

(Blank Page)

DISSERTATION APPROVED BY

September 5, 2018

Date



Debra Ford, Ph.D., Chair



James R. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., Committee Member



Jennifer Moss Breen, Ph.D., Director



Gail M. Jensen, Ph.D., Dean

LEADERSHIP MENTORING: A STUDY OF THE MENTORING EXPERIENCES OF
FEMALE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES

By
CHRISTOPHER M. COBLE

A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in
Interdisciplinary Leadership

Omaha, NE
(September 5, 2018)

Copyright 2018, Christopher M. Coble

This document is copyrighted material. Under copyright law, no part of this document may be reproduced without the expressed permission of the author.

Abstract

This dissertation in practice used the phenomenological qualitative method to explore the perceptions of the mentoring experiences of female federal civil service employees at a major Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina. The sample consisted of 15 female civil servants in senior leadership positions in the grades GS-12 to GS-14. Data was collected through the interview method using open-ended questions that discovered the types of mentoring the participants experienced throughout their careers and how mentoring, if at all, contributed to their professional career development in the federal service. The findings showed most interviewees experienced informal mentoring during their careers, and the partnership with the mentor positively influenced their personal and professional development. However, in the federal service, most sample members were unaware of or did not participate in the Marine Corps' formal mentoring program, an extensive, service-sponsored effort to purposely pair protégés with mentors as part of a broader leadership development program for federal civil servants. Analysis of the data suggested that creating a dedicated Mentor Program Coordinator, whose only duties are administering the formal mentoring program, is the most efficient solution to furthering mentoring partnerships, and thus leadership development, at the installation. Finally, proof of the efficacy of having a sole Mentor Program Coordinator may demonstrate the need for similar billets at other Marine Corps bases, providing enhanced mentoring services to all federal employees employed by the Marine Corps.

Keywords: mentoring, Mentor Program Coordinator, Marine Corps, leadership development, Civilian Mentor Program

Acknowledgements

To those who have helped me in my dissertation journey, sincere and heartfelt gratitude is bestowed. This list is not comprehensive but must include a thank-you to my dissertation chair and co-chair, Dr. Debbie Ford and Dr. Jim Martin, as well as my wife and daughter, Sara and Madelyn, who have stuck with me during this four-year journey. Finally, I am grateful to the many Marines, federal civil servants, and volunteers who assisted in me gaining authorization to conduct research through the lengthy and detailed permission process.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction and Background	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study	5
Research Question and Subquestion.....	5
Aim of the Study.....	5
Methodology.....	5
Definition of Relevant Terms	7
Limitation and Delimitations	8
Personal Biases	9
The Role of Leadership in this Study	10
Significance of this Dissertation in Practice Study.....	12
Summary.....	13
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
Introduction.....	15
Mentoring.....	16

Women and Discrimination in the Workforce.....	22
Non-Traditional Types of Mentoring.....	31
Pairing Leadership Styles and Mentor Characteristics	34
Mentoring Programs	36
Summary	44
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	47
Introduction.....	47
Research Question and Subquestion.....	47
Research Design.....	47
Participants, Data Sources, and Recruitment.....	48
Data Collection Tools	51
Data Collection Procedures, Validation, and Data Analysis Plan	52
Ethical Considerations	59
Summary.....	61
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	63
Introduction.....	63
Data Collection and Analysis.....	64
Presentation of the Findings.....	67
Synthesis of the Themes to the Research Question	99
Summary	100
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	102
Introduction.....	102
Purpose of the Study	102

Aim of the Study.....	103
Proposed Solution.....	105
Support for the Solution.....	106
Factors, Policies, and Stakeholders Related to the Solution.....	108
Potential Barriers: Resistance to Change.....	109
Implementation of the Proposed Solution.....	110
Factors and Stakeholders Related to the Implementation of the Solution.....	115
Evaluation and Timeline for Implementation and Assessment.....	115
Implications.....	117
Practical Implications.....	117
Implications for Future Research.....	117
Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice.....	118
Summary of the Study.....	119
References.....	122
Appendices.....	134

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1. First-year Tasks for the Mentoring Program Coordinator	113
Table F1. Participant Demographics.....	140

List of Figures

	Page
Figure 1. Phenomenon and Theme Interrelationships	67

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Background

Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986) described women's ascent up the corporate career ladder as blocked by a glass ceiling, an invisible barrier crafted from enduring prejudice and corporate tradition. Despite efforts to reduce gender discrimination in the workplace, women continue to be underrepresented in senior leadership positions (Cook & Glass, 2014). The myriad barriers obstructing women from upper management include antiquated stereotypes about gender and leadership, whereas men are portrayed as more adept, competent managers (Bruckmülle & Branscombe, 2010). These stereotypes persist despite research which suggests women often display more attributes critical for the top-tier leader: compassion, patience, decisiveness, and authenticity (Cook & Glass, 2014).

The metaphor of the glass ceiling is not restricted to public or private business. The Department of Defense and the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recognize that obstacles may exist within the federal civilian workforce that impede female employee promotions (Department of Defense, 2015). Both organizations have formal Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) programs to identify negative workplace cultures and lingering stereotypes concerning women and minorities. OPM, which manages the federal civil service, stated that between 2008-2015, EEO programs increased female employees in entry-level positions, included more women in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) professions, and produced a 5% increase in women fulfilling the most senior government leadership positions (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017a).

Despite these encouraging statistics, women only comprise 44% of the federal civil service and represent less than 15% of employees in senior leadership positions (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017a). Some federal organizations have fewer women in civil service positions. For example, the United States Marine Corps employs nearly 18,000 civil servants with just 26% (4,600) being female and seven percent occupying senior leadership billets (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017a). More specifically, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in eastern North Carolina has a small civilian workforce consisting of fewer than 112 senior civilian leaders; while 14% of these individuals are female, 100% more than the greater Marine Corps, they only reside in the most junior of the supervisory positions (M. Arkin, personal communication, June 1, 2017).

Similar demographics are mirrored in the Marine Corps' active duty force. Although the service has consistently increased the number of women serving in both the officer and enlisted ranks the past three decades, the force continues to be male-dominated (CNA Corporation, 2015). Federal organizations with similar gender demographics, such as federal law enforcement agencies, have caused female employees to experience "greater occupational stress...through discrimination, exclusion and harassment" (Barratt, Bergman, & Thompson, 2014, p. 21).

While some research states gender diversity may negatively impact team performance in male-dominated professions, generally, as organizational gender distribution becomes more balanced, group collaboration and output increases (Bear & Woolley, 2011). Men and women employ different means to gather information and to solve problems (Hannagan & Larimer, 2010). Women are more likely to encourage a

democratic decision-making process and “make decisions that reflect the mean preferences not just of the group itself, but also of the larger population” (Hannagan & Larimer, 2010, p. 52). Women are often more aware of verbal and nonverbal cues, allowing them to be better listeners and more able to ascertain individual motives (Larimer & Hannagan, 2010). Further, gender-balanced, collaborative groups increase the collective intelligence of the team through improved social interaction, resulting in more innovative products and discoveries (Bear & Woolley, 2011).

Marginalization may negatively affect female employees attaining positions of greater responsibility. Leadership development often requires some method of mentor-to-mentee interaction, and without a mentor’s sponsorship or guidance, excluded female employees could lack critical leadership skills (Bergelson, 2014). Therefore, the aim of this dissertation in practice is not to analyze gender discrimination in the U.S. Marine Corps but to analyze how leadership mentoring, or its lack thereof, affects the professional development of female federal civil servants.

Mentoring is crucial for the training and leadership development of employees at all organizational levels. Historically, mentoring is “the longest-practiced approach to leadership development,” and the ability for organizations to sustain long-term value creation requires the patience and diligence to mentor future leaders (Anderson, 2013, p. 2; Tjan, 2017). However, in organizations where leadership boards and senior positions are dominated by men, women may be unable to attain the sponsorship of top-tier leaders who will mentor or advocate for them (Sexton, Lemak, & Wainio, 2014). This is often a result of reduced access to professional networks critical for the development of social capital (Wang, 2009). The literature shows the positive effects of mentorship for junior

female leaders, particularly when more women are represented in senior management positions and there is equal access to social networks (Bednar & Gicheva, 2014).

Regardless of gender, establishing a trusting partnership with a senior, more-experienced organizational member may be an essential part of leadership development.

This chapter introduces the reader to a real-world problem set in the researcher's professional practice setting (Creighton University, 2015). First, the purpose and aim of the study will be introduced, to include the research question and subquestion. Next, the research methodology will be presented, as well as relevant definitions, the researcher's personal biases related to the study, and any limitations or delimitations that affected data analysis and conclusions. As this dissertation in practice is part of a broader leadership curriculum, the role of leadership as it relates to the research topic will then be discussed. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the significance of the research.

Statement of the Problem

At a major Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina, only 14% of senior federal civil service employees (GS-12 to GS-15) are female. Individuals in the General Schedule (GS) pay grades are considered white-collar, professional employees, with GS-15 employees earning the highest salary (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017b). This statistic mirrors similar demographic realities in many business and governmental organizational hierarchies, where women are underrepresented in leadership or senior positions (Beaty & Davis, 2012). Within the Marine Corps, 7% of female employees are a GS-12 through GS-15; however, when analyzing all federal government organizations, female personnel occupy 14% of these pay grades (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017a).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of career mentoring of senior female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina.

Research Question

How do female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina describe their mentoring experiences?

Subquestion

How do female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina describe how mentoring experiences contributed to their professional career development?

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify the different types of mentoring received by female federal civil service employees throughout their career. Specifically, this study discovered the mentoring experiences of the participants, how mentors assisted these leaders in their professional journey, and their perceptions of the importance of mentoring for leadership. The results of this phenomenological study may be used to improve existing, formal leadership development programs for female federal civil service employees in the Department of the Navy and the Marine Corps, such as the Marine Corps' Civilian Mentor Program.

Methodology

This qualitative phenomenological study described the leadership mentoring experiences of female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in

eastern North Carolina. The phenomenological method of inquiry allowed the researcher to gain a detailed, reflective understanding of a phenomenon that extracted the essence of what the participants experienced (Richards & Morse, 2013). The sample included 14 female participants, and one recent retiree, assigned to positions on the installation that placed them in the federal General Schedule (GS) (or equivalent) pay scales of GS-12 to GS-15. Within the Marine Corps, female GS-12 to GS-15 employees represent 1,233 of nearly 18,000 civil service personnel (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017a). The primary method of data collection was one-on-one, semi-structured interviews using a digital recording device and a pre-established interview protocol with open-ended questions; the interviews lasted between 30-55 minutes.

An initial list of potential interviewees was developed by the researcher based on known individuals meeting the sample's demographics. These individuals were individually contacted via email to request voluntary, anonymous participation in the research. Data collection incurred no cost to the federal government, and all interviews were conducted during off-duty hours for both the interviewer and interviewee. The interviews were digitally recorded with the participants' permission, professionally transcribed using Rev.com, and proofed by the researcher to ensure accuracy using handwritten notes annotated during the conversations.

As detailed in chapter 3 of this dissertation, and per the intent of phenomenological research, data analysis sought to discover the essence of the participants' lived experiences. Themes were derived from a phenomenological data analysis method first introduced by Moustakas and modified by Creswell and Poth (2018). Collected data was coded using qualitative data analysis software (MAXQDA

Analytics Pro 12). First cycle coding was conducted using an amalgamation of a priori, in vivo, and emergent coding to detect patterns in the data and to identify categories and subcategories; during the second cycle coding, emotion and value coding further grouped these codes into five primary themes (Babbie, 2017; Saldana, 2016). Interviewee anonymity was maintained using pseudonyms, and all transcripts and notes were stored on the researcher's laptop using password protection.

Definition of Relevant Terms

The following terms were used operationally throughout this study.

Federal civil servant: an individual employed by the United States federal government.

Mentor: a trusted individual with influence and personal or professional expertise who may offer guidance or advice to peers or subordinates (mentees). Through an informal or formal partnership, the mentor assists the mentee understand themselves while increasing their self-confidence, technical knowledge, and intellectual maturity (Lowney, 2003).

Leader: any individual who influences another person or group through the application of leadership skills to attain organizational goals or complete established objectives. The leader may also be any individual who influences those around them through enrichment or change.

Leadership: a transactional process whereby one individual (the leader) influences a single person or group to meet a common goal (Olson & Simerson, 2015).

Billet: a position that an employee, civil servant, or service member occupies to complete assigned work; each base or installation has a pre-established number of billets

as assigned in the organization's Table of Organization (T/O). Some billets may only be assigned to either civilian employees or active duty service members.

General Schedule (GS): a classification and pay system used by the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM), consisting of 15 grades, GS-1 (lowest) to GS-15 (highest); personnel classified within the GS system are considered white-collar employees in technical, administrative, or professional positions (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017b). The pay grade above GS-15 is the Senior Executive Service (SES), representing leaders in positions just below those requiring Presidential appointment (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017c). Other pay bands exist within the federal government, such as the Federal Wage System, for blue-collar employees paid hourly (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017b).

Air station: refers to the Marine Corps installation where the research data was collected. There are several major air stations in the Marine Corps; Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point is the largest air station on the United States' east coast.

Limitations and Delimitations

The air station has only four permanent billets for employees with the GS-14/15 ranks, and only one of these is currently filled by a female federal civil servant. This prevents the analysis of the leadership mentoring experiences of female leaders in the most senior General Schedule billets. Additionally, because of the relatively small number of federal civil servants employed on the air station, there are only 112 positions in the pay grades of GS-12 to GS-13, of which only 16 were females. This constrained the sample size to 16 or fewer female employees.

Nonetheless, experiences of the interviewees may be considered representative of female federal service employees throughout the Marine Corps due to: a) all federal organizations are obligated to follow equal employment opportunity guidelines established by the Federal Executive Branch and OPM; b) all Marine Corps civil servants may participate in the organization's Civilian Mentor Program, established by the service's Manpower and Reserve Affairs branch, which sets guidelines for and encourages federal civil servants to seek mentoring relationships; and c) federal civil servants often move to adjacent bases during their federal careers, similar to the repeated moves conducted by active duty service members. These transitions are frequently the result of new career opportunities or promotions and may provide the interviewee additional mentoring experiences observed at other federal installations.

Personal Biases

The researcher's past experiences and beliefs may bias data collection and analysis. Through reflexivity, however, the researcher continuously reflected on how his actions or interpretations affected the participants and the interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, the researcher strived to keep the participants' perspectives and experiences as the focus of the study, not on the beliefs that were meaningful to the researcher (Creswell, 2014).

Validity of the findings established credibility and trustworthiness in the research. One important method to demonstrate trustworthiness was to use two or more interraters or experts to analyze and critique the results (Roberts, 2010). Several individuals provided assistance during the conduct of the study while also giving advice for solving the professional dilemma. These includes the researcher's dissertation chair and assistant

dissertation chair. Additionally, five interview participants reviewed the themes derived from data analysis, providing feedback on the veracity of the themes discovered by the researcher (Creswell, 2014).

On a personal note, I was an active duty Marine officer for 22 years and am now a federal civil servant on the air station where the research was conducted. None of the participants were in the researcher's chain of command. While women are less represented in senior civil service leadership positions than their male peers who work at the air station, it was critical for the researcher to scrutinize the data without prejudice or prior judgment. Analyzing the data with no preconceptions about existing bias towards women was difficult, as the national media routinely prints articles bemoaning the difficulty women have in cresting the glass ceiling or receiving equal pay as men. It is important to note, however, that as a senior active duty Marine Corps officer, I was aware of only one formal equal opportunity complaint; this includes primarily working in billets that exposed the researcher to male and female service members and civilian employees of all ranks.

The Role of Leadership in this Study

The leader is responsible for all successes and failures in their organization, which includes the obligation to train the next generation of leaders. A critical aspect of this individual development is mentoring, comprised of a senior manager or supervisor having one-on-one, persistent interaction with a junior leader; the intent is for the senior leader to call attention to the individual's strengths and weaknesses, stimulating personal growth, self-reflection, and guidance for future improvement (Johnson & Anderson, 2015). Creating talented leaders nearly always requires some form of person-to-person

guidance and communication best established through a formal or informal mentoring partnership (Bergelson, 2014).

Employees participating in mentoring programs report improved self-confidence, an increase in interdisciplinary skills, and increased satisfaction in the workplace (Bachkirova, Arthur, & Reading, 2015; Drew, 2014; Leggat, Balding, & Schiftan, 2015). There are several types of mentoring: informal, distance, peer-to-peer, and reverse, to name a few. Nonetheless, the end state is similar: a trusting partnership between two or more individuals, maximizing the junior leader's potential through shared experiences, respect, and professional support (Bohannon & Bohannon, 2015).

A critical component of the mentor/mentee relationship is trust and the related characteristic of authenticity. Authenticity is the concept of being true to oneself, and it is this notion that inspires the leadership style of authentic leadership (van den Bosch & Taris, 2015). Authentic leaders demonstrate selflessness and sincerity in their service to junior employees, enhancing employee engagement through their self-awareness and ethical decision-making (Sparrowe, 2005). The mentee's leadership potential, authenticity, and well-being, therefore, are enhanced through their own development of awareness and self-reflection (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

The mentoring partnership is bi-directional, benefitting the junior leader's personal growth and improving the mentor's engagement to the mentee and their organization (Schechter, 2014). Senior leaders must create a culture that encourages the development of aspiring leaders through a formal mentoring process. The payback for the organization, regardless of the type of mentoring program, likely will be authentic,

confident managers who comprehend the importance of continuously training the next generation of leaders.

Significance of this Dissertation in Practice Study

Bednar and Gicheva (2014) suggested increased representation of female leaders in senior organizational positions has positive professional and career results on junior female employees within the workplace. Statistically, female federal civil service employees on the Marine Corps air station are less likely to achieve the grades of GS-12 to GS-15 as their male peers. Consequently, women may seek other, non-governmental opportunities because of the “masculine images of government bureaucracy that are perpetuated in society” and the perception that career growth is not possible in federal service (Bright & Graham, 2014, p. 588).

Mentoring is a manner to instill confidence and commitment in employees and peers; the selfless leader understands this need and incorporates leadership development into their work routine (Tjan, 2017). The Marine Corps and the Office of Personnel Management provide guidelines for implementing civilian mentorship programs, but these guidelines are generally recommendations and may not be part of the development of junior leaders working on the air station. This gap reflects the opportunity for this dissertation in practice to answer the proposed research question: How do female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina describe their mentoring experiences?

This study adds to the literature in several ways. To the researcher’s knowledge, no scholarly research has been conducted at the air station specifically seeking knowledge on the mentoring experience of female federal civil service leaders. More

than ever, women are being represented in senior positions among Fortune 500 companies, and women continue to be promoted to critical leadership billets within the Federal civil service (Matsa & Miller, 2013; United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017c). However, does discrimination exist that may hinder the mentoring experiences of women, decreasing the opportunities for professional and leadership development? Does the dearth of senior female leaders diminish female opportunities for positive mentoring? Do female civil servants benefit more from having same-gender mentors? For example, Bednar and Gicheva (2014) note that mentoring may be more effective among employees of similar gender.

The study's conclusions may assist organizational leaders at the local and higher headquarters levels improve the mentoring opportunities for developing female leaders. If female employees have not been exposed to mentoring opportunities, this may help explain the lack of females in higher leadership positions in the General Schedule pay grades. Conversely, mentoring opportunities may be available but are not used by civil servants due to: inadequate mentor training, misunderstanding the benefits of a mentoring program, difficulty in navigating administrative websites used to volunteer to be mentors or mentees, or the inability to manage workload and time to allow for mentoring occasions.

Summary

In Greek lore, Mentor was entrusted with educating the hero Odysseus's son Telemachus and helping the young man in the quest to reunite with his father (Bloomberg, 2014; Carr, Pastor, & Levesque, 2015). The concept of master teacher and apprentice has existed throughout history, from Greek mythology, through the medieval

guild system with masters and apprentices, to the modern concept of the mentor as an expert in their field and the mentee as a pupil (Bergelson, 2014). Regardless, mentoring exists as a means for junior employees to incorporate the knowledge and experiences of senior leaders into their daily practices and as a means for these employees to have a sponsor in upper levels of management (Bergelson, 2014). Employees with positive mentor/mentee relationships are more effective at acting independently and develop the ability to self-regulate, such as setting goals, sustaining motivation, and creating and analyzing performance strategies (Schunk & Mullen, 2013).

As a critical component of leadership development, mentoring should be a part of each professional organization's individual and staff training. This dissertation in practice explored the concept of leadership mentoring as experienced by female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps air station. Further chapters in this phenomenological study analyze the concept of leadership mentoring and describe the results of 16 individual interviews with female leaders. The final chapter also explores methods that may improve the leadership mentoring experiences for female federal civil servants.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Mentoring is a dyadic relationship, wherein “the more experienced person (mentor) provides workplace [or personal] guidance and support to a less experienced person (mentee)” (Laukhuf & Malone, 2015, p. 71). The mentor enhances the mentee’s professional development through the transfer of knowledge, role modeling, and access to social networks (Geeraerts, et al., 2015). Mentoring relationships may be informal, consisting of casual meetings, or formal, organization-sponsored partnerships, backed by senior executive leaders.

Successful, formal mentoring programs are becoming increasingly important as senior leaders from the Baby Boomer generation seek retirement, taking with them decades of workplace knowledge and leadership (Beaty & Davis, 2012; Bergelson, 2014). Mentoring is especially critical for women, particularly in male-dominated organizations where persistent stereotypes of femininity may decrease female mentoring opportunities (Grantham, Pidano, & Whitcomb, 2014). However, no matter the recipient, mentoring is a critical component of individual leadership and professional development.

This literature review discusses the role of mentoring in leadership and career development, specifically enhancing the reader’s understanding of mentoring as it applies to women in the workforce. First, mentoring will be defined, to include the positive effects of a mentoring relationship. Next, a brief discussion on gender discrimination in the workplace is provided, followed by how women benefit from leadership mentoring with dialogue on same-sex leadership relationships. Subsequent paragraphs will show the differences between the myriad types of mentoring, with a section on two leadership

styles and their relationship with positive mentoring experiences. Finally, the literature review will conclude with a discussion on various methods to build a mentoring program, as well as an overview of the U.S. Marine Corps' Civilian Mentor Program.

The literature review was constructed using databases within Creighton University's Reinert-Alumni Memorial Library to search for peer-reviewed journals. Selected databases included: Academic Search Premier, ERIC, JSTOR, Business Source Complete, PsychINFO, and the Military and Government Collection. Search results were generally limited to journal articles published in 2013 or later. Additionally, search results within each database were refined to seek major topics of interest, primarily limited to articles concerning mentoring, women in the federal service, women and mentoring, and mentoring programs. For example, a search of the topic of interest *mentoring* within the ERIC search engine was limited to the two subjects *leadership training* and *program effectiveness*.

Mentoring

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring has many definitions and is applied in numerous methods across businesses and organizations. Shah (2017) describes the mentor as a trusted advisor who advances the mentee's leadership development by sharing work and life experiences, craft knowledge, and personal networks to "help them [the mentee] realize their full potential" (p. 1). Mentoring is the process of developing subordinates so they may gain the knowledge and experience to replace senior organizational leaders (Salley & Gregory, 2013). Specifically, mentoring is a special relationship, encompassing the "interactions between more-experienced mentors and less-experienced protégés, where mentors

provide career (instrumental) and psychosocial (relational) knowledge, advice, and support” (Schunk and Mullen, 2013, p. 362). Career functions include networking advice, exposure to senior leadership, and opportunities for new challenges, while psychosocial functions include role modeling, improved self-awareness, and increased confidence (Johnson & Anderson, 2015).

Bohannon and Bohannon (2015) further discuss the collaboration between the two parties. Mentoring is a partnership between the student and teacher, the mentee and mentor; it is a relationship built on shared experiences and trust, with the intent to maximize the mentee’s ability to become the person they aspire to be (Bohannon & Bohannon, 2015). The mentor demonstrates role-modeling behavior, impressing upon the protégé the value of learning cultural awareness, emotional maturity, and setting the example (Carr, Pastor, & Levesque, 2015).

The key aspect of mentoring, and the definition that will be used in this study, is that it is a partnership between an individual (the mentee) and a senior leader (the mentor) whose intent is a mutual sharing of ideas, lived experiences, and knowledge. This partnership may be formal, such as an organizational program which actively pairs junior leaders with experienced leaders, or an informal relationship, where an impromptu partnership exists without official sponsorship (Copeland & Calhoun, 2014). The mentor/mentee relationship is not a one-way flow of information, supporting a rigid hierarchy, but a two-way interaction supporting reciprocal leadership development (Schechter, 2014).

As will be discussed in greater detail, mentoring programs may involve relationships with peers and work colleagues or brief discussions between the mentee and

a senior organizational member (such as in speed mentoring). Often, the most productive mentoring relationships allow the mentee to discover personal strengths and weaknesses cultivated through a deliberate, sustained mentoring program (Johnson & Anderson, 2015). To further understand the characteristics of mentoring, the proceeding section will compare and contrast coaching and mentoring, two leadership development tools that have key differences.

Mentoring Versus Coaching

The terms coaching and mentoring are often used interchangeably when describing the interactions between junior and senior leaders, but there are key differences between them (Cleary & Horsfall, 2015). Bishop (2016) describes both terms as “forms of learning conversations, which require reflection during and after learning conversations” (p. 11). Additionally, coaching and mentoring are frequently one-on-one relationships focused on some aspect of professional development (Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016). Regardless, the primary difference between coaching and mentoring appears to be in the intent and characteristics of the mentee/coachee and mentor/coach relationship.

Coaching partnerships generally focus on meeting an employee’s specific developmental objectives and are goal-focused (Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016). Often short-term, coaching relationships typically involve personnel sourced from outside an organization’s hierarchy who are contracted to emphasize certain domains, targeting specific individual performance issues (Cleary & Horsfall, 2015). Outsourcing the coach removes any potential for fraternization or power struggles between the coach and coachee (Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016). A core feature of a coaching relationship is

often a formal contract whereby specific goals or personal objectives are established that are expected to be met by the end of the coach/coachee partnership; in fact, it is not always expected that the coach be more experienced than the coachee for the partnership to be successful (Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016).

In contrast, mentoring relationships are often long-term, with the mentor being a highly-experienced organizational member, charged with developing the mentee for roles of increased responsibility (Cleaver, 2016; Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016).

Mentoring is focused on building the mentee's awareness of self, exploring methods to enhance personal and professional well-being, and improving the individual's effectiveness at work (Cleary & Horsfall, 2015). Both coaching and mentoring are goal oriented; however, mentoring seeks to further build a lasting, personal relationship between the student and teacher intent on sharing knowledge and self-discovery (Cleary & Horsfall, 2015). Mentoring outcomes are often intangible, with long-term mentoring relationships pursuing an increase in the mentee's confidence, intellectual maturity, and understanding of ethics (Cleaver, 2016). Coaching and mentoring both have their value in developing leaders and training technically proficient employees; however, as will be discussed in the following section, successful mentoring relationships positively influence both work-related skills and psychological well-being.

Personal Benefits of a Positive Mentoring Relationship

Mentoring partnerships affect two primary components of professional development: career functions and psychosocial functions (Johnson & Anderson, 2015). Career functions include elements important for job progression, such as assigning challenging assignments, assisting in learning the discipline's skill sets, and introducing

the mentee to the mentor's professional network (Dow, 2014). The psychosocial component of mentoring includes strengthening the confidence of the junior employee through active listening, providing support during stressful situations, and offering sincere friendship (Ghosh, 2015).

Employees engaged in positive mentoring relationships experience improved work performance and an increase in intrinsic motivation, especially when their leaders are viewed as being authentic, supportive, and involved in staff professional development (Marques, 2013). For example, in an analysis of a long-term, large-scale coaching and mentoring program, Bachkirova, Arthur, and Reading (2015) concluded that 78% of the 120 employees interviewed reported greater workplace engagement, improved self-efficacy, and a greater sense of confidence (both personal and professional). Ideally, the protégé journeys from a state of "dependence and inexperience toward independence and proficiency" (Carr, Pastor, & Levesque, 2015, p. 3).

Building social capital through the mentor's personal network is a vital aspect of the mentoring relationship. Copeland and Calhoun (2014), in their analysis of 39 female school district superintendents, stated that networks available to female leaders through their mentor were critical for their selection to the superintendency. Additionally, in an analysis of 20 female hospital CEOs, enhancing one's visibility with senior executives, especially by volunteering to work on organizational-level projects, significantly increased opportunities for upward mobility (Sexton, Lemak, & Wainio, 2014).

Sexton, Lemak, and Wainio (2014) also noted that when 70% of their female research participants developed a mentoring relationship with a senior organizational leader, over half of the participants cited that the mentor sponsored their promotion to a

higher level. Each of the three research examples described above reiterate the significance of developing personal networks. The most influential networks, those often most associated with senior executives, were only accessed through a successful mentoring partnership. As will be seen in the next section, however, positive mentoring partnerships are beneficial to the host organization as well.

Organizational Benefits of Successful Mentoring Relationships

A successful mentoring program is also important for the sponsoring organization. In general, employees involved in mentoring partnerships exhibit greater motivation, less stress, and take fewer sick days (Cleaver, 2016). In some programs, mentees are provided opportunities to lead at early stages of the mentoring partnership so they may learn from mistakes while under the mentor's tutelage, enhancing their leadership growth within the organization (Salley & Gregory, 2013).

Further research supports mentoring as a method to fulfill the psychological contract. The psychological contract is a mental model, or method of reasoning, in which an employee performs work in exchange for support and equitable treatment from their organization (employer) (Kiazad, Seibert, & Krainer, 2014). Mentors, in their role of teacher and leader, may act as a buffer or moderator for employees who perceive a breach in the psychological contract (Haggard, 2012). Of course, a mentor who is not accessible, forced to develop a mentoring relationship, or who is not sincere in their desire to build their protégé will only exacerbate an employee's aggravation (Bloomberg, 2014). Nevertheless, employees who see their employer as fair, caring, and concerned about their professional development will likely be more productive, optimistic, and engaged in their duties.

Women and Discrimination in the Workplace

As briefly described in chapter 1, the glass ceiling is an invisible barrier blocking female employees from climbing to senior corporate leadership positions (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986). The barrier simultaneously excludes women from prime networking and mentoring opportunities essential for achieving success in most organizations (Hymowitz, 2013). Of note, Eagly and Carli (2007) eschew the notion of the glass ceiling as too rigid a barrier and suggest women must instead meander through a virtual labyrinth on an indirect path to organizational leadership. Regardless, despite more than 50 years of legislation supporting equal employment opportunity, women remain underrepresented in the highest public and private institutional roles, holding under a fifth of these positions (Rhode, 2017).

Similar demographics abound in the public service sector. Female leaders occupy just 12% of the state governorships, represent 19% of federal Congressional senators and congresspersons, and are mayors in only 19% the United States' 100 largest metropolitan areas (Rhode, 2017). Hymowitz (2013) further argued that ingrained, chauvinistic organizational cultures persist for women in top, corporate leadership positions. For example, in organizations within the S&P 500 index, 15% of senior executives are women, and 16% of boards are female, despite women filling "51.4 per cent of managerial and professional positions" (Hymowitz, 2013, p. 2).

Organizations frequently offer various support systems for employees to leverage to increase their professional and leadership skills. Support systems include training opportunities, mentoring programs, and access to professional or personal networks. Networking, and having access to networks, "is an essential dimension of organizational

life, and individuals who excel at networking [are] more likely [to] excel in their careers than those who do not” (Wang, 2009, p. 35). Gaining access to those with information and power is essential to career advancement and is a part of leveraging individual social capital (Wang, 2009). However, access to these various support systems is not always equitable for female employees; combined with lower status and less power, women are less likely to gain access to personal networks, significantly reducing their opportunities for leadership development and career enhancement (Wang, 2009). Compared to their male peers, female employees, no matter their work ethic, intelligence, or job proficiency, may be less likely to experience career growth without the introductions to personal networks associated with many mentoring partnerships.

Balancing Familial Duties and Career Aspirations

Unfortunately, solid work ethic and technical proficiency may not overcome lingering bias towards female employees. Women are often stereotyped as being less career-focused than their male counterparts, too concerned with familial duties and less inclined to put the company before personal desires (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986). In the eyes of senior leaders, these stereotypes hinder women from being chosen for senior organizational positions. Regardless of perceptions, women are more often than their spouses to be disproportionately affected by the requirements to raise children, care for the home, and fight for career opportunities (Sexton, Lemak, & Wainio, 2014). Dow (2014) described socializing after business hours as critical to building personal relationships and organizational community, but female leaders balancing the demands of work and family may miss these opportunities. Married women, especially those with children, often have the dilemma of fulfilling career goals at the expense of familial

obligations or missing the opportunity to build the social capital and networks associated with career upward mobility to tend to the home.

Disenfranchised by perceived or actual workforce discrimination, women may create a psychological glass ceiling, in which they disengage from self-promoting behaviors (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Stereotyped by historical gender roles and that leadership is “primarily a masculine enterprise,” women are viewed as more nurturing and better listeners, excelling in the psychological portion of the mentoring dyad yet lacking in the critical career aspect of the partnership (Eagly & Carli, 2003, p. 808; Ghosh, 2015). Further, being a man and displaying masculine characteristics arguably leads to increased societal privilege while “femininity always holds a subordinate position in patriarchal societies” (Barratt, Bergman, & Thompson, 2014, p. 22). Ironically, women who mirror male leaders by displaying overtly masculine, autocratic, or assertive behaviors are often viewed as being less effective leaders than their male peers (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). Not only do women frequently feel the obligation to burden the majority of familial duties, it is difficult for female leaders to adopt the assertive, masculine leadership traits that often make men successful managers.

An organization dominated by men may inadvertently perpetuate gender discrimination through the construction of persistent ideas and beliefs that devalue women and legitimize masculinity (Barratt, Bergman, & Thompson, 2014). While the federal service consists of approximately 43% female employees, the Marine Corps’ active force (8% female) and its civilian workforce (26% female) are predominantly male (CNA Corporation, 2015; United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017a). This

is especially relevant in the military, where leadership has been historically dominated by men, especially in the most senior leadership positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Female federal civil service leaders in the Marine Corps, therefore, are not only the minority in the federal service, but also represent the vast minority associated with gender in active Marine Corps service members.

Despite the gender demographics within the Marine Corps, however, the federal government often employs more women in comparison to non-public-sector organizations, although women share fewer senior governmental leadership positions (Ricucci, 2009). This latter finding reflects Barratt, Bergman, & Thompson's (2014) argument that women in male-dominated social structures may be consciously or inadvertently placed in junior managerial billets. Conversely, Bednar and Gicheva (2014) argue that while sharing similar characteristics, such as gender, with senior executives or mentors is important for female leaders, gender was not a strong predictor of overall organizational female-friendliness.

The 'Glass Cliff' and Senior Female Leaders

Paradoxically, women are often overrepresented in senior leadership billets for underperforming organizations. "Research," according to Bruckmuller and Branscombe (2010), "suggests that women are more likely [than male counterparts] to achieve leadership positions when those are associated with a state of crisis and a higher risk of failure, a phenomenon termed the *glass cliff*" (p. 434). Aspiring female leaders are thrust into perilous organizational situations due to status-quo bias, resulting from the historic placement of men in top leadership positions; when it is perceived that male leadership navigated the company into a precarious situation, a female leader, it is believed, may

make the changes needed to fix the dilemma. (Bruckmülle & Branscombe, 2010). The choice for a female leader is often dependent on the gender perceptions of women being more competent interpersonal supervisors, less likely to shift blame to others, and being more authentic, a key characteristic in leadership crises (Cook & Glass, 2014; Liu, Cutcher, & Grant, 2015).

Further perpetuating the concept of the glass cliff, Smith (2015) discovered that organizations in the public sector, such as local U.S. public agencies, were just as susceptible as their private organizational counterparts to nominate women to senior leadership positions in times of crisis. In contrast to Smith (2015) and Bruckmülle and Branscombe (2010), however, Cook and Glass (2014), in their analysis of CEO genders in Fortune 500 companies from 1990 to 2011, found that women were not more likely than male peers to be named as CEOs in struggling organizations, despite the lingering perception of the glass cliff. The stimulus for selecting senior female leaders resulted from greater diversity among senior organizational leaders, not a desire to change the status-quo (Cook & Glass, 2014).

Organizational Benefits from Gender Diversity

Increasing workforce gender heterogeneity, especially in planning or decision-making teams, may have a positive impact on organizational long-term value creation. The reason for improved performance among gender diverse work groups is a product of the innate differences between the sexes. Women tend to be more risk averse and less competitive than their male counterparts (Apesteguia, Azmat, & Iriberry, 2012). Bear and Woolley (2011) note that through their increased perception of verbal and nonverbal cues and “higher levels of social sensitivity,” the presence of women increased group

collaboration and thus its collective intelligence (p. 148). This resulted in improved inter- and intragroup communication and partnership. Finally, women tend to be more democratic and transformational in their leadership style, encouraging team engagement and cooperation (Larimer & Hannagan, 2010).

Past research suggests a gender-diverse workforce increases an organization's performance through greater innovation, decreases group-think, understands its customers better, and increases product quality (Herring, 2009; Lamb & Klein, 2015). "When three or more women are represented in executive leadership," state Lamb and Klein (2015), "companies tend to perform better on return on equity (+10.7 percent), profits (+91.4 percent), and stock price growth (+36 percent) (p. 21). Gender heterogeneity also results in more equal levels of influence among men and women while decreasing gender stereotyping (Bear & Woolley, 2011). Further, an analysis of the gender composition of 16,000 business student teams participating in the L'Oreal e-Strat Challenge, a multinational business game designed to assess the decision-making aptitude of undergraduate and graduate students, found that gender-diverse teams outperformed those with either all men or women (Apesteguia, Azmat, & Iriberry, 2012).

In contrast, when considering all aspects of employee demographics, Herring (2009) notes that a diverse workforce may actually decrease productivity. Gender, racial, and ethnic tensions could negatively impact group camaraderie through increased absences and turnover (Herring, 2009). However, the literature shows mixed results concerning whether diversity increases group cognitive task performance; some studies link a diverse workforce to increased organizational output, while others note a decrease in organizational productivity (Pelled, 1996). Additionally, moderating variables such as

task routineness and task complexity affect how team diversity affects group performance (Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999). Regardless of lingering racial and gender bigotry in the workforce, however, the nation's population, and thus its workforce, are becoming increasingly diverse. Senior executives and leaders at all levels can negate discrimination through a cultural shift that emphasizes the personal and professional benefits that result from ethnic and gender diversity.

Women Mentoring Women: Positive and Negative Mentoring Partnerships

Ideally, gender should not be a factor for determining who will be an effective mentor. However, proponents of the feminist movement suggest innate female leadership characteristics, such as greater compassion, honesty, and patience, make them more effective mentors than men (Schein, 1995). Further, these advocates imply that more women in supervisory and mentor roles would result in an overall increase in female organizational leaders (Schein, 1995).

Bednar and Gicheva (2014) also propose junior female leaders would have more favorable career outcomes if additional women were in top leadership positions. Frequently, female employees do not have equal ability to develop social capital as they are habitually denied access to male-dominated mentoring and social networks vital for career enhancement (Wang, 2009). Conversely, social networks consisting of only women may limit junior female leaders' advancement, as a female employee's social influence often increases when they belong to male-dominated networks (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Additionally, employees with male mentors frequently earn larger salaries, regardless of the employee's gender (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Nevertheless, greater institutional diversity, whereby women are mentors and decision-makers regarding hiring and candidate evaluation, reduces the impact a candidate's gender has on employment and promotion results (Cook & Glass, 2014). In the teaching profession, for example, where only 25% of superintendents are female, Copeland and Calhoun (2014) argued that men naturally desire to mentor someone observed to be like them in personality and gender. In organizations like the military or law enforcement that are especially male-dominated in senior leadership positions, this creates additional challenges for women seeking a mentoring relationship. This leads to partial reasoning for the lack of female superintendents, where males outnumber females three-to-one, as men are more likely to be mentored than female counterparts.

Based on these research findings, if organizational cultures are modified to decrease gender discrimination, it may be assumed that women in senior leadership roles would assist junior female leaders progress in their careers. Wang (2009) suggests female mentors are better able to assist same-gender mentees because of their ability to coach employees like themselves. Likewise, Bednar and Gicheva (2014) suggest "managers may be better able to detect the true ability of a subordinate if they share a characteristic, such as gender" (p. 374). Unfortunately, this is not always the case. In their study of gender bias in the workplace, Kaizer and Spalding (2015) argued that some senior female leaders in male-dominated, high-discrimination workforces exerted individual self-promotion and career enhancement over advocating for female employees. While Kaizer and Spalding's (2015) assertion is likely based more on a person's temperament and personality rather than overt female-to-female discrimination, the

limited access to male-dominated personal networks may cause female employees to seek male mentors, despite the preferred familiarity with having a same-gender mentor.

In Copeland and Calhoun's (2014) study of the mentoring experiences of eight female school superintendents, five of the participants preferred same-gender mentors due to the unique challenges women face in the workplace. Yet the lack of females in senior leadership positions likely decreases mentoring opportunities for female employees. In her study of female faculty members in public policy programs, Sabharwal (2013) suggested women generally seek guidance from female organizational members because of their ability to self-identify with one another; however, the lack of females in senior leadership positions limited mentoring opportunities for junior female faculty. Additionally, women are often cautioned to choose male mentors due to their perceived access to beneficial career networks (Ghosh, 2015).

The cited examples reveal a dilemma for aspiring female employees. While women may feel more comfortable with a female mentor, the lack of senior female leaders reduces the mentoring opportunities for these individuals. Equally one-sided, women with male mentors historically have greater career opportunities, especially because of their access to male-dominated professional networks that build their social capital through access to senior leaders and critical information. Consequently, female employees not only have fewer opportunities to be paired with a senior female leader, those female employees who establish a same-gender mentoring partnership may ultimately limit their promotion potential.

Non-traditional Types of Mentoring

With thousands of experienced managers from the Baby Boomer generation retiring from the workforce each day, sharing the accumulated knowledge and experiences of senior leaders is critical for organizational success (Bergelson, 2014). Traditionally, mentoring is viewed as a one-to-one association between the student and teacher, no matter the physical setting of the relationship or the social or occupational roles of the two participants (Laukhuf & Malone, 2015). However, organizations are introducing new methods of mentoring, such as peer, group, speed, virtual, and reverse, among others, often incorporating new technological means to enhance mentoring relationships. No matter the method, the end state of mentoring is the communication of knowledge and ideas (Bergelson, 2014). The following paragraphs will discuss some of these new mentoring types in detail.

Virtual or distance mentoring uses video conferencing or other technological methods to pair employees with leaders who are not collocated with the mentee. Despite communication challenges associated with distance mentoring, Lach, Hertz, Pomeroy, Resnick, and Buckwalter's (2013) analysis of 67 nurses participating in a virtual program resulted in positive feedback from the participants. While some individuals may feel less inclined to build rapport through digital means, streaming video provides users with face-to-face communication and the non-verbal cues critical to convey meaning (Bishop, 2016). Nevertheless, many of the 23 participants in another distance mentoring study concluded that an initial face-to-face meeting was important for establishing the virtual rapport, to include the opportunity to "jump-start the relationship, to acknowledge non-

verbal communication styles, and provide an opportunity to exchange a bit of personal information” (Lasater, et al., 2014, p. 502).

A virtual mentoring network allows organizations or mentees to seek mentors outside of their traditional hierarchy (Lach, Hertz, Pomeroy, Resnick, & Buckwalter, 2013). Additionally, mentees are exposed to the knowledge and ideas of experienced leaders without the constraints of geography, during times more conducive to the mentee/mentor’s work/family life (Bishop, 2016). For example, the University of Maryland’s Career Center hosts a new distance mentoring program called Terrapins Connect, a virtual network connecting nearly 5,000 mentees with 2,500 alumni mentors (University of Maryland, 2017). The distance program allows individuals at all stages of leadership development to connect with Maryland alumni regardless of their physical location. Similar to many virtual mentoring programs, the University of Maryland’s database allows potential mentees to search for mentors who may assist them with specific developmental goals or long-term mentoring partnerships (University of Maryland, 2017).

Just as virtual mentoring allows mentoring partnerships to adjust to chaotic schedules, speed mentoring provides employees an opportunity to learn from experienced leaders in a manner like speed dating (Bergelson, 2014). In this method, employees are given a set time to speak with a senior leader, usually between 4 and 15 minutes each, and then must rotate to another mentor once their time is complete (Bergelson, 2014). Speed mentoring may be conducted virtually or in-person; while this method eschews the traditional long-term relationship characterized by most mentoring relationships, it allows

mentees to expand their professional network and learn from numerous leaders in a short period.

As highlighted above, the traditional, formal partnership between two individuals may not be the most effective method to develop junior leaders. Several other mentoring methods forego the traditional one-on-one mentoring partnership: peer group mentoring, mentoring groups, and flash mentoring. Peer group mentoring unites employees of varied work experiences into a group setting where the exchange of ideas and open communication fosters learning and growth; a trained mentor chairs the group (Geeraerts, et al., 2015). An important aspect of peer group mentoring is the gathering of employees in similar professional roles, decreasing feelings of isolation in some individuals and allowing the group to freely share personal and professional goals and difficulties among a group of equals (Collins, Lewis, Stracke, & Vanderheide, 2014). Similar to peer group mentoring, yet lacking the trained moderator, are mentoring groups which focus on understanding peer cultural identities and assisting one another in the daily complexities of life, rather than emphasizing leadership development (Agosto, et al., 2016).

The internet and its ability to connect individuals and organizations across great distances enables the concept of flash mentoring, also known as “mentoring on demand” or “modern mentoring” (Grindrod, 2016, p. 42). This method, noted as part of OPM’s program to increase female representation in the Senior Executive Service ranks, reduces the time requirements of both the mentor and mentee (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017c). Flash mentoring uses an established network of mentees and mentors with access to these individuals’ key skills and work experiences (Grindrod, 2016). Employees can identify leaders with specific traits or skills to assist them in

completing tasks. The intent of flash mentoring, according to Grindrod (2016), is less about building a long-lasting rapport and more about creating a network of employees and leaders who have rapid access to those with unique skill sets. While considered a non-traditional form of mentoring, virtual mentoring provides large organizations with the means to develop leaders constrained by physical location.

A detractor from successful mentoring programs may be employee and manager workload, existing financial restraints, a hostile work environment, or the unavailability of competent mentors (Bergelson, 2014; Carr, Pastor, & Levesque, 2015). Insufficient time to interact due to mentor work burdens has been cited as a significant deterring factor to successful mentoring programs (Schechter, 2014). Thus, self-mentoring may be another alternative to traditional leadership programs. This mentoring method requires proactive employees to lead themselves in the process of learning key organizational roles, with the concepts of self-development and self-reflection as key components of personal growth (Carr, Pastor, & Levesque, 2015).

Pairing Leadership Styles and Mentor Characteristics

Two critical benefits of a successful mentoring relationship are enhanced self-awareness and self-regulation (Bachkirova, Arthur, & Reading, 2015). Kinsler (2014) notes that these two characteristics are the fundamental pillars of authentic leadership. Authentic leaders describe themselves as possessing greater levels of self-esteem, motivation, and psychological well-being (Kinsler, 2014). A key attribute of the authentic leader is enhanced self-awareness, which is one of the critical leadership development objectives of the mentor/mentee relationship (Tjan, 2017). Carr, Pastor, and

Levesque (2015) also argued that enhanced self-awareness and self-regulation lead to self-reflection and an understanding of self, a crucial aspect of the authentic leader.

Another leadership style, emphasized in many private and public organizations, is transformational leadership. Through their optimism and motivation, transformational leaders inspire employees to “go beyond the call of duty, foster creative solutions to problems, serve as mentors, create vision, and articulate plans for achieving [their] vision” (Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011, p. 11).

Transformational leaders are often considered effective mentors through persistent encouragement of subordinates to develop themselves to their fullest and empowering them to meet individual and organizational goals (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

A competent mentor does not require adherence to any specific leadership style or theory. However, the commitment to form a mentoring partnership, and the investment of time required to establish a rapport, require both parties to feel they are in a valued relationship (Shah, 2017). The most effective mentors and mentees may therefore exhibit an amalgamation of both authentic and transformational leadership.

Through transformational leadership, mentees are stimulated to examine problems and complete tasks using creative thinking and open communication; mentors are committed to developing followers and being attentive to their needs (Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). Conversely, authentic mentors create confident followers and mentees through an application of self-awareness and self-confidence intent on increasing the psychological component of the mentoring relationship (Gatling, 2014). The selfless devotion to follower development (transformational leadership), combined with the inspired trust and dedication of the

authentic leader, may lead to a mentoring partnership which benefits the mentor, protégé, and the sponsoring organization.

Mentoring Programs

Elements of Successful Mentoring Programs

Merely establishing a mentor program does not ensure the development of positive mentor relationships. Finding a mentor whom the employee trusts and feels relaxed with is critical for developing the partnership, and it is often the most difficult step in the process (Shah, 2017). As Tjan (2017) notes, an informal yet genuine relationship between the mentor and mentee may be more important than a pre-established mentoring program. Often, mentees paired with individuals whom they do not possess a rapport with show similar leadership development as individuals not participating in mentoring programs (Tjan, 2017). Copeland and Calhoun (2014) even suggested that an informal mentoring partnership, strengthened by natural interactions, shared values, and similar backgrounds, can be more important than a formal relationship.

To enhance mentoring programs, Schechter (2014) lists three main proponents of a successful mentoring partnership: “personal characteristics, professional discourse, and time and frequency of communication” (p. 52). Personal characteristics include essential components of the relationship, such as “respect, admiration, openness, honesty, trust, and sincerity” (Schechter, 2014, p. 58). Through professional discourse, mentors learn about the mentee’s goals and lived experiences, while the mentee must be patient and establish reasonable objectives to meet stated targets (Salley & Gregory, 2013; Schechter, 2014). Finally, interaction between the mentor and mentee, whether in person or

virtually, must be consistent and timely to further the leadership development of both parties.

Despite the differences in mentoring programs, it is reasonable to conclude that positive mentoring relationships are not only beneficial to the organization, but also benefit the leadership development of both the mentor and mentee alike (Schechter, 2014). Mentoring, according to Thomas, Lunsford, and Rodrigues (2015), is identified with increased organizational commitment, work satisfaction, and promotions. In the competitive marketplace, formal mentoring programs are becoming a business strategy, necessary for long-term value creation, especially with thousands of senior leaders (i.e. Baby Boomers) retiring from the workforce (Grindrod, 2016). As with any business strategy, Grindrod (2016) suggests that a mentoring program requires a strategic plan and lists the following as key planning steps: a) agree on business objectives; b) create a change-management program; c) identify participants; d) create the right match; e) train the mentors; f) report on success. While an informal mentoring relationship may be established in the ‘spur-of-the-moment,’ a formal mentoring program cannot be an ‘off-the-cuff’ project; it is a business decision that requires adequate funding, top-down executive-level support, and continuous feedback and improvement.

Identifying the participants and carefully selecting the partnerships are perhaps the most crucial steps, especially when introducing new employees to an organization. Dow (2014) argued that an institution’s top leadership should be actively involved in the selection of mentors and mentoring program managers; a mentoring program not only builds employee leadership, it is an active step to minimize employee attrition. Hughes’s (2013) research of several public and private organizations revealed similar results.

Executive leadership must be actively engaged in leadership programs and invest both time (greater than one year) and financial resources into the training of leaders at all organizational levels (Hughes, 2013).

Other research finds similar key planning steps as those listed above. The most successful partnerships require a natural rapport between the two parties, and properly matching the mentor and mentee is vital to the relationship (Vance, Tanenbaum, Kaur, Otto, & Morris, 2017). Vance, Tanenbaum, Kaur, Otto, and Morris (2017), in their analysis of the American Statistical Association's mentoring initiative, suggested eight steps required to build and maintain a positive mentoring program, including: establishing the purpose of the program, purposely selecting and recruiting program participants (mentors and mentees), effectively matching the mentor and mentee, and continuously analyzing feedback from participants to improve the program. Existing technology may also assist with enhancing mentoring programs. Databases may be used as "matching tool[s]," allowing a large group of mentees and mentors the ability to list their work goals, experiences, and career highlights (Grindrod, 2016, p. 41).

Organizational leadership must be cognizant of the requirements to apply for mentoring programs. In their assessment of a mentoring program at a southwestern U.S. university consisting of 45 junior, tenure-track assistant professors, Thomas, Lunsford, and Rodrigues (2015) discovered that many participants felt the program was too time-consuming and involved too many detailed administrative requirements. While many of the mentees felt less isolated at work as a result of participating in a mentoring program, there was also a persistent feeling of 'sink or swim,' an expectation in academia where individuals should be diligent, "work hard, and be proactive in getting the information

you need – don't expect it to be handed to you” (Thomas, Lunsford, & Rodrigues, 2015, p. 326). This attitude hindered the mentees' desire to ask the mentor for help, fearing that they may be branded as weak or incompetent (Thomas, Lunsford, & Rodrigues, 2015). Mentors who are not approachable decrease employee engagement and perpetuate a culture of individualism and distrust.

The literature repeatedly showed the most effective mentoring partnerships occur when the mentee selects the mentor (Grindrod, 2016). However, women are often less valued as mentors, even those in senior organizational positions (Ghosh, 2015). Ghosh (2015) argued this is the result of several antiquated gender stereotypes: females are perceived to be less influential than men, are not part of the “old boy's network,” have fewer promotional opportunities, and do not have access to vital organizational information (p. 72). Regardless of the accuracy of these typecasts, female mentees seeking advice and professional development may be discouraged from establishing a mentoring relationship with a senior female leader, fearful that the partnership may deter career advancement.

Organizations may sponsor women's networks to inspire female employees to build social networks or encourage male managers to introduce female peers to their personal cliques (Wang, 2009). Nonetheless, if required to volunteer for and informally create mentoring partnerships, female employees in male-dominated organizations “will have fewer mentoring opportunities available to them than their male counterparts” (Thomas, Lunsford, & Rodrigues, 2015, p. 321). Encouraging male leaders to learn behaviors that dissuade gender stereotyping through programs such as reverse mentoring, where junior females mentor senior male managers, may reduce gender discrimination

(Wang, 2009). Organizational cultural change, driven by senior executives and emphasizing the virtues of a gender-diverse workforce, is a critical step in rejecting gender bias and archaic sex stereotypes.

Mentoring is a challenging endeavor, requiring significant time from both the mentor and mentee (Vance, Tanenbaum, Kaur, Otto, & Morris, 2017). However, not all successful programs require substantial time commitment. For example, in a study of Washington State University's (WSU) mentoring program for female engineering students, Poor and Brown (2013) noted an increase in student retention with only 28 hours dedicated annually to the mentoring relationship. The WSU program included email communication, phone conversations, meetings for lunch, and two days shadowing the mentor at their work (Poor & Brown, 2013). The most critical component of the program was to make it self-sustaining through the continuous recruitment of mentor alumni and student mentees (Poor & Brown, 2013).

Johnson and Anderson (2015), in their analysis of a formal mentoring program in the U.S. Navy, discovered additional means to improve mentoring partnerships. The researchers found that while the majority of the mentees benefited from their mentoring relationship, many had negative feedback concerning formal programs. Criticisms included comments suggesting mentoring should be a choice between two individuals to enter a relationship, not be forced to do so, especially when not all higher-ranked officers or enlisted sailors were competent mentors (Johnson & Anderson, 2015). This mirrors Dow's (2014) analysis of suggestions from a women's mentoring conference to improve mentoring at several law firms. Forced mentoring relationships decreased the mentor's

motivation and organizational commitment, and many mentors described an informal mentoring partnership as being more authentic.

Both Johnson and Anderson (2015) and Wang (2009) suggested leaders could be encouraged to participate in mentoring programs if part of their annual reviews or rewards systems are tied to their participation. However, managers pressed into mentoring duties may disregard aspects of their duties and thus decrease employee work satisfaction. Additionally, a formal mentoring program could be perceived as onerous and mechanistic, adding additional administrative burdens to overworked employees who identify the formal program as a “paper drill” or “paper tiger” (Johnson & Anderson, 2015, p. 85). Instead of creating mandatory, formal training, Johnson and Anderson (2015) suggested managers evaluate the leadership culture of the organization, emphasizing the importance of imparting knowledge and life-lessons to junior personnel.

Despite the benefits of mentoring partnerships cited throughout the literature review, some mismatched relationships lead to negative mentoring and a decrease in employee engagement (Carr, Pastor, & Levesque, 2015). Negative mentoring may occur when the mentor and mentee have increasingly differing viewpoints or when the mentee views the mentor as an incompetent leader or teacher; conversely, a mentor may manipulate the protégé for personal gain, lack sincerity, or fail to communicate with the mentee (Carr, Pastor, & Levesque, 2015; Dow, 2014). These examples support the conclusion that the most effective mentoring partnerships occur when the mentor and mentee enter into a mutual, voluntary relationship with frequent interactions highlighted by two-way communication.

The U.S. Marine Corps' Civilian Mentor Program

The focus of this dissertation in practice is the mentoring experiences of female federal civil servants employed by the U.S. Marine Corps. Therefore, it is essential to discuss the Marine Corps' civilian mentoring program. Through its Civilian Leadership Development Program, the Marine Corps is committed to the professional and technical development of its civilian workforce. One method this is accomplished is through the service's formal, voluntary Civilian Mentor Program, a Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps-sponsored program to identify employees who will act as mentors and junior employees who seek to participate in the program (U.S. Marine Corps, 2017).

The program offers both virtual and traditional mentoring for employees seeking professional or career development. Guidelines for the program are published in the Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps Mentoring Guide, the Civilian Marine Mentoring Reference Handbook, and the Manpower and Reserve Affairs website. The former document provides basic definitions and relationships associated with the mentoring process, while the latter adds information on matching the mentor/mentee and specific program templates, such as the Mentor-Participant Agreement.

Marines and federal civil service employees who desire to act as either mentors or mentees are required to register in the Mentor Match Services (MMS), a matching system similar to the database explained by Grindrod (2016). This online database is described as:

an online registry of talented individuals with a variety of technical and leadership expertise throughout the Marine Corps and the Department of the

Navy. It also allows those looking for a Mentor or Coach to register and state what skills and career goals they want to achieve (U.S. Marine Corps, 2017).

The registry is accessed using a Common Access Card through the online Total Workforce Management System (TWMS), a website offering civilian employees access to important career, training, administrative, and professional development information.

Once registered within the MMS, mentees may search for potential mentors based on critical skills or by name, and meetings may occur either virtually or in person. Key components of the program include several formal documents, including: a self-evaluation listing the individuals' (mentee's and mentor's) skills, traits, and characteristics; the Mentor-Participant Agreement, establishing basic guidelines for the relationship; the Mentoring Action Plan, listing individual goals and how they may be linked to organizational objectives; and the Individual Development Plan, a tool used throughout the mentoring partnership listing the protégé's short- and long-term developmental goals (Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, n.d.). The mentor program stresses the unique, reciprocal relationship developed through a trusting partnership, and emphasizes the importance of the mentor and mentee selecting one another (U.S. Marine Corps, 2017).

Any civil servant employed by the Marine Corps may participate in this program. Senior Marine Corps leaders understand the positive leadership development attributed in the literature to successful mentoring partnerships. Not only does the Civilian Mentor Program enable employees to be engaged in their individual personal and professional development, mentors are provided the opportunity to prepare their followers for the unique and challenging demands of leadership.

Summary

The successful leader possesses not only discipline, tirelessness, and technical proficiency, but also well-developed social capital, networks, and personal relationships established in the workplace (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These relationships are often formed through a mentoring partnership that enhances the career and psychosocial functions of the employee (Johnson & Anderson, 2015). As discussed, mentoring has many definitions, yet it is traditionally known as a partnership between a senior organizational member and a junior mentee, with the intent to develop the leadership potential of the protégé (Ghosh, 2015). A mentoring relationship built on trust, and reciprocal communication is an invaluable method to increase the self-efficacy, engagement, and self-compassion of both the mentor and protégé (Bachkirova, Arthur, & Reading, 2015).

A positive mentoring partnership is not a guaranteed predictor of future career success; however, the benefits to the junior leader and the organization are well-documented. Numerous examples exist within the literature showing that the mentoring relationship is not a one-way flow of information (Crossley & Silverman, 2016; Drew, 2014). Relational mentoring theory advocates for a reciprocal relationship, with the mentor also experiencing personal and professional development (Ghosh, 2015). The mentee is likely to experience increased promotional opportunities, leadership growth, and compensation, while the mentor gains a sense of achievement and organizational commitment (Dow, 2014).

However, an established mentoring program cannot undo persistent cultural stereotypes concerning women in leadership positions. Wang (2009) described a study of 3,220 lower- and middle-level Australian employees and their perceptions of mentoring.

Despite increasing the career functions and chance of promotions for female employees, women still lacked the psychological support to overcome interpersonal obstacles not encumbering male counterparts (Wang, 2009). Additionally, Ghosh (2015) noted that women, particularly those who had male mentors, had more difficulty building a reciprocal mentor relationship, describing the partnership as more of a one-way flow of information.

Female professionals can help themselves by being aware of the importance of social capital and network building, making strategic choices to develop close relationship within the networks they are a part of. Further, regardless of their job title, women should create a plan listing their career aspirations and meet with senior organizational leaders to voice these goals; this is in addition to seeking training opportunities and routinely volunteering for special projects (Sexton, Lemak, & Wainio, 2014).

The success of formal mentoring programs requires program managers to meet several key objectives. The program should have a dedicated team to manage the myriad administrative tasks, track mentor development, and maintain virtual communications systems. Executive leadership ensures the organization understands the cultural and business necessity of mentorship, and a dedicated budget should be included in the institution's financial plan (Dow, 2014). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, mentees must be voluntarily paired with mentors who have the time, patience, and commitment required to develop junior leaders to their fullest potential.

The Marine Corps has an established, formal method for establishing mentoring partnerships for federal civil servants called the Civilian Mentor Program. This program

uses a technical database to allow mentors and mentees to input their key leadership attributes and experiences. Mentees are able to seek leaders who they desire to form mentoring relationships with while allowing the Manpower Branch to monitor and supervise the program.

The following chapter will discuss the phenomenological research methods this study will employ to understand the lived experiences of female federal civil service leaders. Participants will share their knowledge concerning mentoring programs and their experiences with mentors during their careers. The results of this dissertation in practice may assist air station leaders and the Marine Corps' Civilian Mentor Program in enhancing mentoring programs for its civilian employees.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of career mentoring of female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina. This section will explore the methodology selected for this study, to include a detailed explanation of the research design. An explanation of participant recruitment will be shared, as well as the data collection and analysis tools that were used. Further information will provide the steps required to gain permission from the Marine Corps to conduct interviews with federal civil servants working at the station. Finally, consideration will be given for all ethical dilemmas that may arise during the conduct of this research.

Research Question

How do female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina describe their mentoring experiences?

Subquestion

How do female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina describe how mentoring experiences contributed to their professional career development?

Research Design

Of the most common types of qualitative research methodology, the case study is perhaps the most familiar. For this method, the researcher studies a “particular social unit or system,” often observing the participants and phenomenon in their actual setting (Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 76). Babbie (2017) adds that a case may be an individual, a

group, or a social phenomenon where the researcher is solely focused on this specific instance, which is the defining characteristic of qualitative methodology. Additionally, a case study is described as bounded or delimited within a certain time or place (Creswell, 2013).

While elements of the case study may allow the researcher to extrapolate commonalities from the collected data, the intent of this qualitative methodology was not to analyze an individual or group within a bounded system. Therefore, the research for this dissertation in practice incorporated a qualitative phenomenological design. A phenomenological study was best suited as it described the lived experiences of the research participants, with the intent to draw meaning and commonalities between these shared experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Further, the purpose of phenomenological research is to collect and analyze data of a sample's perceptions, behaviors, and knowledge (Roberts, 2010). An analysis of the human experience is what makes phenomenological research unique; this method of inquiry, according to Creswell (2013), reduces "individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (a 'grasp of the very nature of the thing')" (p. 76). Moreover, this dissertation did not draw from a specific theory on mentoring and instead focused on the mentoring experiences of the participants, solicited through the interview method (Creswell, 2014).

Participants, Data Sources, and Recruitment

Description of the Population and Sample

The population under study was female federal civil service employees within the GS-12 to GS-15 (equivalent) pay grades. Federal employees within these pay grades are

considered professional, white-collar employees, often holding billets that require the supervision of junior personnel. In the federal service, there are over 909,000 female employees, or 43% of the total 2.09 million federal workers; further, there are 17,900 civilian employees in the Marine Corps, with women representing 4,600 (26%) of this total (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2017a). Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point employs 112 civilian employees in the GS-12 to GS-15 pay grades with 16 of these individuals being female.

The study was conducted at the researcher's place of work, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. Selecting this location for the research site allowed the student to provide data that may benefit federal civil servants working on the air station as well as improve the Marine Corps' Civilian Mentor Program. The sample size consisted of 16 potential participants. While Creswell (2014) suggested a phenomenology's sample size usually consists of three to 10 participants, this study utilized 15 participants to ensure saturation of the data.

The study featured interviews of female civil servants at the GS-12 to GS-15 pay grades for two primary reasons: a) there are no Senior Executive Service federal employees assigned to the air station; b) employees within the selected pay grades generally hold billets of increased responsibility, requiring critical thinking, extensive technical experience, several years in the federal service, and supervisory and leadership experience. The participants were members of the general workforce, civilian or governmental, for more than a decade and had the opportunity to experience leadership mentoring at some point in their careers.

Recruitment Strategy and Sample Plan

The research used nonprobability, purposeful sampling for participant recruitment. Participants selected for purposeful, or judgmental, sampling are done so based on predetermined characteristics which the researcher's feels most represent the population being studied (Babbie, 2017). In this study's example, participants were chosen based on their gender and pay grade within the federal civil service at a specific duty station. The sample was limited to the female federal civilian employees in the indicated pay grades who work on the air station.

Originally, the air station human resources office agreed to aid in the identification of the sample participants. Unfortunately, the human resources office later determined that providing the researcher employee names may be a breach of civil service privacy policy. The student was constrained to identify interviewees based on personal knowledge of individuals residing in key air station billets. Participants were recruited using email and telephonic means. Initially, an email was sent to the individual requesting voluntary participation in academic research (Appendix A). The email included the following information: the intent of the study, how their knowledge will be used in the research, a copy of the informed consent document and Participant Bill of Rights, and information concerning who they could contact if they had further questions. If the prospective participant did not respond to the email request within five business days, the researcher attempted contact through the telephone; however, to respect the privacy of the individual, there were no further attempts to solicit participation if the researcher could not speak with the individual or no emails were returned.

Organizational Process for Permission to Conduct Research

To protect the privacy of civilian personnel, the Marine Corps required several administrative tasks to ascertain the necessity and purpose of all proposed research. These tasks included receiving permission from the air station's commanding officer permitting access to civilian personnel (Appendix B). Further, the research proposal was submitted to the Marine Corps' civilian mentor department for approval and routing to senior leadership within the Manpower and Reserve Affairs division (Appendix G). Finally, this correspondence and Creighton's IRB consent (Appendix E), approved by the university as an exempt study on January 29, 2018, were submitted to the Marine Corps' IRB for final vetting and approval. Final Marine Corps IRB approval for the proposed research was granted on February 22, 2018 (Appendix H).

Data Collection Tools

The interview is the most important data collection tool for the phenomenological researcher. The intent of phenomenology is to explore the lived experiences of the participants from their unique perspective, and this is best accomplished through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews using general questions to ascertain a complete understanding of the phenomena (Creswell, 2013; Roberts, 2010). The meaning each individual relates to their experiences and how they interpret these experiences cannot be expressed through quantitative means (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The study's interview protocol is located in Appendix C.

The participant informed consent form and Participant Bill of Rights are provided in Appendix D. The documents were provided to the participant prior to participating in the study and contains two main parts: a) information about the study, and b) what is

expected from participants and documentation that participation is voluntary (Hicks, 2008). The primary components of the informed consent document and bill of rights include: the researcher's and sponsoring institution's names, the purpose of the research, how participating will improve the study, identification of any potential risks, notice of confidentiality, a notice of voluntary withdrawal at any time, and who may be contacted for any questions (Roberts, 2010). Of note, no physical or psychological risks were identified or observed for individuals who participated in the research.

Data Collection Procedures, Validation, and Data Analysis Plan

Data Collection

Female federal civil service employees in the GS-12 to GS-15 pay grades were identified through the student's personal knowledge of female leaders in key air station billets. Voluntary participation was solicited via email; a copy of the recruitment email is provided in Appendix A. If the researcher did not receive a response from the potential participant within five working days, a telephone call was used to contact the interviewee.

The research incurred no cost to the U.S. government, the U.S. Marine Corps, or the participant. Research and interviews were conducted during off-duty hours for both the researcher and the participants. Interviews were conducted at the participant's place of work or at a location chosen by the interviewee; the latter location was generally a private alcove at the base library. Each interview lasted no longer than 55 minutes; the researcher requested permission to contact the participants via email or telephone to clarify collected data or to assist in verifying themes identified during the data analysis process.

Data was recorded via a digital voice recorder, and a separate microphone attachment was available for the interviewee's voluntary use. The researcher manually transcribed the interview using pen and paper as a secondary measure in case the recorder malfunctioned or if the interviewee declined to have the conversation recorded; however, the digital voice recorder was considered the primary data recording instrument (Creswell, 2014). The digital recording device (including the data files) and physical notes were placed in a locked safe when not in use.

The digital files were professionally transcribed using Rev.com, an internet service provider that transcribes digital recordings or hand-written notes for a pre-determined fee. Specifically, Rev.com charged \$1.00 per digital recording minute, with a claimed 99% accuracy (Rev.com, 2018). Transcribed files were not shared with any other individual, and the data files retained by Rev.com will be destroyed at the researcher's request (Rev.com, 2018). Transcribed files were verified against the recorded interviews to ensure accuracy and then uploaded to qualitative data analysis software (MAXQDA Analytics Pro 12) for theme analysis.

Validation of the Data

Data validation procedures establish measures to ensure objectivity and believability in research (Creswell, 2014). "Validity," according to Roberts (2010), "is the degree to which your instrument truly measures what it purports to measure" (p. 151). Validity is frequently referred to in quantitative methodology; in qualitative research, however, validity is often specified as trustworthiness (Roberts, 2010).

Without establishing trustworthiness in one's qualitative research, the reader may interpret evocative and comprehensive data as incomplete or simply wrong (Miles,

Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). For instance, this study sampled non-representative participants, due to: the small sample size, the constraint of interviewing only those respondents who wished to participate, and the limitation of studying only one organization (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). Researcher personal bias may skew data analysis towards unintentional conclusions, or events may be interpreted incorrectly due to lackadaisical research (termed *holistic fallacy*) (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013).

Thus, several measures were used to establish trustworthiness in this study. First, interrater reliability is a form of validation that measures consistency between two raters or between a rater and an expert, especially critical in instruments with open-ended questions (Roberts, 2010). Specifically, the rater (researcher) utilized the professional advice of the expert (dissertation chair) to check the researcher's interpretations of the data and the validity of the interview protocol as a credible instrument. Creswell (2013) notes that interrater reliability may also be termed peer review or debriefing, especially when referring to qualitative research. Nevertheless, the intent remained to solicit an unbiased, professional opinion concerning the collection and analysis of data.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013) assert that study participants are "bound to know more than the researcher ever will about the realities under investigation" (p. 309). Thus, the use of member checking is another method to ascertain the trustworthiness of the research. Member checking allowed participants to provide feedback on conclusions and interpretations drawn from data analysis (Creswell, 2013). Feedback was requested from five participants after the final analysis of the data; these individuals were purposely selected as they were members of distinct departments on the air station, representing

different career fields. This allowed the researcher to have a complete understanding of the subject, and it allowed the selected participants to focus on the main ideas and causal interpretations of the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). Each of the five participants concurred with the preliminary themes provided.

Finally, credibility was established by reporting data that did not conform to the researcher's hypothesis or initial conclusions. Creswell (2013) describes this method as negative case analysis, while Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013) refer to the researcher seeking negative evidence, outliers, or rival explanations. The purpose of these trust-building activities was to remain unbiased during the research and to provide the reader with an honest, realistic assessment (Creswell, 2013). "Our beautiful theories," quip Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013), "need few data to convince us of their solidarity, and we are not eager to encounter the many brutal facts that could doom our frameworks" (p. 304).

Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative research uses both inductive and deductive reasoning to build categories and themes from the collected data (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative data analysis differs from quantitative analysis in that data is purposely narrowed (reduced) to create a small number of manageable themes, usually between five and seven; conversely, quantitative researchers often retain all collected data (Creswell, 2014). Specifically, for phenomenological studies, Creswell (2014) suggests "the analysis of significant statements, the generation of meaning units, and the development of...an essence description" (p. 196). The participants' perceptions and personal beliefs concerning the phenomenon are essential in understanding their lived experiences (Chun, 2013). Chun

(2013) further notes that knowledge through phenomenological research “is constructed by systematically collecting and analyzing the participants’ experiences and feeling, making meaning through discourse” (n.p.).

Data analysis was conducted with the assistance of the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA Analytics Pro 12. However, this software was only used to assist the researcher with coding and organizing the digital interview transcripts; no coding queries or electronic searches of the corpus were conducted using the software’s analytic engines. The coding results were the researcher’s own discoveries through detailed analysis of the interview transcripts. Discovering the essence of the interviewees’ experiences incorporated Creswell and Poth’s (2018) recommendation for data analysis in phenomenological research, a methodological approach advanced by Moustakas, and coding methodologies as explicitly described by Saldana (2016).

The below steps were conducted to analyze the data:

1. Using analytical memoing, the researcher reflected on the personal experiences he had with the phenomenon. This step focused attention on the sample participants by acknowledging and then setting aside, as much as possible, the researcher’s prior experiences (Creswell, 2013).
2. Participant interviews, transcribed by Rev.com, were compared to the digital recordings to ensure accuracy of the transcripts and uploaded to the data analysis software MAXQDA. This served as an initial reading of the transcribed interviews and provided a general understanding of the shared experiences of the participants.

3. Next, the researcher read each individual transcript with the intent of coding shared words or phrases to link ideas into more detailed themes. This step consisted of two separate coding cycles as described below.
 - a. During the first cycle coding, the data was analyzed using a priori (predetermined), in vivo, and emergent (exploratory) coding, focusing on the intent of the research as derived from the research question and subquestion (Saldana, 2016). First cycle coding produced an initial coding matrix of 614 codes.
 - b. After the first coding cycle, the student consulted with his dissertation chair to evaluate the coding process and focus the researcher on trends conducive to discovering themes through qualitative data analysis.
 - c. Second cycle coding blended the initial, emergent results with emotion and value coding to create more meaningful, nonrepetitive statements. Saldana (2016) described these statements as central or core categories. Emotion coding is appropriate for qualitative studies “that explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions, especially in matters of social relationships, reasoning, decision-making, judgement, and risk-taking” (Saldana, 2016, p. 123). Additionally, Saldana (2016) described value coding as an investigative, affective method that is essential to decode a participant’s attitudes, mores, and beliefs. Second cycle coding resulted in 346 nonrepetitive codes, allowing the researcher to focus on five primary statements or units to organize and present the results.

4. These meaningful, significant statements were clustered into larger units, “called “‘meaning units’ or themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). These five themes included “nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements” of equal worth that focused on the lived experiences of the participants and the research topic (Creswell, 2013, p. 193).
5. Organized by these themes, the researcher produced a narrative of “‘what’” the participants experienced, termed a “‘textural description’ of the experiences” with use of verbatim examples from the interview transcripts” (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). This process is also termed thematic analysis in qualitative methods, where an analysis of “what is spoken or written” during the interviews is examined (Creswell, 2014, p. 191).
6. Sixth, the narrative discussing what the participants experienced was aggregated into a “description of ‘how’ the experience happened...called a ‘structural description’” (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). This required the researcher to analyze and use critical thinking to reflect on how the participant experienced the phenomenon.
7. Lastly, the culmination of the phenomenological method required a detailed description of the essence of the participants’ experiences incorporating what was experienced and how the sample experienced it.

Rich description of the data provided the researcher with a detailed understanding of the participants’ experiences.

Ethical Considerations

As with any research, there were ethical concerns to consider. Creswell (2014), in his discussion on ethics, showed that ethical considerations apply to all research stages: prior to the study, beginning the study, collecting data, analyzing data, and reporting/sharing the information. While no two researchers may share the same definition of ethics, there is concurrence among professional organizations that all study participants are treated with compassion and dignity (Roberts, 2010).

For this research, there were three primary ethical considerations. First, permission to conduct research with federal civil servants required concurrence from the Marine Corps' gatekeepers, the Manpower and Reserve Affairs branch and the Marine Corps University's IRB. Gatekeepers are individuals within a proposed research site that grant permission to conduct research and have an interest in protecting their institution and its employees (Roberts, 2010). Roberts (2010) further describes the importance of coordination with gatekeepers:

Gatekeepers have concerns about the impact of your study on their organization as well as the possible disclosure of confidential information outside the organization. It is, therefore, your ethical responsibility to fully inform them about ways your study may affect the work of the organization and its members. You should also disclose ways the results of your study would benefit the organization (p. 37).

The intent of the Marine Corps' administrative vetting process was to ensure federal civil servants were not coerced into research participation and their personal information remained confidential (Roberts, 2010).

Second, it was critical to not lead study participants during interviews. While every researcher certainly desires their hypothesis or research question to be validated, an honest interpretation of the collected data maintained the study's academic integrity. Understanding and interpreting the unique perspective of each participants' lived experiences required active listening and critical thinking. Active listening compelled the researcher to listen without simultaneously crafting a rebuttal or planning forward for the next question. Questions were asked without leading participants to answer in a manner that validated the research questions or hypotheses. Additionally, non-verbal cues, such as eye-rolling, sighing, or shaking one's head, were minimized as these could have skewed participant responses to support what they believed the interviewer desired to hear or changed how they answered the question.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013) share a unique perspective on the qualitative researcher, who often works alone during the course of the study: "each is a one-person research machine: defining the problem, doing the sampling, designing the instruments, collecting the information, condensing the information, analyzing it, interpreting it, and writing it up. A vertical monopoly" (p. 293-4). Qualitative researchers, therefore, may inadvertently skew data to meet the needs of the research question. Often this misinterpretation of the information is unintentional, but it highlights the need for validation of the research, particularly from peer review, triangulation, or participant feedback.

Lastly, with such a small sample size, the researcher was cognizant of participant confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms were used for each interviewee, and collected data was scrutinized to remove identifying information. The digital recordings

were only reviewed in the privacy of the researcher's home or with the members of the student's dissertation committee.

Summary

Qualitative studies share several characteristics: data is collected in the participants' natural setting, the researcher is the primary individual collecting data, and the research frequently has multiple sources of data for analysis. Further, the phenomenological researcher seeks to create a holistic account of the phenomena, often based on the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2014). Unlike quantitative research where the researcher does not interact with participants, the phenomenological researcher becomes a participant, and the participants become co-researchers, in order for the researcher to truly understand the study's phenomenon (Chun, 2013).

Due to the close interaction of the researcher with the participants, several factors may skew data collection and analysis. Researcher personal bias, for instance, may lead to incorrect data analysis or even negatively influence sample participants to behave or speak in a disingenuous manner (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). Validation methods, to include expert and member checking, were used in this study to ensure trustworthiness and credibility. Most importantly, permission to conduct research with federal civil servants was solicited through the appropriate gatekeepers within the researcher's professional organization.

The phenomenological qualitative method was used to explore the lived experiences of 15 female federal civil servants employed at a Marine Corps air station in eastern North Carolina. Sample members were voluntarily solicited to participate in the study through email or telephone; data was collected using the interview method and

recorded primarily through digital means. Data was analyzed with the assistance of the MAXQDA Analytics Pro 12 qualitative data software, and themes were generated using Creswell and Poth's (2013) modification of Moustakas's method and through analytical coding as described by Saldana (2016). As always, the protection of the participants, to include the confidentiality of their remarks and personal data, was foremost during all aspects of data collection.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

The following chapter will describe the research findings based upon 15 one-on-one interviews with female federal civil service leaders. Included is a reintroduction to the purpose and aim of the study, followed by a brief description of the sample's demographics. Next, an explanation of the coding analysis will be discussed. Finally, the findings will be examined through the primary themes discovered during the coding process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of career mentoring of senior female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina.

Research Question

How do female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina describe their mentoring experiences?

Subquestion

How do female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina describe how mentoring experiences contributed to their professional career development?

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify the different types of mentoring received by female federal civil service employees throughout their careers. Specifically, this study discovered the mentoring experiences of the participants, how mentors assisted these

leaders in their professional journey, and their perceptions of the importance of mentoring for leadership development. The results of this phenomenological study may be used to improve existing, formal leadership development programs for female federal civil service employees in the Department of the Navy and the Marine Corps, such as the Marine Corps' Civilian Mentor Program.

Participant Demographics

The demographics of the sample population are intentionally vague to ensure interviewee anonymity; as most of the interviewees were department supervisors, no information about their job title or duties is provided. Additionally, due to the small number of participants in the study, pseudonyms are used to further protect the participants' identities. The sample consisted of 16 potential interview participants; of these individuals, 14 were interviewed, and the other two declined to participate. Additionally, a recently retired participant who met the sample demographics was interviewed. The average time in the federal civil service for the group was 15 years with 285 total years civil service experience; one-third of the sample had over 30 years each as federal civil servants. Finally, the sample had a median of seven years' experience in their current billet with an average of four direct reports. Table F1 in Appendix F provides additional participant demographic information.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

Initially, solicitation of interview participants was challenging. The human resources department originally agreed to provide the researcher with a list of female federal civil servants who matched the demographics of the study. However, the human

resources department subsequently determined they could not provide the data due to a potential breach of the employees' privacy. Nevertheless, the researcher was able to identify participants through individuals he was familiar with and through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability-sampling method where interviewees suggest other participants who may want to take part in the research (Babbie, 2017). Fourteen of the available 16 members (87.5%) of the population participated in the study, as well as the one recently retired participant.

Interviews were conducted in the participants' place of work or in a private location in the base library. Four weeks were required to solicit interviewee involvement and conduct the interviews. All interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed by a professional, on-line transcription service (rev.com). To ensure accuracy, all the transcripts were compared to the digital audio recordings and the researcher's notes; this also served as the researcher's initial immersion in the data. Of note, while the researcher used the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA Analytics Pro 12, the software was only used as a tool to sort and arrange the data. None of the software's coding or graphing capabilities were utilized.

There were as many commonalities among the collected data as there were differences. Overall, interviewees were split in their opinion of perceived discrimination in the federal service and on whether the mentoring relationship should be a formal or informal process. Conversely, nearly all of the participants concurred that the current formal mentoring program does not provide employees with the professional and career enhancement so critical for leadership development.

Data Analysis

As previously described in the methodology section, two coding cycles were conducted. The analysis of each cycle focused on answering the research question; this ensured the researcher was anchored to the phenomenon being explored and helped organize the researcher's thoughts to discover key data points (Center for Evaluation and Research, 2012). The first coding cycle used an amalgamation of a priori (previously determined), in vivo (literal coding), and emergent (unexpected) coding to establish patterns and meaningful statements in the data (Saldana, 2016). For example, a priori coding included *mentor definition* and *participation in mentoring programs*, to organize data previously determined to be crucial to analyzing the interviewees' experiences. In vivo coding included key remarks or ideas from the participants, such as the notion of being "thrown to the wolves" after initial onboarding. Finally, emergent codes were those discovered during the course of the first several readings of the transcripts, and comprised unexpected finding, such as perceptions of inequality in the federal civil service.

After familiarizing myself with each transcript and discussing the initial coding results with my dissertation chair, I conducted second cycle coding. This cycle used a combination of emotion and value coding to further refine the coding process and create themes from the data key to the phenomenological method. Understanding the unique insights of leadership development in the federal service required the researcher to focus on the "inner cognitive systems of the participants" (Saldana, 2016, p. 124). Perceptions of fairness and equality are critical aspects of being engaged. Thus, emotion and value coding allowed the researcher to assign codes to data representing the interviewees'

“feelings,...integrated value, attitude, and belief systems at work” (Saldana, 2016, p. 124).

Presentation of the Findings

Discovered Themes

The study’s findings reflect five major themes discovered during the coding and analysis process. These themes gather the story of the mentoring perceptions of the participants and assist in explaining their lived experiences. The themes are: mentor description and definition, perception of mentoring in the federal civil service, mentoring relationships and program participation, perceptions of discrimination or inequality, and improving the civilian mentor program. Displayed in Figure 1 is the interrelationship of the five themes to the phenomenon being studied, the description of the mentoring experiences of senior female leaders in the federal civil service.

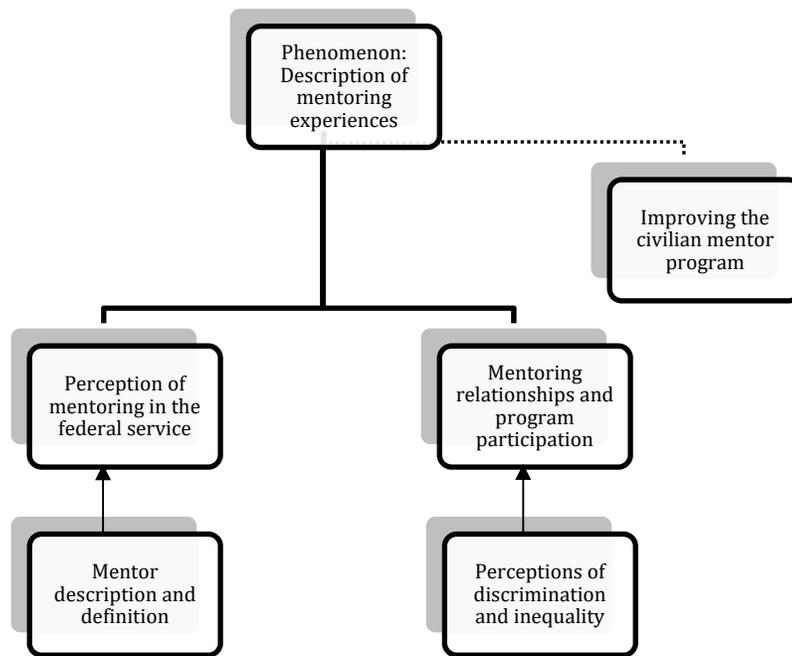


Figure 1. Phenomenon and Theme Interrelationships

The arrows connecting the vertically-displayed boxes indicate the one-way, linear relationship of the two themes. For example, on the left side of the figure, the participant's perception of mentoring in the federal service is grounded in the interviewee's definition of who a mentor is and how the individual should act. Further, as depicted on the right portion of Figure 1, the participant's perception of mentoring relationships and their participation in mentoring partnerships is strongly influenced by their perceptions of discrimination and inequality. These perceptions affect their opinions concerning the usefulness of having a mentor and participating in the Marine Corps' formal mentoring program. Overall, the description of their mentoring experiences is composed of both the theme *Perception of mentoring in the federal service* and the theme *Mentoring relationships and program participation*.

The theme *Improving the civilian mentor program* is displayed with a dotted line between itself and the research phenomenon. The relationship is not directional, and the theme does not contribute to the participants' description of their mentoring experiences. Rather, the theme provides interviewee suggestions for refining the formal program based on career experiences.

Theme 1: Mentor Description and Definition

The first theme examined the participants' definition of a mentor and assessed their perceptions of what mentoring is. The participants provided their perceptions of the leadership qualities valued in a mentor while highlighting key characteristics of those individuals most influential in their personal and professional development. Interviewees suggested the necessity for the mentor to empower the mentee to accomplish tasks beyond common duties and to encourage them to challenge themselves on a daily basis.

Wendy, a civil servant with 35 years of federal service suggested a mentor is “somebody that you can aspire to be. Somebody that you can go to for knowledge or guidance in regard to some of the goals that you may have in your career or in your personal life.”

Further, a critical leadership component of the mentor was their ability to actively listen to the needs and desires of the subordinate, providing the foundation to develop a strong interpersonal relationship. Linda recalled her first supervisor in the federal service and how they developed an informal mentoring partnership:

When I started with the federal service, the person that hired me, hired me as a GS-6 secretary, and in his mind, he saw that role as a stepping stone to other positions within the [department], and he did a really terrific job of working with me to analyze my skillset, and he did an excellent job of setting me up with projects, letting me get involved with things that were clearly outside of my job description to just give me the opportunity to get the experience to move to the next level. And he was very good at doing that with anybody that was interested in his help, and that's probably the best experience with a mentor that I ever had within the federal government. I think his best characteristics were that he encouraged me to work outside of my current position description so that I could start gaining the experience I needed to move up.

Notable mentor characteristics included an individual who was trustworthy, fair, patient, approachable, and had interest in the mentee's well-being. “A mentor,” stated Yolanda (31 years of service), “is someone who has a genuine interest in you, and sees potential in you, and takes the time to spend with you, and guide you, and lead you.”

Moreover, interviewees desired someone who they respected, who lead by example through perseverance and strength of will.

Lisa added that a mentor was “somebody that you could look up to, respect...give you some guidance on...ways you can improve yourself to be more competitive... [someone who] has a lot of inner strength, a lot of drive, very smart, driven...[who] stood up for their employees.” Several participants viewed the mentor as someone who could specifically help in their professional development, aiding in setting career goals, meeting training requirements, and being proficient in their current billet. Conversely, some interviewees defined the mentor/mentee relationship as one that should primarily focus on psychosocial skills, such as intellectual and emotional maturity.

Mentors were further characterized as individuals who possessed multiple talents, effectively balancing work and home life along with community or church service. They were the individuals aspiring leaders continually sought for personal and professional guidance. The common descriptor of the mentor was one who took their time to develop the subordinate in spite of multiple, conflicting demands and was someone who mentees desired to emulate. Cary described her mentor as a professional who understood her weaknesses: “[H]e was very gregarious and outgoing, and so he took me under his wing and showed me how to read people better, showed me how to listen to people more, showed me how to better understand what people needed.” Whether established in a formal or informal relationship, most participants concurred that an individual could have several mentors at the same time, often separating the personal and professional aspects of the individual’s life.

A remarkable finding was that four participants viewed their father as a critical mentor in their personal and professional lives and looked for similar leadership traits in their managers and potential mentors. These descriptors included a mentor who set the example, was compassionate, listened attentively to the mentee's needs, and was highly competent in their job. Finally, while most of the participants desired a mentor who could assist them in mastering their billet, a common yearning was that the mentor could assist them with networking and promotion opportunities.

Theme 1 explored the participants' definition of who and what a mentor is. Mentors were characterized as being a driven, intelligent, and compassionate individual who exhibited genuine concern for the personal welfare of the protégé. Moreover, the mentor devoted significant time to the mentee's professional development, invigorating them with challenging tasks and stimulating their career growth through training opportunities, leadership exercises, and establishing career goals.

Theme 2: Perception of Mentoring in the Federal Service

In this theme, the participants described their perceptions of mentoring in the federal civil service. Perception, in this case, is the interviewees' opinions and discernment of mentoring and growth opportunities available in the federal civil service. Theme 2 is differentiated from theme 1, *Mentor description and definition*, in that this theme builds upon the interviewees' explanation of who and what a mentor is, allowing the findings to focus on their perceptions and opinions of the *act* of mentoring in their current positions. The critical difference is the participants' discernment between *being* a mentor versus the *act* of mentoring.

In general, the interviewees' perceptions of mentoring opportunities were skewed to the negative, with common themes including lack of mentor training, improper program funding, and absence of support for mentoring programs from senior leaders. When queried about having attended a mentor information class, one participant recalled her peers complaining, "oh, here is just another thing to go to." However, many participants agreed that several leadership development programs offered through the training department provided positive mentoring experiences and the opportunity to network with peers and supervisors.

The participants disagreed on their perception of *what* mentoring is, either in their role as a mentee or mentor. Some saw the mentoring relationship as career focused, intent on meeting objectives or goals to increase technical proficiency or promotion opportunities. For example, Wendy perceived a mentor to be a guiding force, someone to enhance their certification and training. "Sometimes," she recalled, "it's just a voice to lead...people to a program they can get involved in." Others thought the mentoring partnership was more critical to developing intangible personal qualities, such as an improved understanding of oneself. Further, several interviewees viewed mentoring as a short-term means to increase their training and career opportunities, while others regarded mentoring as a long-term relationship focused on the professional development of the self.

Yolanda was concerned that mentees may incorrectly interpret the end state of a mentoring relationship as promotion. She noted:

So, I think it is wonderful to mentor people, to grow people. I'm not sure the mentee understands the end result of mentoring...[t]he bottom, in my opinion, is

that everybody's looking to grow, and they are looking to grow in their careers.

Upward mobility. That's not here...we're not growing.

Moreover, mentoring, she added, is not always about getting promoted and making more money. It is about personal and professional development, understanding the self, and bettering the organization.

Many participants thought a mentor's role should be focused on initial onboarding and assisting the employee with becoming familiar with their new job assignments.

There was disagreement on whether the mentoring relationship should be an informal partnership or a formal arrangement officially sponsored by the employer. This misperception and confusion of a standardized notion of mentoring, as well as discontent with the Marine Corps' formal program, was the basis for most negative perceptions.

Deanna, with over 15-years in the federal civil service, stated her frustration with the current mentoring program and her perception of its effectiveness. "Upper-level leadership," she mentioned, "would need to see a true value in the program, and until they did, it's only a check-on-the-box, which is not worth my time." Further, the same interviewee mentioned a commonality between many participants, lamenting how the government spends substantial time and money creating programs that are implemented but not sustained:

I get kind of jaded, I really do. I get jaded because I feel like what the government and what the Marine Corps does wrong is they constantly put out these things that are supposed to make everything so great, and they turn them into a check-in-a-box...you don't really go all-in to them, and that's why they don't work. But I feel like the mentoring program's the same thing. It's like, let's make our

employees feel good, we're gonna say we're gonna have a mentoring program so that everybody will feel good about all these opportunities we're getting you, but they turn into checks-in-a-box.

Deanna continued, "I've tried several times [to be a part of the formal program], it's just very frustrating because it may be a check-in-the-box for somebody, but I don't feel like there is any type of upper level management support. Real support, I don't know how else to say that." Upper level support refers not only to local supervisors but also from the Manpower and Reserve Affairs branch as well, which sponsors the Civilian Mentor Program. Another participant with three years in the federal service, when queried if she participated as a mentor or mentee in the formal mentoring program, indicated she did not perceive the program as being effective despite continued optimism about its potential.

Yolanda shared similar thoughts on mentoring and other training programs. "Training is, 'Let's check the box, and get A through E done, because it's mandatory,' and I don't think that is doing right by your personnel or doing right by your organization." The interviewees discussed frustration concerning required training which contributed to dubious interest in the formal mentoring program. Training, especially computer-based classes, is monotonous and unceasing. Leadership programs are often unattended due to completing mandatory annual training, and training to maintain essential certifications is sometimes neglected. "I'm not even sure," exclaims Yolanda, "that we keep our personnel current in their fields...[we] don't spend enough time on the right or relevant training." Additionally, the formal mentoring program requires the mentor and mentee to maintain administrative records, either physically or digitally. This

contributes to underutilization of the formal program because employees and supervisors are fatigued by the seemingly endless barrage of administrative tasks.

Numerous participants complained of being overburdened with work-related duties and mentioned that time was a contributing factor to not participating in the formal mentoring program. Deanna further complained of the lack of senior leadership support:

Because there's not priority put on mentoring, there's not really...that's not an expectation of me, so I don't always necessarily have to set aside time. So I think that can be a big barrier. And I think you can set up a mentoring program that looks great on paper and then the question is, what's the practicality? Is this actually effective? So I think that's one thing that the government's great at.

We're great at making things look really shiny on paper and in binders but when you really get down to talking to the people, the experience is so much different than what the perception is that we're pushing.

Deanna's supervisors do not view formal mentoring as critical for mission accomplishment, and developing a rapport with a mentee is a timely effort not supported by her leadership. Consequently, the attitude of her senior leaders is, "Hey, fit this in to everything else you have going on."

While some interviewees believed the formal mentoring program was successfully advertised, the majority perceived the Training and Human Resources departments could do better in informing employees of the program's existence. Many saw a request for mentors in daily all-hands emails (electronic messages delivered to civilian employees) but did not understand its importance or have the time to investigate program requirements. Participant Laura noted, "I will say [I have not heard of the

program], if I have, it's probably been in some kind of flash email somewhere.”

Additionally, there were several complaints that adjacent commands or other Marine Corps bases offered professional or mentoring services unavailable to federal civil servant working at the air station.

Linda, reflecting on her experiences with a successful mentoring program in a private business, lamented that mentors in the civil service generally lack the ability, funding, or decision rights to properly train mentees. The program cannot be a development program in name only. She wants to be involved in the Marine Corps' formal mentoring program and has seen interest in the program ebb and flow:

Over the years, I've actually seen that [the formal mentoring program] gain interest quite a few times. Every time it starts to generate a lot of interest, I have the tendency to try to get involved with it. I have a very extremely positive experience outside of the government with mentoring programs. I've seen mentoring programs that have been executed by civilian companies like beyond any expectation I could have and have always hoped that at one point, one of these programs that they've tried to kick off with the federal government would come close to that.

Linda further discussed the effectiveness of her former employer's mentoring program and how it blended the development of employee career and psychosocial functions by empowering the mentor with the ability to actively engage the employee with additional tasks, leadership development opportunities, and professional training. An employee's achievement of career and professional objectives, set each year by the individual's mentor, were critical components for determination of promotion or assignment to jobs of

increased responsibility. This development was achieved through a thorough assessment of the mentee's capabilities and needs. Linda added:

The biggest role of a mentor is to sit down with you and let you use these personal assessments. Let's look at your skillsets, let's look at where you are right now, let's look at where you want to be. Let's identify what it is that you need to get from here to here, and we don't do that at all [in the government]. And if I do that with somebody, I don't have any opportunities as a possible mentor to help them get those skillsets. I can't say to them, '[Linda] needs this class and she needs it because this is a gap in her leadership or a gap in her skillset,' and I would get sent to that class. Here, a mentor saying that, '[Linda] needs this class,' nobody cares. Nobody is going to send you to a class because I did a gap analysis with you and said you need this.

Sometimes it can be difficult to find a mentor eager to devote time to a mentoring relationship. Interviewee Laura actively sought a mentor several times in her 15 years of federal service but was unable find a leader willing to provide her with the guidance she needed, especially during the critical learning period following initial onboarding. This sentiment echoed many of the interviewees' opinion and was described by Lilly as being "thrown to the wolves," analogous to the sink or swim work culture imposed on new employees and managers. Laura described the experience of taking over her former supervisor's position:

And when he was gone...it was kind of thrown in my lap, and like you said, there's no guidance. There's nobody to ask questions. Nobody could answer

them, but the work is expected to get done and turned in, and there's nowhere to go to get the answers.

Conversely, several interviewees perceived the mentoring program as most beneficial to new hires and not a requirement for continuous professional development. Both Brenda and Kate did not see the need for a formal mentoring program unless it focused on enhancing the knowledge of newly-hired employees or junior leaders. Additionally, some interviewees thought a formal program was too cumbersome and did not enhance the informal mentoring that occurs on a routine basis. "I think the government and the Marine Corps in general," noted participant Claire, "have spent a lot of money on things that don't work. And that's kind of disheartening in my opinion...we're trying to formalize a process that in its nature is informal."

Overall, the participants reported negative perceptions of formal mentoring in the federal service. While some were able to effectively establish a formal, positive rapport through the organization's mentor match service, most mentoring relationships were considered informal and not documented through the Marine Corps' Civilian Mentor Program. The lack of senior leadership support and the associated administrative burden associated with the formal mentor program reduced the perception of the program's effectiveness.

Theme 3: Mentoring Relationships and Program Participation

The preceding paragraphs discuss the actual mentoring relationships experienced by the participants, primarily in the federal civil service, whether as formal or informal relationships. This theme explores the interviewees' emotions, feelings, and attitudes about current or former mentoring partnerships. Specifically, this theme reflects their

participation in the Marine Corps' formal mentoring program and delves into past mentoring experiences. For the majority of the interviewees, their mentoring partnerships were informal relationships, not officially sponsored through a formal organizational program. Negative experiences included the inability to find a mentor and frustration concerning the perception of more effective mentoring programs hosted by adjacent agencies.

For those participants who were aware of the Marine Corps' formal mentoring program, only three were assigned as mentors in the official database. At one point in their careers, several other interviewees input their data into the mentor database to act as either mentors or mentees, but lack of support from senior leaders or too few requests for mentoring from subordinates caused them to dismiss the formal program. Discussing her frustration with the formal program and its lack of interest, Claire bemoaned:

[T]he concept of [the program] is great, but we've asked for other things that could be so much [more], and it's one of those things that will get a little bit of momentum, and then it will just die like everything else, you know.

However, as shown below, several participants described their positive experiences with the Civilian Leadership Development (CLD) program sponsored by the Manpower and Reserve Affairs branch and promulgated through the air station's training department.

The CLD program offers multiple methods for civil service employees to enhance their professional development. This includes access to tuition assistance through the Academic Degree Program and leadership development with the New Leader's Program, which provides students with an excellent opportunity to network with senior organizational leaders. In fact, senior leaders are often invited to these leadership classes

to introduce themselves as potential mentors for the students in attendance. Moreover, eight interviewees had attended the formal New Leader Development Program and described their experiences as positive and career enhancing.

Unfortunately, not all of the leadership development programs are advertised, or there are too few student seats available for attendance. Tina argued:

I'm only aware of [the programs] being offered two to three times in the past five or six years...[t]he year I applied, the Marine Corps as a whole, I think, only was able to take one or two people...[t]hen the next time it was offered, nobody let us know, but we did have somebody in the department who used to be our training coordinator, and she found out and applied and got in.

Tina further noted she has never had an official mentor, and even informal mentoring opportunities have been fleeting.

Specifically regarding mentoring opportunities, most participants believed being a mentor or mentee was most beneficial when the relationship was informal and voluntary. Reminiscing about applying for her current position, Debbie described how she never would have sought the billet or thought she would have enjoyed working in it so much without her mentor encouraging her to “get outside of my box...I did it, and I loved it. I would never have done it without him, never.” Furthermore, while describing an informal mentor who was influential in her development, Linda recalled:

[H]e did a really terrific job of working with me to analyze my skillset, and he did an excellent job of setting me up with projects, letting me get involved with things that were clearly outside of my job description to just give me the opportunity to get the experience to move to the next level. And he was very good at doing that

with anybody that was interested in his help, and that's probably the best experience with a mentor that I ever had within the federal government.

However, not all experiences are as positive and uplifting. In an effort to enhance her professional development and understand the technical specifics of her billet, Laura attempted to solicit a mentor through her supervisor on two separate occasions. Each time, however, her request was ignored or disregarded. She remembered:

I have actually gone out and asked for a mentor on two different occasions...I have [dozens] of staff members, so it's on a much larger scale [than my previous position] with a whole lot more policies and a whole lot more guidelines, regulations, and so forth. And how do you manage all that...I had a lot of room to grow. I had the basics down, but having somebody who was more seasoned, who could share some of their experience, their learning with me, would've been helpful.

Laura's frustration with lack of leadership development and mentoring opportunities was compounded by her taking over the duties of her immediate supervisor who was unexpectedly relieved for cause.

While Laura understood the administrative process to request a mentor, some interviewees were frustrated with the mentor-match process. For example, Kate was confused as to how she could pick a mentor from the mentoring program's database. The process was too impersonal for her. Referring to the process of choosing a mentor from the database, Kate pondered, "People wouldn't want a stranger or somebody like that, that they don't know...it's kind of like asking for help from a stranger." Further, she

exclaimed that many wage-earning civilian employees do not even have ready-access to a computer that would allow them to use the matching service.

Several interviewees were envious of other base's leadership and mentoring opportunities. For example, Claire noted that Camp Lejeune maintained a separate yet effective mentoring program for female leaders that was separate from the Marine Corps' official program. She discussed Camp Lejeune's informal mentoring group:

They have an informal [group], they had a luncheon program that they had set up, like outside of stuff where once a month they would get together and all the female leaders would talk about issues they were having. She's like, 'do you know about this, and I'm like no, I didn't even know that existed.' I mean she had told me, it's like a whole underground network of stuff, it was very interesting. Because there was both a female civil service leader at the time, and there was a high ranking female active duty that was a general I think, or lieutenant colonel, I don't remember what rank she was at the time, I'd have to look back.

Noting that she has had the same personal and professional mentor for nearly 30 years, Claire supported more informal mentoring relationships. In fact, it was her positive relationship and networking with this mentor that allowed her to earn an interview with a federal civil service hiring manager over 15 years ago.

Furthermore, Claire was frustrated with the lack of leadership opportunities, specifically mentoring programs, for female employees available at the air station. Not only was she unsatisfied with mentoring support for female leaders, she believed the Marine Corps' formal program did not prepare mentees for leadership roles. In a

particularly honest assessment of the Marine Corps' Civilian Mentor Program, Claire argued:

So the Marine Corps' mentoring handbook is 180 pages or something ridiculous. Yeah, I mean who's going to read that? You know what I mean? That's kind of the same concept in principle, like so the Marine Corps invested over six million dollars on this whole mentoring match program that's in TWMS [the mentor match digital access point]. And all I can think is, six million dollars, and you know how many people signed up for that program? At our base, which is probably one of the most popular places that we've done, and I think we have 30 people, you know. It's like pulling, I mean, it's not here, it's not on your phone, it's in the system that you have to go register and you know, put through...and the concept of it is great, but we've asked for other things that could be so much, and it's one of those things that we'll get a little bit of momentum, and then it will just completely die like everything else, you know, I mean?

Despite the numerous criticisms of the Marine Corps' program, however, the participants see formal and informal mentoring as critical for leadership development. When queried on how often mentors and mentees spoke or met, the general consensus was that the individuals met when necessary, mainly to solve a personal or professional dilemma. These non-routine meetings, and random email/phone inquiries from mentors soliciting the mentee's welfare, appear more beneficial and desired than required, routine meetings. Sara even added that mentoring was "never an official, or even unofficial, relationship...[y]ou caught it as you could catch it. It was more opportunistic in that regard, than something that was pragmatic, calculated, and 'let me teach you.'" While it

is the duty of the leader to develop their subordinates, Sara was hesitant to force employees into a mandatory mentoring relationship, despite the potential benefits. An involuntary relationship, she noted, “carries a lot of bad press and can definitely work against you.”

Adding to some of the interviewees’ opinion that mentoring should be voluntary, Cary reminisced about the excitement of her first professional job and the disappointment of being assigned a mentor after her initial onboarding. She mentioned:

I think in my entire career, I've only been officially assigned a mentor one time, and it was a woman where I had just started working at a radio station, but it was obvious to me shortly after I started that she wasn't interested in being a mentor and didn't really mentor me or help me or give me any information.

Cary felt like an annoyance when she queried the assigned mentor about work or professional dilemmas and would never have considered asking the mentor for personal advice. The notion of being assigned a stranger as part of a mentoring partnership did not appear effective. After several months, however, she attained a mentor (informally) who was compassionate about her personal development and whose advice was instrumental in developing her as a leader.

Unlike many of the participants, Debbie was aware of the formal mentoring program and was active in promoting the service. She described the Marine Corps’ formal program as similar to match.com, an online dating website where individuals are paired based on corresponding personal attributes:

Our official mentor package, it's kind of like the match.com, where you put in all your information and then they match you up. I've actually seen it where people

do great. But I've also seen it where you put two people together just because their qualities are the same, they don't have that personality match, where it doesn't work out. But it's a great program because there's so many people to pick from if you don't have that circle of influence that you're looking for, I guess is how you say it.

Debbie could not recall specific instances, but she knows peers who have established successful mentoring partnerships using the organization's formal program and also those who were unable to develop a positive rapport with the mentors they initially chose to follow.

The majority of the mentoring experiences of the participants may be considered informal. While the Marine Corps' formal program offers the ability to find a mentor match based on specific attributes, the pervasive attitude among the interviewees is that the program is overburdened with administrative tasks and lacks support from senior leaders. Employees seeking mentors are more likely to establish an informal partnership unencumbered by the formality of the official program.

Theme 4: Perceptions of Discrimination and Inequality

The following section will examine the participants' perceptions of discrimination and inequality in the federal civil service, with specific focus concerning how discrimination may have affected their mentoring opportunities. The theme encompasses very private and personal feelings concerning fairness and gender-disparity in the workplace; additionally, the theme is separated into two sub-themes to organize the salient points in the discussion. The opinions presented by many of the interviewees suggest antiquated notions of gender-inequality remain in the predominantly-male, senior

civilian leadership positions on Marine Corps installations. Moreover, as is described in more detail, several participants perceived the air station as being less gender-diverse and providing less support for female leaders than other bases, such as Camp Lejeune located 30 miles away.

In total, eight of the 15 participants felt their gender affected their choice of career fields in the civil service and negatively impacted their ability to contribute to group discussions and decision-making. Yolanda even joked that part of her informal mentoring during the early stages of her career counseled her on how to have “self-confidence in a man’s world.” Fortunately, the remaining seven respondents reported no instances of overt discrimination in their federal civil service careers, with Linda predicting that women “will continue to advance [in the federal service], and the misrepresentation of females in senior positions will continue to decrease.”

Sub-theme A: Male-dominant workforce

As noted earlier in this research, the federal civil service and the Marine Corps are demographically male-dominated, especially in senior leadership positions. In general, the participants believed the male-dominant workforce negatively affected opportunities for advancement and perpetuated a notion of irrelevance for females during meetings.

Further, several interviewees perceived that promotions were skewed towards males.

For example, Brenda mused that in 33 years of federal service, she now had her first female supervisor. Additionally, several interviewees noted gender-role ambiguity in regard to interaction with male peers and supervisors. This is particularly difficult for female leaders balancing family and work duties. For instance, Deanna noted:

One of the barriers that I see to having females in leadership positions in the federal government is it is a male-dominated workforce and so with that, typically speaking, your females are going to be your primary caregivers for children, they're gonna have the bulk of household responsibilities, and there is something to be said for work-life balance. And I think as you get up in...as you kind of get promoted in position, there is an expectation for you to sacrifice for the good of the organization at the expense of your family.

Deanna further reflected that she knew few female leaders at her pay grade who had pre-kindergarten-age children. However, she noted that she understands the difficulty of being a working mom and assists her subordinates balance family and career challenges.

Some promotions have been viewed as being unfairly skewed towards male candidates. "I certainly have had times," added Laura, "where I have felt like I have kind of been put on the back burner and a male's been put before me." Further, interviewee Brenda confided that working in the American South, with the region's antiquated notions of race and gender, is much different than in more progressive areas such as the Northeast and Washington, D.C. She worked in Maryland prior to her current position and described her experiences in North Carolina:

It just feels like in the South, and it's changed over the past 21 years you'll say...I don't know if discrimination's the right word. I just think maybe not as much trust is placed [in women]. I don't know if that's a definition of discrimination, but not as much trust is placed if an opinion or something is stated by a female, but in the D.C. area, there was more of a balance of male and female in the workforce, so it

felt like if you said something as a female you were listened to, but it's different. It's different here.

Wendy concurred that she does not feel like she is considered relevant during group discussion among the male-dominated staff:

I mean, it's been hard, it's definitely been a hard road to go through and be in around a predominantly male, right now it's predominantly more male in our organization right here than it is women...[l]ike if you're going into a leadership meeting and stuff, sometimes I think it is a man's world and it's like, 'Okay, here she is.' I can say the same thing, the other person says the same thing or you're bringing up things that are going on and then they squash you but somebody else [a man] can bring up the same thing and next you know they're headed that way. It's like, 'What's the difference?' I don't know, and I still haven't broken that code as to...What is it? Am I not knowing when to not say something or when to...I don't want to play games. I'm just there to help, and that's very hard sometimes.

Further, Wendy observed it was more difficult to network because she was excluded from certain cliques due to her gender. She described the predominantly male workforce as a critical component of latent perceptions of inequality. Several interviewees agreed that they were acutely aware of the dearth of females in senior leadership positions, especially on the air station.

Claire commented that to work for the Marine Corps, it was essential for women to be strong-willed and confident to combat the feelings of being marginalized in the "male-driven environment." Moreover, she commented on the latest planning session she attended:

I'm like, I'm kind of looking around, and I'll be honest, in about more than a third of the meetings that I go to, actually more than half of the meetings I go to, I'm the only female in the room. And it doesn't take a genius to sit in one of the meetings...[and see] there aren't any females in those meetings. And any of the planning meetings, I'm probably one of two or three females in there out of 35 people, you know, 40 people...It took a long time for me personally to get over that fact, and just like, I don't have to...like at some point, I shouldn't have to continually prove myself to someone, that I am good enough to be in this job, I am okay, like I do know what I'm doing. Just because I'm a young female doesn't mean that I'm incompetent to sit here, because I didn't decide to go off to war.

Remembering her early career as a federal civil servant, Claire mentioned she would frequently arrive home crying at the end of the day due to her feelings of being marginalized by her peers and supervisors. She sees herself as an oddity, referring to her career progression and background; not only is she a senior female leader on the air station, but she was not former military and is not married to an active duty spouse. “In my personal opinion,” she added, “to work for the Marine Corps as a female in any position above basically a GS-11, you cannot get your feelings hurt. I mean you really have to have that mentality.” Mirroring Claire’s thoughts, Lilly reflected that as a petite female, she thought she was quickly judged on her competence to effectively lead her subordinates.

Sub-theme A explored the interviewees’ perceptions of working in the male-dominant workforce at the air station. The participants noted the absence of female leaders, particularly in senior leadership positions. Frequently, many observed that their

professional opinions were less sought after or ignored as compared to their male counterparts. Furthermore, some interviewees' felt their advancement opportunities were limited due to their gender, with some promotions given to men considered less capable in the position. Finally, notions of male superiority were enhanced by the perceptions of women being subservient to and less capable than men, encouraged by local customs clinging to antiquated ideals perpetuated in the Antebellum South.

Sub-theme B: Gender-inequality on the air station

Another perception among the participants was that leaders in adjacent military commands, to include a large Department of the Navy unit and a Marine Corps base (Camp Lejeune) located 30 miles to the south of the air station, were more aware of gender inequality and better supported the professional advancement of female employees. For example, senior civil service and active duty military female leaders at Camp Lejeune have hosted peer group mentoring seminars for female civil servants. These seminars allowed women to voice work-related, professional, and personal concerns, ranging from questions concerning training opportunities to how to cope with changes to their bodies after child birth.

Additional support groups focused on mental and physical trauma experienced during deployment, as well as leadership development through a mentor. While these sessions were predominantly focused on active duty female Marines, the end state of the gatherings was to provide women with a female-only venue that allowed them to discuss gender-related issues in their personal and professional lives. Discussing her view of the improved workforce culture at Camp Lejeune as it related to gender equality, Claire noted:

There's just a more pervasive attitude there [Camp Lejeune], because they already have more females established in key roles, it tends to be more driven that way.

And they had programs established about mentoring for females already on both the green side [military] and on the civil service side.

Claire and another participant noted they were unsure why female federal civil servants are more represented in senior leadership positions at Camp Lejeune but speculate that the more cavalier culture of the air wing exacerbates discrimination issues. Furthermore, several interviewees believed their peers at Camp Lejeune, in similar billets, were higher compensated and had larger support staffs. Brenda observed:

I don't understand why there is such a [pay] discrepancy for [the] same jobs...it's just odd to me, what the same person doing the same thing at Camp Lejeune, and here at Cherry Point there's, yeah, it's a bigger place, but you're doing the same thing. You're doing the same thing.

Further perpetuating prejudicial notions of role congruity theory, Tina added that men and women are expected to lead differently (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women who are direct are seen as less nurturing and 'bossy.' However, she also stated that the most she felt discriminated against due to her gender was from other female leaders. "I've actually felt it [discrimination] more from other women..." recollected Tina, "no matter what I said or my background on anything, I was an idiot." Moreover, she felt that finding a mentor, especially one of the same gender, was difficult; her experience was that women often do not build one another up and feel threatened by same-gender peers, especially in a male-dominated workforce. "There's not a lot of females in leadership, and a lot of them don't seem to care if you do get built up."

Concurrently, Cary shared similar thoughts, noting that she worked better with male peers and supervisors mostly because there was less ‘drama,’ and female peers often felt threatened by her. “I see more competition between women,” noted Cary, “as opposed to building them up and helping them unconditionally. I see more strings attached, I guess.” However, she also added that most of her female peers understand “there aren't a lot of women at this level. It's definitely a boy's club and so the women in this group tend to stick together a little bit more and so we talk to each other and help each other and guide each other.”

Claire remembered a poignant message from a female mentor (Marla) she had early in her career:

I asked Marla about it [inequality and discrimination in the federal service], and she said, ‘You know, I'm going to tell you something that no man in his right mind would ever tell you, and no female probably would either...if you want to succeed in the Marine Corps, you are going to have to stick to a training role or an HR [human resources] role, or something that a man doesn't consider threatened or feel threatened by.’ They're [men] okay with you knowing more about human resource topics, or training topics, or things that they don't feel are masculine roles...in the Marine Corps.

Claire believed the other armed services have better integrated women into the workforce and especially in senior leadership positions. The male-dominated Marine Corps, she perceived, makes it difficult for women to establish themselves in roles not typically associated with female employees, such as operations or engineering. The attitude

towards female employees, not individual talent, prevented women from ascending to higher leadership roles.

Despite seven of the interviewees perceiving little to no gender discrimination in the Marine Corps, over half of the participants felt their gender limited their opportunities for advancement and constrained them to excel in careers historically filled by women. Further, it was observed that other Marine Corps bases, especially Camp Lejeune, offered more mentoring and leadership development support to female employees. In addition, several participants perceived a potential pay discrepancy between them and their peers working at other duty stations. The perception of bias against women perpetuates feeling of inadequacy among some female leaders and contributes to their lack of finding beneficial mentoring partnerships.

Theme 5: Improving the Civilian Mentor Program

This section will discuss the research participants' opinions for how the Marine Corps' formal program may be improved. Specifically, the interviewees were queried on how they would change the formal program to be more conducive to leadership development and methods to encourage voluntary participation. This theme is included in the exploration of the participants mentoring experiences as a means to address the potential professional dilemma that may exist in the researcher's workplace.

As described in the literature review of this dissertation, the Marine Corps' Manpower and Reserve Affairs branch sponsors a formal mentoring program for federal civil servants, titled the Civilian Mentor Program (CMP). The CMP provides a database in which individuals desiring to be mentors may input their personal and professional demographics to allow employees to seek out potential mentors based on desired

characteristics. The database provides contact information for the mentor, and the relationship may be established at any geographic location. The mentee creates an Individual Development Plan that lists desired career and professional objectives that they hope to attain from the mentoring relationship.

Several participants discussed improving the formal program by immediately placing new employees with a mentor. Brenda, Kate, and Laura thought a mentor should be assigned during the onboarding process and wished they could have been exposed to different careers in the federal government, perhaps in the guise of a temporary 'job swap' program. Wendy concurred that shadowing her mentor in the performance of the mentor's duties assisted her in gaining insight into the responsibilities of senior leaders and the duties of adjacent departments on the base, something she experienced through the New Leader Program. Lilly also agreed, sharing her desire to learn from a senior leader, especially during the initial stages of learning a new job, to reduce the stress and uncertainties associated with accomplishing one's new duties. "You're going to job shadow her for a week. We don't expect anything out of you the first month you're here, except to visit the different programs and learn. I think that would be very beneficial." This included understanding how to properly document and adjudicate disciplinary issues.

Additionally, the New Leader Program, through a six-month developmental training curriculum, required students to interview senior base leaders and complete written assignments focused on leadership and management. The New Leader Program is one of several programs offered through the Training department that provides developing leaders formal instruction on leadership styles and strategic thinking; it is a

part of the service's Marine Corps Civilian Leadership Development Program (MCCLDP) (U.S. Marine Corps, 2017). The exposure to senior leaders, in particular, was critical for developing the student's professional networks, and many interviewees wished the program was offered to every employee regardless of pay grade. Claire concluded that the New Leader Program provided her the opportunity to visit adjacent commands to observe how they developed junior leaders and allowed her to conduct an internship within the human resources department to develop her career objectives.

A concern among the interviewees was whether the formal mentoring program should require documented, routine interaction between the mentor and mentee. When queried if meeting at a routine time each week or month should be mandatory, Debbie mused:

I don't think you could mandate anything like that. I think internal growth is something that you need. Everybody needs to grow, everybody needs help along the way, I don't care who you are. But I don't think you can force it on somebody. Me and my mentors, I don't think if they told me that I had to meet with my mentee once a month, then it's almost like I'm just doing it because I have to and not because I choose to. And I would rather the two that I mentor feel like that I genuinely am here for them. I think if you mandate it, no.

However, Deanna argued that the mentor could not develop the junior employee without having an intimate knowledge of their needs and objectives; this required some form of regular communication with the mentee.

Conversely, Claire argued that mentees should establish the rhythm in which they meet their mentor. To her, this makes the relationship more genuine as communication

occurs when the mentee feels the need to open the dialogue. Discussing how often she meets with one of her present mentees, Claire noted:

It really just depends on the person, I mean my mentee right now, when I first reached out to her, and I think it depends on what they need. You know, you kind of have to let that person, because sometimes you have a mentee relationship that develops because a person needs something. And then they might not reach back out to you for another year, two years, and that's okay. We have to recognize that that's okay, you know, because of what's going on.

Additionally, Tina and Cary believed mentoring, at least in an informal manner, should be a part of an employee's day-to-day routine, but the relationship would be stymied if higher leadership did not recognize the time required to build a meaningful mentoring partnership. Despite the potential that the relationship may not be genuine, both participants felt individual development, as predicated through a mentoring relationship, should be a part of both the mentee and mentor's annual performance evaluation. Cary mused:

I think I would make that [mentoring] part of their [mentor and mentee] performance appraisal, because I think it helps not only the person being mentored, but it helps the mentor also, helps them to understand how people absorb and learn and could help them with their management skills as well.

The mentor's supervisor would be responsible for ensuring the mentoring partnership is authentic and helpful for both parties.

A shared premise among the participants was that civil service mentors often lack the ability to send mentees to training. Yolanda argued that the mentor, through their

formal decision rights, should be empowered to send the mentee to training that provides meaningful growth or professional certification. Formal decision rights, for example, would provide the mentor with the ability to fund certification programs for mentees, grant time-off awards for achieving agreed-upon objectives, or allowing the mentor to add comments to the mentee's official personnel record. Dana concurred, adding, "We are required to maintain certifications, [but] they don't help us in getting the annual training that we need to keep those certifications." Moreover, Claire pondered providing more decision rights to the mentor, such as the ability to award mentees:

I think I would allow the mentoring program to blend more with the awards program and rewards...such as time off on the spot...because I feel like your mentors are the people that know and recognize in people who've done things, and I feel like they have the ability and would know the right people to reward for things, even when supervisors don't.

Overall, the participants shared the common perception that growth opportunities are limited on the air station, and if the mentoring program remains a formal process solicited through the Manpower and Reserve Affairs branch, one's mentor should have the ability to actually affect change for the mentee (such as access to promotion opportunities, privileged training, and time off or monetary awards).

Conversely, Tina thought mentoring should be an informal process. "[I]f there's an option for informality, I think that more people might jump in [to a mentoring relationship] because they don't necessarily want everything they do to be, 'Okay, I'm being evaluated on whether or not I follow through on mentoring or something that's

supposed to help me.'" Concerning the formality of the mentoring program, Claire added:

I feel like when you force people to do certain things it makes it not as genuine of a relationship...[sometimes] we just recognize there are informal [mentoring] relationships that exist and would be happy with some of that. But it's almost like that's not good, and we can't recognize that, you have to document everything, and everything has to be done [properly], and that honestly scares away half the people like myself, that go well, you know, if I sign up to be a mentor, and then there's, you know, five people that need to be mentee'd, and I have to do all of this documentation and paperwork for them and keep track of all of that stuff, I don't have time to do that, you know.

Further, Claire believed mentors should receive more formal education on how to be a mentor, focusing on the intricacies of developmental learning and improving active listening skills.

Moreover, finding time in the mentee and mentor's chaotic schedule is a significant constraint to developing a mentoring partnership. This is compounded by a perceived lack of support from senior leaders. Deanna noted her frustration with finding time and senior leadership support to assist employees whom she considered informal mentees:

Because there's not priority put on mentoring, there's not really...that's not an expectation of me, so I don't always necessarily have to set aside time. So I think that can be a big barrier. So I can agree to have a mentee, but if it's someone outside of the organization that's a natural rapport for me, it may be really difficult

for me to stop what I'm doing to accomplish my mission and sit with that person. So it almost seems like it would need [to be] a priority from the organization, that this would be either an expectation or an opportunity for leaders to engage in. So that there would be a precedent set that, 'Hey, it is okay for you to step off, take an hour every week or whatever you need to go do to kind of pour into this person.' Versus, 'Hey, fit this in to everything else that you have going on.'

Additionally, several respondents pointed out that mentoring is rarely discussed by the training or human resources departments, even during annual training events which focus on providing employees with key information that may affect their career development.

The fifth theme explored the participants' perceptions of methods to improve the formal mentoring process. The most salient opinion was that senior leaders did not support the mentoring program. This results in a lack of formal training for mentors, inadequate funding for mentee professional development, and disregard for the amount of time required to establish a genuine mentoring partnership. Further, interviewees perceived that the formal mentoring program could be more effective if the mentor was empowered to make tangible change, such as having the ability to fund formal training for mentees and allowing the mentor to comment on mentee goal progression in the individual's annual evaluation.

Synthesis of the Themes to the Research Question

The following section provides an analysis of the findings and contrasts these themes against the research question and subquestion. The intent of the research was to comprehensively answer the research question and subquestion, which guide the study and form the foundation for presenting the finding and results (Roberts, 2010). Thus, the

results reveal the perceptions of the mentoring experiences of female federal civil service employees and discuss how these experiences contributed to their professional development.

The phenomenon, the description of the mentoring experiences, is presented through the synthesis of five themes. As shown in Figure 1, the participants' stories and lived experiences are interrelated through these five themes. In summary, the perception of the interviewees' mentoring experiences in the federal civil service is guided by their personal interpretation of what a mentor is. Further, their knowledge of mentoring relationships and mentoring programs is altered by their perceptions of discrimination and inequality in the Marine Corps. These perceptions form the basis of analyzing the central phenomenon and comprehensibly answer the research question(s). The theme *Improving the civilian mentor program*, while distinct from the other four themes, guides the results section of this dissertation and forms the basis for suggesting a solution to the student's professional workplace leadership dilemma. The proposed solution and an analysis of the findings is presented in the final chapter.

Summary

This phenomenological qualitative research explored the lived experiences of 15 female federal civil service leaders employed at a Marine Corps air station in eastern North Carolina. Through one-on-one interviews, the researcher collected detailed accounts of the mentoring experiences of the participants. Despite having access to a formal mentoring program officially sponsored by the Marine Corps, the vast majority of the participants received guidance and leadership development through an informal mentor. This was primarily due to a perceived lack of support for the formal program

from senior leaders, and the extensive administrative requirements associated with the program. Additionally, the interviewees perceived continued gender inequality at the air station and noted that adjacent military commands appeared to offer greater opportunities for female leaders and leadership development overall.

The final chapter of this dissertation in practice will provide suggestions that may be used to modify the existing formal program and the leadership culture of senior leaders on the air station. A proposed solution to this leadership dilemma will be recommended, with an explanation of possible stakeholders and obstacles to the solution. Finally, the research will conclude with the practical implications of the study and how future research may add further to the literature.

FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore the mentoring experiences of female federal civil servants and discover how mentoring contributed to their personal and professional development. Further, this study examined the types of mentoring the participants received and the importance of mentoring in their career progress. The final chapter of this dissertation in practice will describe methods to improve the mentoring experiences of female federal civil servants employed at the air station. Included will be suggestions to modify the existing formal mentoring program to meet the needs of developing leaders, fiscal constraints affecting program change, and key stakeholder support required. The section will continue with methods to implement the proposed solution and a description of any obstacles that may hinder application. Finally, implications for future research and a discussion on how the research relates to the broader study of leadership theory will be considered.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of career mentoring of senior female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina.

Research Question

How do female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina describe their mentoring experiences?

Subquestion

How do female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina describe how mentoring experiences contributed to their professional career development?

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify the different types of mentoring received by female federal civil service employees throughout their careers. Specifically, this study discovered the mentoring experiences of the participants, how mentors assisted these leaders in their professional journey, and their perceptions of the importance of mentoring for leadership development. The results of this phenomenological study may be used to improve existing, formal leadership development programs for female federal civil service employees in the Department of the Navy and the Marine Corps, such as the Marine Corps' Civilian Mentor Program.

Analysis of the Findings

The majority of the interviewees shared positive mentoring relationships experienced throughout their careers. However, most of these relationships were established informally without the solicitation of the Marine Corps' mentor database or through another formal mentor program. Most participants experienced the greatest personal and professional growth when their supervisor or mentor made a determined effort to understand the subordinate's career objectives and set goals for them to show progress towards. Additionally, supervisors or mentors assigned tasks or projects which forced them 'outside of their comfort zone.' This referred to placing the mentee in situations where intuition, creative thinking, and determination were required for success,

all the while increasing the individual's confidence and technical proficiency. Most importantly, those interviewees who established genuine mentoring partnerships benefited from the mentor's guidance and encouragement, regardless of whether the relationship was informal or formally sponsored by their employer.

However, most interviewees had negative perceptions of mentoring in the federal service. Negative perceptions reflected both formal and informal partnerships. For example, many participants were unaware of the formal mentoring program, did not have access to the formal program, or viewed the formal program as a 'check-in-the-box' that was overburdened with administrative tasks. Furthermore, it is perceived that mentoring, whether formal or informal, is not supported by the majority of senior leaders, and little work time is allotted for mentoring relationships.

Analysis of the interviews provided additional perceptions of the work environment on the air station. Participants were generally discouraged by the lack of career opportunities at Cherry Point. Furthermore, the lack of senior leadership support caused most participants to view informal mentorship as more effective than participation in the Marine Corps' formal mentoring program. Several interviewees also suggested the Marine Corps' formal mentoring program may be made more effective by empowering the mentor with the ability to affect meaningful change for the mentee (i.e. send to training, award time off, contribute to evaluation reports).

Just over half of the 15 participants perceived gender discrimination affected their opportunities for promotion or career choice. Adjacent commands (Fleet Readiness Center East and Camp Lejeune) were perceived as being more gender diverse and offered more opportunities for female and overall employee leadership development. Finally,

there was confusion as to what mentoring is, such as whether it should be a short- or long-term partnership and whether it is primarily focused on promotion and career opportunities or on personal development.

Proposed Solution

Although the Marine Corps has a formal mentoring program officially sponsored by the Manpower and Reserve Affairs branch, the majority of the interviewees had negative perceptions of mentoring in the federal service. Additionally, only four sample respondents participated in the Civilian Mentor Program as either mentors or mentees. While most participants had received some form of positive, informal mentoring throughout their careers, there was doubt to the efficacy and value of a formal mentoring program for federal civil servants. Further, the mentor program, like many formal programs in the Marine Corps, was perceived as being a ‘check-in-the-box,’ a shallow initiative not fully supported by senior organizational leaders. This perception, as well as a general misconception of the end state of a mentoring relationship, limited participation in the formal program

As previously discussed, the Marine Corps has devoted substantial time and federal funds to create and sustain a formal mentoring program. As described in formal documentation, mentoring is a key component of the service’s Marine Corps Civilian Leadership Development Program (MCCLDP) (U.S. Marine Corps, 2017). The intent of this program is to develop, throughout a civil servant’s career, the individual’s ability to lead and attain positions of greater responsibility. Furthermore, the Marine Corps’ Civilian Leadership Development Handbook and the Civilian Mentor Program Quick

Reference Guide provide detailed information on establishing and maintaining a formal mentor program at Marine Corps installations.

Analysis of the participants' perceptions of mentoring showed that *implementation* of the formal program at the air station fails to meet the needs of potential mentees, mentors, and the organization. Implementation refers to the application and day-to-day functioning of the program and does not mean that the formal program or its intent are faulty. Therefore, the fundamentals of the formal mentoring program do not need significant changes to be effective for developing subordinates.

Despite having a federal civil servant, the Mentor Program Coordinator (MPC), acting as the base representative for the formal mentoring program, the program appears inefficient in its execution. This is likely the result of the MPC being overburdened with multiple demands and administrative tasks and makes no assumptions about the work ethic of the billet-holder. What is required, therefore, is an advocate to shepherd the mentoring initiative, one who is not hindered by numerous additional and collateral duties. Consequently, the proposed solution to this professional dilemma is to make the job of MPC an individual's only duty, so that they may devote time and attention to creating a viable and effective mentoring program.

Support for the Solution

The Marine Corps' Civilian Mentor Program is the foundation of the Civilian Leadership Development Program (CLDP), itself a part of the greater Marine Corps Civilian Leadership Development Program (MCCLDP) (U.S. Marine Corps, 2017). The service's Human Resources and Organizational Management branch, a part of Manpower and Reserve Affairs, manages the CLDP. According to the program's handbook:

The purpose of the CLD program is to improve the leadership competencies and skills of Civilian Marines. The program aligns with the Department of Defense (DoD) Civilian Leader Development Framework and Continuum (CLDF&C) which provides a blueprint for the deliberate development of DoD civilian leaders below the executive [SES] level (Director, Marine Corps Staff, n.d.).

Mentoring, as an interorganizational social relationship, requires support and participation from each key member of the mentoring partnership (the mentee, mentor, and organization) (Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, n.d.; Lyons & Pastore, 2016).

Further, the critical purpose of the CLDP is to “nurture, build, and grow Civilian Marines through the integration of our value proposition throughout the entire work life...[and] create leaders at every level to reinforce the value proposition” (CMP, p. 1-2). It is the people, the civil servants and the service members, who are fundamental to the strategic success of the Marine Corps’ mission and the cultivation of future civilian leaders. Without dedicated and sincere support for building leaders to assume billets of increased responsibility, primarily through a genuine mentoring program, the civilian workforce is negating the critical responsibility of developing future leaders and meeting organizational requirements (Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, n.d.).

As reviewed in the literature, a successful, formal mentor program requires dedicated support from senior leaders, sufficient funding for professional development, and an established charter and objectives (Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, n.d.). The critical component of this process is the mentor, a senior leader committed to an authentic relationship with a mentee to develop the protégé’s personal and professional knowledge or to provide emotional and psychosocial support (Gunn, Lee, & Steed, 2017). To

prevent the Marine Corps' formal mentoring program from being perceived as a superficial option for employee development, the service must dedicate personnel and funding to assign a Mentor Program Coordinator at the air station whose sole task is managing and championing the mentor program.

Factors, Policies, and Stakeholders Related to the Solution

Substantial time and resources have already been applied to creating a formal mentoring program for the Marine Corps' civilian workforce. The program is detailed in the Headquarters, USMC (HQMC), Civilian Mentor Program (CMP) Quick Reference Guide; the HQMC Civilian Leadership Development Handbook; and on the service's Human Resources and Organizational Management website. Thus, the time-intensive, administrative process of developing and agreeing upon a formal program is already complete. The CMP quick reference guide provides clear, succinct data on how the local Mentor Program Coordinator should manage the air station's mentor program. However, the requirement remains for a federal civil servant, unencumbered with collateral duties, to lead the mentoring initiative.

The billet of Mentor Program Coordinator may be filled several ways, and the commanding officer has numerous options to implement the proposed solution. The commander may replace one existing billet with that of the new MPC. This means that a department on the base would lose an employee, likely in the grade of GS-12 or 13, to act as the program coordinator. There would likely be resistance to appoint a dedicated Mentor Program Coordinator by taking away manpower from one department without replacing the individual.

Another option is for the commanding officer to request an additional billet be assigned to the air station. This option, of course, requires the allocation of funds to pay for the new civil servant. Although the defense budget has increased in recent months, justification for the new billet would require detailed explanation. As defense budgets are completed in four-year cycles, funds would not already have been allocated for this new employee, requiring the funds be redistributed from another previously agreed upon source. While it does not take away the burden of choosing which department to reallocate funding, the commander may request the billet be temporary, meaning that funding for the new employee may cease after a pre-determined date unless certain objectives or goals are met.

Potential Barriers: Resistance to Change

Several barriers may exist which could be obstacles preventing implementation of the proposed solution. Lack of funding for a new civil servant or refusal to transfer an employee to the MPC billet have already been discussed. However, the most likely obstacle is organizational members' resistance to change or refusal to participate. Failure among global organizations implementing change has been reported between 40-70%, with employee recalcitrance identified as the most likely cause of failure (McKay, Kuntz, & Naswall, 2013).

Despite the noted failure rate of change initiatives among organizations, adding the new MPC billet and affecting the change required to implement the Marine Corps' formal mentoring program can be achieved through positive change management. As most plans fail due to employee resistance, the change agent (MPC) must understand the social and human relationships which constitute the organizational culture (Lawrence,

1969). Organizational gatekeepers, such as department heads and the air station's operations directorate, should be consulted for their institutional knowledge as well as selected as opinion leaders, those individuals who exert significant influence of peers and subordinates (Rogers, 2003). Through the gatekeepers support and positive reinforcement, the MPC may direct the formal mentoring program using the key elements of the Marine Corps' directives as the foundation for the program.

Implementation of the Proposed Solution

Initially, the key stakeholder for implementation of the proposed solution is the air station's commanding officer, with critical support from the installation's senior personnel manager, as well as the director of operations and the training support branch's department head (as discussed above). Further backing from the next higher commander, the Marine Corps Installations East commanding general, may be required if an additional civilian billet is determined as a necessity to staff the Mentor Program Coordinator position. The first step, however, will be gaining concurrence from the training support branch department head.

Guided by the Marine Corps' Civilian Mentor Program publications, the Mentor Program Coordinator's (MPC) overarching objective would be to make mentoring, and thus leadership development, a part of both the mentors' and mentees' daily battle rhythm (routine). This would be accomplished through an amalgamation of formal, informal, and peer group mentoring through numerous short- and long-term goals (Table 1). Informal mentoring can be productive and appealing, especially since many relationships occur spontaneously and voluntarily without the need for a recognized agreement (Lyons & Pastore, 2016). Informal partnerships may also allow more frequent communication

between the two parties, developing a close rapport without the constraints of a formal program. As Lyons and Pastore (2016) note:

Regardless, though, of whether coaches are mentored in a formal or informal setting or program, the process can potentially lead to the procurement of personal fulfillment and professional evolution for both parties involved. In this mutually beneficial bidirectional relationship, scholars have noted that mentees have someone to invest in their total growth as professionals (Jones et al., 2009) and that mentors are rewarded with personal satisfaction that comes with helping another person in the vocation (Pastore, 2003). In support of this claim, in sport survey research, Weaver and Chelladurai (2002) indicated that male and female mentored athletic administrators are ‘more satisfied with their work than their non-mentored counterparts.’

However, even though most of the sample participants were accustomed to informal mentoring, a formal program adds three critical aspects to the mentee/mentor relationship: accountability, teaching/listening methodology for both partners, and a structured mentoring program. Failed mentor relationships often occur for several reasons: the mentee and mentor do not develop a rapport and are a poor match; the mentee or mentor lack motivation to advance the relationship; the protégé does not believe that the partnership is meaningful; and “one or both of the dyad members are unprepared for, and inexperienced at, their respective functions [such as assigning and completing tasks or goals]” (Artis, 2013, p. 361). Both the mentor and mentee must be taught the value of active listening and establishing realistic goals. Further, it cannot be

assumed that a successful leader will be an effective mentor; without proper training, mentors entering a partnership may not be prepared for mentoring duties (Gotain, 2016).

For instance, mentees can be empowered by understanding their career objectives, reflecting on their merits and limitations, creating a meaningful personal mission statement, and intentionally choosing a mentor who can assist with personal and professional goals (Artis, 2013). Protégés would not begin the mentoring partnership until all onboarding was complete and their initial onboarding representative, a member of the human resources team or peer mentor within their work department, concurred that they were familiar with work procedures and finished with any administrative onboarding tasks. The peer mentor, Artis (2013) noted, would provide the new employee with a familiar individual who could assist with developing their career objectives and personal mission statement.

Despite the familiarization with informal partnerships, formal mentoring relationships share important characteristics that are beneficial to the protégé, mentor, and organization. These common features include: formal programs are organized, strategic, and overseen by a central authority; the roles and responsibilities of both members of the partnership are predefined and codified by a negotiated mentoring agreement; members are held accountable to one another through the mentoring agreement; and the success of the relationship can be measured through achievement of pre-determined goals (Lyons & Pastore, 2016). Further, both individuals would be provided formal instruction on mentoring theory, effective communication techniques, and setting realistic goals and timeframes, life-long skills that can be used in many aspects of life (Gotain, 2016). Finally, the MPC can create peer group mentoring

opportunities for federal civil servants so that employees of similar grade may network, share ideas, and vent frustrations,

The tasks in Table 1 show key objectives critical for the success of the mentoring program. Included in these goals is teaching mentoring fundamentals to senior leaders, educating employees on the benefits of mentoring, ensuring the mentoring partnerships are goal-focused based on the mentee’s self-assessment, championing an increase in funding for civilian leadership development courses, and creating a sponsorship program for newly-hired employees (Lyons & Pastore, 2016). Further, special attention will be given to establishing a network of female civil servants who desire to be mentors. As Hernandez, et al. (2017) noted, the literature on leadership and mentoring theory indicates having a broad network of potential mentors for female workers, especially same-gender mentors, is especially helpful for women in professional or scientific careers.

Table 1

First-year Tasks for the Mentoring Program Coordinator

Task	Objective	Requirement
Teach mentoring fundamentals	Ensure mentors understand value of active listening and setting meaningful, attainable objectives	Mentor or communications skills instruction from qualified instructor
Encourage program participation and peer group mentoring	Create desire to participate in the formal mentor program and establish routine peer group mentoring sessions for similar grade or gender participants	Continuous supervision and oversight of existing partnerships and facilitate peer group meeting areas
Educate all employees on benefits of mentoring	Increase knowledge of mentor program and participation benefits	Provide periods of instruction to department heads and program participants

Task	Objective	Requirement
Champion civilian leadership development programs and classes	Assist with securing funding for CLDP classes	Advocate for funding and assist individual departments with filling manning shortages due to employees participating in the programs
Allocate additional funding for training budget for formal program	Incentivize both mentors and mentees to participate by providing additional training opportunities	Request funding through air station comptroller
Empower mentors	Provide mentors with decision rights to award time off, allocate funding for training, and affect annual evaluation	Approval required from air station commanding officer and department head for employee personnel affairs
Request mentoring be a portion of leaders' annual performance evaluation	Ensure active participation by supervisors	Request support from air station commanding officer or HQMC program sponsor
Advocate for air station MPC to act as regional MPC	MPC will standardize mentoring program for both the air station and Camp Lejeune	Show success through initial assessment of mentoring program
Recruit active and retired military personnel as mentors	Use leadership experience of military personnel to enhance mentoring opportunities for employees	Solicit approval through air station commanding officer and HQMC program sponsor
Provide leadership strengths assessment	Allow mentors and mentees to understand leadership/ personality strengths and weaknesses	Allocate funding to purchase user rights for leadership assessment
Instruct mentors on conducting mentee gap analysis	Provide mentors critical knowledge on methods to assess mentee strengths and weaknesses and means to establish short- and long-term objectives	Provide professional instruction on conducting gap assessments and establishing goals
Request local program modification to allow mentor to be one grade level above mentee	Increase mentoring opportunities for employees	Request support from air station commanding officer or HQMC program sponsor
Create sponsorship program for new employees	Assist newly-hired employees with transition to government service and introduce them to mentor program	Create hew-hire orientation program with assigned interim mentors who will facilitate individual employee transition

Factors and Stakeholders Related to the Implementation of the Solution

Besides the support of the commanding officer, department heads, and the documented mentors, the protégé plays a critical role in the implementation of the solution. The mentee must be organized, have initiative, and possess a positive work ethic; conversely, mentors should allow the protégé to manage the relationship, assign meaningful tasks or assignments to further the mentee's development, and insist on routine meetings (Artis, 2013).

Evaluation and Timeline for Implementation and Assessment

Evaluation of a dedicated MPC will determine if the billet remains funded and part of the air station's table of organization. Additionally, positive feedback from participating mentors, mentees, and the commanding officer may provide justification to create a dedicated MPC at an adjacent Marine Corps Installation (Camp Lejeune), a base consisting of over 70,000 service members and civilian employees. It is also feasible that the air station's MPC could change their duties to that of a regional MPC, responsible for the mentoring programs at both Cherry Point and Camp Lejeune.

Nevertheless, the initial assessment period would last 12 months. This coincides with the recommended mentoring partnership period of one year, which provides ample time to assess mentee progress while also providing the mentee or mentor a "way out" of relationships that may be stagnant (Artis, 2013, p. 365). Feedback concerning the efficacy of the program should be solicited from participating mentors and mentees while also seeking individuals who choose to not take part in the formal program. Assessment would be conducted via mixed methods research, through a combination of one-on-one, open-ended interviews and the survey method. The researcher may solicit participation

from the original study's participants, however, data from employees actively engaged in the program or who have attended mentoring training sessions would provide the most accurate assessment of the program's direction.

Research may be conducted by an external research agency or through the acting MPC, though the latter option defeats the purpose of a dedicated program coordinator (due to the time required to conduct a meaningful study). Once the research results are published, the MPC would affect change as required to meet the needs of the program participants as identified through the research. After another 12-month period, the program would undergo a final evaluation to ascertain its effectiveness. Measuring the intangible yet critical benefits of psychosocial development is difficult, yet an accurate assessment may be reached by analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data collected through the assessment studies.

External Implications for the Marine Corps

This research's findings and the review of the literature provide innumerable examples of the personal and professional development obtained through a positive mentoring partnership. Consequently, the Marine Corps has invested several million dollars towards the formation and growth of a formal mentoring program for its federal civil servants. However, the superficial execution of this program appears to devalue the organization's investment in the program and the leadership development of its employees.

The assignment of a dedicated MPC to the air station may have global implications for the Marine Corps, a service which prides itself in creating leaders. A successful program coordinator at Cherry Point may show the value of creating dedicated

program managers at each installation. Further, the service may create a model mentoring program adaptable to non-governmental private or public institutions, further showcasing the Marine Corps' dedication to making leaders and caring for its members, while influencing potential employees to work for the federal government.

Implications

Practical Implications

This research explored the perceptions of mentoring of female federal civil service employees, and it is these perceptions, particularly the negative ones, that guide the proposed solution. A successful, formal mentoring program benefits the mentee, mentor, and the organization through increased workforce engagement, employee retention, productivity, and morale (U.S. Marine Corps, 2017). However, many of the study's participants perceived senior leaders as unwilling to support mentoring partnerships and viewed the formal program as one of many such government initiatives that appear "great on paper" but do not enhance the work environment. Thus, a program supervised by a dedicated Mentor Program Coordinator may have a direct impact on developing junior leaders to meet the demands of future billets by enhancing the Marine Corps' civilian leadership and its ability to meet the defense needs of the country.

Implications for Future Research

To the researcher's knowledge, no previous studies have been conducted on the mentoring experiences of senior, female federal civil service employees working at the air station. The findings of this research add to the Marine Corps' knowledge of the efficacy of its mentoring and civilian leadership development program. Future studies may increase the sample size to include federal civil servants in grades below GS-12,

perhaps using mixed methods to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Studying the mentoring perceptions of junior female employees may identify challenges and professional development areas unique to individuals beginning their careers.

In addition, future studies should include the mentoring experiences of male civil servants. Data from male participants could compare and contrast perceptions of mentoring that were identified in this dissertation's results. For example, data reflecting negative perceptions of mentoring in the federal service complements the need to change the existing program to better meet the professional needs of the participants. Conversely, positive mentoring experiences by male employees could highlight the existing gender discrimination and bias perceived by several of this research's sample members. If the proposed solution is applied to the professional dilemma, the most salient future study, however, would be the initial review of the MPC and the mentoring program after the initial 12-month assessment period. Results of the initial 12-month period and the final 24-month assessment would determine if the billet would continue to receive funding and assess the feasibility of the MPC assuming the duties of the adjacent command's mentor coordinator.

Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice

The mentor can have numerous duties: confidant, role model, teacher, advisor, technical expert, agent, sponsor (Gotain, 2016). Perhaps the most critical task for the mentor, however, is cultivating future leaders so that the organization may sustain its mission, whether that be in public or private industry or the public service sector. The findings in this study coincide with the results of past research concerning the importance

of a mentor in a junior leader's personal and professional development. Further, these results reinforce the broader application of transformational leadership as a method to enhance an organization's workforce.

Transformational leaders are characterized as possessing a "deep sense of self," changing an organization and its followers through a positive vision and having a genuine concern for the needs of peers and subordinates (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 330). An effective mentor is transformative by acting as a positive role model for mentees, inspiring followers to have pride and enthusiasm in themselves and their work products (Kotlyar & Karakowsky, 2007). It is through the transformational leader's strength of will and devotion that protégés develop an innate sense of who they are and aspire to develop their personal and professional attributes.

Summary of the Study

This dissertation in practice employed the phenomenological qualitative method to explore the perceptions of the career mentoring experiences of senior female federal civil service leaders at a major Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina. Fifteen one-on-one interviews were conducted with female civil servants in the grades GS-12 to GS-14. The aim of the research was to examine how mentoring contributed to the participants' career development with the study's findings potentially being used to improve the formal mentoring experiences of female federal civil servants.

Most interviewees had experienced informal mentoring in their careers, and the majority of these relationships were positive. However, few participants participated in the Marine Corps' formal mentoring program due to negative perceptions of the program's efficacy and perceptions that mentoring is not valued by senior executives in

the organization. Further, the interviewees described the formal mentoring program as another governmental program that “looks good on paper” but is never executed to its full potential. The result is an underutilized mentoring program and a lack of mentoring opportunities for employees working at the installation.

The proposed solution for this professional dilemma is create a standalone billet for the Mentor Program Coordinator (MPC), meaning that the professional responsibilities of the MPC, as outlined in the Marine Corps’ mentoring directive, are the employee’s only duties. While the air station currently has an individual designated as the MPC, this is a collateral duty; the employee has numerous other administrative tasks and is overburdened with meeting other work-related obligations. Although the creation of the new position of MPC would likely result in a decrease in another department’s manning, the responsibility to cultivate future leadership through a formal mentoring program is critical for continued mission success.

An initial assessment of the MPC would occur 12 months after designation, and a final assessment would be conducted at the 24-month period. The intent of these assessments would be to analyze participation in the formal mentoring program and to discover methods to further improve the program. After 24 months, the commanding officer may conclude that the responsibilities of the MPC be reassumed as a collateral billet, or proven success of the program may show the value in creating a regional MPC, one that supervises the mentoring program at adjacent installations.

The benefits of a positive mentoring relationship are well-documented in antiquity and the research literature. This study contributes to past research through an analysis of a formal mentoring program that is well-designed but poorly executed, reinforcing the

need for formal programs to be centrally-managed, properly funded, and have support from senior executives. Through an intentional and nurturing partnership, mentoring may increase the career and psychosocial functions of the participants and the organization. Not only is this required for long-term value creation, mentoring, through transformational leadership, develops employees to be not just good workers but also compassionate, confident citizens.

References

- Agosto, V., Karanxha, Z., Unterreiner, A., Cobb-Roberts, D., Esnard, T., Wu, K., & Beck, M. (2016). Running bamboo: A mentoring network of women intending to thrive in academia. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education*, 9(1), 74-89.
- Anderson, R. G. (2013). Perspectives: Acting commander's introduction. *The Army Medical Department Journal*, 1-3.
- Apestequia, J., Azmat, G., & Iriberry, N. (2012). The impact of gender composition in team performance and decision making: Evidence from the field. *Management Science*, 58(1), 78-93.
- Artis, A. B. (2013). An alternative approach for MBA mentor programs: Empower the protege. *Journal of Education for Business*(88), 361-365.
- Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16, 315-338.
- Babbie, E. (2017). *The basics of social research* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Bachkirova, T., Arthur, L., & Reading, E. (2015). Evaluating a coaching and mentoring programme: Challenges and solutions. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 10(2), 175-189.
- Barratt, C. L., Bergman, M. E., & Thompson, R. J. (2014). Women in federal law enforcement: The role of gender role orientations and sexual orientation in mentoring. *Sex Roles*, 21-32.

- Bear, J. B., & Woolley, A. W. (2011). The role of gender in team collaboration and performance. *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, 36(2), 146-153.
- Beaty, L., & Davis, T. J. (2012). Gender disparity in professional city management: Making the case for enhancing leadership curriculum. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 18(4), 617-632.
- Bednar, S., & Gicheva, D. (2014). Are female supervisors more female-friendly? *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings*, 104(5), 370-375.
- Bergelson, M. (2014). Developing tomorrow's leaders: Innovative approaches to mentorship. *People & Strategy*, 37(2), 18-22.
- Bishop, J. (2016). Enhancing the performance of human resources through e-mentoring: The role of an adaptive hypermedia system called "AVEUGLE". 12(1), 11-23.
- Bloomberg, M. (2014). The role of mentoring. *Physician Executive Journal*, 88-90.
- Bohannon, R. L., & Bohannon, S. M. (2015). Mentoring: A decade of effort and personal impact. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 31-36.
- Bright, L., & Graham, J. C. (2014). Why does interest in government careers decline among public affairs graduate students? *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 21(4), 575-594.
- Bruckmülle, S., & Branscombe, N. R. (2010). The glass cliff; When and why women are selected as leaders in crisis contexts. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 49, pp. 433-451.
- Carr, M. L., Pastor, D. K., & Levesque, P. J. (2015). Learning to lead: Higher education faculty explore self-mentoring. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 13(2), 1-13.

- Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(5), 811-831.
- Center for Evaluation and Research. (2012). *Tips & tools #17: Analyzing qualitative data*. Retrieved April 2018, from www.tobaccoeval.ucdavis.edu
- Chun, H. (2013, July 5). *A brief introduction to the techniques used in phenomenological research*. Retrieved Nov 26, 2017, from www.boomerwomaned.wordpress.com
- Cleary, M., & Horsfall, J. (2015). Coaching: Comparisons with mentoring. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 243-245.
- Cleaver, J. (2016). How to mentor. *The Chemical Engineer*, 44-50.
- CNA Corporation. (2015). *An analysis of female representation and Marines' performance in aviation and logistics occupations*. Marine Corps Force Integration. Arlington, VA: U.S. Marine Corps.
- Collins, A., Lewis, I., Stracke, E., & Vanderheide, R. (2014). Talking career across disciplines: Peer group mentoring for women academics. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 12(1), 92-108.
- Cook, A., & Glass, C. (2014, January). Women and top leadership positions: Towards an institutional analysis. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 21(1).
- Copeland, S. M., & Calhoun, D. W. (2014). Perceptions of mentoring: Examining the experiences of women superintendents. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 9(2), 28.
- Creighton University. (2015, March 5). *Creighton University Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Leadership Student Dissertation Manual*. Retrieved from www.creighton.edu

- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and reserach design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4 ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Crossley, M., & Silverman, R. D. (2016). Reflections on mentoring. *The Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics*, 44, 76-80.
- Department of Defense. (2015). *Diversity management and equal opportunity in the DoD*. Arlington: Department of Defense.
- Director, Marine Corps Staff. (n.d.). *Headquarters Marine Corps Civilian Leadership Development (CLD) Handbook*. Quantico, VA: Human Resources and Organizational Management Branch.
- Dow, R. S. (2014). Leadership responsibility in mentoring organization newcomers. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, 15(1), 104-112.
- Drew, J. (2014, March). How to start and run a mentoring program. *Journal of Accountancy*, 34-39.
- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2003). The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14, pp. 807-834.
- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). *Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109(3), 573-598.

- Eagly, A. H., Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C., & van Engen, M. L. (2003). Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles: A meta-analysis comparing women and men. *Psychological Bulletin*, *129*(4), 569-591.
- Gatling, A. (2014). The authentic leadership qualities of business coaches and its impact on coaching performance. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, *12*(1), 27-46.
- Geeraerts, K., Tynjälä, P., Heikkinen, H. L., Markkanen, I., Pennanen, M., & Gijbels, D. (2015). Peer-group mentoring as a tool for teacher development. *European Journal for Teacher Education*, *38*(3), 358-377.
- Ghosh, R. (2015). Teaching case study- Mentoring- Is it failing women? *New Horizons in Adult Education & Human Resource Development*, *27*(4), 70-74.
- Gotain, R. (2016, March). Mentoring the mentors: Just because you have the title doesn't mean you know what you are doing. *College Student Journal*, *50*(1), 1-5.
- Grantham, S., Pidano, A. E., & Whitcomb, J. M. (2014). Female graduate students' attitudes after leadership training. *Journal of Leadership Training*, *8*(1), 6-16.
- Grindrod, S. (2016). Mentoring is now changing the workplace through technology. *Employment Relations Today*, 39-44.
- Gunn, F., Lee, S. H., & Steed, M. (2017). Student perceptions of benefits and challenges of peer mentoring programs: Divergent perspectives from mentors and mentees. *Marketing Education Review*, *27*(1), 15-26.
- Haggard, D. L. (2012). Mentoring and psychological contract breach. *Journal of Business Psychology*, 161-175.

- Hannagan, R. J., & Larimer, C. W. (2010). Does gender composition affect group decision outcomes? Evidence from a laboratory experiment. *Political Behavior*, 32(1), 51-67.
- Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. (n.d.). *Civilian Mentor Program Quick Reference Guide*. Arlington, VA: U.S. Marine Corps.
- Hernandez, P. R., Bloodhart, B., Barnes, R. T., Adams, A. S., Clinton, S. M., Pollack, I., . . . Fischer, E. V. (2017, November 1). Promoting professional identity, motivation, and persistence: Benefits of an informal mentoring program for female undergraduate students. *PLoS ONE*, 1-16.
- Herring, C. (2009). Does diversity pay?: Race, gender, and the business case for diversity. *American Sociological Review*, 74(2), 208-224.
- Hicks, L. (2008). *Informed Consent*. Retrieved Nov 21, 2017, from www.hope.edu
- Hughes, P. (2013). Ten ingredients of a successful customized leadership program. *Employment Relations Today*.
- Hymowitz, C. (2013, March 2). Taking a new hammer to that old glass ceiling: Female executives offer women a helping hand. *Edmonton Journal*, 1-3.
- Hymowitz, C., & Schellhardt, T. D. (1986, March 24). The glass ceiling: Why women can't seem to break the invisible barrier that blocks them from the top jobs. *Wall Street Journal*.
- Johnson, W. B., & Anderson, G. R. (2015). Mentoring in the U.S. Navy: Experiences and attitudes of senior Navy personnel. *Naval War College Review*, 68(3), 76-90.

- Jones, R. J., Woods, S. A., & Guillaume, Y. R. (2016). The effectiveness of workplace coaching: A meta-analysis of learning and performance outcomes from coaching. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 249-277.
- Kaiser, C. R., & Spalding, K. E. (2015). Do women who succeed in male-dominated domains help other women? The moderating role of gender identification. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 599-608.
- Kiazad, K., Seibert, S. E., & Krainer, M. L. (2014). Psychological contract breach and employee innovation: A conservation of resources perspective. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 535-556.
- Kinsler, L. (2014). Born to be me...who am I again? The development of authentic leadership using evidence-based leadership coaching and mindfulness. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 9(1), 92-105.
- Kotlyar, I., & Karakowsky, L. (2007). Falling over ourselves to follow the leader: Conceptualizing connections between transformational leader behaviors and dysfunctional team conflict. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 14(1), 38-49.
- Lach, H. W., Hertz, J. E., Pomeroy, S. H., Resnick, B., & Buckwalter, K. C. (2013). The challenges and benefits of distance mentoring. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 29(1), 39-48.
- Lamb, N., & Klein, W. (2015). A proactive approach to wage equality is good for business. *Employment Relations Today*, 21-27.

- Larimer, C. W., & Hannagan, R. J. (2010). Gender differences in follower behavior: An experimental study of reactions to ambitious decision makers. *Politics and the Life Sciences, 29*(2), 40-54.
- Lasater, K., Young, P. K., Mitchell, C. G., Delahoyde, T. M., Nick, J. M., & Siktberg, L. (2014). Connecting in distance mentoring: Communication practices that work. *Nurse Education Today, 34*, 501-506.
- Laukhuf, R. L., & Malone, T. A. (2015). Women entrepreneurs need mentors. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 13*(1), 70-86.
- Lawrence, P. R. (1969, January). How to deal with resistance to change. *Harvard Business Review, 1*-24.
- Leggat, S. G., Balding, C., & Schiftan, D. (2015). Developing clinical leaders: The impact of an action learning mentoring programme for advanced practice nurses. *Journal of Clinical Nursing, 24*, 1576-1584.
- Liu, H., Cutcher, L., & Grant, D. (2015, May). Doing authenticity: The gendered construction of authentic leadership. *Gender, Work and Organization, 22*(3), pp. 237-255.
- Lowney, C. (2003). *Heroic leadership*. Chicago, IL: Loyola Press.
- Lyons, V., & Pastore, D. (2016). Tools for a formal mentoring program: A guide every mentee in coaching can use. *The Physical Educator, 73*, 1-14.
- Marques, J. (2013). Understanding the strength of gentleness: Soft-skilled leadership on the rise. *Journal of Business Ethics, 116*(1), 163-171.
- Matsa, D. A., & Miller, A. R. (2013). A female style in corporate leadership? Evidence from quotas. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, 5*(3), 136-169.

- McKay, K., Kuntz, J. R., & Naswall, K. (2013). The effect of affective commitment, communication, and participation on resistance to change: The role of change readiness. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 42*(2), 29-40.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3 ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Olson, A. K., & Simerson, B. K. (2015). *Leading with strategic thinking: Four ways effective leaders gain insight, drive change, and get results*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Pelled, L. H. (1996). Demographic diversity, conflict, and work group outcomes: An intervening process theory. *Organization Science, 7*(6), 615-631.
- Pelled, L. H., Eisenhardt, K. M., & Xin, K. R. (1999). Exploring the black box: An analysis of work group diversity, conflict, and performance. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 44*(1), 1-28.
- Poor, C. J., & Brown, S. (2013). Increasing retention of women in engineering at WSU: A model for a women's mentoring program. *College Student Journal, 47*(3), 421-428.
- Rev.com. (2018). *Rev.com*. Retrieved January 2018, from www.rev.com
- Rhode, D. L. (2017). *Women and leadership*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Riccucci, N. M. (2009). The pursuit of social equity in the federal government: A road less traveled? *Public Administration Review, 373*-382.
- Richards, L., & Morse, J. M. (2013). *A user's guide to qualitative methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

- Roberts, C. M. (2010). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (Vol. 5). New York: Free Press.
- Sabharwal, M. (2013). Productivity and leadership patterns of female faculty members in public administration. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 19*(1), 73-96.
- Saldana, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Salley, B. D., & Gregory, S. A. (2013). Mentoring: A key ingredient to growing our replacements. *The Journal of the American Society of Military Comptrollers, 30-33*.
- Schechter, C. (2014). Mentoring prospective principals: Determinants of productive mentor–mentee relationship. *International Journal of Educational Reform, 23*(1), 52-65.
- Schein, V. (1995). *The leader's companion: Insight on leadership through the ages*. New York: The Free Press.
- Schunk, D. H., & Mullen, C. A. (2013). Toward a conceptual model of mentoring research: Integration with self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychology Review, 25*(3), 361-389.
- Sexton, D. W., Lemak, C. H., & Wainio, J. A. (2014). Career inflection points of women who successfully achieved the hospital CEO position. *Journal of Healthcare Management, 59*(5), 367-383.
- Shah, A. (2017). What is mentoring. *The American Statistician, 71*(1), 1-2.

- Smith, A. E. (2015, Fall). On the edge of a glass cliff: Women in leadership in public organizations. *Public Administration Quarterly*, pp. 485-517.
- Sparrowe, R. T. (2005). Authentic leadership and the narrative self. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *16*, 419-439.
- Thomas, J. D., Lunsford, L. G., & Rodrigues, H. A. (2015). Early career academic staff support: Evaluating mentoring networks. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *37*(3), 320-329.
- Tjan, A. K. (2017, February 27). What the best mentors do. *Harvard Business Review*.
- U.S. Marine Corps. (2017). *U.S. Marine Corps Manpower and Reserve Affairs*. Retrieved August 2, 2017, from www.manpower.usmc.mil
- United States Office of Personnel Management. (2017a, March). *FedScope Federal Human Resources Database*. Retrieved May 31, 2017, from www.fedscope.opm.gov
- United States Office of Personnel Management. (2017b). *Pay and leave: Pay systems*. Retrieved June 11, 2017, from www.opm.gov
- United States Office of Personnel Management. (2017c, June 20). *Women in the federal workforce*. Retrieved from www.opm.gov
- University of Maryland. (2017). *University Career Center*. Retrieved November 2, 2017, from www.careers.umd.edu
- van den Bosch, R., & Taris, T. W. (2015). Authenticity at work: Development and validation of an individual authenticity measure at work. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *15*, 1-18.

Vance, E. A., Tanenbaum, E., Kaur, A., Otto, M. C., & Morris, R. (2017). An eight-step guide to creating and sustaining a mentoring program. *The American Statistician*, 71(1), 23-29.

Vinkenburg, C. J., van Engen, M. L., Eagly, A. H., & Johannesen-Schmidt, C. M. (2011). An exploration of stereotypical beliefs about leadership styles: Is transformational leadership a route to women's promotion? *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10-21.

Wang, J. (2009). Networking in the workplace: Implications for women's career development. *New Directions for Adult and Career Education*, 33-42.

Appendix A

Recruitment Email

The below paragraphs will be included in an email to solicit voluntary participation for the proposed study. Included as an attachment will be the informed consent form and Participant Bill of Rights.

Dear [participant],

I am a federal civil servant stationed on the air station and am currently enrolled in Creighton University's Doctorate of Education in Interdisciplinary Leadership program. I am researching the mentoring experiences of female federal civil service employees in the grades GS-12 to GS-15 who work on the air station as part of the requirements for graduation. Additionally, this study seeks to learn how mentoring, if applicable, affected your professional career development.

I am looking for volunteers to participate in one-on-one interviews lasting no more than 45-55 minutes. The interviews will be conducted during off-duty hours, and there is no cost to you if you choose to participate. Will you consider participating in the research? If so, the interviews can be conducted at any location most convenient for you.

Attached is a copy of Creighton University's participant informed consent form and Participant Bill of Rights. If you desire to be a part of the research, please contact me by replying to this email or by telephone, and we can schedule a time that works for your schedule. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Debbie Ford, with any questions. I appreciate your time and understanding and hope to hear from you soon.

Respectfully,

Chris Coble
843-271-5634

Debbie Ford, Ph.D.
402-280-3413

*Appendix B***Air Station Commanding Officer's Permission to Conduct Research**

1300
CO
7 AUG 2017

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on Christopher M. Coble's ltr 1300 RMD of 21 Jun 17

From: Commanding Officer, Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point
To: Operations Directorate, Range Management Department,
Mr. Christopher M. Coble

Subj: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH AIR STATION
CIVIL SERVANTS

1. Readdressed and returned.
2. Your request to recruit volunteer Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point female subjects to conduct one-on-one interviews to study the effects of leadership mentoring on female civil service employees, is granted contingent on final concurrence for you to conduct this research by cognizant authority at Manpower Plans and Policy Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps.
3. Interviews must be conducted during off-duty hours for both the participants and the interviewer. No cost to the government is authorized.



T. W. FERRY

*Appendix C***Interview Protocol**

Interviewee:

Date and interview time:

Interviewee title and place of work:

Interviewee pseudonym:

Location:

Introduction:

Thank-you for volunteering to discuss your perceptions of mentoring in the federal civil service. This research seeks to understand the mentoring experiences of female federal civil service employees in the grades GS-12 to GS-15. Additionally, this study seeks to learn your perceptions of how mentoring, if at all, contributed to your professional career development. I am conducting the research as part of the degree requirements for Creighton University's Doctorate of Education in Interdisciplinary Leadership program. All your comments will remain confidential, meaning that only my two dissertation committee members and I will have access to my interview notes. A pseudonym will be used in lieu of your name. I anticipate the interview taking between 45-55 minutes to complete. Were you able to read the consent form and Participant Bill of Rights I provided in my email? If not, please take a moment to read these forms. We can pause or stop the interview at any time for any reason.

May I use a digital recorder to record our conversation today? Yes ___ or No ___

Questions:

1. What is your current role/billet, and how long have you been in the federal service?
2. What is your definition of a mentor?
3. Please describe the characteristics of the mentor who you believe significantly contributed to your leadership or career development?
4. How did your personal development change from your interaction with the mentor?
5. How did your career change from your interaction with the mentor?
6. How would describe your mentoring experience in the federal civil service?
7. If you could modify your current organization's mentoring program, how would you do so?
8. Are there any other ideas or comments that you think may contribute to the study?

Thank-you so much for your patience and attention! Do you have any questions for me? May I contact you again if I have further questions? If you desire, I can always provide you with a copy of the final dissertation I submit to Creighton University.

*Appendix D***Informed Consent Form and Participant Bill of Rights**

Date:

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to join a research study because you are a female federal civil servant employed at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in the pay grades of GS-12 to GS-15. You do not have to participate in this research study. The main purpose of this research is to create new knowledge for the benefit of female federal civil servants and society in general. Research studies may or may not benefit the people who participate.

Research is voluntary, and you may stop being in the study at any time. There will be no penalty to you if you decide not to participate or if you start the study and decide to stop early. This consent form explains what you have to do if you are in the study. Please read the form carefully and ask as many questions as you need to before deciding about this research. About 10-15 people will participate in the study.

This research study is part of the degree completion requirements for Creighton University's Doctorate of Education in Interdisciplinary Leadership program. Christopher Coble is the researcher. The purpose of this study is to explore the mentoring experiences of female federal civil service employees. Historically, women have been underrepresented in senior organizational positions in public and private businesses and institutions. Additionally, women may not always receive the same mentoring opportunities as their male peers. Mentoring has been shown to be an important aspect of personal and professional development for both the protégé and the mentor and has many benefits for the host organization as well.

If you decide to participate in this study, your participation will last approximately 45-55 minutes during a one-on-one interview with the researcher at your location of choice. With your permission, the interview will be digitally recorded for professional transcription to aid in the data analysis portion of the research. All research notes and transcripts will remain confidential, and no identifying information will be presented in the research report.

Please know that there are no anticipated physical or psychological risks by assisting in this study. There is no cost for being in the study, however, the interview will be conducted during off-duty hours. There is also no payment for participation.

The researcher and Creighton University will protect your information, as required by law. The researcher may publish the results of the study. If so, pseudonyms will be used to identify study participants and no personal participant identifying information will be used. Your name will not be used in any publication or presentation about the study.

Dr. Debbie Ford, Christopher Coble's Dissertation Chair, can answer any of your questions. She can be reached at 402-280-3413. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, or if you want to talk with someone who is not involved in the study, you may call Creighton University's Research Compliance Office at 402-280-2126. Anonymous messages may be delivered to a phone hotline at 855-256-0478.

Sincerely,
Christopher M. Coble

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.
2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.
3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.
4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.
5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.
6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.
7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.
8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research subject.
9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
 - a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.
 - b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.

Appendix E

Institutional Review Board

2500 California Plaza • Omaha, Nebraska 68178 phone: 402.280.2126 • fax:
402.280.4766 • email: irb@creighton.edu

DATE: January 29, 2018

TO: Christopher Coble, Ed.D. [SEP]

FROM: Creighton University IRB-02 Social Behavioral

PROJECT TITLE: [1184704-1] Leadership mentoring: A study of the mentoring experiences of female federal civil service employees

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: January 29, 2018

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The following items were reviewed in this submission:

- ApplicationForm-Coble_114.1BApplicationforDeterminationofExemptStatusSurveys-interview- observation.doc (UPDATED: 01/18/2018) [SEP]
- Creighton-IRBApplicationForm-Creighton-IRBApplicationForm(UPDATED:01/18/2018) [SEP]
- Letter-RequesttoConductResearchICOChristopherM.Coble.pdf(UPDATED:01/18/2018)
- Proposal-CobleDissertationProposal1.18.2018.docx (UPDATED:01/21/2018). This project has been determined to be exempt from Federal Policy for Protection of Human Subjects as per 45CFR46.101 (b) 2. All protocol amendments and changes are to be submitted to the IRB and may not be implemented until approved by the IRB. Please use the modification form when submitting changes.

If you have any questions, please contact Christine Scheuring at 402-280-3364 or christinescheuring@creighton.edu.

Appendix F

Table F1

Participant Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	Time in Civil Service (years)	Time in Current Billet (years)	Direct Reports
Brenda	31	5	3
Cary	10	8	5
Claire	15	3	10
Deanna	3	0.25	5
Debbie	33	3	1
Dana	31	10	4
Kate	5	5	0
Linda	15	10	5
Laura	15	6	5
Lilly	18	3	5
Lisa	14	1	0
Sara	12	10	4
Tina	17	8	1
Wendy	35	15	3
Yolanda	31	15	6
Mean	19	6.817	3.8
Median	15	6	4
Mode	15, 31	3, 10	5
Standard Deviation	10.146	4.435	2.535
Min	3	0.25	0
Max	35	15	10
Sum	285	102.25	57
Range	32	14.75	10

Variance	102.933	19.671	6.427
----------	---------	--------	-------

Appendix G

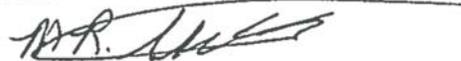
**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
3280 RUSSELL ROAD
QUANTICO, VA 22134-5001**

From: Deputy Director, Manpower Plans and Policy Division,
Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps

To: Marine Corps Survey Program Manager

Subj: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR INTERVIEWS OF FEMALE CIVIL SERVANTS ABOARD
MARINE CORPS AIR STATION, CHERRY POINT

1. Manpower Plans and Policy Division supports the research proposed by Mr. Christopher M. Coble to recruit senior female civil servants to conduct interviews. This research will study the effects of leadership mentoring on female civil service employees.
2. This support is limited to approval of the topic of this research. Limited Marine Corps resources will be expended in support of this extramural research in the form of a list of female civil service employees provided to the researcher by the installation's Human Resources department. All interviews will be conducted during off-duty hours for both the interviewer and interviewee. This approval is contingent upon the review and approval of Creighton University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and administrative review and approval of the Marine Corps Human Research Protection (HRP) Program.
3. Mr. Christopher Coble has agreed to provide copies of his findings to this office upon request.
4. The point of contact in Manpower Plans and Policy Division is Mr. James Hilton at james.hilton@usmc.mil.



M. R. STROBL

Appendix H

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
 3300 RUSSELL ROAD
 QUANTICO, VA 22134-5001

3900
 C 4623
 22 Feb 18

From: Human Research Protection Official, U.S. Marine Corps (Attention: Ms Leah Watson), 2079 Barnett Avenue, Quantico, VA 22134
 To: Mr. Christopher M. Coble, Principal Investigator, Creighton University, 2500 California Plaza, Omaha, NE 68178

Subj: HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM U.S. MARINE CORPS ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OF PROPOSED STUDY: "LEADERSHIP MENTORING: A STUDY OF THE MENTORING EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES"

Ref: (a) DoDI 3216.02
 (b) SECNAVINST 3900.16D
 (c) MCO 3900.18
 (d) U.S. Marine Corps Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) Policy and Procedures (27 Sep 16)
 (e) MCO 5300.18 Marine Corps Survey
 (f) Creighton University Federalwide Assurance 00001078

Encl: (1) Coble Dissertation Proposal 1.18.2018
 (2) Christopher Coble ltr 1300 RMD of 29 Jan 18
 (3) CO MCAS Cherry Point ltr 1300 Co of 7 Aug 17
 (4) Dep Dir MPP ltr 5300 MP undated
 (5) Creighton University IRB ltr of 29 Jan 18: Determination of Exempt Status
 (6) CITI DON Supported Extramural Performer Course (Exp 23 May 2020)

1. Per references (a) through (d), I have performed an Administrative Review, on behalf of the U.S. Marine Corps Human Research Protection Program (USMC HRPP) of the research titled "Leadership Mentoring: A Study of the Mentoring Experiences of Female Federal Civil Service Employees." This research is being conducted as partial fulfillment of your academic requirements as a doctoral candidate at Creighton University (GCU). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the perceptions of career mentoring of senior female federal civil service employees at a Marine Corps installation in eastern North Carolina.

2. The enclosure (1) is your dissertation as submitted to the Creighton University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which includes your proposed recruitment e-mail (Appendix A), interview script (Appendix C), Informed Consent Form (Appendix D), and a Bill of Rights of Research Participants. All have been reviewed by this office to ensure compliance with requirements the Department of Defense and USMC HRPP regulations and policies.

3. As outlined in the research plan and the Request for Site Authorization at enclosure (21), voluntary participation will be sought from female civilian federal employees assigned to Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point. Their participation would include participating in interviews on the topic of mentoring for female civil service employees. Enclosure (2) is your request for permission to recruit voluntary participation. Enclosure (3) provides the approval of the Commanding Officer of MCAS Cherry Point, which stipulates that all interviews must be conducted during off-duty hours for both yourself and the interview subjects. Enclosure (4) provides the General Officer level letter of support, for your research, as required under

Subj: HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM U.S. MARINE CORPS ADMINISTRATIVE
REVIEW OF PROPOSED STUDY: "LEADERSHIP MENTORING: A STUDY OF THE
MENTORING EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES"

reference (d), from the Director, Manpower Plans and Policy, Manpower and Reserve Affairs. This GO letter of support also meets the requirements for review and approval by the USMC Survey Office, as required under reference (e).

4. Reference (f) is Creighton University's Federalwide Assurance (FWA00001708) with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP), which authorizes GCU to conduct human subject research. The Creighton FWA expires 21 April 2021. Per enclosures (5), the Creighton IRB reviewed this research proposal and found that the activities described were minimal risk and met the criteria for exempt research under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior, unless:

(i) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and;

(ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

5. Enclosure (6) is the certificate of completion of research ethics training, for the Marine Corps required course for "DON Supported Extramural Performers" as provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI).

6. Review by the Creighton University IRB, the Commanding Officer approval letter and General Officer letter of support, and the proof of completion of research ethics training, satisfy Marine Corps HRPP review requirements for this study. Based on this review of the Performer provided documentation, I find the Creighton University FWA is appropriate for the proposed research and the IRB approval appears to be in compliance with DoD, Department of the Navy and USMC HRPP policies. I concur with their determination that this research meets criteria for Exemption under category 2. You are required to inform this office, as well as your approving IRB, if there are any changes or amendments to your protocol. No further review or approval from this office is required. A copy of this approval is being provided to the USMC Survey Officer.

7. If you have any questions or require further information, please don't hesitate to contact me at (703) 432-2566, e-mail leah.watson@usmc.mil. I wish you success with your study and appreciate your patience in complying with our review and approval process.

L. B. Watson

L. B. WATSON

Copy to:
USMC Survey Officer