with an informed consent disclosure and participated in a voluntary manner. Due to the small sample size and population, I took extra steps to eliminate any possible divulgence of the participants' identities.

Based on research recommendations (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), I used pseudonyms for participants. All identifying elements were eliminated during the coding process. Due to the unique positions and leadership roles held by these individuals within the U.S. Army, even small references could have been attributed to a particular participant. Because the WOC is a small population within the government, and because African Americans constitute a little over 1% of the total Army WO population, I took additional steps to protect the identities of the participants by replacing potentially identifying text with pseudonyms and aliases.

Information obtained through the data collection process will be kept confidential. I am the only person with access to the transcribed information, which will be kept in a secure place as approved by the IRB. Storing data for a minimum of 7 years allows for accessibility in the event that the IRB or a participant makes an inquiry (Creswell, 2009),

though participants were provided transcribed copies of their responses. Participants did not receive monetary compensation for their time. In terms of conflicts of interest, I ensured that coresearchers/participants who could pose conflict of interests would be eliminated and rejected. This includes individuals who could come into direct contact with me on any given day.

Instrumentation

According to Creswell (2009), the researcher is the primary data-gathering instrument in qualitative research. As the instrument of data gathering, the qualitative researcher seeks to understand when, where, why, how and under what circumstances behaviors come into meaning (Bogden & Biklen, 2006). From the framework of the interpretive, the researcher utilized active listening to fully capture the perspective of the participant. Additionally, a framework of the interpretive included providing a trail of interview transcripts to determine if the nature of the interview brought about a need for additional inquiries (Carcary, 2009). For this study, an interview guide with questions was used as the primary means of collecting data from participants. Open-ended questions consistent with the research question were provided to each of the participants. Additionally, the standard questions from the research question, demographic questions were used to document the characteristics of the participants. Follow-up questions were posed to seek clarification and probe for deeper understanding of the participants' responses.

The instrument used for this study were vitally important to the research conducted. These instruments are consistent with the necessary requirements for

qualitative methods in phenomenology study. This qualitative research design allows the researcher to capture the true essence of the human experience about the phenomenon as expressed by the participants. This approach allowed the researcher to capture the personal attributes and motivating factors and success strategies that contributed to their career ascension to senior field grade warrant officer ranks. Thus, this study used the phenomenological approach. This design allowed the researcher to bracket or relate participants' personal experiences to gain a clear understanding of their experiences (Creswell, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Procedures for Data Collection

Participants in this study were interviewed using the open-ended interview protocol. Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggested that a benefit of data collection through individual in depth interviews is the ability to capture the interviewees' perspectives and experiences. According to Milena, Dainora, and Alin (2007), qualitative studies ask open-ended questions, whereas quantitative inquiries use instruments, such as surveys, and primarily stick to closed ended questions. Additionally, Johnson, Buehring, Cassell, and Symon (2006) suggested that "qualitative management research embraces an array of non-statistical research practices" (p. 131).

Other data sources that the researcher used included personal journals, notes, and audio recording files for capturing data. As the researcher received the electronically signed consent form from each participant, they were contacted individually by phone or email to set up the interview at a time and place convenient for them. Before each interview was concluded, any questions that the participant was addressed. At the

conclusion of each interview, each participant was debriefed. Each participant was thanked for his participation in the research study.

Data Analysis Plan

Creswell (2007) reported that in applying the phenomenology approach, a more personal touch is applied in completing the data analysis by incorporating personal experiences and expanding on the true essence of the research based on the researcher's direct knowledge of the issues addressed in conjunction with the information provided by the research participants. According to Patton (2002), the development of some manageable classification or coding of data scheme is the first step of the analysis. In organizing the content of all data collected, a process of categorizing, coding, labeling, and defining the primary patterns of the data was used. Microsoft (MS) Office applications and NVivo was used for managing and analyzing data collection.

In applying coding to data collected, specific code words or terms were assigned using a protocol based on the theoretical framework, research questions, as well as interview questions. Terms were coded to determine if emerging patterns derived from participants addressing these terms in their responses are present. This coding process helped in identifying themes and differences between the perceptions of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Obtaining informed consent from participants is essential as it builds rapport with participants (Creswell, 2007; Nachmias & Frankfort-Nachmias, 2008; Nelson, 2011). Before beginning the data collection process, participants were emailed a consent form to

obtain their permission to participate in the study. In the consent form, participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and of any physical or psychological risks that the participants might experience. They were also informed that their participation is voluntary. After each interview was transcribed, each participant was emailed a transcript of their interview and asked to check the transcript for accuracy.

Credibility ensures the congruency of the research findings to the purpose of the study (Shenton, 2004). Credibility achieved in this study will help ensure that the participants in the study will be representatives of the African American male Army Warrant Officer population as retired personnel. Credibility achieved also helps ensure that interviews will be properly recorded and transcribed. Each participant of the study performed a review of the transcript and provided additional data along with their confirmation of data recorded.

Transferability or external validity pertains to the degree to which the study's findings apply to other situations (Shenton, 2004). Development of a detailed description of the research setting will help ensure transferability in this study. The researcher provided descriptive information about Department of Defense policies and procedures implemented to ensure that all reported findings were confined only to organizations that had similar characteristics.

Dependability addresses the reliability of the data where findings are generated (Shenton, 2004). This study tracked the data analysis process. The open, axial, and selective codes tracked are in a manner consistent with the data analysis guidelines. The

researcher will keep all transcriptions for future researchers' reference when conducting similar studies. Confirmability addresses the objectivity of the study. The researcher remained objective in the analysis of the data. The researcher utilized computer software such as Microsoft Office and NVivo 12 that assisted in sorting, categorizing, and identifying codes frequently mentioned by the participants. This technique aided the researcher to refrain from including personal biases in the data analysis.

Confirmability addresses the objectivity of the study. I remained objective in the analysis of the data. I utilized computer software such as Microsoft Office, Microsoft Excel and NVivo 12 to assist in sorting, categorizing, and identifying codes that are frequently mentioned by the participants. This technique helped me to refrain from including my personal biases in the data analysis.

Summary

A limited amount of research has been conducted regarding the retention of African-American chief warrant officers in the Army. Although there are articles and scholarly documents about Army African-American officers, there is still nothing that brings to life the voices and the experiences and retention strategies of Army warrant officers. As an example, the first African American appointed as an Army warrant officer is still unknown (Chiles, 2016). Specific data of the number of African-American chief warrant officers serving, it is under Army control and was not be released at the time of the study. This research will have a great impact on the military community, in particular, the Army WOC who are often described as the “quiet professionals”. The study aims to

inform senior leaders, recruiters, and policy makers how better recruitment of African Americans, particularly our young black males will yield a diverse military force.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents results and analysis of the study data. I sought to explore the lived experiences of a purposeful sample of 10 African-American men who are retired Army senior field grade officers (CW5) in the Army WOC. The purpose of this study was to answer the question: “How do retired African-American men describe their experience of attaining the rank of senior field grade warrant officer (CW5/W5) in the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps?” There were also two subquestions: “What are the experiences which shaped the achievements of African-American men serving in senior leadership positions in the Army Warrant Officer Corps?” and “What strategies do African-American men believe they used to reach the rank of senior field grade warrant officer?”

This phenomenological study adds to the literature and provides an understanding of the lived experiences of African-American males, especially the impacts of their socialization experiences on their attitudes, behaviors, career aspirations and their successful accessions to senior ranks within the WOC. The study results may inform policymakers in increasing the numbers of African-American males aspiring to and becoming members of the WOC.

The findings may also help inform recruiters, human resource professionals, and policymakers within the Army about which factors contribute to African-American males’ successful acquisitions of the rank of CW5, which may also assist other minority groups who are underrepresented based on lessons learned from the experiences of

African-American males. Finally, this study could be expanded to both profit and nonprofit organizations interested in increasing the diversity of their managerial ranks.

This chapter contains a discussion of the results obtained from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews held with the participants. In this chapter, I describe the research setting and the environment that where I interacted with participants. I also present demographic characteristics of the participants, which are essential in describing the context of their responses and experiences. In addition, this chapter reiterates the data collection and data analysis that I used in generating the themes of the study. Evidence of trustworthiness is then presented to assure readers that the data are valid and are representative of the actual experiences of African-American men serving as Army senior field grade warrant officers.

Researcher's Background and Interest

I am an African American male who is a W5/CW5 in the United States WOC with more than 30 years of military service. My roles have varied over a long career that includes an assignment as the senior human resources technician, assistant inspector general, cyberspace operations action officer, and global logistics battle captain. I am also a part of the study cohort and sampling frame, as I am a male African American senior field grade warrant officer in the U.S. Army WOC.

The interest in conducting the present study came because of being often asked: "Why do you believe you have been successful in reaching the senior officer ranks in the Army Warrant Officer Corps, as an African American?" Before this study, I had limited experience in conducting theory-based research. I did not have expertise in conducting

semi-structured and in-depth interviews, data collection, and analysis. I conducted test runs with the questionnaire through mock interviews, used the recording device before a live interview, and worked on transcribing the mock interviews for familiarity. I bracketed biases and prejudice and preconceived notions regarding the participants' experiences. Bracketing allowed me to listen to participants' experiences without sharing my own experiences (see Moustakas, 1994).

Research Setting

At the time of this study, there were no personal or organizational conditions expressed by research participants that influenced their contributions to this research. The snowball sampling method was used to gather data through application of in-depth semi-structured interviews with 10 African-American men who retired as Army senior field grade warrant officers. Of the 10 interviews conducted, eight of them took place by telephone, and two participants sent their responses via e-mail. Due to time constraints with all the participants, a face-to-face interview was not possible.

Demographics

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 10 African-American men who retired as Army senior field grade warrant officers. Significant participant demographics are in Table 1. This includes pseudonyms, education level, rank, career field, and date of interview.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

PARTICIPANT	EDU LEVEL	# of YRS W1 - W5	YRS MILITARY SERVICE	ENLISTED RANK	RETIRED RANK	MILITARY CAREER FIELD	DATE OF INTERVIEW
Armstrong	M	18	31	E5	CW5	Human Resources Tech	7/21/2018
Brent	PhD	24	29	E6	CW5	Air & Missile Defense Tech	7/21/2018
Clayton	M	18*	32	E7	CW5	Air Traffic Control & Quartermaster	7/21/2018
Darryl	A	20	43	E7	CW5	Electronic Systems Maintenance Tech	7/22/2018
Elijah	M	20	38	E6	CW5	Nuclear Warfare Systems Tech	7/23/2018
Fred	PhD	15	30	E6	CW5	Electronic Missile Systems Tech	7/23/2018
Girard	B	23	36	E5	CW5	CID Special Agent	7/23/2018
Howard	B	17*	39	E7	CW5	Human Resources Tech	8/3/2018
Isaac	A	19	40	E6	CW5	Automotive Maintenance Tech	8/5/2018
Jasper	A	22	43	E7	CW5	Information Technology Tech	8/5/2018

* Denotes W2 - W5

Data Collection

Before the data collection process, I obtained the required approvals and documentation for this study. I designed the interview protocol and formulated 20 interview questions to answer the research questions. I used a semi-structured interview to provide the participants with the flexibility to respond to the questions without hesitation. For participants who were not available for a face-to-face interview or were not in the Washington, DC area, I opted to conduct a telephone interview rather than a face-to-face interview. Each interview took approximately one hour to complete. After conducting interviews, I transcribed, coded, analyzed, and interpreted them. I ensured that the research conformed to the NIH (2017) and Walden University's IRB guidelines for researching with human participants by completing NIH training and obtaining approval from Walden University before data collection.

Profile Narrative of Participants

In phenomenology, researchers must uncover layers of meaning rather than discovering specific causation as seen in simulated test experiments (Van Manen, 1990). The methodology calls for the researcher to sense and reflect on participants' stories to infer from their experiences. Phenomenology is personal, so the meanings researchers draw from participant stories need to correlate and to the individuals in the study.

Armstrong's Story

Armstrong served 31 years in the Army and retired as a CW5, which he achieved in 18 years of his military career. Armstrong was a noncommissioned officer (NCO) and attained the rank of E5 when he decided to pursue a career in the WOC. He shared his motivation to join the WOC:

Well, when I first went in, I had no idea what a warrant officer was. All I knew that there were commission officers that I had been used to in basic and AIT. And I didn't know what a warrant officer was until I got to my first permanent duty station in Germany. I was assigned to the maintenance battalion, 703rd Maintenance Battalion, where there were warrant officers. They had signal warrants. They had motor maintenance techs, a couple of other warrant officers. So that was my first exposure to the warrant officer corps.

For some reason I just sort of gravitated to the way that they carried themselves, the way that they were respected by commission officers and NCOs in the unit. And so that always stuck with me until I decided to apply for warrant officer.

Armstrong provided insight into what factors that inspired him to achieve senior field grade warrant officer status. He knew early on that he had to compete with his peers to reach the next highest grade until finally attaining the rank of CW5:

Well, I always knew that I had to be a step better than my compadres. I also knew that I had to work a little bit harder, I had to work smarter, show up earlier, stay later, have the knowledge, knew the subject, better expert. And the thought in my mind was, always do your best, and we'll see what happens with the rest.

Armstrong served in both enlisted capacity as well as his warrant officer career as a human resources technician and earned his master's degree during his military service. Armstrong was forthcoming in his assessment of career options in the Army, especially the WOC. He believed that specific career fields benefit certain individuals more than they benefit others:

I do, absolutely. There are certain positions, and jobs that carry a lot more weight than others, and those are the hard jobs. Those are the jobs that people generally speaking, tend to shy away from. For example, in my career field, I was always advised to seek a job in a division. Make your mark in a division, because that's where the rubber meets the road, that's where the challenge is, and that's where you need to be. And if you're successful in those jobs, those various jobs within the division, then you're gonna be looked at by a promotion board a lot more favorable than if you were in another job that was not necessarily considered in the eyes of the promotion board to be a tough job. And I found that to be true, even sitting on a promotion board myself. Not that it was a bias of mine, but you

can easily tell if the candidate that you're looking at, if their record reflects that this guy had the tougher job, he didn't shy away from the tough jobs.

And so sometimes it's a matter of chance, but it's also a matter of choice. If your career manager is saying, "Hey, I've got an opportunity for you, it's in a division in Europe, do you want it?" Of course, the answer for me was always, "Yes, send me there." And so I spent a lot of time, in my early years, up until the W3 rank, in those jobs, those tough jobs, or at least what was viewed as, considered a tough assignment.

Armstrong also shared his leadership style that contributed to his success in ascending to the highest rank in the WOC. He strongly recommended that current warrant officers and enlisted personnel aspiring to become warrant officers to seek a mentor:

Well, I tell you, I've read a lot about leadership, period. I've enjoyed reading books by Colin Powell, by Barack Obama, by Maxwell, and others, about leadership. Little bit from Dwight Eisenhower. But my philosophy is probably a combination of all of those great leaders. To try and incorporate their styles of leadership, what they think leadership is, into what I would want my leadership to be, or what my leadership was.

Well, I think I'm a situational, or I think I was a situational leader, that had the basic tenet of leadership. I did believe in the six traits of effective leadership that was expressed by Dwight Eisenhower, of making others feel comfortable, promoting a vision. Following the golden rules, admitting mistakes, not criticizing others in public, do it in private. Staying close to the action. And understanding

that leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done, simply because they want to do it, not because you want it done, but because they want to do it. And so how you do that, in my view, kind of depends. It depends on the situations. It depends on who you're leading. It depends on a level of respect that they have for you. And it depends on your expertise in your particular field. And so, my style of leadership is not one of those. . . . kind of deals, but it's probably a combination of several things. I'm not an A type personality. I'm pretty reserved. I'm pretty firm in my decision-making. And so it's sort of situational thing. You kind of lead your audience, lead the soldiers you're leading, lead the non-commissioned officers that work with you, for you. And of course, you apply different styles of leadership depending on what the situation calls for.

Summary. Armstrong's ascended to the top rank in the WOC. He admitted that without the learned lessons and leadership style acquired as an Army WO, he could not have been successful post retirement. He has been a contractor for the Department of Defense for almost two decades.

Brent's Story

Brent served 29 years in the Army of which 24 years he served in the WOC. He joined the Army at the age of 24 and chose Air and Missile Defense as a career. Brent was clear that his initial aspiration was not to join the WOC but was convinced to do by his comrades:

It wasn't my original aspiration. I told you my friends talked me into going to the Army recruiter. Well, one came in as an intel specialist, and he signed up for three

years. The other came in as a single channel radio operator, and he signed up for two years. I was the one that didn't want to go in at all, but I wanted something technical, so to sign up for Patriot, you had to sign up for a minimum of four years, so I wound up with the longest hitch out of all of my buddies.

My buddy talked me into putting in my warrant officer packet, and of course I don't have the bare minimum time, because you have to have at least two years in order to have your application be eligible. So there I am again raising my hand to reenlist. And I figure, not too bad. I'll give myself a little extra time. I'll either get a little further ahead in night school, as I was going, or I'll come out on the E7 list, or maybe I'll get selected for this warrant officer thing. Who knows?

When asked if the military is a savior for African-American men, Brent highlighted that Armed Forces can benefit persons of all ethnicities. He believed that the military can be a benchmark for further success in the business world:

It [the military] provides a place for minorities or disadvantaged people, I think, of all colors, to come in and take advantage of an opportunity to gain experience, leadership, responsibility, a sense of commitment, duty, and education. And then go out into the business community, into the wider world and succeed.

Brent also described his experience in pursuing private education and one that would both benefit the Army and the business world. He was able to map a plan to earn his bachelors, masters, and eventually his doctorate while serving in the WOC:

As a working adult, of course I couldn't go to school in the day time where the courses are offered. And of course, I couldn't take a full load, so as I mapped it

out, I could probably get in and get to a course, one in the morning, one in the afternoon. I could work something out. But my schedule, the way I figured it, with the courses being disjointed and I have to catch them as they can, I basically calculated that it would take me approximately eight or nine years to finish this EE degree, piecemealing it, and that was way too long. So, I looked for another avenue, which was something that was necessary in the Army, was something that we do and that we develop over the course of a career field, or career span, is leadership and management.

So, I looked to another alternative which was the Parks and Webster University systems, which support military on base, and provide courses at night. I was in the direction of management and leadership in those areas. So, I got my bachelor's degree, and going nights and weekends in human resource's management, and then I later finished my master's from Webster in Management Organizational Development. Then I decided that I was going to go ahead and go for my PhD. And I started going to Capella.

Although he had not personally experienced any obstacles to his career success, he had witnessed officers who would often discourage NCOs and warrant officers from pursuing education outside the military. He described officers in the Army as the "elite" group who were considered the brain trust of the organization, therefore warranting their need to pursue higher learning:

A perfect case in point, it wasn't directed at me, while I was the warrant officer education system chief for the DOTD for Air Defense, I was working on my

master's degree at Webster University, going to school at night. Well, one of the NCOs, and E7 in the next office, was going to school with me, so we were having conversations about education and school, and he wanted to build a business and all that, and I was totally for him and encouraging him, because the brother, he was really going after it, and I said, "That's good." There was a Caucasian lieutenant colonial who was in the office adjacent to mine, and I guess he had overheard our conversation. When I went over there to talk about something else, he was asking about school. He was like, "Is sergeant such and such going to school?" And this and that. And I was excited. I go, "Yeah, you know, he's working on his master's degree. He'll be done with this now." He furrowed his face, and his comment was, "You know, what does an NCO need with a master's degree?" You know?

This was very telling in the culture of the military. How they stratify each one of us. Regular line officers are the elite. They're the ones that need the education, and make decisions, and do all of the thinking, and then you have the warrant officers, the technical ones, where they see you like, "Yes, kind of good for you to get the education, but what do you really need it for?" And NCOs, in their limited view it was, "Why would you need an education?" Not thinking that, hey, we're all eventually getting out. You know?

And you have to prepare yourself for that eventuality. There's nothing wrong with someone taking advantage of the educational opportunities to prepare themselves to make a better life for themselves or their families.

Summary. Brent's story provides an understanding and insight into the lived experiences he encountered in his ascension to the rank of CW5. Brent credited social and professional networking and learning experiences and some of the significant factors contributing to his success.

Clayton's Story

Clayton is a retired Army warrant officer who served 32 years. His highest enlisted rank before joining the WOC is Sergeant First Class (E7). He describes his experience of deciding his career post-high school at a time where there were not a lot of options for black students from segregated high schools.

When I graduated high school, I didn't really know what I wanted to do, you know so I kind of worked for three years. I grew up in Alabama, okay, down south, and in our little town, just about everybody probably was in some type of military service. I wasn't ready to go, didn't really want to go to college, because back then, I graduated in '69. Back then there were limited, I would say, curriculums that people were going into, primarily teaching. There's nothing wrong with teaching, it's just that it wasn't something I wanted to do, so I really didn't know what I wanted to do.

I had the capabilities, I mean I graduated valedictorian out of the high school, but had a couple strikes against me. One, first of all, you've got to remember now back in '69 in Alabama, our school was totally segregated. I was bused like 25 miles one way to an all black school, of course when you grow up in that environment, you really don't know the difference. The year after we

graduated, then they force integrated. Anyway, me being bused to this all black school, I'm from another area, and so that's the first strike against you, you're not a local. The second strike is the old, I guess, saying back then was that guys are not supposed to be smart or whatever, so when I came out with the highest average, there was frowns of, 'How can this guy be valedictorian, because he's a guy who's from another place?'

Clayton goes on to describe his experience during his Army enlistment as one of only a few blacks entering a career field where there were few blacks in training. He chose a career path based on the length of training as he scrolled alphabetically through the career options.

When I go to the recruiter, I decided I'm going to join the Army, you know they give you a big book. Chronologically starting with A, so I see air traffic control, and so the one thing I did know because some of the people had been in the Army, I knew that the longer the MOS school was, probably the better the job. I see air traffic control, and the schooling was like six months so, "Wow okay, that's probably a good job," and then it's also at Fort Rucker, Alabama. Well, you know when you first join the Army, you want to get away, but you still want to be close to home. Fort Rucker being in Alabama, I felt like I want to do that. I met all the requirements, but even the recruiter had no idea air traffic control was, and I didn't either. We chose air traffic control, and boy, was I in for the shock of my life when I get to Fort Rucker after basic training at Fort Polk.

I get to Fort Rucker, the air traffic control school, and I think the Army had just taken it over then. It used to be Keesler Air Force base run by the Air Force. The Army had taken the school over, and I get there, and guess what? I grew up in segregation and all that stuff, but I see one black guy, and he see me, and come to find out we're the only two black in the entire school. Then about a week or two later, a female showed up, and of course they had WACS then, of course they had their separate barracks and stuff, and man, both of them flunked out of the school, so I'm the only black guy in the entire school for a long time. I really didn't want to do air traffic control, so I tried my best to get out of that. Finally, I found a C-7, he's a black guy, he's an air traffic controller. He convinced me that this is probably one of the better jobs in the Army and to stick with it, because there was always so much studying and learning airways and airspace and all that stuff. Anyway, he convinced me to do it, and did it, graduated, and I'll tell you, for the first five years, I don't think I even saw a black guy, but it worked out great though.

As for his WO career, Clayton explains how fortunate enough he was to achieve enlisted rank fast with the goal of reaching the highest enlisted rank of sergeant major or E9. He goes on to explain the fate of entering the WOC and being appointed a direct commission as a W2, bypassing the rank of W1.

My goal is to make Sergeant Major because I was making rank real fast. I protested and stuff, and of course you know how Sergeant Major's talk and stuff, it's like you ain't got any choice. So when you come back, you know everything's

going to be set up. When I come back, believe it or not, this guy had done just about all of the legwork. I just had to provide a few things and apply the Warrant Officer's stuff. Then I forgot about it. Like 6 months went by, and I get a call from a guy at DA, and 'Hey Sergeant, you've been selected as an air traffic control Warrant.'

Now remember, there were no Warrants in ATC, so I was chosen as an ATC Warrant. I'm like "Okay." And he said, "Do you want W-1 or do you want W-2?" And I'm like, "What kind of a question is that?" I said, "Okay, what's the deal?" He said, "If you take W-1, you have a full year commitment, but if you take W-2, it's a 6-year commitment." Because then you probably know back then you had direct appointments. You didn't have to go through the WOCC school, it was just a 2-week orientation course. I had eleven years in then so taking 4 years didn't make sense, I said "Give me W-2".

I come from being an E-7 in air traffic control up to straight to W-2. I was number 7 picked out of 40. There was only 40 in the entire Army, and I was the first black. Matter of fact, there was only of that forty, there were only 3 blacks chosen. Now mind you, I was one of the Junior guys. Most of the other guys that were picked were on the E-8 list or whatever. I was the youngest of them and, like I said, of the first 7 and the only black. That raised a few eyebrows.

Clayton recalls having to reclassify his career in the WOC from Air Traffic Controller to Quartermaster at a time when the Army was faced with a restructuring of

WO positions. He describes the choice of either reclassifying his Military Occupational Specialty or retire or separate from the Army.

I had a choice, okay, you either reclassify, retire, or you get out. Of course, I didn't have enough time to retire. I wasn't going to get out, so I reclassified into Quartermaster. That's kind of how my career got started as a Warrant Officer, as a result of that.

Clayton achieved the rank of CW5 in 18 years, having been appointed as a CW2. Clayton was also able to pursue civilian education having earned both a bachelors and a master's degree.

Summary. Clayton provided a wealth of information concerning his lived experience ascending to the rank of senior field grade warrant officer. Clayton spoke at length about his leadership style and the impact on his career in the WOC. He emphasized the importance of being a flexible leader in adapting to obstacles throughout your career.

Darryl's Story

Darryl describes his experience of growing up in the Deep South on a 65-acre farm before joining the military.

Where I'm from, a little country town, the military had more to offer to me and my family so I decided to stay in. I'm a country boy, raised up on a 65-acre farm, and my daddy and his heirs had another 113-acres. We raised tobacco, corn, watermelon and cantaloupe. All little stuff. You know?

Darryl served a total of 43 years, 8 months and 23 days, and his education level is an associate degree. He says that he doesn't recall having any barriers that he could not overcome. He provides insight into the key to success in the WOC.

I think the key thing is for a warrant officer to do, is know your job very well; and when the supervisor requests something, try to do it or tell them, say, 'Let me research it, and I'll get back with you.' Don't give him nothin' phony. You got to be fact...you got to be straightforward. So if he give you a task that you aren't familiar with, then you say, "Sir, I'm not familiar with this, but if you give me enough time, I'll research it and do it for you. And all of 'em would listen to me. Whatever questions, they would follow my instructions. And I didn't have no problems.

Darryl's enlisted career field was electronic systems maintenance. He served an enlisted rank of E7 before embarking upon the WOC. He mentions that he submitted his WO packet three times before finally being selected.

Well, I had a friend named Mr. O'Reilly. He was in the corps, retired, he was Brink's Manager. I used to work for him. He told me, he said, "Man, you'd make a good warrant." I said, "Naw, I won't." He said, "Yes, you will." He had me get my package together, and I sent it in. The first time I sent it in . . . they turned me down. Then Mr. O'Reilly was in Hawaii, and then he became the Brink's Manager. Well, I submitted it three times. First time, E-6. Second time, E-7.

Darryl recalls that on his third packet submission as an E7, his application packet was finally accepted. Darryl's military career field was as an electronic systems maintenance technician and ascended to the rank of CW5 in 20 years.

When asked what recommendations he would suggest to African-Americans, particularly African-American males, help them navigate and improve their path through the promotion system, Darryl offered keen prescriptive advice to the WO currently serving in the Corps.

With the system the way it is now, I encourage every warrant officer to get the highest level of education he or she can get. At the same time . . . I mean civilian education. Because now if you don't have a BS, it's kind of hard to get up to level 5. You know? Unless you're perfect, I mean, not perfect... Did a super job and the guys like you and write you a good report card. All my report cards, you know, recommend... Every time they wrote them, they recommend to the next rank, the next rank. When I got up from four to five, the guy said he highly recommended me cause I did such a good job of following instruction and providin' a good product for them. And that's the key thing I tell people, 'Get all the education you can, military and civilian.' Try to achieve the highest goal you can. It pays off in the military, and it will pay off after you get out of the military. It will open doors for you in civilian life.

Summary. Darryl's lived experience was described in his both his challenges and triumphs in ascending to the highest rank in the WOC. His success strategies include

education, competence in your functional area, and present only the facts to commanders and senior military leaders.

Elijah's Story

Elijah's story can only be described in one word: perseverance. He recounts a period in his childhood experience the driving factor that propelled him succeed against the odds both as an enlisted soldier and throughout his warrant officer career.

My growing up, sir. I grew up in a single family with my mother, and I'm the only boy. I'm her only son. So she kind of sheltered me, true. But at the same time, she gave me a drive that I ordinarily wouldn't have had. The other driving force for me was, as a kid, I had a cousin tell my mother, "You ain't shit, and your kid ain't going to be shit either." And that has stuck with me even today, that has stuck with me, those words have stuck with me.

Those words stayed with me. So, when a person tells me I can't do something right, it drives me. It drive me to the point where if I say, 'There's nothing gonna stop me from reaching this milestone but me.' So I drive myself. If it means I gotta work all night to get something done, I'll do that. If it means I gotta take a class that I'm not comfortable with, I'll do that. If that means me going to a location that I'm a little bit fearful of, I'm gonna do that. Because it drives me.

When describing the obstacles for upward mobility in the military as it relates to military and civilian education, Elijah's recall was as concise as if it occurred just

moments before our interview. He describes his experience with taking a class at the military education center.

I'm a country boy from central Virginia, and our school didn't have any ... they had them for people who was excelling, but you have to excel, and everybody that excelled didn't go to school. So, my thing was I wanted to go to college. I wanted to be more than just that little country boy. So, I joined the military and they gave me that opportunities. And I will tell you that it still took me eight years, right, to even take my first course once I got into the military, because there was so many other opportunities that was out there.

Then one day, I had came back from the club one night when I was at Fort Riley, Kansas, and it was like I was in conversation with someone. I was actually sleeping, and that someone was saying, "Why did you join the military?" I said, "Go to college." They said, "Well, you have not taken one course." So, that morning when I woke up, which was a Saturday morning, anxiety was all over me until that Monday morning when I went to the education center and signed up for my first course.

Even when I went there, it was eight years and the young lady said ... she wasn't that young, but she says I have to retake the TABE test again, and I took the TABE test again and I scored lower. She told me, I wasn't capable of going to school, much less pass a college course.

So I studied on my own, I retook the TABE test, I scored higher. But she still didn't want me getting that opportunity, so I sat in her office until she gave me the opportunity. She didn't like it but I would not move. She says, "Well, my next appointment's outside." I said, "Ma'am, I don't care. I'm going to sit here until you sign me up for this course." That's what I did. She says, "If you didn't make a C or better on this course, you will never take a course here at Fort Riley." I said, "Ma'am, I'm okay with that." At the end of the semester, I gave my grade slip and I said, "I want to take two courses now." Cause I had made an A. That was my driving force behind that, joining the military.

Elijah would go on to earn both his bachelors and master degrees while serving 38 years in the military. Elijah joined the WOC as an E6 applicant. Once accepted, he reached the highest rank of W5 in 20 years in the career field of Geospatial Engineer. It was no easy task for Elijah as he recalls having to go before promotion three times before pinning on the elusive rank.

I'm probably one of the few guys in the Army that it took three times to make CW5. And not because I wasn't talented enough. It was because they would not give me the ratings. Example, I ran the schools at Fort Belvoir and I had graded four instructors under me. We would be there for six classes per year to 12 classes per year. And the guy before me, he did it just with 34 guys for seven classes. I did it with 34 guys with 12 classes. And yet, I was not as good as he was. So, what Mr. Mallard did to me was he said, "Keep on going. Keep putting that good effort forward." And I'll tell you, Sir, on my first time I didn't make it, it's

because they gave all the top blocks to the white guy. Even after he left, right. They were reluctant to give me a top block because they compared me with him. I said, "Look. He's no longer working for you. I'm still here. I'm making this thing work. You know, give me what I deserve."

So eventually, what I did, sir, I decided to leave the schoolhouse and take a tour to Iraq. I went to Iraq the first time. I worked for a Navy captain, an O-6. And what I did, sir, I went and I said, "Sir, what is your expectations of me?" And he told my expectations. I said, "Sir, too easy." I say, "Here's what I'm gonna do for you." So, I made out what I was gonna do for him and how it was gonna help him make his job a little bit easier. That's what I did. And into that too, sir, I didn't ask for a top block. I was given a top block. I came back to the national capital region. I worked for this major, at the time, for almost a whole year. And we had the leadership teams.

And that was about 10 months in. So, he had just made rank from O-4 to O-5. And I say, "Sir, you got a top block to give now. Would you be willing to help me out to make me a five by giving me a top block?" He told me I wasn't a good staff officer and told me to try next year. I said, "Pardon me, sir?" He said, "Try next year." So as he walked away, I said, "Sir." He said, "Yeah." I said, "I'm gonna try next year." So, what I did, sir, I left and went back to Iraq again. And this time for another Navy captain O-6. And I asked him the same questions. "Sir, what's your expectation of me?" He say, "Chief, I'd like to give you this, this and

this.” I said, “Sir, too easy. Here’s what I’m gonna do for you.” I finally said, “Sir, how about another top block?”

So, what I’m saying, sir, is this. The engineer regiment did not look out for me. The person that helped me to make CW5 was two Navy captains. They had no inkling about what I’d do. But, knew I did a good enough job for them in Iraq to get a top block. That’s what made me to get CW5. The other part that kept me going was CW5 E. M. He says, “Man, Keep trying. It ain’t over yet. Keep trying.” And I kept trying until I made W5. When I made CW5, he was one of the first to congratulate me. He says, “Man, well done.” On my third try. He says, “Well done.” Number one on the list. That’s my third try. So, I highly respect him for what he said and what he did for me. Even today, I respect Mr. M.

As if reaching the highest rank in the WOC wasn’t enough, Elijah describes the barriers faced as a senior field grade warrant officer in comparison to his white counterparts.

I was W5 for eight years . . . I had one job as a W5, that was at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. The rest of the jobs here at Fort Belvoir, and the national capital region, they did not give to me. Even today as a W5. Because they said I wasn’t as smart as the white guys. I still had challenges. Even when I got out, I still had challenges. Let me give you an example, sir. You know, I’m on transfer leave, I’ve got about two weeks left in the military. I put in my end of tour award in October. It’s July. I haven’t got that award. And nobody really cares about it

because I'm a black guy. That's just the way I think. They don't really care about it.

With the many obstacles Elijah endured, he was able to achieve the rank of CW5 and remained a leader throughout the process. When asked about attributes in leadership, Elijah described his leadership philosophy.

You lead from the front, sir. You don't have no soldiers or warrants do nothing that you're incapable of doing. It becomes very important because they're gonna look at you and see what you have done. If you can't run a PT test in 14 minutes, why should you expect them to do it? If you can't do a road march, why do you expect them to do it in a certain time frame? So, you've got to lead from the front.

Summary. Elijah shared his lived experiences of growing up in a single parent household, the only boy with two sisters in a household. He recalls being told by a cousin that his future would never amount to anything. Those words drove him to join the Army and the Army WOC. Elijah's challenges as an African American male serving in a predominantly white environment tested his resilience to serve with excellence. He pays homage to his mentor, also African American who pushed him to stay in despite the adversity. His is now a defense contractor with the skill set he acquired in the Army WOC.

Fred's Story

Fred's experience of growing up in a household with ten siblings in rural helped to shape his sense of belonging. As a middle child, he describes the characteristics for career success as an Army Warrant Officer:

I am one of ten kids, I grew up on a farm in Alabama and to be honest with you, I wanted to really set myself apart from the military, from my siblings, and really, I tell people all the time, my goal was to make my daddy proud.

When asked if certain jobs benefited some members of the WOC in reaching the rank of CW5, Fred shared his observations based on his lived experiences in achieving the senior level status:

I think early on, I really feel early on that if you just do your best at whatever job you're in because you don't get a choice. Now, one through three, usually you kind of stuck wherever they think you should fit. Around the four, the five, you get to kind of ask for the job that you want. Once you start getting into the senior level jobs, there is a great benefit to your growth. When you're working for a two star or higher, it makes a difference where you go and what you do. So while I think the job plays in promotions, I think early on it's just to do the best you can at the job that you have.

With two associate degrees, a bachelor's degree, two master's degree, and a Ph.D., Fred go on to describes what set him apart from his peers in achieving the highest rank in the WOC:

So the first one is determination. Like I said, I took the hard jobs first. Then the civilian education along with being Airborne as well in my background and those things, you make yourself certified, you don't just sit down in the motor cruise and sit down in the CO office and think, well the Army's gonna come to me. You gotta go to the Army, you gotta seek out the opportunities as they come and not

just wait to get in there. You know, once you have them . . . I set the standard for how my team was all the ways, when I was out there. I don't believe in setting standards, I always told them I am the standard. Be like me and you'll be alright.

When the question was asked about the Army current promotion system, Fred's perspective offered a unique view to African American that would challenge conventional wisdom:

Well . . . to be honest, I think it's not necessarily, like I said they have the best promotion system out there. However, I think that for the Officer Core across the whole, not just one officer, because you gotta understand that you have to work with good people to make you be good. So what I'm saying is, there if there is a bias in your leadership, of course there's gonna be a bias towards you. Whether they have a bias toward one officer, or they have a bias towards people of color. So, we have to go back and look at the total officer system. As you may not know, if you go back and look at the last three or four years of the commanders selected to be commanders, I think three last year, four the year before that and like two this year. For people of color to elected to combat commanders.

If we're talking about black warrants reaching to the senior ranks, to reach the senior ranks, you're gonna be rated by people. And if you're going to be rated by people and those people don't look like you, there's a concern. Because we know that we have a tendency to drift, we say the Army's green, but we know people in the Army have a tendency to surround themselves with people that look like them.

We want to think that we surround ourselves with the best people, but if you watch your military career, people have the tendency to surround themselves with the people that look like you. So it's going to hinder our opportunity to work in certain jobs which would hinder our opportunity to grow.

Fred describes his leadership style as unique and pays homage to his unique leadership style from his early career as a drill sergeant:

I'm a little bit unique compared to most warrants. What I mean by that, I had the opportunity to be a drill sergeant, I had an opportunity to be an attack officer. And with that being the reason I brought those up is because I'm a person that believes you lead from the front and not asking anybody anything that I can't do or I won't do.

I don't think that . . . I'm more of a motivator than I am an authoritarian. What I mean by that-I believe in motivating people to do the right thing for the right reasons, than threaten people to, if you don't do it, this is gonna happen to you. You know, having three or four different combats until my belt, I've seen that this type of style works much better.

Summary. Fred has described his experiences of growing up in a large family; being a middle child of eleven children as well as making it his mission to make his father proud shaped his career in the Army WOC. Fred took on the hard jobs and aligned himself with successful mentors and peers who did not necessarily look like him proving that success has no measure on race. His experiences of serving as a drill sergeant further developed his leadership skills. Fred has multiple degrees including his Ph.D. allowing

him to leverage his civilian career after transitioning his thirty-year career as a retired CW5.

Girard's Story

Girard's career as a retired Army warrant officer can be traced back to his childhood experiences, and he always knew that he wanted to be in law enforcement:

It goes all the way back to my childhood, frankly, because I grew up in Seattle, Washington, small African-American community anyway, but the neighborhood called the Central District that I grew up in. Right across the street from my home, I had a block long area with nothing but woods. The other kids, young boys in the neighborhood, along with myself used to "play army" for countless hours right across the street from my house. I still have visions of doing that. That was my initial thought about the army, even though we had absolutely no clue about what we were doing except being stealth like and moving as a team and doing all those things that you do when you're playing out in the woods. We all would have our little toy pistols and toy guns and stuff. That really is my first exposure and any thought to the army.

I had absolutely none. The other exposure I had to the military growing up, along with playing army so much, was I had an uncle who was Air Force, a master sergeant in the Air Force. He would fly into McChord Air Force base before they joined with Fort Lewis. He would visit, my mom's brother, and he would fly in and stay with us for periods of time when he was at McChord Air Force base. Obviously, you see a black man in uniform and he was senior enlisted

and you could clearly tell he knew exactly what he was doing and what his mission was. I was just so impressed with that; that really, for me, made it as clear as crystal after I finished college as to what, at least initially, I wanted to do.

Girard would go on and earn his bachelor's degree and began his Army career as a Military Police. Girard became a citizen soldier as his civilian career took off in law enforcement as well:

After being an MP investigator and then going to CID, I decided by then that I wanted to be on the civilian side of the house in law enforcement. I saw that I was going to be able to continue. I went state police. So as opposed to Seattle Police Department, et cetera, I went to Washington State Patrol. I saw that I was going to be able to run parallel career paths and remain in the army, and WSP was very supportive of me being able to do that. There were a number of folks that were still in the reserve component that were troopers on the civilian side working at WSP. That, again, helped me with that decision.

When asked about the factors he believed set him apart from his peers, Girard describes his experience of the strategies he used for warrant officer success:

I think attention to detail is probably is extremely, extremely important. And I also believe that despite the type of career that I chose, I also believe in being very inclusive. Even as assistant chief, WSP, I had 10 captains under me that ran 10 different districts in the state. My primary objective didn't change from when I had the det in reserve component or I was running detachment with 8 troopers in it. I still wanted them to feel like they were contributors and their input was

important and that we were part of a team. I just think that that's one of the factors that I've always really stressed is working as a team.

I (also) think my willingness to step outside the lines and not remain in my comfort zone. That's really big. Because there are a number of courses out there, a few of them we've gone over. In my case, they were not CID specific, but let me get my feet wet and see if, in fact, this is something that, a knowledge base that would help me down the road. It's pretty clear. All those courses were pre-detachment commander courses. I fully believe that in order to prepare myself become a detachment commander, those courses that were not CID specific were just as important as those CID courses were, no question.

Summary. Girard served 30 years for the State Police Department, and 32 years in the Army (22 years in the Army WOC). Now retired, Girard serves as Chair of the security detail at his place of worship. Additionally, Girard volunteers for the Alzheimer's Association as well as Habitat for Humanity. He attributes his success to both his military and civilian career in law enforcement to staying focus and discipline.

Howard's Story

Howard had just finished high school when he received a draft notice in the mail. He decided to join the Army rather than being drafted. Girard does not recall any barriers to entry in the Army WOC:

"I can't recall any obstacles because I was the best qualified for the appointment of CW2 vice CW0. I had great mentors."

When asked what factors contributed to his success in the Army WOC, and what set him apart from his peers throughout his military career, Girard describes his experience:

“Best qualified to include training, education and motivation. Remember, I was well respected because I worked for the CIA. Also, I was available for call ups and became the POC for critical missions or exercises and deployment.”

Girard described having no significant obstacles that he had to overcome. He was the best qualified to be appointed to join the Army WOC as a CW2:

“I can’t recall any obstacles because I was the best qualified for the appointment of CW2 vice CW0. I had great mentors.”

Girard also recalled relying on his faith, and hard work and contributing factors that enabled him to ascend to the highest rank in the Army WOC. He also credits his mentors throughout his military career for his success, and now he is retired and runs his own company:

“I own a small company. My military training taught me how to respect all people and treat everyone fairly.”

Summary. Girard enlisted in the Army on his own merit after receiving a draft letter in the mail. He served three years on active duty before joining the Army National Guard and served as a Human Resources Technician. He attributes his success in the Army WOC to his faith, hard work, and striving to be the best qualified at every promotion board. Now retired, Girard runs his own small business.

Isaac's Story

Isaac recalls hearing stories of his uncles who served in WWII, one of whom served at Pearl Harbor:

Well, I had two uncles who were in World War II. And one of them was in Pearl Harbor at the time of the attack. And mostly, I was impressed by their war stories. The other one was a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division, whom I saw him in a parachute in my grandmother's house there. He was, you know, picture. And that helped me to make my mind up that that's what I wanted to be.

Isaac does not believe the military is a savior for African-American men, rather an opportunity for anyone regardless of the color of their skin. He offers his perspective the question that was posed to him:

I see that as an opportunity for anyone who really wants to succeed in a career in the Army. It also offers benefits that I feel are unmatched by any civilian company. Some civilian companies, should I say. It allows anyone who wants to be successful at opportunity to be the best at whatever they want to, career field they choose. Most important, the military enables us, you know, make a better life for yourself and your families. And I looked at it that way.

The oldest of 10 children, Isaac recalls life growing up on a farm for whom both of his grandfathers were farmers. He attributes his work ethic in the military to his early childhood experiences:

Both of my grandfathers were farmers. And during the summertime I worked on the farm with them, helped out on the farm. And my daddy was a construction

worker. And he worked on vehicles part-time. You know, I came from a farm-loving family, and we worked, like I say, we worked together as a family. And most of the time we spent helping out on the farm during the summers.

When asked about the barriers faced throughout his military career, Isaac recalls that how he showed up as an African American was perhaps his biggest obstacle. He describes the events that occur during his service:

One of the biggest obstacles that I had in my career, as you know, being a black warrant officer ... I was assigned to the warrant officer career center in Alabama. I was assigned there, being or not, that was the first job in the Army I ever went on an interview for. As the branch chief here, one of their assistant commandants told me that I was an advocate for blacks. And we were, I replied, said, 'No, I wasn't an advocate for blacks. I was an advocate for all soldiers, and I wanted everybody to be treated right.'

Because I saw what was happening to the black soldiers that came through the career centers. I would have a total of 75 students coming through, and with five of them being, look like you and I.

And especially in the aviation area. And I saw a lot of them were being eliminated. And I instituted a program to fix that. And I didn't like to be said that I was an advocate for our soldiers. I was there to take care of all soldiers, but I was more or less, I was concerned about my color, too. I'm not gonna tell you a lie, but for him to say that I was an advocate for just the black soldiers, it wasn't that.

When asked to expound on how black warrant officers were being treated as compared to their white counterparts, he further describes his experiences:

As far as things that were happening, they were getting demerits. They'd just, like, single out. They had to work almost twice as hard. Even as a CW5, you know, I still continue finding myself have to prove yourself, and you may face some of the challenges now.

As a black officer, you never stop, you got to be better than everybody else all the time. You got to continue to prove yourself. And I found that with my guys, I was seeing them being treated, I would see the white guys get demerits for things. And then I would see black guys get demerits for things. But a lot of them were not being, they just weren't being fair when it comes to handing out demerits and treating the soldier of colors. And most in the disciplinary area.

Isaac's career allow him to ascend to the highest rank of CW5 and he provides a perspective to the current non-commissioned officer who aspires to join the WOC:

I would tell him the warrant officer's the best rank in the Army. And I'd tell him to prepare himself early for it. To make warrant officer ... you'd have to know your job, and be the best, and prepare yourself for it. Set your goals high and achieve them. A lot of this is probably redundant. I've said it before. But when I mention to some NCOs want to become a warrant, it's not just becoming a warrant. First of all, you have to know your job. You have to almost be the best at it, because people are gonna come to you to ask you questions. And you must take the tough jobs. And a lot of times with growing up, you've got to go on every ...

Like, we call them missions. When they'd have field exercise, take those contact team jobs. Go off and be the best that you can. Do those jobs.

You've got to accept the challenge jobs. You can't sit back and let somebody qualify you. You have to prepare yourself for qualification. You set yourself up. And in order to stay on top of the warrant, everybody wants all highly qualified at the top. It's very competitive at the top, as you know. If you make it, and I have to tell them, start preparing themselves early in their career, and don't ever stop preparing yourself. There are always challenges out there. Accept the challenges.

Summary. Isaac served a total of 40 years in the army, of which 19 years he served in the Army WOC. He obtained his associate degree and met all the military professional development requirements that propelled him to the rank of CW5. Isaac's strategy to success was not to focus on his "report card" or evaluation report. Instead, he took care of soldiers and accepted the tough jobs. Now retired, Isaac's volunteers his time as a tutor, and assists his wife with special needs children. He has not transitioned to a civilian job for he now enjoys full retirement.

Jasper's Story

Jasper grew up in Philadelphia, and based on the times of racial tension; he set out to join the Army after graduating high school:

At a very young age growing up in Philadelphia, PA. I decided when I graduated from High School, I would join the US Army. Growing up in the 1950s was a time when Black people had a terrible time with Jim Crow laws and racial

bigotry. Most concerning was people marking time with no place to go having no money for education and other needs. I figured joining the Army would solve two problems education and job skills needed to have a decent income to support a family.

After being an enlisted soldier for 13 years, Jasper wanted to become a Warrant Officer to increase his knowledge in telecommunication and increase his promotion potential. Jasper attributes being a workaholic, loyalty, setting the example, and leading from the front to his success as an Army warrant officer.

When asked to describe whether mentors were influential in his career to the rank of CW5, Jasper recounts his experience:

You must remember it was early on we didn't have many CW5. Our mentorship was being selected to the Master Warrant Officer program. The Master Warrant graduates were supposed to be the first warrant officers selected for CW5.

However, this did not happen. The first selections was by TIG (Time-in-Grade) that included CW4's that were not selected for MW4 training or turned the training down.

Jasper believes that certain jobs are more beneficial than others for getting promoted through the Army. He explains:

Yes. The way to early promotion is taking the hard jobs, and the additional duties assigned to you by your commander if any. The reason the WOC program was established is the young LT's and young commissioned were not given the courtesy and mentorship these young officers required. The old warrant officers

refused to salute LTs . . . didn't want to teach them the skills they required to advance in the commissioned grade. The bad thing is these LTs grow up to be GEN Officers and WOs grow up to be CWOs.

Jasper served 43 years in the Army, of which 22 years was as a warrant officer. He earned his associate's degree during his military service. He offers this advice on leadership as an Army warrant officer:

Lead from the front and particularly take care of the troops. Listen to all that work for you and their ideas. A private may have a great idea therefore consider recommendations and get back to them. Counsel your people monthly not the day you write their efficiency report.

Summary. Jasper left his native Philadelphia to join the Army in pursuit of better opportunities not offered for blacks in his community. Jasper's career field in Information Technology allowed him to soar in taking on the tough jobs. Jasper's philosophy on leadership is lead from the front in setting an example for others to follow. He also emphasizes that education in today's Army is the key, and that making sure your efficiency reports reflect what you have done to increase the productivity of your organization.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process of this phenomenological study started during transcription of the semi structured interviews of the ten participants of the study. I reviewed all the transcriptions for accuracy and clarified important words that appeared

inaccurately recorded or seemed to be confusing. I proceeded to conduct data analysis after ensuring that all information was clarified.

This phenomenological study utilized the open, axial, and selective coding processes whereby each process conveyed a significant pattern of information that could be categorized or grouped into larger thematic areas. Following this process, I identified salient words during the development of coding the data scheme. I managed the categorization, coding, labeling, and defining of the primary patterns of information using Microsoft Office applications and NVivo. These software packages aided me in sorting, formatting, and documenting the coding procedures in a logical order. I began the open coding by tagging important words and assigned essential meanings to each word.

From the open coding process, 240 open codes emerged in the analysis. All codes were grouped according to 15 categories as shown in Table 2. The categories formed, resulted from the consistent responses and summary of key ideas that emerged from the answers to interview questions. Organizing the codes and categories identified in the open coding allowed achievement of added analysis in the axial and selective coding process.

Table 2

Categories and Axial Codes (Frequency)

Categories	Axial Codes (frequency)
Reason join the Army	Always wanted to be a soldier, goals from early life, back to childhood (4), education benefits (2), knew wasn't going back to school, didn't want to go to college (2), curriculums limited, primarily teaching (2), not sure what wanted to do occupation-wise (2)
Reason remain in the Army	Enjoyed the military, love the job (5), make a difference (3)
Military – savior for African-American men?	Excellent opportunity for all men (4), no (3), not now (2), of course, true for African-American men (2)
Aspiration of becoming a WO	Pushed by other warrants (3), impressed me, gravitated to way carried themselves (2)
Barriers in career progression	None, I can't recall any (6), being a black warrant officer (3), even as W5 said not as smart as white guys (3)
Career strategies for minority males	Have mentor (3), have roadmap (3), establish goals (3), credibility (2), get educated, civilian specialty (2), strategize timeline on next rank, highest rank (2)
Excel through Army promotion system	Picked hardest jobs, took tough jobs (5), did super job taking care of subordinates (3), education (3), gain knowledge, convey to commanders, tell boss what needs to know (3), maximize all opportunities – if given take it (2), promotions within range of average promotion, promoted on time (2)
Personal attributes	Be a leader, example to set a standard (3), determination (3), drive, motivation, goal-oriented (3), hard work (3), workaholic (3), loyalty (2), willingness to step out of comfort zone (2), God, prayed a lot (2)
Role mentorship played in ascension	Yes/absolutely (9), always had mentor throughout entire military career (2)
Certain jobs more beneficial getting promoted	Yes (5), no, don't think so (4), numbers game – only so many people can be W5 (4)
Advice to NCO about WOC	Be sure that's what you want to do (2), take inventory of skills, abilities, and knowledge (2)
Advice to WO currently serving	Always do best you can (4), broaden horizons as much as possible with military educational opportunities (2), should always be preparing for W5 (2), take advantage of opportunities for growth (2)
Benefits to civilian career transition	Opened doors (2), w/o military career, wouldn't have been as successful (2)
Leadership style	Situational (3), inclusive (3), lead from the front (3), open and direct, straight shooter (2), showed genuine concern about soldiers, treat like family (2), firm in decision-making (2)
Career post retirement	Contracting career (2), playing golf (2), travel (2), volunteer (2)

As shown in Table 2, I presented the categories and axial codes emerging from the transcripts of the participants. In the axial coding process, I sorted the open codes and identified codes that emerged frequently and appeared in each category. I then established the theoretical and conceptual connections between all interview questions related to the theoretical framework of the study. These axial codes were essential in the identification of the emerging pattern from interviewees addressing these terms in their responses. This coding process aided me in identifying the themes.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was achieved in this study through the establishment of credibility, transferability, dependability, and, confirmability. These mechanisms ensured that the results of this study are generalizable among a population with similar demographic characteristics, in this case, African-American men who served in the Army Warrant Officers Corps.

Credibility

Credibility ensures the congruency of the research findings to the purpose of the study (Shenton, 2004). Credibility achieved in this study helped ensure that the participants in the study were representatives of the African American Army Warrant Officer population who are U.S. Army retirees of the rank CW5. Credibility achieved also helped ensure that interviews were recorded correctly and transcribed. I initiated the conduct of member checking to ensure that transcriptions were correct and that my analysis of the data had no erroneous information. Each participant of the study reviewed the transcript and provided additional data along with their confirmation of data recorded.

Transferability

Transferability or external validity pertains to the degree to which the study's findings apply to other situations (Shenton, 2004). Development of a detailed description of the research setting helped ensure transferability in this study. I provided descriptive information about Department of Defense policies and procedures implemented to ensure that all reported findings were confined only to organizations that had similar characteristics.

Dependability

Dependability addresses the reliability of the data where findings are generated (Shenton, 2004). This present study tracked the data analysis process. The open, axial, and selective codes tracked are in a manner consistent with the data analysis guidelines. I have kept all transcriptions for future researchers' reference when conducting similar studies.

Confirmability

Confirmability addresses the objectivity of the study. I remained objective in the analysis of the data. I utilized computer software such as Microsoft Office, Microsoft Excel and NVivo 12 to assist in sorting, categorizing, and identifying codes that are frequently mentioned by the participants. This technique helped me to reframe from including my personal biases in the data analysis.

Study Results

Themes

Textural descriptions were used in conjunction with the interview questions to develop the core themes. According to Moustakas (1994), textural descriptions provide a research participant's reflection of the phenomenon to include feelings and images described in words to describe this lived experience. An analysis of the responses to the interview questions provided by all the research participants to describe the phenomenon can be used to develop the central themes that describe this phenomenon and are necessary to capture the true meaning of the lived experience of the research participants (Moustakas, 1994).

The textural descriptions were based on the validated invariant constituents relevant to the phenomenon under study. The textural descriptions were developed using the participants' responses to the ten interview questions used to analyze the research question: How do retired African American male officers describe their experience of attaining the rank of senior field grade warrant (CW5/W5) in the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps?

The interview questions used to develop the textural descriptions are included in Appendix A. The interview questions guided the research participants to reflect on the attributes and skills they perceive that minority officers in the U.S. Army need to attain the rank of CW5. The responses to the 20 interview questions produced the themes that follow.

Theme 1: Competence in Primary Functional Area

The first core theme that emerged from the responses to the interview questions was competence in the primary functional area. Several participants referred to competence being a critical factor in their promotion to CW5 in their response to the interview questions. The research participants identified demonstrating technical competence in the primary functional area as a dominant theme. The participants provided the following comments.

Darryl. I think the key thing is for a warrant officer to do, is know your job very well; and when the supervisor requests something, try to do it or tell them, say, “Let me research it, and I’ll get back with you.” Don’t give him nothin’ phony. You got to be fact...you got to be straight forward. So if he give you a task that you aren’t familiar with, then you say, “Sir, I’m not familiar with this, but if you give me enough time, I’ll research it and do it for you. And all of ‘em would listen to me. Whatever questions, they would follow my instructions. And I didn’t have no problems.

Elijah. I tried to get as much education as I possibly could, because education actually drove me to drive other guys and girls that this is what you need to do to get ahead. And, by the way, you got to know your job just as good as they do. You gotta know your job from top to bottom, left to right ... you gotta have the education to go with it.

Fred. It’s kinda like people respect where you were at a CW5, when they know that you were a CW5 they automatically give you that amount of respect that you know what you’re talking about.

Isaac. you'd have to know your job, and be the best, and prepare yourself for it. Set your goals high and achieve them. A lot of this is probably redundant. I've said it before. But when I mention to some NCOs want to become a warrant, it's not just becoming a warrant. First of all, you have to know your job. You have to almost be the best at it, because people are gonna come to you to ask you questions. And you must take the tough jobs. And a lot of times with growing up, you've got to go on every ... Like, we call them missions. When they'd have field exercise, take those contact team jobs. Go off and be the best that you can. Do those jobs.

Theme 2: Aspiration

The second theme centered on participants' initial motivation to pursue a career as an Army warrant officer. As participants recalled what initially sparked their interest in transitioning from enlisted service members to warrant officers, they commonly shared their reasons were aspirational. Many participants were impressed in what they saw in other warrant officers and how this select group of officers carried themselves. The participants provided the following comments.

Armstrong. Well, when I first went in, I had no idea what a warrant officer was. All I knew that there were commission officers that I had been used to in basic and AIT. And I didn't know what a warrant officer was until I got to my first permanent duty station in Germany. I was assigned to the maintenance battalion, 703rd Maintenance Battalion, where there were warrant officers. They had signal warrants. They had motor maintenance techs, a couple of other warrant officers. So that was my first exposure to the warrant officer corps. For some reason I just sort of gravitated to the way that they

carried themselves, the way that they were respected by commission officers and NCOs in the unit. And so that always stuck with me until I decided to apply for warrant officer.

Isaac. Okay, in the earlier days I worked for a CW-4 Chief, who impressed me with his knowledge. He was really a core professional. As a young Spec 4, I set my goals to want to be like him because everything this man did, it impressed me.

Darryl. Well, I had a friend named Mr. O. He was in the corps, retired, he was Brink's Manager. I used to work for him. He told me, he said, 'Man, you'd make a good warrant.' He had me get my package together, and I sent it in. The first time I sent it in and they turned me down. Well, I submitted it three times.

Theme 3: Overcoming Barriers to Promotion

The third theme for many participants were navigating through barriers in ascending to each rank in the Army WOC. While some participants could not recall any obstacles that led to their success, other participants described some of the barriers faced being black and a warrant officer. The participants provided the following comments.

Elijah. In the nuke weapons field, the best that a black man or lady could do was be a good NCO. And they were okay with you being an NCO, just as long as you didn't get top-tier NCO. When I came in, it was just after the Vietnam era. So you had guys that been in 18, 19 years still E-5s and E-6s. And for them it was okay. Because back in those days, it was almost normal to retire at those ranks. It was uncommon to retire at a E-7, E-8, and E-9 back in those days. So they systematically held us back. So my driving force was, be more than they expect me to be. In everything that I did, I tried to outdo them. I tried to get more education than what they did. I tried to go to every school. I tried to get

as much education as I possibly could, because education actually drove me to drive other guys and girls that this is what you need to do to get ahead. And, by the way, you got to know your job just as good as they do. You gotta know your job from top to bottom, left to right ... you gotta have the education to go with it. So that was my driving force, was that they didn't want me to have certain jobs. And I'll tell you, sir, even as a W5 ... I was W5 for eight years ... I had one job as a W5, that was at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. The rest of the jobs here at Fort Belvoir, in the national capital region, they did not give to me. Even today as a W5. Because they said I wasn't as smart as the white guys.

Brent. Well, one of the NCOs, and E7 in the next office, was going to school with me, so we were having conversations about education and school, and he wanted to build a business and all that, and I was totally for him and encouraging him, because the brother, he was really going after it, and I said, 'That's good.' There was a Caucasian lieutenant colonial who was in the office adjacent to mine, and I guess he had overheard our conversation. When I went over there to talk about something else, he was asking about school. He was like, 'Is sergeant such and such going to school?' And this and that. And I was excited. I go, 'Yeah, you know, he's working on his master's degree. He'll be done with this now.' He frowned his face, and his comment was, 'You know, what does an NCO need with a master's degree?' You know?

Jasper. Early on there were no military education systems as we have today. We learned our skills on the job. There was also the Army Proficiency Test that provided monetary reward for individual who meet the test requirements score.

Theme 4: Proven Leadership Style

The fourth core theme that emerged from the responses to the interview questions was demonstrating successful leadership at increasingly high levels within the organization. In the military, the ultimate opportunity to show an officer's leadership abilities is provided during command. In the Army WOC, a warrant officer can command a unit just as commissioned officers at various levels. This is an opportunity not available in the private sector or anywhere outside the military environment. Demonstrating effective leadership at increasing levels of responsibility was a common theme reiterated by the research participants. The participants provided the following comments.

Armstrong. Well, I tell you, I've read a lot about leadership, period. I've enjoyed reading books by Colin Powell, by Barack Obama, by Maxwell, and others, about leadership. Little bit from Dwight Eisenhower. But my philosophy is probably a combination of all of those great leaders. To try and incorporate their styles of leadership, what they think leadership is, into what I would want my leadership to be, or what my leadership was. I think I was a situational leader, that had the basic tenet of leadership. I did believe in the six traits of effective leadership that was expressed by Dwight Eisenhower, of making others feel comfortable, promoting a vision. Following the golden rules, admitting mistakes, not criticizing others in public, do it in private. Staying close to the action. I'm pretty firm in my decision-making.

Jasper. Lead from the front and particularly take care of the troops. Listen to all that work for you and their ideas. A private may have a great idea therefore consider

recommendations and get back to them. Counsel your people monthly not the day you write their efficiency report.

Isaac. My philosophy, Chief, is to be as inclusive as possible, as decisive as possible after weighing all the options, and being as deliberative as I can with regard to the thought process before I make a decision. I think that very, very open; very direct. I've never been, you know, one of those laissez-faire types in the old school definition of laissez-faire. But very, very positive; very upbeat; and very inclusive.

Fred. I'm a little bit unique compared to most warrants. What I mean by that, I had the opportunity to be a drill sergeant, I had an opportunity to be a TAC Officer. And with that being the reason I brought those up is because I'm a person that believes you lead from the front and not asking anybody anything that I can't do or I won't do.

Theme 5: Mentorship

The fifth theme shared among the participants were having great mentors. There was universal agreement among the participants that not having a mentor would have had a negative impact on career progression. The participants recognize that their career progression that mentorship was an equal opportunity regardless of race/ethnicity. The participants provided the following comments.

Armstrong. Even as a W1, I sought out the mentorship of W2s, W3s in my organization. Always got the advice that I needed. And I always had a mentor, ever since my appointment as a W1. Be it a W2, W3, W4, in those days, I guess it was ... I think it was before we had the 5, but anyway, I always sought out mentorship to help me along

the way. I think it's very important that we all have mentors, because your mentors have been there, they've done that, and they can advise you, and then you just need to execute.

Elijah. Yes, mentorship did play a role in that, a great role actually. A black CW5, really my only mentors in the army to be honest with you. He's an African-American. He's an MI. I'm an engineer. We had several assignments together. Along the way, he would grab me by the horn, sort of speak, because I was acting like I could be a bull in a china closet. He would grab me by the horns and he would say, 'Hey, Chief. Look, that's not how it goes. This is how it goes. Let me teach you this.' So along the way, right, he kind of calmed me down. He said, 'Look, this is how things work. You got to talk to [inaudible 00:24:24] a little bit. You gotta know people. You gotta do your job well. You gotta be good at what you do.' And those things, I did. And when making W5, I can tell you, sir, I'm probably one of the few guys in the Army that it took three times to make CW5.

Howard. Become the best qualified and have a good mentor. Mentorship played a major role in my ascension to the CW5 rank throughout my entire career both military and civilian.

Isaac. Mentorship played important role in my career because I went back to my mentors, even though my mentor only attained the rank of CW4, at the time CW5 came late after they retired. But they had played a big role, a large role. I took my mentor's advice on how to program my career for success.

Theme 6: Education Opportunities

All participants describe having tremendous success in their career as warrant officers. There was a common theme among the participants that education, both military and civilian played a major factor in their promotion to the senior field grade warrant officer's level. The participants provided the following comments.

Brent. Well, so I hit all of the professional military educational grades up to the warrant officer senior staff education. But civilian education-wise, I came back from Korea as a senior W2, and I was accepted into a degree completion, where I went and I finished up my associates degree in electronic technology.

Charles. I went to a lot of the courses when I switched over from air traffic control to Quartermaster. I switched over and I went to Profitt E Bok's, I went to all of them. The other thing though is that I take so much pride in what I do, was every school I went to I either made honor graduate, distinguished graduate, or something like that. You usually didn't have that in a W-5 to senior Warrant Officer education system, but the staff course you did. I just put a lot of effort into it. I figure if you're going to do it you might as well do it well. So I think that really helped me through the schooling part of the Warrant Officer.

Elijah. Sir, the major reason was for the education benefits. I'm a country boy from central Virginia, and our school didn't have any ... they had them for people who was excelling, but you have to excel, and everybody that excelled didn't go to school. So, my thing was I wanted to go to college. I wanted to be more than just that little country boy. So, I joined the military and they gave me that opportunities. And I will tell you that

it still took me eight years, right, to even take my first course once I got into the military, because there was so many other opportunities that was out there.

Isaac. I guess, my strategy, if you will, and you have to wonder just how planned it was, but to some degree there were just certain courses, for example, in the military education system that some were, and quite many of them in CID command, were optional. But if you're given the opportunity ... And I guess that's something for the aspiring warrants ... If you are given the opportunity, execute. Don't say, "Well, don't really need that." "Mmm, I think I might pass on that." Because each one of the courses and the educational opportunities that I was given clearly on paper upon completion helped build toward achieving those warrant officer promotion dates, no question. No question about it. If given the opportunity, take it. Even if it doesn't appear that right now, I mean I really need that.

Theme 7: Establish a Career Roadmap

The seventh theme identified was establishing a career roadmap. There was agreement among the participants who that setting goals, planning their career and having a roadmap were success strategies that propelled their career progression. The participants provided the following comments.

Armstrong. What actions you need to establish to achieve those goals? So you've got to have a roadmap. And if you, as an individual, stick to that roadmap, with the help of others, be they fellow warrant officers, be they commissioned officers, be they NCOs, and certainly the soldiers that you lead, you've got to have a plan. And you've got to execute that plan to the fullest.

Isaac. For those aspiring warrant officers in the future, it's critically important that they think through very carefully what benchmarks that they can identify, that they should achieve, that they can reach in order to achieve the level that they want to attain. Very, very important. You can as close as possible map that out so that there's a clear progression as you move forward. Granted, tomorrow may not be promised but you can certainly, if at all possible, map out a timeline of when you'd like to achieve certain things, when you want to accomplish certain goals in order to reach the next level, take the next step, and move forward into the next arena that you want to find yourself in.

Theme 8: Excel Through Army Promotion System

Participants were asked to describe the factors that contributed to their promotion from W1 to CW5 throughout their warrant officer career. Several participants explained that the Army promotion system as one of the best methods that look at the merit of the soldier, and promotion is based on performance. The participants provided the following comments.

Armstrong. Well, I believe, looking back, as a matter of fact, when I saw that question, I had to go back and find something to remind me of where I was, and how long it took me to get there. And I finally found a copy of an old ORB. I had an idea of my promotion case, but I had to confirm it, so looking back on it, it was pretty normal. It's was pretty much routine from W1 to W2, and the time gauge from 2 to 3, 3 to 4, were pretty much routine, about average. None of my promotions were below the zone. They were all within the range of the average promotion for the next higher grade.

Isaac. I think each skill sets offer each one of us, every one, the opportunity to excel in any given time. It depends on how you apply yourself and you love what you do. If you got somebody in a job that they don't like, naturally, they're not gonna be motivated to perform and do the best at it. I mean, a lot of this, with promotions, can be driven by demands or the mission for the Army too as a whole, you know, as we go through our career. If they have a critical need for this particular skill set, the promotion is gonna be more in an area. And in my case, I found, like, supply, it's supply and demand. You know, it drives the backbone of the Army. But the key ones being for us, I found a lot of us in person, they don't supply medical, communication, and maintenance. But those are some of the skillsets, even though I do have some MI buddies, but those are the skillsets that are critical to the mission of the Army. I'm not saying the rest of them are not, but you got to [inaudible 00:28:18], communicate, maintenance, you got to have somebody manage the personnel, supply and medic.

Theme 9: Faith

There was common agreement among the participants attributing their faith and belief in God as a means of navigating their careers to their higher ranks. With limited opportunities outside the military during their service, the participants relied on their faith along with their hard work to maintain a successful career. Two of the participants served during Vietnam and prayed a lot. The following are responses from the participants in describing their experiences on success strategies.

Howard. God and hard work were personal attributes used that contributed to my success as an Army warrant officer.

Isaac. I strived to be the best at what I did, giving my commanders more than one alternative, as I told you before. I saw what needed to be done, and I do it. I did it. I accept the challenge. Not being a yes man. I took care of my soldiers. Most important, seeing where I could make a difference in the Army. Not accepting the term “No, it can’t be done.” That wasn’t an answer. I embraced the commander’s vision. And I prayed a lot. I’m not gonna tell you a lie. I did a lot of praying, okay?

Summary

This study sought to understand and highlight the intrinsic and extrinsic influences and motivators for those African Americans who reached the highest levels in the U.S. Army WOC. The ten participants were retired male African American senior field grade warrant officers. All participants described their experience in reaching the senior officer ranks and attributed much of their success to a myriad of influences that included education, family, mentoring, work ethic, resilience, and adaptability, and exposure to life and culture. These male African American officers are adaptable and resilient, and they attribute these abilities to their exposure to different experiences, challenges, and people throughout their lives and careers.

The data analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding process resulted in 240 codes emerging from the open coding analysis. These codes were categorized and formed into ten categories. From these categories, axial codes emerged that were used to identify the selective codes necessary in the development of the themes in the study. Nine themes emerged: competence in primary functional areas, aspiration, overcoming barriers to promotion, proven leadership style, mentorship, educational opportunities, establish a

career roadmap, excel through army promotion system, and faith. These themes represented the answer to the central research question: How do retired African American male officers describe their experience of attaining the rank of senior field grade warrant officers (CW5/W5) in the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps? Chapter 5 presents implications, recommendations and conclusion of the research study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The rationale for this phenomenological study was to add to the literature and gain an understanding of the lived experiences of African-American males regarding motivation and success strategies to achieve the highest rank in the Army WOC. The results of the two subquestions and the findings supporting the research question revealed various factors that contributed to the ascension of these participants to CW5 in the Army WOC: (a) competence in primary functional areas, (b) aspiration, (c) overcoming barriers to promotion, (d) proven leadership style, (e) mentorship, (f) education opportunities, (g) establish a career roadmap, (h) excel through army promotion system, and (i) faith. The findings from this study may be used to guide senior leader decision makers and recruiters while also addressing the underrepresentation of African-American males in senior leadership positions. The study may also lead to a significant increase of African-American males aspiring to and becoming members of the WOC. Minorities are currently underrepresented within the uniformed services (Rice, 2005; Riccucci, 2009), and the data for 2030 and beyond suggests that this underrepresentation will widen (Office Personnel Management, 2011).

Interpretation of Findings

Semi-structured interviews along with a qualitative questionnaire and analysis of supporting provisional coding sheets revealed perceptions and lived experience of 10 retired service members of the Army WOC concerning their motivational success strategies to achieve the highest rank of CW5. Their input provided insights into the role

of African-American senior leaders in addressing the lack of African Americans at the senior field grade warrant officer level in the Army. Additionally, they provided insights into measures to employ leading to the enduring establishment of career progression strategies for African Americans desiring to advance their careers to the senior level in the Army WOC. An analysis and assessment of findings presented with conclusions address the research questions identified in this study.

Summary of the Results

I sought to explore the lived experiences male African-American officers in the Army WOC who reached the senior officer level (CW5) and their strategies to ascend to this rank. As of the date of this study, data of the first African American promoted to the rank of CW5 is unknown. Although there have been many African Americans who have ascended to the rank of CW5, their accomplishments are largely unknown. The first appointment of an Army staff senior warrant officer representing all WOs for the Department of the Army was African American.

The findings describe what is unique about male African-American officers who reach the senior officer ranks in the U.S. Army WOC and provide an understanding that may assist the Army and other workforce analysts in recruiting, developing, retaining, and studying members of this population.

Discussion of the Results

I used the resiliency theory, derived from the data, to explore “What is unique about male African American senior warrant officers in the Army WOC?” Starting with a single open-ended question, I asked each participant to describe his personal experiences

of attaining the rank of senior field grade warrant officer (CW5/W5) in the Army WOC. The phenomenological approach was ideal for this type of study because it allowed me to capture the lived experiences of each participant. The theory that emerged from these data is that male African American officers who reach the senior officer ranks in the Army WOC are adaptable and resilient, and this resiliency is developed from exposure to different experiences, challenges, people, and cultures throughout their lives and careers.

Conclusions Concerning the Literature and the Field

There is little literature on what is unique about African Americans who succeed, and there is less literature on successful African Americans in the military, especially those in the Army WOC. Therefore, relations that can be drawn between the conclusions of this research and the existing literature are preliminary at best.

McClelland (1985) suggested the following characteristics and attitudes of achievement-motivated people: (a) they are more motivated by simply achieving than they are by financial or material outcomes; (b) they do not perform or achieve for the purpose of earning praise or recognition but for the satisfaction in successfully reaching a goal or completing a task; (c) they see the financial or material gain of reaching a goal as only one measure of success and not the ultimate measure or goal; and (d) they prefer reliable and accurate feedback over simple praise. Based on these descriptors, the data collected from the participants in this study aligned with several aspects of McClelland's theory.

However, achievement motivation does not adequately describe the experiences of the participants in this study. For instance, the culture of military service is an up-or-

out promotion system that publicly rewards excellent performance through promotions and punishes poor or even average performance through failed promotion. This system appears to drive, perhaps unconsciously, many personnel toward extrinsic motivators. Several of the participants in this study illustrated strong achievement motivation as defined by McClelland. In the military, even intrinsically motivated performers have been conditioned to expect reward or recognition in various forms. This is especially true for promotions, which are often publicly presented before a group of peers. However, I did not determine whether participants were intrinsically or externally motivated in this study.

Researchers have sought to compare achievement motivation with the Big Five personality trait taxonomy. For example, conscientiousness refers to goal-directed behavior, and individuals who are conscientious tend to be responsible and organized (Hart et al., 2007, p. 268). Individuals rated higher on conscientiousness are more likely to go on to successful careers than individuals rated lower on conscientiousness (Kern, Martin, & Luong, 2009). Additionally, openness refers to how much an individual is willing to accept new ideas or experiences (Hart et al., 2007, p. 268). Both conscientiousness and openness are personality traits that may lead to being an adaptable and resilient goal-oriented individual and could be used to describe the participants in this study. However, because a personality inventory was not used in this qualitative study, these findings suggest the need for further research with a similar population using the Big Five personality inventory or a mixed methods approach.

Another area that these study results led me to explore is career mentoring as a potential factor influencing the success of the study participants. Mentoring is challenging to study, as it is defined in different ways across multiple studies. As it relates to the present study, mentoring played a major role in the success of the participants. However, the participants only described informal mentoring as a factor related to their success. Formal mentoring refers to an organization taking a direct role in matching mentors and protégés (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). In such programs, employees that are more senior are matched to junior employees based on completed profiles that provide professional and personal information. This mentoring is planful and lacks spontaneity. In contrast, informal mentoring occurs when the mentor and protégé develop a relationship due to factors such as common interests (Chao et al., 1992). Informal mentoring may be instrumental in facilitating trust relations that are sustained over time, which allows the mentee to feel comfortable discussing challenges and issues they are facing as well as seeking help with things like mapping out their career.

Another study that related to the current study was conducted by Davis (2009), who surveyed and interviewed 12 African American finance officers (four of whom were female) about the factors they felt had an impact on their ability to be promoted and advance in the U.S. Army. Though Davis sought to highlight factors that led to the disparity in promotions among races, I sought to understand those who were promoted to the senior officer ranks rather than the factors that held them back. However, this study's findings revealed that a strong work ethic and drive for excellence were significant factors leading to success, which corresponds with Davis's themes: (a) work ethic, (b) a

lack of mentors, (c) issues of fairness in the promotion board process, (d) issues of accuracy in performance evaluation reports, and (e) racism. Additionally, the lack of mentors of the same race was an issue that arose in the present study; however, these data indicate that those who were successful in the Army WOC managed to address the scarcity of senior African-American mentors by connecting with nonminority mentors. Further, issues of fairness in the promotion board process and issues of accuracy in performance evaluation reports did not arise in the present study, likely because the participants in this study had been successful in passing the screening of promotion boards and reaching high ranks. Finally, racism was experienced by some of the participants in the present study, but these individuals took pride in their ability to adapt to and overcome such obstacles.

Davis (2009) also found that educational preparation and degree attainment by the African-American finance officers were neither a contributor nor an obstacle to promotion. However, in the present study, education, learning, and the attainment of educational degrees were a major factor in how the participants perceived their success. In contrast, Gibbons's (2011) findings with African-American students are related to issues found in the present study. Gibbons noted the importance of parental support for education and learning, seen in this study as the categories of family influence and education. Gibbons also demonstrated the importance of positive peer groups, which parallels support and advisory networks, as well as the role of extracurricular activities, which parallel community, sports, and clubs in the present study.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation was that the study was limited to African-American men chief warrant officers. The second limitation was only participants who served in the U.S. Army and retired were selected. The third limitation is that the findings do not necessarily generalize all African-American men chief warrant officers. Unknown factors may include family conflicts or personal hardships that may have hindered career progression. The fifth and final limitation was that I included only African-American men who retired at the rank of CW5. No other group participated in this study.

Recommendations for Further Study

The opportunities for further research are broad and varied. Potential studies could include: (a) a quantitative exploration using the Big Five personality traits and achievement motivation for military officers across a sample of the five Armed Forces; (b) a case study of the first African American woman to be promoted to the most senior ranks in each of the five Armed forces; (d) a quantitative study of the parental factors associated with successful African American military officers and enlisted personnel; and (e) use of achievement motivation theory to assess senior officers in the Army, reported out by race, ethnicity, gender and chosen military professions. Each of these possible research directions would broaden the understanding of the growing diversity of the United States military workforce. They would establish a level of knowledge about the military workforce that seems not to exist today. Such research could lead to improvements in the screening processes that are currently in place. Further research might result in an overhaul of the training for initial accession into the military, as well as

for professional development, which may lead to increased retention and increased overall performance of individuals and groups. Understanding the military workforce allows us to prepare leaders and managers to lead and ensures the provision of the best opportunities for all to succeed.

Implications

The theoretical framework for this study was derived from current and seminal literature on representative bureaucracy and social equity in trying to understand the lived experiences of African-American males and the impacts of their socialization experiences and social origins on their attitudes and behaviors as they aspired to the position of CW5 within the Army WOC. The anticipated outcome of this study was an improved understanding of the lived experiences of retired male African American CW5s, which could then reinforce the existing literature or produce new insights. The findings of this study did reinforce concepts derived from the existing literature and introduced new ones. For example, Meier and Bohte (2001) suggested that individuals are more inclined to champion and pioneer the issues most relevant to their demographics. This was evident in this study, as demonstrated by the minority/minority mentorship coaching and development programs for aspiring Senior Executives. Additionally, similarity-attraction was also overwhelmingly seen as a cause of the small number of African Americans within the Army WOC.

This study also expanded the research in the area of active representation. Active representation suggests that individuals from a particular group actively seek to influence the outcomes of their specific group once in a position to do so. However, based on the

mentorship discussed within the findings, the African Americans in this study encountered non-African Americans who either sponsored or provided opportunities for their development and career progression.

Equally importantly, this study provided insight into the importance of socialization experiences, as well as exposure to role models at a very formidable age. Previous literature suggested that males are likely to have educational and occupational aspirations that mirror those of their parents. Although the sample was small, this study did not support this concept or theory. Less than 20% of the participants had parents who had attended and finished college or held white-collar jobs. However, the majority of the participants attended college immediately following high school.

Regarding their occupational aspirations, many desired to be pilots, engineers, executives or work in the business industry. Their parents, school officials or someone else fueled the aspirations of these individuals taking an interest in their future. In many cases, these individuals were non-African Americans. This highlights the importance of expanding the literature in looking at the impact that sponsorship plays early on in an individual's life and career.

This study provided insight into the self-confidence and tenacity necessary to pursue and aspire to senior-level positions. Part of confidence building derives from self-efficacy. Bandera (1977) considers self-efficacy a targeted perceived capacity. This is important because confidence in itself is built from persistence that generally leads to an accomplishment or conquering of a goal; in this case, the goal is achieving a particular occupation or position. Individuals who aspire to become Senior Executives must

recognize a need to be dedicated to this goal and, firstly, have confidence in their ability to be a successful leader and, secondly, from a discouragement point of view, not allow the small number of African American senior executives to discourage them from aspiring to this position. Although there is a minimal number of black males who are Army warrant officer members, the WOC itself makes up a small fraction of the total population of Army. African-American males must also seek out mentors, and the race or gender of mentors who can better assist them in meeting their goals should not matter.

This research suggests that individuals with prior enlisted senior ranks were in better positions to compete for and be appointed as members of the Army WOC and achieve the rank of CW5. Orville (1996) suggested that this learning process is continuous, beginning at birth and progressing throughout the later stages of life. The socialization experiences provided by the military, regarding working with individuals from various races, social statuses, and ethnicities, along with leadership development programs and assignments, were a major part of these participants' successes. This implies that military personnel may have been afforded the opportunities necessary to help build their senior leader core qualifications portfolios.

The findings of this study suggest that opportunity is a critical component necessary for placing African American in competitive positions to become senior leaders. McGregor (1974) indicated that social equity should provide a reasonable and equal distribution of opportunity and reward. Throughout the study, the experiences relayed by the participants suggested that opportunity was a key element that helped them

to achieve their career aspirations. The literature did not provide a clear delineation of what types of opportunities an individual need to be considered for certain positions.

This study showed that the opportunities provided must include developmental and leadership opportunities, which, in turn, place an individual in a better position for promotion opportunities. This implies that leaders and talent managers must ensure that programs and policies are developed that are fair, equitable and not based on a system that does not provide equal access to all. The literature should be expanded within the area of opportunity to address opportunities that develop individuals for future positions specifically. Leaders do know what positions and jobs will lead to a better chance of being selected as a senior leader in the WOC. Without a fair and equitable system in place, decision-makers will continue to select individuals, with whom they had similarities with and attracted to because of these similarities, thus denying others the opportunity to have a legitimate chance of competing.

Understanding the stories relayed by these participants and inferring how their experiences, motivational success strategies, and behaviors were formed and shaped by their social origins and socialization experiences is important to the overall quest of increasing diversity within the senior ranks of the Armed Forces. All of the participants agreed that they faced challenges in the selection process; only 2 of the 10 attributed these challenges to race. All agreed that some of the issues experienced by African Americans are not limited to one particular race. This study suggests that the African-American males who participated did face obstacles, but they overcame these barriers as someone lent a hand to pull them up or place them in a better position to succeed. All

agreed that it is not necessarily easy to obtain a senior field grade warrant officer position; however, it is not impossible, either. The Army WOC can assist in the process of increasing the number of African-American males within the enlisted ranks; they must first acknowledge, though, that the small current population of male African American warrant officers indicates that a problem does exist, and then actively seek to correct this problem.

Finally, the implications of this study, although addressing Black males, can have a further reach in regard to African-American males as a whole in both the Public and Private Sectors. Roberts (2012) in his study of senior executives within corporate America suggested there was a lack of talent management, succession planning and implementation of programs, which help to place African Americans in positions to compete with their non-minority peers. Coupled with this study researchers should seek to leverage the findings from these respective studies to determine if the issues are driven by an organization or those individuals leading the organization.

Significance of the Research

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), in 2060, the population will be 28.6% Hispanic, 14.3% non-Hispanic black and 9.3% non-Hispanic Asian. Today, the breakdown is 17.4% Hispanic, 13.2% black and 5.4% Asian. This study can catalyze further research on the rapidly evolving diverse workforce in the United States. Although the study focused specifically on African Americans and the Army WOC, the theory presented here drives toward a deeper understanding of resilience, adaptability, and the role these plays in achieving success; as such, the findings may apply to other

underrepresented minorities. The research also draws attention to the critical lack of empirical research on the topic.

Conclusions

The resiliency theory derived from this study presented an understanding of a population that has only been studied from the perspective of why African Americans fail. Given military leaders like General Colin L. Powell (U.S. Army, Retired), former Secretary of State; and the Army Staff Senior Warrant Officer CW5 David Williams (U.S. Army Retired), who was the first warrant officer to be appointed in that position, it is time to shift the focus to how African Americans succeed. This change in focus would lead to knowledge that could drive social change and create opportunities for the United States workforce and African Americans.

Teamwork in such a diverse environment brings about both opportunities and challenges for organizations and managers; such a workforce can be beneficial when a variety of perspectives come together and can be instrumental in solving problems (Mayo, 1999). The more that we understand about the diverse cultures that make up the American workforce, the better equipped we will be to nurture an environment of collaboration, innovation, and productivity. This exploratory study suggests that male African American officers who reach the senior officer ranks in the Army WOC are adaptable and resilient, and this resiliency is developed from exposure to different experiences, challenges, people, and cultures throughout their lives and careers. It is hoped the theory that emerged in this study is a stimulus for more research expansion to

advance social change within all underrepresented minority demographic groups across the Department of Defense.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Date: 6/4/18

Assignment code: RQP1 – RQP10 (10 participants)

Start time: 00:00:00

End time: 01:00:00

Thank you for taking time to participate in this research study. As you know, I'm James J. Williams, a PhD student at Walden University. My dissertation topic is *Career Ascension of African American Men in the Army Warrant Officer Corps*. You were selected as a participant because you met the criteria needed for this study. I will be conducting this research study. The purpose of this study is to better understand the career progression experiences of African-American men serving in the Army Warrant Officer Corps who achieved the highest rank of W5. 2018 marks the 100th Anniversary of the WOC and your lived experiences will add to the scholarly literature that has not be explored. Your participation is greatly needed and very much appreciated. I will provide you with a code for your confidentiality. The interview will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Should you choose to stop the interview at any time; all information obtained will not be used. If there are no questions, I will begin recording the interview.

Warm-Up: I would like to learn about your experiences in the Army. No right or wrong answer exists. I just want you to be honest in sharing your experiences, both positive and negative. Think back to when you first considered joining . . .

Demographic Questions

1. **Probe:** Why did you decide to join the Army? Did you have any concerns or hesitation joining? If yes, what were your concerns?
2. What was your career field (e.g Signal, Quartermaster, Intel, Infantry)?
3. Do you believe the military is a savior for African-American men?
4. Why did you aspire to become an Army Warrant Officer?
5. What made you remain in the military?
6. How long did it take you to reach Chief Warrant Officer 5?
7. What has been your (professional development) educational path leading to becoming a (Senior Field Grade Warrant Officer)? **Probe:** What is your highest level of education?

Motivation

8. What barriers or obstacles have you encountered in your career progression?
9. How did you overcome the obstacles or barriers?
10. If you ranked the factors that you believe set you apart from your peers, what would they be?
11. What specific career strategies do you believe minority males utilize to navigate their careers in the Army?

Success Strategies

12. How did you excel through the Army promotion system?
13. What personal attributes contributed to your success?
14. Did mentorship play a role in your ascension to the Chief Warrant Officer 5 rank? If so, how so? If not, why not?

15. Do you feel that certain jobs are more beneficial than others for getting promoted?

Please explain.

16. What advice would you give an NCO about the WOC? **Probe:** As for Army warrant officers currently serving – what advice would you give to them to make Chief Warrant Officer Five?

17. What recommendations would you suggest that could improve the promotion system for African Americans?

Leadership

18. What is your philosophy on leadership?

19. What kind of leadership style do you have?

20. If retired, what are you doing now? How has the Army WOC benefit you in your transition to a civilian career?

Is there anything that you would like to add that we have not covered that may be relevant to this research study?

CLOSING

Thank you again for participating in my interview. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. I might contact you for a follow up interview. If there is anything that you think of later that would be beneficial please let me know so that we can schedule a shorter follow up interview.

This is a historic timeline for the Army WOC as it celebrates “A Century of Service”. Your lived experiences in achieving the highest rank in the WOC as an African American male is a notable achievement. Your history matters! With that, thank you for time the time from your schedule to meet with me.

Appendix B: NIH Certificate

