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Red, White, Blue & Black: A Phenomenological Analysis of the African American Officer Experience of Mentorship in the California Army National Guard

Larry B. Rankin II
University of Massachusetts Global, lrankini@mail.umassglobal.edu

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A Phenomenological Analysis of the African American Officer Experience of Mentorship in the California Army National Guard

A Dissertation by

Larry B. Rankin II

University of Massachusetts Global

A Private Nonprofit Affiliate of the University of Massachusetts

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Committee in charge:

Carlos V. Guzman, Ph.D., Chair

Gerald Dugas, Ed.D.

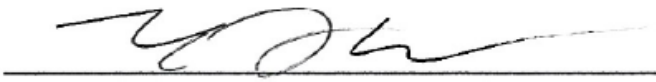
Shaun Hillis, Ed.D.

University of Massachusetts Global

A Private Nonprofit Affiliate of the University of Massachusetts

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

The dissertation of Larry B. Rankin II is approved.

 , Dissertation Chair

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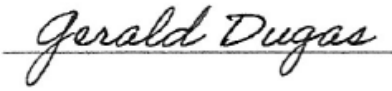
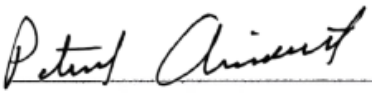
 , Committee Member

Gerald Dugas, Ed.D

 , Committee Member

Shaun Hillis Ed.D

 , Associate Dean

Patrick Ainsworth

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ABSTRACT

Red, White, Blue & Black:

A Phenomenological Analysis of the African American Officer Experience of Mentorship in the California Army National Guard

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Purpose: The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis was to explore the perception of mentorship through the experiences of African American officers in the ranks of O-4 and above as related to their retention in the California Army National Guard.

Methodology: For this study, a qualitative design was used to conduct research to identify and describe the perception of mentorship through the experiences of African American officers. The sample was composed of five African American officers (rank O-4 and above) still serving in the California Army National Guard.

Findings: Analysis of the data collected from 10 semi structured interview questions resulted in two primary findings (drawn from the emerging themes of participants' experiences of mentorship as African American officers in the California Army National Guard) to answer the research question: (a) self-efficacy traits were prevalent characteristics, and (b) formal mentorship isn't always impactful.

Conclusion: Mentorship by itself did not play an essential role in the career longevity of African American officers: Multiple participant responses indicated that several of their experiences of mentorship would have been more effective if they had been accompanied by acts of advocacy during the junior officer years. African American officers in the California Army National Guard must be resourceful in their approach to receiving

mentorship, seeking to build relationships with individuals outside their own racial spectrums.

Recommendations: Future research is recommended to focus on (a) the experience of African American female officers, (b) similarly marginalized populations from additional state National Guard Organizations, and (c) perceptions of mentorship through the experiences of African American officers in the California Air National Guard.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction."

– John C. Crosby

The struggles for equality and equity are not a new topic in any arena of United States history. The U.S. military's struggle with ensuring diversity and inclusion remains a thing to be addressed, much like any other successful organization. In 2015, a Department of Defense (DOD) demographic report of minority service members at all officer ranks showed that the numbers of African American officers, female and male, have stayed relatively constant, comprising only 9.1% of the total officer corps at all ranks (Davis, 2018).

The United States Army has struggled immensely with ensuring that its standards of equality are evident in areas of promotion and placement in positions of leadership and influence. The presence of institutionalized racism, along with a lack of formal mentorship has made it very difficult to ensure that African American officers achieve an equal standing with their Caucasian counterparts (Butler, 1999). Gender equality (and equity) is an additional concern within this realm, as African American female officers are all but forgotten in this struggle (Cameron, 2016). The need for change is immediate, and all branches of the Armed Forces should be required to address these issues. The Army National Guard (ARNG) is a reserve component of the larger U.S. Army and provides the primary military force to support each state, under the control of the governor. As such, the ARNG also falls within the scope of these requirements and is generalizable to the officers of each state, specifically, those serving within the California Army National Guard (CA ARNG).

African Americans have consistently faced racism despite military service since the colonial era. For over 200 years, African Americans were key participants in every major conflict of United States history, fighting bravely against the United States' common enemies (Smith, 2010). As if these feats alone were not enough, many if not all were subjected to individual and institutional racism by their own countrymen (Oakley, 2010). And a backwards glance to the creation of the 9th and 10th Cavalry and 24th and 25th Infantry reveals that many Caucasian officers in the regular army held the belief that Black Americans did not possess appropriate or adequate leadership skills, despite the U.S. Military Academy already successfully graduating two Black Americans: Henry O. Flipper and Charles Young (Ferreira, 2017).

In 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order Number 9981. With this signature, the order designated the military to be the first public/social institution to integrate and promote diversity. Further stipulations of this executive order dictated requirements and obligations for fair and equitable treatment as well as opportunity for advancement for all individuals serving in the Armed Forces. These obligations were not to be subjected to any prejudice or discrimination based on race, color, creed, or religious preferences (Lee, 2014).

Graves (2016) describes institutional racism as a process that results in significant differences in access to and quality of public services because of ethnic/gender characteristics. Institutional racism neither assumes nor denies intent to discriminate on the part of system decision-makers. Its existence does, however, represent a

> …policy shift of research interest away from questions of individual attitudes and

> interpersonal relations and towards questions of whether the net effect of a given sequence of actions or decisions within an organization is to discriminate against members of a social category to which that organizational action should by law be indifferent. (p. 32)

African Americans achieved a victory both historic and monumental with the desegregation of the U.S. military in 1947. Unfortunately, African American officers continue to confront major racial barriers, particularly within the promotion system. Tacit prejudice among white evaluators prevented achievement of commands and key leadership roles dating back to the 1950-1960s. This created a denial not only of equal representation within the higher ranks, but also of availability of mentors for junior black officers (Smith, 2010).

Background

Previous research indicates multiple barriers to advancement for African Americans in the Army, including lack of mentorship and prevailing attitudes of institutional racism. In 2008, Congress formed the military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC) to analyze and address the need to more diversely stratify the Armed Forces. The DOD director of the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity stated "mentoring is a key factor that influences career choices" (Cho, 2011).

Pre-Civil Rights Act of 1964

Military race integration saw its genesis during the Civil War, with authority granted by both sides for African American slaves to take up arms and fight. On the side of the union, this sacrifice was given initially with the promise of freedom at the end of service, and then further encouraged by the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation,

which essentially declared that enslaved persons were freed (Butler, 1999). Military service did not fully integrate the units, however, and all of the African American units established included only enlisted personnel, with officer leadership appointing Caucasian officers as unit commanders. In 1877, Henry O. Flipper became the first African American graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, commissioning as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army (Smith, 2010). A decade later, the second African American officer, John H. Alexander, was commissioned after also graduating from the West Point.

Over the next 100 years, more African Americans began to pursue careers as military officers in the U.S. Army (Smith, 2010). These small victories would remain overshadowed by the continued existence of segregated units in the Armed Forces until 1948, when President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order Number 9981 (Lee, 2014). While this Executive Order was critical in the integration of the Armed Forces, and the U.S. Army initiated as the first branch to comply, racism and racial discrimination were still overwhelmingly prevalent in both the military and civilian sectors (White, 2009).

Post-Civil Rights Act of 1964

In 1964, Congress passed Public Law 88-352 (78 Stat. 241), otherwise known as the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*. This act mainly addressed the disparities within the civilian sectors (workforce and education) as it strengthened the enforcement of the right to vote and school desegregation practices. There were also several implications for the military sector, as the provisions within the civil rights act forbade discrimination on the basis of sex as well as race in hiring, promoting, and firing. These implications, largely found in

Title VII of the act, were strongly resisted as many argued against its use to redress discrimination practices that were rampant within the U.S. military (White, 2009). Although the language of Title VII was amended in 1972 to include and speak very clearly to the inclusion of military personnel, many service-persons continue to be "judicially excluded" because they are not identified as "employees or members of a military department" in accordance with the *Feres* doctrine (p. 227).

Though the military has enacted many other relatively ineffective policies and programs to combat racism and discrimination, the U.S. Army's position is that color doesn't truly exist within the military because "everyone is green." Bonilla-Silva (2015) and Stefancic and Delgado (2000) posited that this position presents several issues. The inability of the U.S. Army to "see" and recognize color or race drives a specific idealization of sameness. This ideology is what connects the U.S. Army with the American diaspora that drives a fear of having conversations about race (Bonilla-Silva, 2015).

Military Mentorship

Research has shown that effective mentoring programs are beneficial and aid officer progress throughout their careers (Lee, 2014). Findings from a 2007 study on minority advancements within the U.S. military suggest that effective mentorship practices also play a crucial role in the career longevity of minority officers (Budd, 2007). In a 1996 study completed by Dreher and Cox, findings indicated "white men are more likely to provide mentorship to junior officers that resemble their own demographics," leaving a void for individuals (minorities specifically) who did not share these same demographics (Thompson, 2016).

Mentorship has been identified as critical to the reduction of minority promotion deficits within the military. Findings from a 2002 study on minority advancements in the U.S. military indicated that while mentorship (or the lack thereof) is not the primary cause of minority promotion deficits, it plays a crucial role in minority officers' career longevity (Budd, 2007). Colonel Florentino Carter stated, "There is not a conscious effort on the part of leaders to exclude minorities but rather a recognition that certain innate human tendencies affect how leaders are more apt to mentor member[s] of his [or] her own phenotype" (Smith, 2010). These words, issued in Carter's 2008 U.S. Army War College research project, highlight the deficit that exists in minority promotions, specifically above the rank of major in the U.S. Army.

Nieberding (2007) defines mentorship as "the voluntary developmental relationship (built on mutual respect and trust) between a person(s) with greater experience and a person of lesser experience." Mentorship has been directly identified in reports of promotions received, monetary compensation provided, career satisfaction, and overall job involvement (Cleveland, 2007). While minority promotions as a whole appear to be lagging, the effects are more readily reported by black military officers when compared to their white officer counterparts. A 2018 research study identified that the influence of mentorship may result in a greater impact that could yield career success for African American Army captains and promotion opportunities when the mentorship process is initiated at the onset—not in the middle or end—of an officer's career (Randolph, 2018).

Mentorship and Resilience

Among the key concepts discussed in research on the mentorship process is that of resilience. In a 2012 study conducted by the Department of the Army, one theme addressed in the revised manual for leadership specifically highlighted the importance of resilience in the Army leadership model and directly linked it in the mentorship process to studies on efficacy (Rouse, 2019). The simple definition of resilience is an individual's ability to "adapt and bounce back when something difficult occurs" (Graves, 2016). This concept includes not only adaptation, but also the ability to again move toward a goal or objective following a trauma or painful experience. Previous research on resilience and its positive effects on leadership has thus far focused on the larger military components (i.e., active duty Army, Air Force, and Navy). There is limited research that has addressed this concept through the lens of the minority officers in the California Army National Guard.

African American Female Officers

Much of the research identifying barriers to African American promotions in the military has centered on the male officer experience. There is sufficient evidence of the need to expand this subject matter to include the experiences of African American female officers as well. While the literature identifies that both genders have expressed an abnormal division in mentoring practices, African American female officers often reported feeling ignored altogether, which was a difference from their Caucasian female counterparts. As a result of these experiences, they reported a lack of benefit in the experience of mentorship as a whole (Cameron, 2016). For the African American female, this experience is often reported in civilian organizations; however, only recently has it

been increasingly reported through practices in the military. An additional area for consideration is African American female commissioned officers' concerns regarding "promotion potential to the highest levels and the feelings of dishonor towards societal ideations for family involvement and the sacrifices required" (Davis, 2018).

The California Army National Guard

The California National Guard (CNG) is part of the reserve component force of the United States military. As one of the two primary components of the CNG, the CA ARNG is composed primarily of personnel and equipment that support the nation's warfighting operations and civil support operations in the United States (Mifsud, 2020). The CA ARNG mission is to deploy trained and ready forces to support national, state, and local emergencies while adding value to communities by providing resources, services, and educational programs that reflect the diverse needs of the people the militia serves (Watts, 2017). The CA ARNG is further broken down into a composition of full-time and reserve military members totaling approximately 14,113 members (Mifsud, 2020).

Statement of the Research Problem

Diversity and the inclusion of diversity initiatives within the armed forces continues to be an issue as people of color are underrepresented with regard to rank promotions and assignments to positions of leadership (Lee, 2014). Specifically, within the California Army National Guard (CA ARNG), African Americans in the ranks of O-3 and above are leaving, not advancing, and have the perception that "There is an unwritten ceiling for growth." For an African American officer in the CA ARNG, this poses a

direct threat to potential advancement opportunities, selection for positions of leadership, and overall career longevity (Basham, 2013).

A brief look at the racial and ethnic makeup of the CA ARNG highlights the lack of diversity at officer ranks of major (O-4) and above. According to a 2019 quarterly diversity report, of the entire CA ARNG, only six percent of members were African American. Of that six percent, only two percent were officers, and even fewer of those members held the rank of major (O-4) or higher. These disproportionate numbers seem to reflect an organizational culture that has become stagnant and unmotivated to be inclusive and diverse at its higher leadership levels.

An increase in diversity can lead to an increase in overall cultural intelligence within an organization (Moua & Lamborn, 2010). As a result of increased cultural intelligence, organizations may see greater job satisfaction for employees and less employee attrition over time. The military is one such organization that may benefit from this approach. This research seeks to formalize the process of mentorship and discover the best practices to ensure that fair and equitable promotion rates (rank and positions alike) are achieved across the spectrum. This will lay the groundwork for not only future generations of leaders within the CNG, but within the United States Army as a whole.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was to explore the perception of mentorship through the experiences of African American officers (in the ranks of O-4 and above) as related to their retention in the California Army National Guard (CA ARNG).

Research Question

How do African American officers (O-4 and above) perceive the impact of the mentorship process on their desire to remain in service past advancement to the rank of O-3 in the California Army National Guard?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study are intended to provide a clear understanding of the experiences of CA ARNG African American officers at field grade levels (O-4 and above) specific to the impact of mentorship during their careers. The themes presented from participants may be utilized by senior leaders to improve upon the current process of mentoring junior officers. Additionally, utilization of this lens may have an impact on the future increase in number of African American officers that decide to pursue promotions to higher ranks within the CA ARNG during their careers. Statistics reflect that although the United States has experienced influential growth in diversity over the last half century, this growth has not been fully replicated within the ranks of the U.S. Army's officer corps. Godbolt (2013) posits that although the enlisted ranks of the U.S. Army appear more representative of the nation's demographics, the senior levels of leadership display an inadequate representation of its overall force and of the U.S. population.

The categorical makeup of the U.S. Army is as follows: combat arms, combat support, and combat service support. Results from a 2009 RAND study highlighted that approximately 80% of all Army leadership is derived from combat arms. The nature of the occupation (leading soldiers through extremely undesirable conditions under extreme stress) lends to the idea that combat arms officers are "proven leaders" (Lim et al., 2009).

The researchers highlighted a gap between the numbers of Caucasian and African American officers who identified combat arms as their selected area of service. In 2006, 22% of colonels (rank O-6) in combat arms were African American as compared to their Caucasian counterparts at 46%. In stark contrast, 69% of colonels in combat service support (rank O-6) were African American compared to their Caucasian counterparts at 39% (Lim et al., 2009). In short, over the last 15 years, the numbers of African Americans selecting combat arms over combat service support has decreased significantly.

Many African Americans who choose the pathway of an officer in the Army tend to select a branch that provides civilian career transferability (Smith, 2010). This same mindset is applicable to individuals who transition from active service to the civilian sectors upon completion of their initial contract obligations. Specifically looking at the career paths of logistics, signal or air defense, these branches tend to draw more selection from African American officers due to the high transferability of skills in civilian industries (Arbiter, 2014). Sixty-five percent of the Army's senior leaders have a robust background in combat arms, and of that number, less than 6% are African American officers. By this measurement, the field of combat arms is largely underrepresented by African Americans officers, which contributes to the difficulty in diversifying the demographics of senior leadership (Vanden Brook, 2014).

The Army has recently recognized that the lack of diversity at its senior leadership levels is in part a result of an overall lack of mentorship (Mifsud, 2020). This systemic issue is not unique to the larger Army component. The Reserve and National Guard are much smaller forces by comparison; as a result, diversity inequities at senior

leadership levels are more prominent in these force structures. With the larger Army component identifying 22% of African American officers (in combat arms) at senior leadership levels, in the National Guard, less than 10% of senior leaders are African American. Funneling down further to specific states, this number fluctuates between three and twelve percent on average depending on the state/geographical location (Lopez, 2015). The CA ARNG places on the lower end of that range, with less than 2% of its senior leaders being African American officers. Based on this data, it can be inferred that while diversity is touted as a "commander's priority," there are many other obstacles to overcome in order to ensure that the force is more representative of California's demographic makeup, specifically as it relates to African American officers at the ranks of O-4 and above.

Though these numbers suggest a bleak outlook with regard to diversity at senior leadership levels, a larger concern is the contributing factor of mentorship (or the lack thereof) on the motivations of junior officers to not only pursue more combat arms pathways, but to remain satisfied and interested in continuing service after their initial contract obligations end. Mentorship provided during these initial periods of service has been shown to increase desires and motivations to remain in service (Mifsud, 2020).

Cross-racial mentoring is not a new concept and has garnered growing attention in the last decade. Senior leaders have many opportunities to engage junior officers and lend insight into appropriate career pathways and professional development; however, as these senior leaders are most always Caucasian, there also exists an impression that junior officers of color cannot or will not approach their senior leaders to seek mentorship

(Lopez, 2015). The larger Army component also struggles with this errant perception but has made several strides to address it among the ranks (Cho, 2011).

Major General Ronald Lewis (an African American Apache pilot) posits that "young officers should not be concerned with the color of the mentor and should seek mentorship from combat arms leaders" (Vanden Brook, 2014). ADRP 6-22 states, "Individuals must be active participants in their developmental process. They must not wait for a mentor to choose them but should take responsibility to be proactive in their own development. Every Army officer, non-commissioned officer, Soldier, and civilian should identify personal strengths and areas for improvement (Cho, 2011). Lack of mentorship is a problem experienced by the large Army component as well as the Reserves. Evidence of this issue is represented in no grander way than the statistics of the California Army National Guard and, unsurprisingly, it contributes to the lack of diversity at senior leadership levels. This study can help better clarify this phenomenon as related to perceptions of African American officers in the CA ARNG and may be a catalyst to ensure that cross-racial mentorship is more effective and available to all young officers who desire to pursue it.

Definitions

Theoretical Definitions

Mentorship. The voluntary developmental relationship (built on mutual respect and trust) between a person(s) with greater experience and a person of lesser experience (Nieberding, 2007).

Functions of Mentorship. The activities by which individuals determine the effectiveness of a mentoring relationship and include career development, psychosocial

support, and role modeling. The functions are a result of Scandura and Ragins's (1997) research.

Mentorship Mechanisms. The practices that enable mentoring relationships to achieve mentoring functions. Specific examples include formal or informal mentoring programs, electronic mentoring, or professional networks.

Mentorship Conditions. Either supervisory or nonsupervisory relationships in the workplace that contribute to mentoring outcomes and achieve mentoring's 13 functions. This operational definition is derived from Payne and Huffman's (2005) mentorship study with military officers.

Operational Definitions

Institutional Racism. A process that results in significant differences in access to and quality of public services as a result of ethnic/gender characteristics (Graves, 2016).

Resilience. For the purpose of this study, resilience is defined as an individual's ability to "adapt and bounce back when something difficult occurs" (Graves, 2016).

Field Grade Officer. A field grade officer is a commissioned service member in the pay grades of O4, O5, and O6 with the corresponding ranks of a major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel (Kapp, 2018).

Delimitations

This study was delimited to five field grade officers in the CA ARNG. A field grade officer in this study was a current or past CA ARNG officer at the rank of O-4 (major) or above. Each participant also met the following criteria:

1. Evidence of successful development from a junior to senior officer level
2. Self-identifies as African American (or black) during period of service

3. Served a minimum of eight years as an officer in the CA ARNG
4. Participated in mentoring sessions as both a mentor and a mentee.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I includes an introduction to the relationship between, diversity, and leadership, a brief overview of the mentorship, its theoretical foundations in historical civil rights progressions, three dimensions of mentorship (Kram, 1983), and the impact of each of these on the military. Chapter II covers an in-depth review of the literature on system justification theory, implicit bias theory, critical race theory, mentorship theory, and the applicability of mentorship to members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Chapter III describes the methodology used to collect and analyze data for this study. Chapter IV presents an analysis of the data to include findings and results of the research study. Chapter V concludes the study with major findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter I of this study introduced the relationship between diversity and leadership, a brief overview of mentorship and its theoretical foundations in historical civil rights progressions, three dimensions of mentorship (Kram, 1985), and the impact of each of these on the military. This chapter gives an in-depth review of the literature and research conducted on system justification theory, implicit bias theory, critical race theory, mentorship theory, and the applicability of mentorship to members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Background

Current literature surrounding diversity and equity in the U.S. military indicates a trend of a lack of diversity within the senior levels of leadership. Specifically, with the U.S. Army and its different components, the disparities in promotion rates and retention rates have been shown to be significant (McClellan, 2020). Identifying the root causes of these disparities is not always an easy task; however, much of the research conducted since 2012 reveals a connection between effective mentorship practices and promotion/retention of minority officers both into and beyond the ranks of 0-4. Mentorship has been linked to the successful careers of senior military leadership (including general officers) along with civilian counterparts that have struggled to increase diversity at the senior levels. As diversity and equity conversations continue to evolve, the impact of mentorship should be clearly displayed within military and civilian organizations.

Mentorship allows a mentor to serve two primary functions for a protégé: career functions and psychosocial functions (Kram, 1985). Career functions assist protégés in

"learning the ropes" and can facilitate advancement through coaching, positive exposure and increased organizational visibility (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Psychosocial functions enhance a protégé's professional and personal growth through counseling, acceptance, and role modeling. Mentors may provide all or only some of these behaviors in varying frequencies during the mentoring relationship (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

Over the last 40 years, the U.S. Army has worked to refine its understanding and definition of mentorship as well as its impact on the force. Prior to 2001, the Army stance was that mentorship was optional and seen as an additional benefit (Mifsud, 2020). In fact, in a 2002 survey given to graduates of the U.S. Army War College, 71% of respondents had a negative viewpoint of mentorship. It was only after the Army found itself engaged fully in the global War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan that leaders realized the lack of mentorship was a large contributing factor to the development of its junior officers (Mifsud, 2020). In a 2013 study, Catchings surveyed 24 junior officers with less than 8 years of service time at Fort Knox, Kentucky. While 92% of respondents identified that they had received military education beyond their assigned officer basic course, 60% had not received any form of mentorship since completing the course. Another 42% percent of respondents had no knowledge about Army mentorship at all and were unaware of how to find resources. Conclusions from that study indicated a large consensus that (a) mentorship is useful and could help further their careers, and (b) there is a need for senior officers to mentor junior officers at the onset of their careers.

The Department of the Army (2012) took note of the need for updates to its definitions and in *ADRP 6-2* identified mentorship as "the voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser

experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect" (p. 7-11). From an organizational standpoint, this becomes evident in the passing of experiences and leadership guidance from senior leaders to junior leaders to close the generational gap (Mifsud, 2020). Mentorship, when implemented within an organization, builds trust between the superiors and the subordinate. It also improves organizational culture, creating a clear distinction from those organizations that do not invest in mentorship (formal or informal), resulting in higher rates of turnover (p. 28). Mentorship is an inherent part of leadership, as successful mentors utilize mentoring sessions to provide guidance and career advice to their subordinates in order to promote success (Mifsud, 2020). A 2010 survey conducted by Johnson and Anderson revealed that most successful senior leaders in the military community have had mentors at one time or another during their period of service. The study went on to identify 691 active and retired flag officers, 67% of whom identified they had at least one mentor, while others reported having multiple mentors throughout the duration of their careers in the United States Navy. Successful senior leaders who provide mentorship to subordinates often increase the likelihood of mentees' career success (Hunsinger, 2004). Contrarily, additional research found that the lack of mentorship among junior officers was linked to a drop in retention rates in the military (Prevosto, 2001; Ryckman, 2017).

Theoretical Foundations

Kram's Mentoring Theory

The concept of mentoring is one that has been around for a very long time. According to Fisher (2012), an understanding of mentoring can be traced back through the ages to mythology of Greek origins, through which the goddess Athena donned the

guise of a mentor to help guide and counsel the young Telemachus, son of Odysseus, during his father's campaign against the city of Troy. Based loosely upon this, Kathy Kram (1985) developed an understanding of mentoring roles that delineated clearly into two branches: career functions and psychosocial functions (Ragins & Scandura, 1997). Clearly defining the two branches, Kram posited that the career functions are dependent upon both the position and influence of the mentor within the organization (p. 5). The practical utilization of the term *mentor* has developed from characterizations of intense, exclusive, multiyear relationships between senior and junior colleagues to now include a variety of more short-term and low intensity peer interactions between slightly older workers and their direct supervisors (Fisher, 2012).

Options for choice of mentor can be from a wide variety of places but should be determined by the protégé and should be reflective of an individual with whom a positive relationship can be built (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). Kram (1985) identified a few conditions that impede constructive mentoring: 1) potential mentors may be opposed to the idea of mentorship because they never received mentoring or because they experienced career blocks that potentially extinguished the desire to promote junior colleagues; 2) potential protégés may exhibit skepticism in the absence of trust for senior manager motives and intentions or in the absence of respect for levels of competence and career advice of identified senior colleagues; and 3) potential protégés may lack the attitudes and interpersonal skills required to initiate and/or maintain relationships with potential mentors (Inzer & Crawford, 2005).

Mentoring theory (Kram, 1983; Levinson et al., 1978) notes that key interpersonal processes associated with the development and sustenance of mentoring relationships

include mutual liking, identification, and attraction. If the mentor and protégé do not have input into this match, it can spoil the relationship. Mentoring theory also states that the mentorship must meet both individuals' needs. In formal programs in which mentors are forced to participate, mentors may not get their needs met, particularly if they view their assigned protégé as a poor fit. Mentoring theory also says that protégés should develop a sense of personal competence and professional identity. If either the mentor or protégé sees the relationship as strained, it can be detrimental to their self-perceived competence and identity (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006).

Formal Mentoring

Formal mentoring has been the subject of many studies over the past decade. An organization will spend time and resources investing in its members and developing each employee to the greatest extent possible (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). From an organizational standpoint, the need for formalized mentoring is important, as it shows the organization's investment in its members, and as such, the desire for the increased development of its employees (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). Studies have shown that individuals who receive mentoring through their organizations tend to experience higher rates of advancement opportunities and higher wages than their counterparts who do not receive mentoring (p. 36).

Mentoring has also been linked to promotion of six areas of learning for an aspiring manager or leader: 1) organizational politics, 2) norms, 3) standards, 4) values, 5) ideology, and 6) organizational history—when utilized in unison, has been shown to lead to increased reports of job satisfaction (Brown, 2010). Bryant (2009) suggests that the organizational benefit of mentoring is applied through increased achievement of

strategic goals. Additionally, mentoring creates an environment that fosters enthusiasm, camaraderie, and professionalism and has a positive impact on the entire organization through the promotion of organizational values, norms, and standards (Brown, 2010). As such, the foundation for creation of a formal mentoring program should be linked directly to an organization's business goals (Allen et al., 2006). Formal mentorships tend to focus more specifically on career goals that are both short-term and related to the protégé's current position. Effective formal relationships have the potential to extend past the timeframe of the program to become informal relationships that last longer and result in protégés that are more likely to transition into mentors themselves (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000).

Formal mentoring relationships tend to promote an organization's values (Ragins & Scandura, 1997); as a result, mentee identification and commitment with the organization also increase (Payne & Huffman, 2005). Formal mentors tend to resonate with high levels of commitment to the organization. Additionally, the goals of a formal mentorship not only aid the protégé, but also benefit the organization. Formal mentors act on behalf of the best interests of the organization. A formal mentor serves as the organizational agent that invokes positivity and feelings of reciprocity from the mentee towards their mentor that may be projected onto the organization (Lyle & Smith, 2014).

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring is the process of mentoring during which a mentor and mentee join through friendship and personal or professional respect for one another. It is often an experience that occurs not only in the workplace, but during social or family activities (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). Informal mentoring has on occasion been shown to

be more effective than formal mentoring, as it provides many different career development functions such as coaching, increased exposure for mentees, and the development of challenging developmental activities (Ragins et al., 2000). Typically in this form of mentorship, the mentor and mentee are selective about who they select to participate in the mentoring relationship, as it is usually formed on a voluntary basis and can lead to a lasting professional and/or personal friendship (Inzer & Crawford, 2005).

While Inzer and Crawford agree that the best relationships come from informal mentorship, Inzer stands firm on the premise that formal mentorship in the workforce promotes the mentee's career and can create an environment of mentorship in which informal mentoring relationships thrive. There are differences in the overall structure of informal mentoring relationships. While formal mentorships tend to be shorter and more structured than informal relationships, the goals of informal relationships tend to change over time as they acclimate to the individuals' career needs (Ragins et al., 2000). Informal and formal mentoring relationships often result in different relationship outcomes. In informal relationships, mentees tend to have more developed, broadened career longevity and psychosocial functions. Kram (1985) posited that in informal relationships, these functional benefits tend to transcend the interval of the mentorship, and that these interventions from an informal mentor may be more likely to culminate over a longer period (Ragins et al., 2000).

Mentorship and Success

According to the literature, not only does "everyone who makes it have a mentor" (Kram, 1985), but everyone needs a mentor: first-year teachers, potential Fortune 500 CEOs, welfare mothers, employees in need of remedial help, student teachers, newly

minted assistant professors, prospective administrators, women, minorities, and the list goes on (Gay & Stephenson, 1998; Gerstein, 1985; Godbolt, 2013; Hu, Thomas & Lance, 2008). The literature also points out that not only does everyone need a mentor, almost every supportive relationship is mentoring.

From an organizational standpoint, mentoring is an important tool for successful development of its members. Ragins and Scandura (1997) identified that formal mentoring in organizations can lead to improvement in performance appraisals and career development plans. Maxwell (1998) also linked the use of mentoring with increased reports of employees feeling empowered to accomplish goals and milestones within the organizational framework. As a naturally occurring activity, mentoring has been described as the process of passing of wisdom and knowledge from individuals considered wise to those who may be considered naïve, thereby increasing both mentor and mentee fulfillment (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). Ostroff and Koslowski (1993) posited that organizational newcomers with a mentor assigned tended to learn more about organizational politics and practices than newcomers who were not assigned a mentor. Additional findings were that the influences of mentoring begin much earlier in the socialization process of an organization than previous research has suggested. This is in direct contrast with Kram's (1985) findings that suggested career-enhancing effects do not occur until after socialization periods are complete. A mix of follow-up research findings suggest the significance of mentoring relationships during early organizational entry for the adjustment and socialization of newcomers (Lacey, 1999).

Organizational success is largely dependent upon the effectiveness of the people as well as the leadership styles that drive the organization (Mifsud, 2020). From a

historical perspective, Northouse (2015) associated leadership with domination, while placing a large emphasis on centralized power and control. This association evolved throughout the 1900s, and in the 1970s was focused more on meeting organizational goals, transformation, and influence. Literature shows that leadership occurs in various forms and styles, with effective leaders utilizing these forms and styles to efficiently lead their organization or units to success (Mifsud, 2020). Mentorship is one of the key attributes that leaders assert influence their successes.

Cleveland (2007) suggested that mentoring is the development of individuals on both professional and personal levels, defining a mentor as one who can "provide the protégé with opportunities to learn and practice and to reward him or her so that acquired knowledge, performance and motivation can increase" (p. 64). Bryant (2009) later asserted that mentoring appears to continue operating as an activity carried out by the powerful on their own behalf, to preserve their dominant social status. This works not just in favor of certain class interests but also in favor of white males against the interests of oppressed groups such as women and ethnic minorities (Landefeld, 2009).

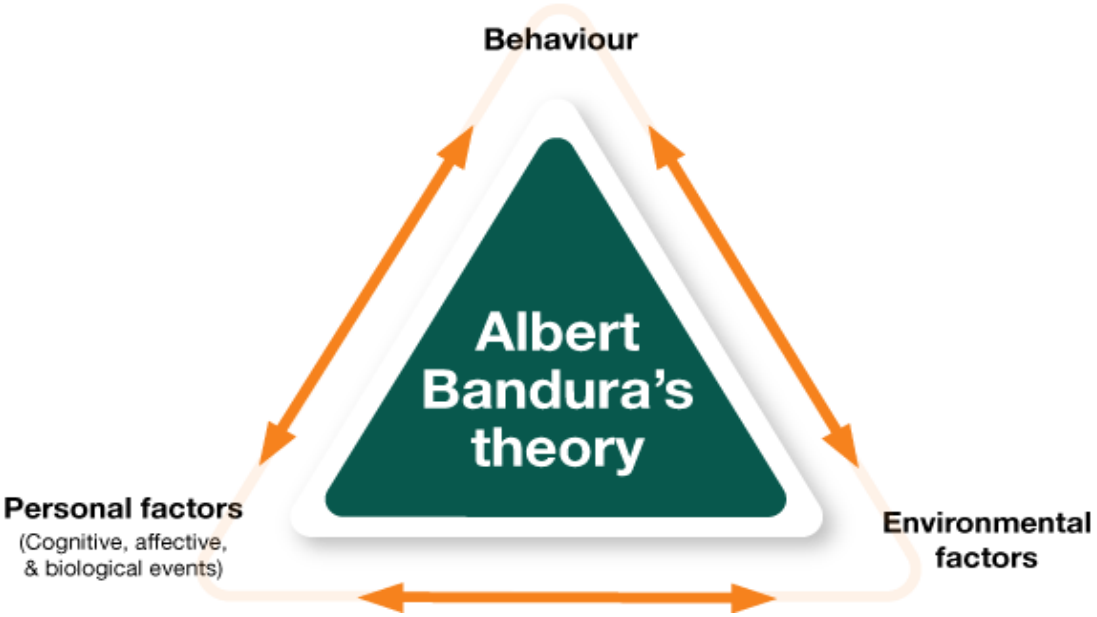
Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (SCT), introduced in 1986 in Albert Bandura's book, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*, was a fusion of Bandura's social learning theory (SLT) and self-efficacy concepts published in the late 1970s (Luszczynska, Scholz, & Schwarzer, 2005). Bandura's SLT posited that individuals learn behaviors via observation and social modeling (see Figure 1). Previous behavioral learning research focused on personal experience, where individuals learned behaviors from their own trial and error (Luszczynska et al., 2005). The social learning

construct was adapted towards the practice and maintenance of behaviors in Bandura's SCT. SCT maintained that an individual can observe a behavior practiced by another individual and then mimic and incorporate the behavior into their own practice (Bandura, 2000).

Figure 1

Bandura's Social Learning Theory Model



Self-Efficacy Theory

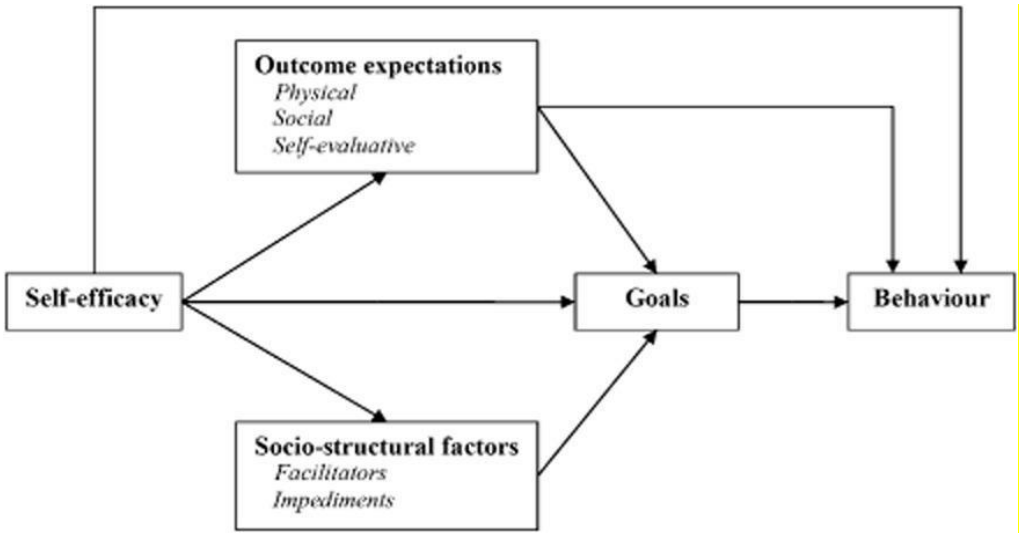
Self-efficacy speaks to an individual's confidence or belief in their ability to practice or control their engagement in a particular behavior. Bandura (1997) posited that self-efficacy and outcome expectation play crucial roles in control and are core determinants to successful practice of long-term health behaviors. For example, if an individual believes they can run and that running will improve their health, they are more inclined and dedicated to the practice of running.

According to Rueda (2011), self-efficacy touches the attributions theory and all four components of the expectancy value theory (attainment, intrinsic, utility, and cost). Rueda added that self-efficacy is the concern an individual has to complete a task based on prior experiences, knowledge, feedback from others, and previous failures and successes. Self-efficacy is not to be confused with self-esteem. Self-efficacy is how an individual believes in themselves and their ability to complete the task, whereas self-esteem is how an individual feels about themselves in general.

Self-efficacy is part of the motivational gap that exists in the military. Some senior-level officers doubt their abilities to provide quality mentorship to junior officers. They feel that their experiences, knowledge, and other characteristics may not provide the proper tools for effective mentorship. Bandura (1997) posited that self-efficacy alongside outcome expectation plays a critical role in control and is a core determinant of successful practice of healthy behaviors long-term (see Figure 2). Higher self-efficacy gives an individual greater persistence to overcome obstacles and resilience while engaged in challenging tasks (Pajares, 2002; Poon, 2006).

Figure 2

Bandura's Model of Self-Efficacy



Theoretical Framework

A study's theoretical framework conceptually binds the study's assumptions and existing theories. These theories, formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena, often challenge and extend existing knowledge within the bounds of the study's assumptions (Swanson & Charmack, 2013). With strong influences from Bandura's self-efficacy and social cognitive theories, social cognitive career theory (SCCT) looks at self-efficacy, instrumental, expressive, and sponsorship domains to inform the mentoring framework. With self-efficacy theory, Bandura (1997) suggested that an individual's success is rooted specifically in that individual's belief that they possess the ability to achieve an outcome. In contrast, firsthand observation of another person's successful performance may influence an individual's beliefs about themselves (either positively or negatively; Bandura, 1997). SCT was introduced to connect self-efficacy to cognition through an individual's practice of using cognitive and behavioral

skills to produce the intended or desired outcomes (Bandura, 1986, p. 1181). In this approach, what becomes more important is the effect of an individual's experience of satisfying productivity and success in selected performance environments on self-efficacy, which may positively influence that individual to create other environments that repeatedly promote success (Lent & Brown, 2008).

Social Cognitive Career Theory

Lent et al. (1994) developed social cognitive career theory (SCCT) to combine measures of cognitive, motivational process, and self-regulation with career behaviors that place self-efficacy at the heart of career development (p. 259). In this theory, Lent combined three entities of Bandura's (1997) SCT:

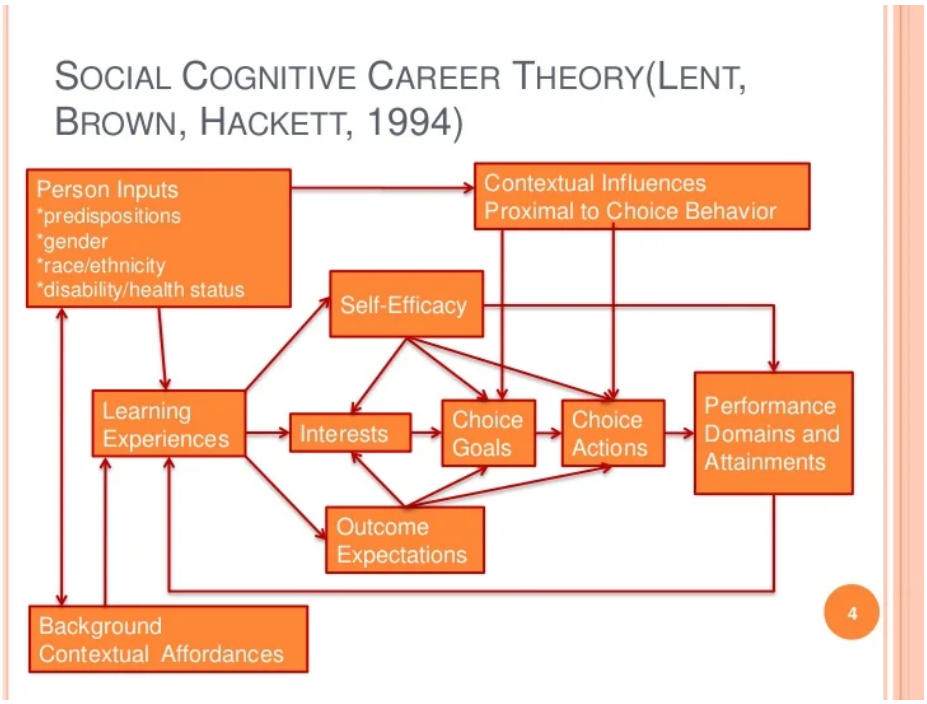
- *personal goals*: one's intent to engage in a particular activity (e.g., to pursue a given academic major) or to attain a certain level of performance (e.g., to receive an A in a particular course);
- *self-efficacy beliefs*: beliefs about one's ability informed by personal performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences (e.g., observing similar others), social persuasion, and physiological or emotional states; and
- *outcome expectations*: beliefs about the consequences or outcomes of performing particular behaviors (e.g., what will happen if I do this?).

Lent and Brown (2008) later expanded upon these entities to include adaptability as a way individuals can concurrently work through career choices and the unpredictable events that occur in life. From the perspective of mentoring, the flow chart in Figure 3 depicts the examination and analysis method for researchers to examine the influence of a

candidate's beliefs through mentorship in regard to career pathways and success (Lent & Brown, 2008).

Figure 3

Lent, Brown & Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory Model

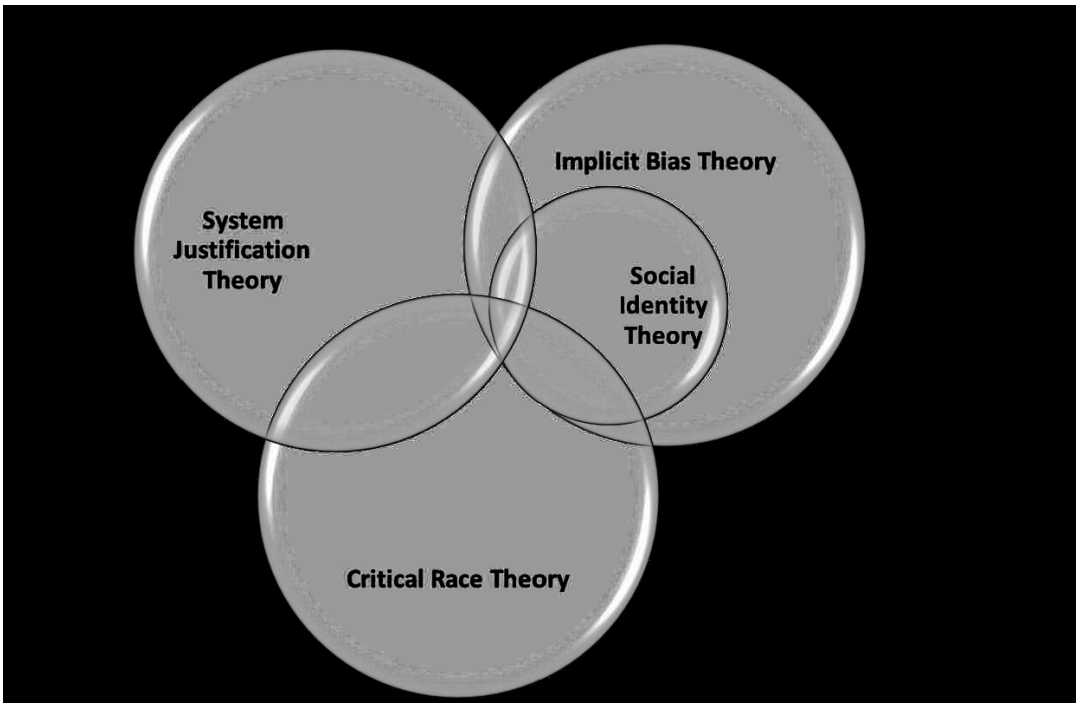


SCCT has been applied across career fields that include higher education and mentoring (Lynn, Jennings & Hughes, 2013). In 2018, Jennings (and colleagues) discussed the application of SCCT to university teaching platforms aptly called Teaching Development (TD). In this approach, students were encouraged to select TD in accordance with individual self-efficacy beliefs and interests, in turn impacting their desired outcomes. Lent et al. (1994) posited that this approach is generalizable to doctoral level students through mentoring students who aspire to progress into higher career positions (p. 23).

The framework for this study utilizes SCCT as its foundation, incorporating elements of social identity theory (SIT), system justification theory (SJT), and critical race theory at their points of intersection for conceptual boundaries (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Theoretical Framework



Systems Justification Theory

Systems justification theory (SJT) describes the social and psychological desire of the individual to legitimize the status quo as an ideal that is not only good and fair, but also ultimately inevitable (Jost et al., 2009). Disadvantaged groups tend to be more likely to participate in activities of social change when ego or group justifications override the needs of system justification within the prevalent social, economic, and political settings, even if the result is negative for themselves or others (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). Motivations for SJT are manifested in different ways (i.e., stereotyping and ideologies),

occur both implicitly and explicitly and serve underlying needs that are epistemic, existential, and relational (Jost et al., 2009).

Implicit Bias Theory

Implicit bias theory is a result of studies of implicit social cognition, which examined the psychological phenomenon a where an individual harbors unconscious association between identity characteristics (i.e., race, gender, age) and social meaning or values (Wegner & Vallacher, 1977). Implicit bias theory describes how these associations lead to stereotypes and attitudes regarding people who display similar characteristics (McClellan, 2020). In one study, social identity theory was linked to implicit bias theory, as it was shown to predict certain behaviors based on the perception of differences in group status as valid (Turner, 1999). Tajfel and Turner (1986) also linked social identity theory to implicit bias theory, suggesting that supervisors often use demographic variables such as race to form specific in-groups and out-groups.

The U.S. Army took notice of the potential impacts of implicit bias on its personnel with regards to Army Officer Record Briefs and Officer Evaluation Reports. McClellan (2021) found a direct connection between implicit bias and African Americans in the U.S. Army as compared to their Caucasian counterparts. The negative effects of bias experienced by African American officers not only had no similar effects on their Caucasian counterparts, but was beneficial to Caucasian officers (McClellan, 2021).

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) evolved in the early 1970s as a response to stalled progress in the battle for civil rights litigation to produce meaningful racial reform in the United States (Taylor, 2002). The theory recognizes that racism is inherent and woven

into the fabric of American society, and institutional racism remains pervasive in the dominant culture independent of individually-held racist. Institutional racism includes the dominance of racism in all institutions, including educational and religious institutions, in a manner that knowingly or unknowingly justifies, explains, legitimizes, or otherwise tolerates the existence of racism (Lyman, 1998). CRT collects many critical positions that challenge the existing legal order based on the perspective of race and places a specific focus on the disparities in treatment people of color experience as a group (instead of individually) under the traditions of the law (Brooks, 1994). In this view, CRT details a far more effective explanation of the effects of implicit bias (McClellan, 2021).

CRT discusses how race and racism intersect (Tate, 1997), and although its origins are in the field of law, CRT has been applied in education and organizational leadership contexts (McClellan, 2021). Stefancic and Delgado (2000) describe CRT as "a collection of activities and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (p. 3). In CRT, data collection is provided through the narrative of a person of color to give voice to the many experiences that have historically been silenced or ignored by society's majority (Taylor, 2002).

Within CRT, the use of system justification theory lends itself to understanding the justification (through ignorance) of individual inequalities with the system to legitimize the belief in the system's fairness and reject the very existence of these inequalities (Jost et al., 2004). These theories intersect with mentorship and implicit bias theory with respect to the professional development of African American officers in the U.S. military. Historical evidence points to the development of a dichotomous in-group/out-group dynamic in which African American officers (as a minority status) find

themselves members of the latter instead of the former (McClellan, 2020). Critical race theory analyzes this dichotomy from the perspective of the in-group and asserts that all negativity stemming from the bias that African American officers experience is systemic and is perpetuated because of the non-existent harms to Caucasian officers and the inexorable benefits that result (p. 37).

Mentorship and Military Leadership

Mentoring has been characterized as an essential leadership skill. Not limited to managing and motivating people, mentoring also plays a pivotal role in helping others learn, develop professionally, and become more effective and efficient in their jobs (Rouse, 2019). Leadership traits are most often paired with an individual serving in a position of authority and influence within their organization (Thomas & Thomas, 2015). Leadership researchers have agreed that an individual's traits, skills, and actions are critical to determining the emergent leader (Ginnett & Curphy, 2002**).**

The Department of the Army (2012) defined mentorship as "the voluntary, developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect" (p. 7-11). The lack of mentorship is not limited to one branch or component of the U.S. Army; rather, this deficit is prevalent across the Armed Forces (Mifsud, 2020). Research evidence indicates that less than 50% of men and women serving in the U.S. Navy have received mentorship from their senior leaders (Johnson & Anderson, 2010). Additionally, in the U.S. Marine Corps, evidence highlights a policy change from voluntary mentorship in the 1990s to a more formalized and mandatory approach beginning in 2006 (Thomas & Thomas, 2015). These studies connect the lack of mentorship to readiness and retention

deficits in the different branches of the military (Ryckman, 2017). Mentorship gaps exist in the military and can mostly be attributed to root issues of motivation within the organizational culture and the officer corps (Mifsud, 2020). Mcateer (2016) posited that the Army's mentorship challenges reflect the societal challenge of effective workplace mentorship. Mcateer further stated that research shows a trend in growing performance gaps of workplace mentorship as a result of climate, competition, and technology advancements.

Senior Military Leaders and Mentorship

The success and longevity of an organization often depends on the use of mentorship from the top levels down. The military organization is no different, and it is imperative for military senior officers across all components to understand the concept and impact of mentorship to effectively mentor junior officers and prepare the organization for future success. Budd (2007) framed mentorship from a perspective that addresses the question "Where do you see yourself in five years?" (p. 16) and understands that mentorship is not simply sponsoring junior officers to facilitate their early promotions or choice of successive assignments. Rather, effective mentorship tends to occur when both mentor and mentee mutually agree to invest long-term in a relationship that focuses on the provisions of professional advice and guidance (Mcateer, 2016). In his 2007 research on leadership, Nieberding asserted that mentoring is more than merely teaching and coaching an individual; it is a more subjective process occurring between the senior leader and junior leader, often utilizing candid dialogue, career advice, support, and commitment (p. 62). Catchings (2013), Budd (2007), and Mcateer (2016) linked the use of emotional intelligence as a critical component within

the mentoring relationship. Mifsud (2020) identified the importance of senior leader mentorship to junior officers, highlighting that their relationship effectively shapes the organization for the future and implements needed cultural change within the military organization towards the impact of mentorship.

U.S. Army Organizational Culture

Defining the term *organizational culture* is not an easy task. The concept of culture is inherently powerful, as it relates to an invisible social force that encompasses the norms, behaviors, and values of a group (Schein, 2017). In his 1992 research, Schein also posited that in order to fully understand an organization, an individual must first understand the culture of that organization. All organizational cultures have artifacts (e.g., symbols, stories, and languages) that members all share and see modeled by the leader, with certain underlying assumptions (Schein, 2017). The military organizations share a similar perspective on culture. In a 1999 publication, the U.S. Department of the Army defined culture as "a group's shared set of beliefs, values, and assumptions about what's important" (p. 14). Steinberg (1999) asserted that the U.S. Army culture is very structured, hierarchical, and authoritative; it promotes an environment focused on masculine authority through its command decisions; and these cultural assumptions are evident in the way the Army professionally educates its officers. Taylor (2002) described the Army as a male-dominated organization often characterized in literature as a "brotherhood" with specific assumptions of masculinity that remain deeply embedded and nearly invisible within the organizational structure (p. 3).

Mentoring and the U.S. Army

In Army leadership doctrine, the concept of mentoring is defined as "the proactive development of each subordinate through observing, assessing, coaching, teaching, developmental counseling, and evaluating those results in people being treated with fairness and equal opportunity" (U.S. Department of the Army, 1999, p. 16). Mentoring relationships are not a recent development in Army leadership. In a 2005 study, Payne and Huffman analyzed mentorship through a survey of 1,334 U.S. Army officers, and 81% confirmed having at least one mentor relationship. Another 68% reported they perceived their direct supervisors in a mentor role, and 85% described receiving professional, career-based guidance from their mentors (Payne & Huffman, 2005). In contrast to this study, a plethora of similarly talented junior officers in the Army often select a senior officer with much more experience to serve as model and mentor for career-based guidance in the military as well as personal guidance regarding life activities and choices. Current literature also indicates that the most successful officers in military organizations had mentors that served in roles of advisor, motivator, and role model, assisting in their successful career progressions (Pinch et. al., 2004).

In the active-duty component of the U.S. Army, mentorship plays a large role in retaining the ranks of junior officers (Mifsud, 2020). Remo Butler (1999) further identified mentoring as one of the four principal determinants of failure or success for African American Army officers (in addition to education, developmental assignments, and cultural clash). Evidence from a 2015 study from the U.S. Army suggests a strong correlation between mentorship and extended periods of service (longer than eight years) for junior officers that commission through Officer Candidate School (OCS), Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), or West Point Academy (Lopez, 2015; Ryckman, 2017).

Literature demonstrates that the mentorship provided by senior officers to junior officers positively impacts junior officers' careers. In one longitudinal study, junior officers with service time under high-performing mentors increased their chances of early promotion by 29% compared with officers who did not have a mentor (Lyle, 2014). Also in this study, captains who received early promotions to the rank of major tended to have higher rates of retention compared with their same-year peers who were required to wait for the promotion boards occurring one to two years later (Mifsud, 2020).

Mentoring African American Female Officers

Over the last decade, there has been an observed increase in female soldiers in active duty U.S. Army service, though female officers are still not proportionately represented at the most senior leadership positions, the general officer ranks (Lyle & Smith, 2014). Lim et. al. (2009) reported an underrepresentation of women in the majority of the most senior ranks both in the officer and non-commissioned officer corps of military. DiGuglielmo (2000) posited that female United States Army officers tend to reach a "glass ceiling" upon attaining the rank of brigadier general (one-star). Rouse (2019) adds depth to this conversation with research on the mentoring relationships of African American women in the Army, challenges and successes of their mentoring experiences, and the effects of these mentoring relationships on their career advancement and construct of success. Rouse's research findings indicated that for female African American officers, the glass ceiling occurs upon achieving the rank of colonel—this threshold is earlier than and in contrast to DiGuglielmo's (2000) findings for female Army officers generally.

Mentoring has traditionally been associated with the successful careers of military professionals. Ragins, Cotton & Miller (2000) indicated that women lack upward mobility in many organizations due to their inability to establish relationships. Ragins expounded by saying that in many predominantly male environments, women are often stereotyped as lower status and misidentified in administrative positions; as a result, they find it difficult to assert themselves and their authority, which often causes them to have a hard time finding mentors (Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000). However, according to the literature, females who develop mentoring relationships do better in organizations than those who do not.

Hunsinger (2004) stated that mentorship is "controlled by the mentee and the apprenticeship process begins with mentors, not the mentee." At its onset, mentorship did little to address women and even less to specifically address African American women. Though there is widespread interest and desire to utilize mentoring as to addresses myriad problems, the concept is not well understood within the U.S. Army (Jahnke, 2008). Career development literature seldomly focuses on the dynamics of mentoring black women.

Historically, African American women have not had the access to available mentors that their Caucasian or male counterparts have (Rouse, 2019). Mentorship is reported as integral to career progression, but gender and racial considerations continue to be left out of the arguments in literature. Thomas and Thomas (2015) stated that there exists a prevailing need to examine qualitative data on mentorship's relational effects with respect to minority groups. Johnson and Anderson (2010) posited that race is significant in mentoring relationships that involve African Americans and it trends as the

strongest predictor of pairing choices in mentoring. These results lend to further conclusions that African American women are underrepresented in positions of organizational power and might encounter barriers in the progression towards advancement.

Cross-Race Mentoring in the U.S. Army

The U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 6-22 *Army Leadership: Competent, Confident, and Agile* (U.S. Army, 2006) discusses the important role of diversity in Army leadership and the challenges faced by leaders, but there is limited research that investigates the impact of race on mentoring relationships in the U.S. Army (Cho, 2011). The impact of positive mentoring relationships on careers is evident in multiple studies completed over the last decade. In 2006, Murrell et al. explored race and cross-cultural mentoring and its effect on careers in the civilian sector. While research continues to highlight non-military organizations, there is room for additional research on the impact of military mentoring, specifically in relation to cross-race mentorship (Cho, 2011). Current literature has identified that one phenomenon affecting this involves individuals' preference to engage in mentoring relationships with others who have a similar cultural background (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005; Hu et al., 2008; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005). The differences that result from mentoring relationships between members of racial minority groups and majority groups have also been linked to the development of effective leaders in the U.S. Army (Bryant, 2009; Doward, 2008; Florentino, 2008; Hu et al., 2008; Jahnke, 2008; Johnson & Anderson, 2010; Nieberding, 2007). With the high value placed on mentoring within the construct of effective leader

development, the U.S. Army needs to ensure that any barriers to the leader development process are removed (Cho, 2011).

Cho (2013) noted that for cross-racial mentoring relationships to succeed in the Army, an appropriate amount of time is needed to ensure that mentors and mentees learn and understand each other's cultural backgrounds. This is an important step if both senior and junior leaders are to feel comfortable in their roles as mentors/mentees. This will help drive open communication, which is necessary for effective mentorship. With a noticeable increase in the Army's diversity at all levels, mentors and mentees must be honest with themselves and each other. This commitment to honest dialogue is essential in cross-racial mentorship relationships (Cho, 2013). Additionally, cross-racial mentorship will increase as diversity increases among junior officers, making requirements for self-efficacy among senior officers critical.

The United States Army National Guard

The United States Army National Guard (ARNG) is a reserve force and component of the US military administered by the National Guard Bureau (Walker, 2005). The ARNG has a distinguished and extensive history rooted in a militia model derived from an all-volunteer civilian population serving part-time to augment the regular military in times of emergency or war (Doubler & Listman, 2007). Known as citizen-soldiers, ARNG soldiers ranging in age from 18 to 60 serve in the U.S. military part-time while maintaining their civilian careers and social lives (Doubler & Listman, 2007). ARNG soldiers are expected to maintain the same standards as their active-duty counterparts and are obligated to serve a minimum of one weekend a month and two weeks a year as part of their volunteer service (Doubler & Listman, 2007; Walker, 2005).

The ARNG consists of 54 individual state army militias that include the California Army National Guard (CA ARNG). Since 2001, there has been an unprecedented utilization of the CA ARNG to respond to natural disasters and domestic operations at home while engaging in traditional military operations supporting the war on terrorism (Russell et al., 2017). As such, the CA ARNG has endured a 19-year operational tempo riddled with extended deployments overseas and complex domestic activations at home. In 2020 alone, over 120,000 NG members were engaged in worldwide operations to fight wildfires, respond to nationwide civil unrest, assist medical authorities with COVID-19 responses, and support other military operations abroad—all of which have driven demand for NG assets to levels not seen since World War II (Garamone, 2020; U.S. Department of Defense, 2020).

The California Army National Guard

As a sub-component of the Army National guard (ARNG), the CA ARNG is one of the largest ARNG forces in the United States, with approximately 13,000 soldiers (Foster, 2019). The CA ARNG has a long and varied history, with roots in early skirmishes with American Indians; numerous activations in response to domestic operations such as earthquakes, wildfires, and civil unrest; and past and current conflicts overseas (Doubler & Listman, 2007; Johnson & Anderson 2010). The CA ARNG provides the federal government and state governor with a ready and able labor force to respond to numerous emergencies at home and abroad at a moment's notice (Doubler & Listman, 2007; Walker, 2005). The CA ARNG has experienced a consistent rise in utilization since 2001 as a result of its response to natural disasters within the state as

well as its participation in traditional military operation support during the war on terrorism (Russell et al., 2017).

California Army National Guard Leadership

Most leadership roles in the CA ARNG are traditional military leadership roles with the appropriate rank structure. In general descriptions, the U.S. military force is comprised of commissioned officers and non-commissioned officers. The administrative duties that separate the rank structures deal primarily with authority and duty roles assigned (Landefeld, 2009). While most commissioned officers serve in command roles, both officers and enlisted members of the military serve in a management role over other enlisted soldiers (Fraser, 2018). In the CA ARNG, commissioned officers are further distinguished by leadership roles that include company grade, field grade, and general officers. Each of these different levels requires assumption of greater leadership responsibilities and include a widened span of control (Fraser, 2018; Kapp, 2018). General officer ranks begin at brigadier general (one-star) and increase to general (four-star), with all generals serving at the top of the military leadership spectrum. In contrast, company grade officers (in ranks of lieutenant to captain) represent the entry level commissioned officer corps (Kapp, 2018). Officers in the ranks of major to colonel are considered field grade officers and serve as both primary and senior staff officers who also lead up to 5,000 servicemembers (Kapp, 2018).

Summary

Mentorship has a significant impact on the success and career progression of junior members in an organization. The role of mentor is an integral part of employee development and often is linked to confidence in performance and ascension through the hierarchy of an organization. Specific to military organizations, mentorship is more effective when the senior officer and the junior officer are able to initiate and foster a strong professional relationship in which the senior officer provides valuable career guidance to the junior officer, contributing to the development of the junior officer as a successful future leader in the organization. The impact of mentorship is observed through the use of both formal and informal mentoring. While the best organizational relationships come from informal mentorship, formal mentorship in the workforce tends to show more positive results for the mentee's career and can create an extremely positive environment of mentorship (Inzer & Crawford, 2005).

Research related to the theoretical foundations of this study focuses on the concepts of self-efficacy and social cognition. Multiple studies considered the intersection of social justification theory, critical race theory, implicit bias theory and social identity theory, highlighting the impact of self-efficacy and expectation management through effective mentoring practices within the organizational hierarchy. Thus, an effective mentor-mentee relationship will incorporate an understanding of an individual's social identity and motivation throughout the mentoring relationship.

The most effective leaders model, guide, and inspire the junior members of their organizations. Understanding the impact of mentorship on talent development, management, and promotion should be at the forefront of any leadership development program. Mentoring whether informal or formal is linked to the success of many senior

officers in the U.S. Army. While much of the conversation surrounding mentoring has addressed the notion of the mentee seeking out his or her mentor, there is evidence that suggests senior Army officers may find new and increased benefits in initiating the conversation with junior officers to help create a welcoming and secure environment. Cross-race mentoring remains an underrepresented area of research in military organizations, but current research discusses benefits for the development of a positive mentoring relationship that transcends the racial/ethnic boundary. Cho (2011) highlights many of those benefits in the realm of mentoring army officers throughout their careers.

African American women in non-military organizations have limited access to available mentors of similar ethnicities or races when compared with their male counterparts (Rouse, 2019). And there is a gap in the research on the impact of mentorship on African Americans (both male and female) in the subgroups of the U.S. military, specifically the CA ARNG. Therefore, it is imperative for leaders within the CA ARNG to become more involved in developing junior officers, regardless of ethnicity, race, and/or gender, and the important role that mentorship can have at early developmental milestones in their careers. The research provides a clear understanding of the experiences of CA ARNG African American officers at field grade levels (O-4 and above) specific to the impact of mentorship during their individual careers. Additionally, the research can assist senior leaders in understanding some reasons that contribute to a lack of organizational diversity at the senior staff officer level while encouraging the facilitation of healthy and positive relationship building and development practices across the enterprise.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Chapter III describes the methodology utilized to examine how African American officers (rank O-4 and above) in the California Army National Guard experience the influence and impact of mentorship on their desires for rank advancement and career longevity. Employing system justification theory, implicit bias theory, critical race theory, and mentorship theory, this study sought to understand the impact of mentoring on career progression and development through the individualized accounts and personal descriptions of meaningful experiences.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was to explore the perception of mentorship through the experiences of African American officers (in the ranks of O-4 and above) as related to their retention in the California Army National Guard (CA ARNG).

Research Question

How do African American officers (O-4 and above) perceive the impact of the mentorship process on their desire to remain in service past advancement to the rank of O-3 in the CA ARNG?

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative approach to consider the numerous interpretations that participants created from their lived experiences. This approach helps to increase awareness and overall appreciation of the individuals' meanings (Shenton, 2004). Early research patterns place emphasis on quantitative approaches to research. It has only been in recent years that the efficacy of qualitative and mixed methods frameworks has been

acknowledged (Creswell, 1998). Chapman and Smith (2002) found that phenomenological qualitative research allows the researcher to better understand the lived experiences of participants. Additionally, Elliott et al. (1999) posited that qualitative methods are not focused on the verification of assumptions or theories but on improving upon the understanding of experiences.

Phenomenology

The phenomenological approach explores participants' perceived experiences. In essence, it "describes the experience as it is lived by the people being studied" (Caelli, 2001). In philosophy, phenomenology is defined as "the study of experience" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 16). The central aim of this approach is to reach a full understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon (Chapman & Smith, 2002). Phenomenology seeks to illuminate a situation or experience according to the individuals who experienced it (Lester, 1999). Phenomenology's origins have been credited to Franz Bretano, who described it as *descriptive psychology* (Hanna, 2007). In his 1931 study, Husserl posited that the overall value an individual places on a specific experience is the "real key" to the study of the human experience.

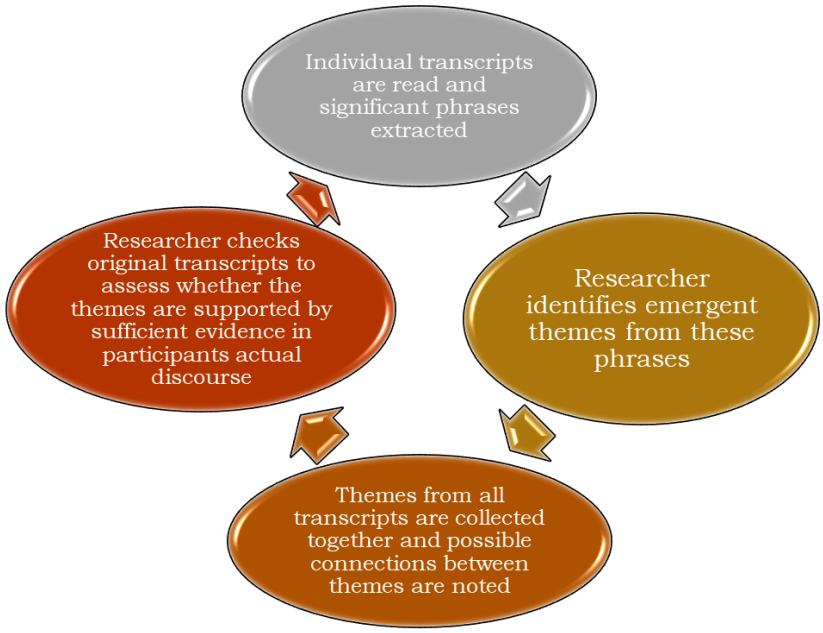
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) explores the ways in which participants make sense of their experiences through an investigation of their interpretations of the experience (Smith, 1996). Researchers who use IPA are objectively investigating the "how" of an individual's awareness of the experience (Chapman & Smith, 2002). In this, IPA focuses on the examination and understanding of participants' opinions about their experiences (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Researchers who utilize IPA

have a specific goal to accurately describe a phenomenon, remaining true to the facts, while also avoiding bias from any pre-given framework (Groenewald, 2004). Figure 5 illustrates the flow and analysis of the IPA framework from the perspective of the researcher (post interview).

Figure 5

IPA Framework Model



IPA is characterized as phenomenological due to the emphasis placed on individuals' perceptions; it is also interpretative due to the researcher's attempt to make sense of the information gained while accessing the participants' world (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The IPA framework is ideal for this study, as the focus is placed on understanding individual interpretations of the experience of being an African American officer in the CA ARNG at the ranks of O-4 and above.

This study utilizes IPA to explore the lived experiences of African Americans officers in the CA ARNG at the ranks of O-4 and above. One goal of the study is to

understand the impact of mentorship on participants' experiences as junior officers and on their motivations to remain in service for extended periods following their initial contract obligations. In keeping with the overall purpose of IPA, semi-structured interview questions were used to provide the participants—the subject matter experts—an opportunity to detail their experiences as they perceive their importance. Additionally, this method allowed the interviewer to probe deeper and follow up on any answers provided by the participants (SAGE publication, 2017).

Method Rationale

Current literature on African American officers focuses on those in active duty, which comprises the bulk of U.S. Army servicemembers (Mifsud, 2020). Reserve and National Guard servicemembers largely perform duties in a "part-time" status. Specifically looking at the National Guard, a majority of servicemembers work in the civilian sector full-time but train in a military capacity during weekend inactive duty training (IDT) and typically a single two-week annual training period. As a result, career management from a military perspective is often secondary to the career progressions that servicemembers pursue in civilian employment. With such limited research on National Guard officer career perceptions, this study's design is particularly helpful to explore under-researched perceptions of African American officers serving in the CA ARNG.

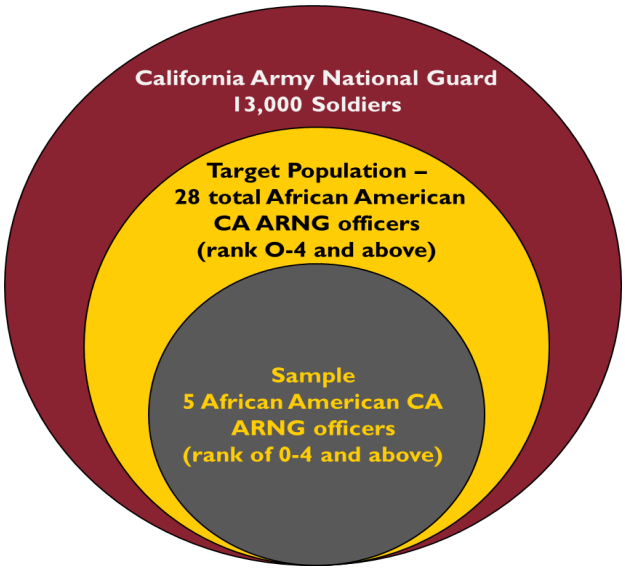
Population

McMillan and Shumacher (2010) describe *population* as a group that conforms to a specific set of criteria, to which results from research is generalizable. The population for this study was five participants. It was a sampling of the larger population group of 28 African American CA ARNG officers serving at the rank of O-4 (Major) and above, to

which study results were later generalized. The entire population of the U.S. military is 1,371,627 active-duty servicemembers, 357,872 reservists, and 441,870 National Guard servicemembers (Defense Manpower Center, 2020). As a subset of the Army National Guard, the CA ARNG has 13,169 total servicemembers spread throughout the state. Of this number, 342 are minority officers within the CA ARNG, and of those, just 70 are above the rank of O-4 (Major). Current data reflects that 28 of those 70 officers self-identified as African American. This study's population size is inclusive of the 28 African American officers at the rank of O-4 and above, and only targeted those who self-identified as having participated in a mentorship process prior to achieving their rank (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Study Population and Sample



Target Population

IPA provides valuable data gleaned from a very small pool of participants. IPA studies typically require between four and 10 interviews (Smith et al., 2009). As defined

by Creswell (1998), the target population is a small percentage representative of the total population and is narrowed to define specific participants who display clear characteristics that are of significance to the study. According to a 2020 personnel management report, the CA ARNG currently reports 28 African American officers in the rank of O-4 and above out of 13,169 Army National Guard servicemembers in the state. Of those 28 servicemembers, approximately 10 were identified as available to participate in the study; the remainder were disqualified due to mobilizations and permanent assignments outside of the state). In order to remain consistent with the IPA design, the sample size for this study was limited to five participants. Male and female participants were equally solicited for participation. Inclusion criteria for participants were African American race, occupation as a CA ARNG servicemember, and rank of O-4 and above.

Sample

A sample is described by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) as a representative subset of the larger population from which data is collected. The sample for this study was selected using purposeful snowball criterion sampling. Purposeful sampling was an ideal method for this study as it enabled the researcher to identify specific elements from the population that would "be representative or informative about the topic" (p. 138). Chain (or snowball) sampling allows participants to be selected from an overall group of individuals "familiar with the cases that are information-rich" (Creswell, 1998, p. 127). This sampling method has been beneficial for researchers who work with populations that are often stigmatized or marginalized (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Additionally, criterion sampling works well when all of the study participants are representations of people who understand the phenomenon from firsthand experiences (Cresswell, 1998, p.

128). The main benefit of purposeful criterion sampling is that researchers can interview individuals with a vested interest in the topic who also share the desire to have their voices heard (Smith et al., 2009). This method fit the study well, in that previous independent surveys and studies have indicated an overall awareness of the lack of diversity at senior leadership levels within the CA ARNG.

Participant Selection Process

To identify and explore perceptions of the impact of mentorship on the desire to remain in service, the researcher first determined which CA ARNG field grade officers in the rank of O-4 or above met the following criteria:

1. Evidence of successful development from junior to senior officer level
2. Self-identifies as African American (or black) during period of service
3. Served a minimum of eight years as an officer in the CA ARNG
4. Has participated in mentoring sessions as both a mentor and a mentee

Participants in the sample population for this qualitative study were selected from a pool of 342 total minority officers in the Army component of the CNG. The researcher refined the list to 70 by selecting candidates who serving at the rank of major (O-4) and above. Continued refinement filtered out all candidates who did not self-report as African American in accordance with a June 2021 personnel accountability report. This filter resulted in a total of 28 candidates eligible to participate in the study. Finally, the researcher applied a filter of geographical availability to participate in an interview and provide any required artifacts as support. Due to mobilizations, deployments, or other military requirements, the final sample of eligible candidates was five total male and

female African American officers serving at the rank of major (O-4) and above in the CA ARNG.

Following approval from Brandman University and the institutional review board, the five study participants were contacted to participate in the study. The process for contacting study participants follows.

1. The researcher contacted ten potential study candidates via email with information about the research and an invitation to participate in the study.
2. As a follow-up to the email, the researcher contacted each participant via phone to ensure receipt of the invitation, answer questions, and/or address any hesitations about participation in the study.
3. The first five of ten participants to respond to the invitation via email or via phone signifying that they were willing to participate were selected as the sample population for this study.
4. The five study participants were sent an additional email with an Invitation to Participate letter (Appendix A), the Research Participant's Bill of Rights (Appendix B), and an informed consent document (Appendix C). Additionally, each participant was informed that they could contact the researcher via email or phone to address any issues or concerns.
5. To proceed with the interview, each participant first confirmed receipt of the Research Participant's Bill of Rights and Informed Consent documents.
6. Participants were contacted by phone to schedule a day and time for a 45-minute interview either in person (socially distanced as required) or through the Zoom telecommunication platform.

7. Interview scheduling was based on the availability in both the participants' and the researcher's schedules. Time slots were confirmed via an email that also contained the Invitation to Participate letter, the Research Participant's Bill of Rights, the Interview- Informed Consent document (collected prior to the interview), and the interview script/protocol (Appendix D).
8. Interviews were conducted in a comfortable setting and neutral environment chosen by each participant. Following each interview, the researcher provided all signed forms and additional documents via email to participants, including the Invitation to Participate letter, the Research Participant's Bill of Rights, the Interview -Informed Consent document, and the interview script/protocol.

Instrumentation

Creswell and Poth (2018) identified the researcher as a key instrument in qualitative data collection. As a primary contributor to the study design, the researcher may influence the method in which data is collected, (i.e., the use of interviews, artifact review, and direct observation). In this study, the researcher was the instrument conducting in-depth, semi-structured, and open-ended interviews, and examining artifacts (counseling statements and leadership philosophies as provided) from the participants.

Patton (2015) posits that as an instrument, the researcher brings to the study a specific set of internalized beliefs and lived experiences that may introduce bias during data collection and analysis. In order to mitigate this bias, the researcher must willingly acknowledge that this may influence the data collection and analysis process (Patton, 2015). This researcher has accumulated 19 years of service in the U.S. military and currently serves as a full-time employee of the California Military Department,

specifically within the CA ARNG, at the rank of captain (O-3). As a self-identified African American officer eligible for promotion to the next rank (O-4), the researcher brought potential bias to the study based on personal experiences that are similar to those being studied. The researcher has previous experience conducting similar interviews similar both in the California Military Department and more widely within the CA ARNG.

In order to remove researcher bias, the researcher enlisted the aid of other doctoral candidates and experienced researchers to develop the ten open-ended semi-structured interview questions utilized for the study. The researcher aligned each interview question with specific concepts found in the literature surrounding the use of mentorship in both civilian and military organizations. The first question, in accordance with Kram's (1985) mentoring theory, addressed the participants' individual perspectives of mentorship, both formal and informal. Additional probing questions allowed the participants to expound upon the influence of mentors internal versus external to the organization. Questions two, four, five, seven and eight linked directly to participants' perceptions of the mentoring functions and process (Ragins & Scandura, 1997) at the ranks of O-3 and below, and then again at the ranks of O-4 and higher. Questions three and six linked directly to research supporting the impact of race on mentorship and the use of cross-race mentoring techniques in the military (Cho, 2011). Questions nine and ten linked directly with the concepts of mentoring and development discussed by Crawford and Smith (2005).

Validity

A researcher's chosen design and methods for collecting data are part of the determination of a study's credibility and validity (McMillan & Shumacher, 2010).

Validity is the control method that ensures a study measures what it intended (Shenton, 2004, p. 64). Additionally, validity ensures that the instruments utilized provide findings that are true (Roberts, 2010) and align with the research questions (Patton, 2015). Creswell and Creswell (2018) posited that in order for an instrument to be an effective, trusted tool of measurement, it must have a certain level of validity. One method for increasing validity within a study is to conduct a field test with interview volunteers who answer the questions and then provide feedback to the researcher. The researcher utilized feedback from interview volunteers and observers that was collected and reviewed by experienced researchers and faculty for improving the validity of the study.

There are myriad methods to ensure qualitative research is legitimate. IPA does not provide specifics for validity, but research from Smith et al. (2009) supports the four principles Smith and Osborne (2003) asserted that IPA researchers must display: 1) sensitivity to context; 2) commitment and rigor; 3) transparency and coherence; and 4) impact and importance (Smith et al., 2009, p. 180).

Utilizing the first principle, the researcher identified the requirement for sensitivity and selected IPA as the chosen method. As a part of the practice of sensitivity to context, the researcher also recognized the value of building rapport through interpersonal professional relationships with the participants. This rapport supports active listening during the interview process and remaining mindful, present, and connected throughout each interaction. Utilizing the second principle of commitment and rigor, the researcher was extremely selective in choosing participants for the study. The sample was limited to officers who identified as having received mentoring prior to the rank of O-3 *and* having provided mentorship after achieving the rank of O-4. Additionally, the

researcher demonstrated commitment and rigor through strict adherence to IPA guidelines for analyzing and interpreting data.

The researcher utilized two additional methods to establish validity. The first method addressed validation of the researcher, demonstrated in the purpose statement by identifying the purpose was a sought exploration of the lived experiences of African American officers in the rank of O-4 higher in the CA ARNG and how they perceived the impact of the mentorship process on their desire to remain in service past advancement to the rank of O-3. The second method utilized established process validity, demonstrated by an independent audit (Smith et al., 2009). This audit by an independent party requires the individual selected to be unfamiliar and thereby unbiased to the study prior to reviewing the study questions and conducting an evaluation.

Reliability

Study reliability demonstrates the consistency of the researcher's method and approach throughout various endeavors (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Reliability is enhanced once the researcher establishes the standards for collecting the data (McMillan & Shumacher, 2010). General consensus among researchers is that true reliability is displayed when an instrument can achieve the same results consistently over time (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Patton, 2015**)**. Patton (2015) describes the interview script as the ideal control method to ensure each participant receives the interview questions, directions, and prompts all in the same consistent way. This research study utilized a pilot study of three participants to establish reliability and determine consistent patterns across participants when identifying themes. In utilizing this method, the instrument can be seen as reliable, and the results of the study can then be replicated with the anticipation of

achieving similar results over time. This anticipated replication, or external reliability, can often be difficult when conducting interviews with humans (Patton, 2015). This is often a result of inconsistent interactions between individuals from one interview setting to another and the shifting dynamic between the interviewer and the study participant.

Data Collection Procedures

The primary method for collecting data in this study was the qualitative semi-structured interviews. Before initiating data collection, the researcher requested and received approval to conduct this study from the Brandman University Institutional Review Board.

The study collected data from ten CA ARNG officers who self-identified as African American and had achieved the rank of O-4 or higher. Data was collected through interviews and artifacts provided by each participant. Each interview was conducted on a volunteer basis, and all selected study participants received an email with information that included: 1) Brandman University Bill of Rights, 2) the informed consent; and 3) confirmation of the interview date, time and location. In order to adhere to social distancing practices guidelines issued by the State of California, virtual interviews were made available to interested participants via utilization of Zoom technology. The researcher also completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative's social behavioral educational researcher coursework resulting in a certificate on research ethics to protect human research participants (Appendix E). Interview transcripts and all other data were uploaded and maintained securely in a password-protected electronic file. Additionally, participants were assured that any and all data

collected would remain confidential under the researcher's control and secured for up to five years, after which all data will be destroyed.

Data Collection

Qualitative data collection was facilitated through face-to-face interviews conducted both in person at the California Military Department headquarters in Sacramento, CA, and via virtual meeting rooms provided by the Zoom platform. Each interview consisted of ten open-ended semi-structured questions and prompts. Interview responses were used to bring clarity to, explore, and expound upon statements presented in the semi-structured survey questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Prior to the interview, the researcher provided each participant with an email containing a brief description/overview of the study, the developed interview questions, expected interview duration, privacy protocols, the participant rights, and the participant consent to record the interview. Following each interview, participants were provided a transcript of the interview to allow them to accurately review and clarify potential misinterpretations. Following this, the researcher utilized NVivo to code the approved participant transcripts and all data provided through artifacts.

Data Analysis

The data collected through in-person and Zoom-based interviews that illuminated the phenomenological lived experiences of African American officers in the rank of O-4 and higher in the CA ARNG constituted the majority of data collected from this study. Utilizing NVivo software, the researcher identified themes that aligned with the trends and messages identified by each participant. In accordance with Creswell's methods (2013), the researcher enlisted peer assistance to help code themes and increase

intercoder reliability. The use of software applications like NVivo is particularly effective in expediting the coding process (Patton, 2015). From emerging themes that were extrapolated from the data, the researcher developed descriptions, classifications, and interpretations of the data based on frequency.

Intercoder Reliability

Qualitative data analysis allows the researcher to interpret meaning from interviews and draw conclusions about the study (Patton, 2015). Intercoder reliability is a proven method for mitigation of bias and subjective interpretations during the coding process, and it enhances the strength of a qualitative study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). In order to achieve an 80% or higher alignment for themes and reference, the researcher enlisted the aid of two colleagues familiar with the research and coding process to each independently code 20% of the data received. Each independent coder's results were compared with the researcher's results to determine alignment.

Limitations

According to Patton (2015), all research studies have inherent limitations in their scope. Limitations include the elements of the study that are outside researcher control. Though not restricted to a specific type, limitations are typically linked to biases or subjectivity from the researcher or issues with the research methodology and design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton & Newhart, 2018).

The researcher intended to explore the phenomenological experiences of African American officers in the CA ARNG. While there is potential for researcher bias based specifically on the topic of the study, the researcher is unable to control personal observations. The researcher recognized potential threats to internal and external validity

of the study and took mitigating action to minimize factors that could manipulate data collection (Gay et al., 2009).

Summary

Chapter III provided details on the nature of the study. Additionally, it acknowledged the methodology utilized to examine the phenomenological experiences of African American officers in the CA ARNG. This chapter covered the purpose statement, research questions, research design, data collection and analysis, sample population, and selection process. Finally, this chapter highlighted the importance of ensuring meaningful data collection to examine a phenomenon with an appropriate methodology and identify the mentorship experiences of African American officers serving in the CA ARNG.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This study applied social cognitive career theory (SCCT) to understand the perceived impact of mentorship on the desire for continued service in African American officers ranked 0-4 (Major) and higher in the California Army National Guard. This study looked specifically at the impact of mentorship received from the ranks of O-1 (2nd lieutenant) to O-3 (captain) and the change in that perception of mentorship once the participant achieved the rank of O-4 (major) and higher.

Following a summary of the study, Chapter IV provides a review and analysis of the data collected through interviews and artifacts collected to answer the research question. The research question was addressed by qualitative data obtained through interviews and the collection of supporting artifacts. Qualitative collected data is displayed in tables accompanied by a narrative report that provides a detailed interpretation of the data and findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was to explore the perception of mentorship through the experiences of African American officers in the ranks of O-4 and above as related to their retention in the California Army National Guard (CA ARNG).

Research Question

How do African American Officers (O-4 and above) perceive the impact of the mentorship process on their desire to remain in service past advancement to the rank of O-3 in the CA ARNG?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This study utilized a qualitative approach to consider the interpretations that participants created from their lived experiences. This method assists in the efforts to increase the awareness and overall appreciation of the individuals' meanings (Shenton, 2004). Chapman and Smith (2002) found that phenomenological qualitative research specifically aims to allow the researcher to better understand the "lived experience" of the participant(s). The main intent of this approach was to identify and then improve upon the understanding of these experiences as reported by each participant, and not to validate or verify assumptions (Elliott et al., 1999). The phenomenological qualitative approach provided additional insight and clarity on the impact of mentorship on African American officers (O-4 and above) and the lived experiences both prior to and after achieving the rank of O-3 in the CA ARNG.

Qualitative Data

In order to gather data that identified and explored the impact of mentorship on African American officers (O-4 and above) and the lived experiences both prior to and after achieving the rank of O-3, the researcher utilized virtual interviews via the Zoom platform to collect statements, along with other provided artifacts that included counseling statements, evaluations and leadership philosophies to support participant statements in the interviews. Qualitative data collection was facilitated through face-to-face interviews over Zoom and consisted of semi-structured, open-ended prompts and questions regarding their individual experiences in the CA ARNG. Prior to each interview, the researcher provided each participant with an email that included a brief overview of the study, the interview format and duration, the interview questions, privacy

protocols and the participant rights. After interviewing the five participants about their mentorship experiences, the researcher transcribed the audio-recorded sessions and asked participants to verify transcription accuracy. The majority of participants (*n*=4) had no revisions and approved the transcriptions. One participant responded with a minor revision, requesting the researcher to clarify the response to a question about experiences in mentorship and the role of race in those experiences. Upon receipt of the participant's emailed approval or revision, the researcher reviewed the transcriptions side by side with interview notes and assigned initial codes to the data, highlighting key words and phrases that appeared to hold significant meaning or capture the essence of participants' experiences. The researcher compiled and sorted codes into categories by research and interview question to identify patterns and themes in the data. Following manual analysis and coding, the researcher utilized NVivo version 1.6.2 for Mac to organize thematic categories, developed a summary analysis of the data, and began drafting visual data displays of the impact of mentorship experiences on desires to remain in service as reported by participants. All participants were provided a copy of the interview transcripts for individual review in order to allow the opportunity to accurately verify answers and/or provide clarifying statements to any data misrepresentations.

Population

The population for this study was five participants and serves as a sampling of the larger population group of 28 African American CA ARNG officers serving at the rank of O-4 (Major) and above. The Army National Guard is only one of the multiple components of the U.S. Military. The entire military population consists of 1,371,627 active-duty servicemembers, 357,872 Reservists, and 441,870 National Guard

servicemembers (Defense Manpower Center, 2020). As a subset of the Army National Guard, the CA ARNG currently contributes 13,169 total service members spread throughout the State. Within this population of over 13,000 service members, the total number of minority officers within the CA ARNG is approximately 342. Of those 342 service members approximately 70 members are above the rank of O-4 (Major). Looking at the racial makeup of these 70 officers, current data reflects 28 personnel have self-identified as African American. This study's population size is inclusive of the 28 African American officers at the rank of O-4 and above, and only targeted those individuals who self-identified as having been a participant in a mentorship process prior to achieving their rank.

Sample

To identify and explore perceptions of the impact of mentorship on desires to remain in service, researcher determined which CA ARNG field grade officers in the rank of O-4 or above met the following criteria:

1. Evidence of successful development from a junior to senior officer level
2. Self-identifies as African American (or black) during period of service
3. Served a minimum of eight years as an officer in the CA ARNG
4. Has participated in mentoring sessions as both a mentor and a mentee.

Participants in the sample population for this qualitative study were selected from a pool of 342 total minority officers in the Army component of the CNG. The researcher refined the list of 342 candidates down to 70 by determining candidates that were currently serving at the rank of major (O-4) and above. Continued refinement by the researcher filtered out all candidates that did not identify (self-report) as African American (in

accordance with a June 2021 personnel accountability report). This filter resulted in a total of 28 candidates eligible to participate in the study. Finally, the researcher refined the list of twenty-eight by applying a filter of geographical availability to both participate in an interview and provide any required artifacts as support. As a result of mobilizations, deployments or other military requirements, the final list of eligible candidates was reduced to a combination of five male and female African American officers, serving at the rank of lieutenant colonel (O-5) and above in the CNG. The sample size of five qualitative participants met the criteria (Table 1) established by research recommendations and provided enough data to draw meaningful conclusions from the study.

Table 1

Criteria for Participating Field Grade Officers (Rank O-4 and higher)

Criteria	Participant				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Evidence of successful development from a junior to senior officer level	X	X	X	X	X
2. Self-identifies as African American (or Black) during period of service	X	X	X	X	X
3. Served a minimum of eight years as an officer in the CA ARNG	X	X	X	X	X
4. Has participated in mentoring sessions as both a mentor and a mentee	X	X	X	X	X

Demographic Data

The participants in this study were homogenous with regard to race and ethnicity. All participants self-reported as African American (black) in correlation with the inclusion criteria for the study. The target population was small and as such the demographic data were discussed as a whole instead of as individual responses in order to protect the anonymity of the participants. Each participant was assigned a number from 1 to 5. Table 2 displays the self-identification regarding race and gender for each participant. Participants were 40% female and 60% male. The study participants 100% identified as African American. Twenty percent of participants served in the rank of O-6 (colonel), and 80% of participants served in the rank of O-5 (lieutenant colonel). Additionally, the sample included a wide range of experience within the military as officers, ranging from 18-25 years of total service and the average of 20 years. Table 2 displays the participants' years of service in the military at the time of the study.

Table 2

Demographic Profile of Participants

Profile ID	Rank	Gender	Years of Service	Race
P1	Colonel (O-6)	M	25	African American (Black)
P2	Lt Colonel (O-5)	F	19	African American (Black)
P3	Lt Colonel (O-5)	M	21	African American (Black)
P4	Lt Colonel (O-5)	F	18	African American (Black)
P5	Lt Colonel (O-5)	M	20	African American (Black)

Presentation and Analysis of Data

This study utilized a qualitative approach with applicable qualitative instruments to gather data. This section reports the findings and data gathered with descriptive narratives aligned with the research question. One primary research question (RQ) guided

data collection and analysis in this study. The researcher developed 10 interview questions (IQs) with follow-up questions and sub questions to aid in answering the RQ. Table 3 shows the alignment of the research question with the interview questions.

Table 3

Alignment of Research Question and Interview Questions

Research Question (RQ)	Interview Question (IQ)
RQ: How do African American Officers (O-4 and above) perceive the impact of the mentorship process on their desire to remain in service past advancement to the rank of O-3 in the CA ARNG?	· IQ1: In your own words can you provide your definition of mentorship? In your answer, please distinguish between definitions of formal and informal mentorship. · *Subquestion 1*: How does your definition change when considering *formal* mentorship with someone internal to the organization? · *Subquestion 2*: How does your definition change when considering *informal* mentorship with someone internal to the organization? · *Subquestion 3*: How does your definition change when considering *formal* mentorship with someone external to the organization? · *Subquestion 4*: How does your definition change when considering *informal* mentorship with someone external to the organization? · IQ2: Can you describe what your perception of mentorship was as a young officer (rank O-1 to O-3) in the California Army National Guard (CNG)? · IQ3: Can you describe your perception of how your racial makeup impacted your early years as an officer (rank O-1 to O-3) in the CNG?

RQ: How do African American Officers (O-4 and above) perceive the impact of the mentorship process on their desire to remain in service past advancement to the rank of O-3 in the CA ARNG?	· IQ4: What messages did you receive about mentorship as a young officer (rank O-1 to O-3)? · *Subquestion*: Did that message(s) change after you achieved the rank of O-4? How so? · IQ5: What were your experiences of mentorship as a recipient like during your early years as an officer (rank O-1 to O-3)? · *Sub question*: How did that experience change after you achieved the rank of O-4? · IQ6: Can you describe your perception of the role race played in your mentorship experience as a young officer (rank O-1 to O-3)? · IQ7: How did your mentorship experience influence your desire to continue service once achieving the rank of O-4? · *Sub question 1*: What strategies have you utilized to mentor young officers (rank O-1 to O-3) in regard to remaining in service or leaving prior to achieving the rank of O-4? · IQ8: What has your experience been as a mentor in the mentorship process (O-4 and above)? · IQ9: As a mentor, what is your selection criteria for those individuals you choose to mentor? · IQ10: How can the CA ARNG better shape the mentorship process for young African American officers?

Results for the Research Question (RQ)

The research question was *How do African American officers (O-4 and above) perceive the impact of the mentorship process on their desire to remain in service past*

advancement to the rank of O-3 in the CA ARNG? All 10 interview questions (IQ) aligned with the RQ to elicit specific responses about participants' experiences of the impact of mentorship and their desires to continue service after achieving the rank of O-4. After reviewing the transcribed and coded interviews, the researcher noted 13 trends or commonalities in the participant responses. The researcher categorized the commonalities into five superordinate themes (and one emergent theme) with each associated interview question for ease of understanding. The themes are identified in Table 4. Each of the five superordinate themes are displayed with frequencies in Table 5 through Table 9.

Table 4

Identification of Themes by Interview Question

Research Question (RQ)	Interview Questions (IQ)	Themes/Common Words (*N*)
RQ: How do African American Officers (O-4 and above) perceive the impact of the mentorship process on their desire to remain in service past advancement to the rank of O-3 in the CA ARNG?	IQ 1/7	*Understanding Mentorship* · Career development/management (4) · It's creating relationships (3) · Mostly occurs informal (4) · "Didn't play much of a role" (4)
	IQ 2/4/5	*Changes Over Time* · It's up to me: Early career beginnings (O1-O3) · Perceptions as a mentee (4) · Messaging received (4)
	IQ 4/5	· Top-down mentorship: Life as a Field Grade Officer (O4-above)

		· Perceptions as a mentee (5) · Messaging (5)
IQ 3/6	*Race Matters*	
		· Initial perceptions (4) · Race and mentorship (3)
IQ 7/8/9		
	I'm the mentor now	
		· Doing things different (5) · "You've got to want it" (5)
IQ 10		· "Honesty is a must" (5)
	The Way Forward	
		· Lessons learned (4) · Crossing the color lines (4) · Advocacy is required (5)

Understanding Mentorship

Interview Question 1 asked the participants to define mentorship in their own words while 1) distinguishing between the concepts of formal and informal mentorship and 2) describing any differences between mentorship internal to the organization versus external. Interview Question 7 asked the participants to utilize their definitions of mentorship to 1) describe the influence mentorship played on desires to continue service after reaching the rank of O-4 and 2) describe mentorship strategies each utilized to provide mentorship from those higher ranks. The data were grouped into four overarching themes based on the participant responses. The four themes were *career development/management, it's creating relationships, mostly occurs informal* and "*didn't play much of a role*" as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Understanding Mentorship Themes and Frequency

Theme	Interviews Coded	Interview Frequency	Frequency %
Career Development/Management	5	9	22
It's creating relationships	5	11	26
Mostly occurs informal	5	9	22
"Didn't play much of a role"	5	13	30
Total		42	100

Career development/management. Interview Question 1 (IQ1) required the participants to identify their interpretations or definitions of mentorship in their own words. All five participants initially discussed mentorship in the scope of military life as an officer, defining it as a process through which senior officers provide instruction and guidance (based on policy, doctrine and experience) to junior officers. Participant 1 stated,

> Mentorship is when a senior individual, i.e., senior individual in an organization or senior individual in the Army, takes under his or her tutelage, junior officers or junior individuals in the company and shows them how to be successful in the company or successful in the military. What key milestones they should achieve, what key education they should achieve and overall, making sure that individual knows all the avenues to success in that organization or the military.

Participant 2 further defined mentorship:

> Mentorship, I believe, is rigid in the form of hierarchy, and the use of tools such as, specific to the Army, the officer evaluation reporting system, counseling statements, and so on and so forth. To basically communicate with whomever expectations both professionally and perhaps otherwise. Everything that is in my opinion, oriented on what it takes to be a US Army Officer.

It's creating relationships. All five participants' responses highlighted commonality in the establishment of a bond between the mentor and the mentee.

Participant 4 described mentorship as “the act of actively and regularly dialogue and engagement between senior and junior members.” Participant 3 also described the building of a relationship between two individuals:

> Mentorship is a relationship opportunity that provides guidance, knowledge, wisdom, comradery, hope, direction, and support to an individual on a one-on-one basis, being formal, where you come in and discuss all manners of things that affect the individual holistically, one-on-one. And informally, where it could also be one-on-one, however, it's like off the cuff or in passing by, I got something for you, or someone is answering a question that came up randomly.

Participant 4’s responses drew a line of separation between the concept of mentorship within the CA ARNG and the utilization of mentorship in an outside (or civilian) organization, noting,

> When you mentor someone within your organization, you both have, and you expect to perform your duties in a certain manner. With somebody outside the organization, although you can get mentorship, it would probably be framed in a different way. A different set of expectations, different set of behaviors, if that makes sense.

Mostly occurs informal. The follow up question to IQ1 also asked each of the five participants to distinguish between formal and informal mentorship in their responses. All five participants noted that within each of their experiences in the CA ARNG as officers, the majority of the mentoring they experienced and/or provided to others was informal mentorship. For each participant, this was largely due to the desire of the mentor to truly “understand the experiences of the mentee and provide effective guide paths for career development.” Participant 5 defined mentorship as “a relationship between two people, where the individual with more experience, knowledge, and connections are able to pass along what they've learned to a more junior individual within

a certain field." Moving into the distinctions between formal and informal, Participant 5 also stated:

> When it comes to my definition of formal mentorship is when a senior member or officer communicates regularly and set clear expectations and invest time in the experience. Usually they are structured, well organized, and sometime aligned with the organizational goals and objectives….Then informal mentorship is a relationship between two people where one gains insight, knowledge, and wisdom, and friendship from the support of another. Usually, an informal mentorship starts with a relationship between two people. The actual process is really not structured.

Participant 2's responses highlighted the impact of informal mentoring and the use of the "candid conversation" to build trust instead of the mentor reliance on the process of documenting and reporting formally:

> When people see paperwork sometimes, I just think it diminishes trust. But when you have a candid conversation with an individual, regardless of rank or grade, because mentorship can come from anywhere, it doesn't have to be hierarchical. When you establish trust and you have candid conversations on anything from life situations to job performance and everything in between, then I think it's more robust. I think it's even richer, and definitely can help you or the individual progress, not just career wise, but overall, as a human being, which obviously we want our officers to have.

"Didn't play much of a role." Interview Question 7 required the participants to identify the impact of mentorship on their desires to remain in service after reaching O-4. While literature surrounding the use of mentorship with young officers often links career longevity and mentorship together, four out five participants indicated that mentorship had little to no impact on their desires to remain in service past the rank of 0-4. Participant 3 spoke directly to the lack of mentorship impact:

> It wasn't the mentorship that influenced my desire to continue. I had already made the decision when I hit 10 years of service and I knew I was going to stay…And, yeah…. So, I would say the influence that I got from some of the leaders telling me how to get to the next rank was helpful and beneficial, but my decision wasn't based on their mentorship, because they mentored me…I want to stay.

Participant 5 responded briefly and concisely with "yeah….it did not come into play in my decision to continue to serve. Mentorship…. it was not a key for me." In contrast, Participant 2 indicated a positive correlation between the mentorship experience as a whole and a career that saw promotions up to the O-5 (lieutenant colonel) rank:

> Senior officers, an O-6 [colonel], O-5 [lieutenant colonel], and one…soon to be O-7 [brigadier general] have said to me… 'Hey, you are a representation of the American dream. So, you've worked hard to be where you are'……. 'You're doing a great job!' That obviously lit a fire in my belly as well to continue to strive….not much has changed since then.

Changes Over Time

IQ 2, 4, and 5 asked the participants to (a) describe perceptions of mentorship specifically during career period of O-1 to O-3 that include messages received as a mentee during this time and (b) describe what changes (if any) were noted in these experiences and messages after reaching the rank of O-4. The data were grouped into two overarching themes based on participants' responses. The two themes were *it's up to me* and *top-down mentorship* as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Changes Over Time Themes and Frequency

Theme	Interviews Coded	Interview Frequency	Frequency %
It's up to me	5	18	66
Top-down mentorship	5	9	34
Total		27	100

It's up to me. The early periods of an officer's career are often defined by the different leadership approaches they may receive. As a company grade officer (ranks O-1

to O-3), all five participants reported the experience of having to go in search of mentorship from someone they wanted as their mentor. This responsibility for this process was placed in large part (if not entirely) on the participant as the mentee to recognize key traits to emulate and identify the appropriate career pathways to follow. Participant 3 specifically identified the requirement to be proactive in the mentorship approach: “It wasn't like people were out looking to mentor you, you had to kind of go in and try to get it, or try to create a relationship, develop a relationship.”

Recalling experiences as a young 2nd lieutenant, Participant 5 specifically recalled,

> As a young officer in the rank of O-1 to O-3 in the California National Guard was that of, if you were interested in having a mentor, I needed to identify one on my own. There was never an encouragement or discouragement, and it was up to me to find someone I felt like I wanted to emulate my career after and develop myself after and ask them if they would be interested in being my mentor.

Participant 4 described the overall experience of mentorship during company grade officer years as “not very proactive,” continuing on to indicate that it was “not enduring and it is not consistent.” In times where counsel was needed, Participant 4 reported having to “go and seek it” as opposed to being engaged by someone in a mentor role. While Participant 1 did indicate that during this initial phase as an officer, there was some minimal mentorship that was initiated by the mentor, there was a string indication that a higher level of involvement from a mentor early on may have resulted in eligibility for promotion to O-4 at an earlier stage:

> If somebody would have sat me down and said…. No, you need to get this done. I understand you need to spend more time with your family, but you need to get this done so you can get promoted to major sooner…. That would have probably, I think, saved me a year, year and a half in my officer development.

Participant 2 indicated receiving multiple messages that encouraged seeking out a mentor in whom trust had been established and feelings of comfort dominated the messaging,

over being approached directly by an individual seeking to provide the mentorship of their own initiative.

Top-down mentoring. An officer's development and promotion from the company grade to a field grade officer rank (O-4 and above) is often characterized by an increase in responsibilities and expectations for performance that are not often experienced by the lower ranks. Three of the five participants indicated that this was the period of their careers where they received the most insight from a mentor, and both regarded the mentee experience (at the rank of major) as the point in which senior leadership became more "accessible" to them for officer development. Participant 5 specifically recalled that "At the time of O-4, I had an officer for approximately 10 years, and this was the first time that a senior leader took the time to have a formal mentorship session with me." Participant 4 noted the specific change in access to senior leaders was incredibly noticeable as an O-4:

> When I knock on the door, some of those senior leaders actually answered me, versus when I was a captain. When I call, someone actually answered the phone, or returned my emails…within a reasonable time.

Participants 3 and 4 also indicated the importance of this access was that as a "junior Major" the mentee received specific career planning that provided a pathway to senior level officer positions (O-6 and higher). Not all officers experience this change in access or availability upon reaching the rank of O-4. Participants 1 and 2 highlighted the continued perception that mentees are responsible to continue seeking their own desired mentorship and development.

Race Matters

IQ 3 and 6 asked the participants to (a) describe perceptions of how racial identity impacted their career, specifically during the ranks of O-1 to O-3 in the CA ARNG and (b) describe perceptions of the role that race played in their mentorship experiences during the ranks of O-1 to O-3. The data were grouped into one overarching theme based on participants' responses. The theme was "*they don't look like me*" as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Race Matters Themes and Frequency

Theme	Interviews Coded	Interview Frequency	Frequency %
"They don't look like me"	5	13	100
Total		13	100

"They don't look like me." IQ 3 and 6 (IQ 3/6) asked participants to describe their perceptions of how their individual racial make-up impacted them as young officers (ranks O-1 to O-3). The common theme among all five participants when discussing perceptions of the senior leadership was that "none of them look like me!" Participants 1 and 3 reported little no impact from their racial make-up perceived during this time period. With demographics that highlight less than two percent of the CA ARNG identifying as African American or black (at the ranks of O-4 and above), three out of five participants responses highlighted the importance of "visualization" on initial perceptions of individual career potential and longevity. Participant 4 indicated that upon commissioning as an officer more than 18 years ago, "there are few African American officers with whom to interact, in either supervisory, subordinate or peer capacities."

Taking this a step further, Participant 4 recognized that this disparity was directly correlated with the lack of senior African American officers from which a young officer could choose a mentor:

> I think if there had been more African American officers, I think that commonality would've at least set the stage for a relationship, and I could've gone out and gotten that. And I take that on as a personal implicit bias. Whereas I think if I would've had, growing up, an African American battalion command or a brigade commander, if I would've been more apt to go out and proactively seek out a mentor.

Participant 2 chose to highlight that while there was a "lack of racial commonality between the mentor and the mentee," there was no lack of mentorship available and as a result, no developmental milestones or targets for performance were missed. Participant 5 indicated that during this time, it was not uncommon to be the only officer of color in a briefing or conference and noted potential personal benefits may have resulted from having more officers of color represented in senior leadership positions:

> I'm sure if I had seen more senior African American leaders in the ranks, that would've given me more of an opportunity to possibly start a conversation, through informal mentoring, which could have actually turned into a formal mentoring relationship.

I'm the Mentor Now

IQ 7, 8 and 9 asked the participants to (a) describe the influence mentorship played on desires to continue service after reaching the rank of O-4, (b) describe their experiences as a mentor in the mentorship process (as an O-4 and higher), and (c) describe mentee criteria each utilized as senior officers to select candidates to mentor. The data were grouped into three overarching themes based on participants' responses. The themes were *doing things differently*, "*you've got to want it*," and "*honesty is a must*" as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

I'm the Mentor Now Themes and Frequency

Theme	Interviews Coded	Interview Frequency	Frequency %
Doing things differently	5	13	36
"You've got to want it"	5	9	26
"Honesty is a must"	5	14	38
Total		36	100

Doing things differently. Four out of five participants identified that while they themselves may not have been sought out by a mentor, as field-grade officers (rank O-4 and above), they personally have sought out mentoring relationships with other young officers at the captain rank and below, in hopes to develop them early on. Participants 1 and 2 indicated that as mentors, their target population is not solely based on racial commonality, but often they will seek out minority junior officers to establish a relationship that can guide their developmental pathway. Participant 2 provided more specific examples of the foundational guidance offered:

> So, when I talked to junior officers regardless of ethnic background, generally speaking, I relay the same message that I was given which is, if you want to increase your scope of influence, you got to do these things, go to school, stay of trouble, work, life balance as much as is possible. And then to be honest. First with self and two, with everything else that's external to you. To be candid as much as it possible when given feedback. That's really what I discuss with junior officers when the opportunity presents itself.

Participant 4 highlighted the importance of service in that role as a mentor to young officers, noting that mentorship is not simply about "evaluating duty performance" but that "mentorship, if we're doing it the right way…is about making these people the best versions of themselves, no matter where they go…no matter if they stay or go."

Participant 5 identified strongly with the use of informal mentorship as the tool to develop young officers. In this process Participant 5 specifically noted the personal requirement as the mentor to initiate the relationship and to be available for the mentee:

> When I see a young officer of any race, especially my race, who is open to a basic conversation with a senior officer, I take the first step. A young officer is not going to, most of most of the time, go up to a senior officer and start a conversation. A senior leader has to make it known that they are available to have that conversation, whether it be formal or informal, it doesn't matter.

"You've got to want it." IQ9 required the participants to engage the researcher from the perspective of a mentor/senior officer and highlight some of the criteria that each utilized to select a young officer to mentor. All five participant responses indicated a strong requirement for the mentee to have some form of initiative and drive that displays a "desire to engage and participate" within the mentoring relationship. Participant 4 stated,

> You've got to want it as much as I want it for you…..you've got to be willing to put the work in….so as long as a mentee just wants it, no matter... like the Bible says, you've only got to have the faith the size of a mustard seed, well, you've only got to have the drive the size of a mustard seed.

The phrase "You've got to want it," captures the sentiment that rang loud throughout each participants' response, echoing strongly the earlier responses about messaging they each received as young officers.

"Honesty is a must." Participants 2, 3 and 5 reported an additional selection criterion that ranked the principle of honesty as a "must be," not only from the mentee perspective and approach, but also highlighting the importance of the mentor engaging in honest and open communication during the mentoring relationship and in daily life. When asked about selection criteria, Participant 3 reported seeking out "someone who is

willing, they're open, they're honest, they're eager, and yeah….those things right there."

Participant 5 spoke directly to the impact of honesty as an officer value:

> Honesty, integrity, these are pretty much my only and most important criteria, not only for mentorship, but for life. If you feel the need to be dishonest, I think you need to take 60 seconds to reevaluate your motives. Then if you still need to be dishonest, be prepared to live with the consequences. I try to, what I present myself as is, I hope I'm not a person that anyone feels like they need to be dishonest with.

Participant 2's responses indicated signs of mentee appreciation for the "be honest" practice in action, stating, "when they recognize that it's candid, it's honest…. I've had people come back and say, 'thank you' later on." Participant 2 framed it as honesty through positive or negative feedback loops:

> When I give them the bad news and the good news all in one….So I think it really matter gender or ethnic background. It's that honesty and caring about their development that matters.

The Way Forward

IQ10 asked the participants to discuss practices for the CA ARNG to better shape the mentorship process for young African American officers. The data were grouped into three overarching themes based on participants' responses. The themes were *lessons learned, crossing the color lines,* and *advocacy is required* as shown in Table 9.

Table 9

The Way Forward Themes and Frequency

Theme	Interviews Coded	Interview Frequency	Frequency %
Lessons learned	5	10	26
Crossing the color lines	5	13	34
Advocacy is required	5	15	40
Total		38	100

Lessons learned. IQ10 required each of the participants to utilize their experiences both as a mentee and a mentor during the course of their military career in the CA ARNG and identify areas of the mentorship process that can be improved upon for young officers in the future. Participant 3 highlighted the need for accountability for those individuals responsible to mentor others:

> Establishing a process and then make it weighable in some way. Weighable, meaning accountable. Like if you're not doing it, then there's consequences for not. But making it where it's not like I'm going to check the box kind of mentoring, but that people are all buying in to the fact that this is what's going to grow our organization and make us better in our future.

All five participants indicated that while individuals in the CA ARNG may use specific tactics and methodology for implementing mentorship, there is still a need for a "formal" mentoring program to be implemented from the top levels of leadership down. Participant 4 described the need for senior leadership to take a more active role in the implementation of an effective mentoring program, stating, "when the senior leaders, decide that they want an effective and enduring mentorship program in order to produce

the best quality soldier….to recognizing that mentorship, it can be formal, but it can't be forced. Mentorship is based off relationship." Participant 2 recommended strategies to address racial and gender gaps within the organization:

> I think the biggest thing…. is just to make sure that everybody has an equal opportunity to succeed. What does that mean? Access to education, fair evaluations, as much as it's humanly possible. Candor, encouraging. If an issue arises and an African American officer says, I believe I'm being singled out either negatively or positively because of my heritage that we take it seriously and address it as quickly as possible and as honestly as possible. But I think the biggest thing for anybody across the board, regardless of ethnic background or agenda, is just to make sure that everybody has the same access to opportunities to succeed.

Participant 5 saw the organization as the answer for future mentoring effectiveness, stating,

> I feel the best way that they can address this, is to develop a formal mentorship program for all O-1, O-3 officers. It has to be inclusive, because we need to discover why and how others are making the choices to stay past the rank of O-4.

Crossing the color lines. While not all participants addressed race in the recommendations for shaping the mentorship process (IQ10), several participants noted that while the CA ARNG had a deficit of African American officers in senior leadership positions, mentorship itself does not require racial commonality to be effective. Participant 3 stated, "it doesn't have to be African American on African American…. but we need to ensure young recipients are African American…in order to provide the opportunity for everyone to get a seat at the table." Participant 4 cautioned against singling out minority officers for "special attention" through mentoring:

> I would be careful about singling out African Americans or any gender on any given day to provide special attention. Just because it can backfire. I really don't want to be sitting at the table and being told, oh, you got to where you are because you're African American.

Participant 1 identified the impact of visualization for young minority officers and noted the importance of seeing officers of color serving in senior leadership positions across the enterprise:

> …captains, lieutenants, majors, and lieutenant colonels all need to see a person like me in front of a brigade. They need to see a person walking into the room with stars on their shoulder that looks like me. Some of those selections made for key leadership positions…they're just not diverse enough.

Advocacy is required. One common theme observed among four of the five participant responses was the distinct separation between the use of mentorship versus the use of advocacy and the reliance on the former in the absence of the latter in conversations about equity in the organization. Participant 1 indicated that advocacy by a senior officer can often mean the difference between a young minority officer being placed into an opportune and key position to learn, develop, and grow as a leader:

> I sit on a Military Police Advisory Committee and a couple other committees where we look at junior officers to put in the key positions. Sometimes me being in the room means that some soldiers who look like me get considered for promotion where maybe they would not….Because someone is in that smoke-filled room is looking out for you and knows your name….Because that name's thrown out there, people say, "Did anybody know this person? What's the background this person?.Instead of saying….No, I know that person. He or she is a squared away officer and needs to be placed into positions of key leadership.

Participant 4 responded that advocacy doesn't have to be limited to opportunities for the young officer within the organization, as there many civilian opportunities as well. The senior officer/mentor should be discussing "all potential opportunities" with the mentee to give them additional avenues of success:

> No matter if he or she is staying or going…you treat them like a person and that show them the love….So if you're doing the math, and you're counting how many people are starting to go…because they don't always stay. Yet if we redefine the metrics and can ensure they're better prepared than what they were before, then I think we're doing a hell of a job.

Summary

In this interpretive phenomenological analysis, the researcher interviewed five participants using an interview protocol of 10 interview questions (IQs) to answer the research question (RQ) related to how African American officers (O-4 and above) perceive the impact of the mentorship process on their desire to remain in service past advancement to the rank of O-3 in the CA ARNG. Thirteen themes emerged for the RQ. Table 10 represents a summary of those findings, discussed in detail in Chapter V.

Table 10

Summary of Major Findings

Theme	Interviews Coded	Interview Frequency	Frequency %
Career Development/Management	5	9	22
It's creating relationships	5	11	26
Mostly occurs informal	5	9	22
"Didn't play much of a role"	5	13	30
Total		42	100
It's up to me	5	18	66
Top-down mentorship	5	9	34
Total			100
"They don't look like me"	5	13	100
Total			100
Doing things differently	5	13	36
"You've got to want it"	5	9	26
"Honesty is a must"	5	14	38
Total			100
Lessons learned	5	10	26

Crossing the color lines	5	13	34
Advocacy is required	5	15	40
Total			100

This chapter presented the results of the demographic and interview data collected, along with the themes that emerged in participants' responses and the categories identified by the researcher to organize these themes. Chapter 5 concludes this study with a discussion and interpretation of the study results, a situation of the results alongside previous literature, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This study applied social cognitive career theory (SCCT) to understand the perceived impact of mentorship on the desire for continued service in African American officers ranked O-4 (Major) and higher in the California Army National Guard. This study looked specifically at the impact of mentorship received from the ranks of O-1 (2nd Lieutenant) to O-3 (Captain) and changes in the perception of mentorship once the participant achieved the rank of O-4 and higher. This final chapter outlines the major findings, unexpected findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations, and concludes with reflections from the researcher.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was to explore the perception of mentorship through the experiences of African American officers in the ranks of O-4 and above as related to their retention in the California Army National Guard (CA ARNG).

Research Question

How do African American officers (O-4 and above) perceive the impact of the mentorship process on their desire to remain in service past advancement to the rank of O-3 in the CA ARNG?

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative approach that relied on interviews and artifact data to provide answers to the research question. To gather the qualitative data to further identify and understand the impact of mentorship on African American officers' desire to remain in service after achieving the rank of O-4, the researcher utilized in-person and

virtual interviews and collected artifacts that supported the participants' statements. For example, the researcher collected written counseling statements, mentorship tools, and evaluation reports that detailed successful career trajectories that developed from either informal or formal mentorship practices. Each interview consisted of 10 semi-structured, open-ended questions and prompts.

Population

The population for this study was five participants sampled from the larger population group of 28 African American CA ARNG officers serving at the rank of O-4 (Major) and above. The researcher targeted only those officers who self-identified as having been a participant in a mentorship process prior to achieving their rank.

Sample

To identify and explore perceptions of the impact of mentorship on desires to remain in service, the researcher selected CA ARNG field grade officers in the rank of O-4 (Major) or above who met the following criteria:

5. Evidence of successful development from junior to senior officer level
6. Self-identified as African American (or black) during period of service
7. Served a minimum of eight years as an officer in the CA ARNG
8. Participated in mentoring sessions as both a mentor and a mentee

Participants were selected from a pool of 342 total minority officers in the Army component of the CNG. Of those, 28 candidates were eligible to participate in the study. The researcher further refined the list of candidates by applying a filter of geographical availability to participate in an interview and provide any required artifacts as support. After filtering for candidates who were mobilized, deployed, or meeting other military

requirements, the final list of eligible candidates was reduced to five male and female African American officers serving at the rank of O-4 and above in the CA ARNG (Table 11). The sample size met the criteria established by research recommendations and provided enough data to draw meaningful conclusions from the study.

Table 11

Demographic Profile of Participants

Profile ID	Rank	Gender	Years of Service	Race
P1	Colonel (O-6)	M	25	African American (Black)
P2	Lt Colonel (O-5)	F	19	African American (Black)
P3	Lt Colonel (O-5)	M	21	African American (Black)
P4	Lt Colonel (O-5)	F	18	African American (Black)
P5	Lt Colonel (O-5)	M	20	African American (Black)

Major Findings

The study was intended to contribute to the body of literature on the impact of mentorship on the desires of African American officers in the CA ARNG to remain in service after achieving the rank of O-4. The study also addresses a gap in the knowledge base relative to the use of mentorship as it affects minority officers serving in a reserve component of U.S Army. This research has the potential to prescribe organizational roles and responsibilities for senior leaders within the California National Guard to address concerns of diversity, equity, and career longevity of minority officers that currently serve in either the ranks of O-1 (2nd Lieutenant) to O-3 (Captain) or O-4 (Major) and higher.

Thirteen sub-themes emerged from the data relating to participants' experiences of mentorship as African American officers and the impact on their desires to remain in

service after reaching the rank of O-4. These themes (*career management, "it's creating relationships," mostly occurs informal, "didn't play much of a role," perceptions as a mentee, messaging, race and mentorship, doing things different, "you've gotta want it," honesty is a must, lessons learned, crossing the color lines*, and *advocacy is required*) were organized into six categories: (a) *understanding mentorship*, (b) *it's up to me: early career beginnings (O-1 to O-3)*, (c) *top-down mentorship: life as a field grade officer (O-4 and above)*, (d) *race matters*, (e) *I'm the mentor now*, and (f) *the way forward*.

Two primary findings can be drawn from the emerging themes of participants' experiences of mentorship as African American officers in the CA ARNG to answer the research question: (a) self-efficacy traits were prevalent characteristics, and (b) formal mentorship isn't always impactful.

Finding 1: Prevalent traits of self-efficacy were present in African American officers O-4 (Major) and higher serving in the California Army National Guard

Lent et al. (1994) developed social cognitive career theory (SCCT) to combine measures of cognitive, motivational process, and self-regulation with career behaviors that place self-efficacy at the heart of career development and performance success. Results of this study affirm Lent's theory of self-efficacy as one of three successful performance and career advancement indicators.

Responses to Interview Questions 2, 4 and 5, which were aligned to the research question, indicated a majority of participants considered themselves extremely proactive and self-motivated to not only seek out mentorship as young officers rank O-1 to O-3, but to set themselves on the proper career pathways for success as officers ranked O-4 and higher. This was highlighted by participant responses such as "I had to reach out and seek

the mentorship. It wasn't like people were out looking to mentor you" (Participant 3), or "There was never an encouragement or discouragement, and it was up to me" (Participant 5). As young officers in the organization, most of the participants identified with the concept of being proactive in their search for mentorship from senior officers, whether the guidance was for career progression, required education, or just basic leadership knowledge (Participants 2, 4, and 5).

Finding 2: Formal mentorship is not always as impactful in experiences of African American officers serving in the California Army National Guard

Kram's (1983) mentoring theory notes that mentorship must meet both individuals' needs, and in primarily formal programs (where mentors are forced to participate), neither mentors nor mentees may get their needs met. This literature supports the study finding that formal mentorship, when applied, was not reported to have a lasting impact on participants' career trajectories. In sharp contrast, informal mentoring was reported as highly effective in four out of five participant responses to Interview Questions 4 and 5. Participant 3 reported, "I was fortunate between O-1 and O-3 to see people that looked like me and who took an interest in me and who provided opportunities for me." Contrarily, two of the five participants indicated that informal mentorship was only received after reaching the rank of O-4. Participant 4 stated, "the first time I actually got any real career counseling for my map to O-6 (Colonel), was when I was a junior major." Participant 5 highlighted, "by the time I reached O-4, I had been an officer for approximately 10 years, and this was the first time that a senior leader took the time to have a formal mentorship session with me."

Participant responses to Interview Questions 4 and 5 not only aligned with the literature, but also indicated a detriment of not having mentorship available early on in their careers. Participant 1 noted that "there were some steps in my career that if someone would've guided me through, I think my career might have been a little bit more successful." Participant 4 noted that earlier career mentorship and guidance would have had more of an impact: "to get that counsel as a major when that part of my career was already over, don't want to say it's a bit 'too little too late,' but I wish I would've gotten that six to seven years ago."

Unexpected Findings

This section covers findings that the researcher did not anticipate but were observed through data analysis. The analysis of participant responses collected from 10 semi-structured interview questions resulted in two unexpected findings.

Unexpected Finding 1: Mentorship alone was not essential in decisions to serve after achieving the rank of O-4 for African American officers serving in the CA ARNG.

Previous literature on the impact of effective mentorship in the military identified strong positive correlations between effective mentoring and the decisions of those mentored to remain in service for longer periods of time. This attribution is not exclusive to the military but is seen in research for civilian organizations as well. Maxwell (1998) linked effective mentoring with increased reports of employees feeling empowered to accomplish goals and milestones within the organizational framework. This empowerment is reflected in employees' career longevity in their respective companies. Some literature also reflected a correlation between lack of effective mentorship and decreased rates of retention in the military.

Prevosto (2001) and Ryckman (2017) postulated that lack of effective mentorship among junior officers in the military causes a drop in the retention rates (not component-specific) over the course of four to seven years. A review of participant responses to Interview Questions 4, 5 and 7 did not identify concrete evidence positively correlating perceptions of mentorship experiences and the desire to continue service after achieving the rank of O-4. Participant 3 noted some instances of mentorship after reaching O-4 as a factor that fueled continued service but highlighted that the more influential factor was the 10+ years of service already accrued once the rank of major was reached. Participant 1 identified that once the rank of major was reached, the more influential factor for continued desire to serve was the lack of shared racial commonality within the peer group at that rank: "I looked around and did not see very many people who looked like me. There were only a few of us and we all knew each other." Participant 5 made the very clear statement that "mentorship…it was not key…it did not come into play in my decision to continue to serve."

Unexpected Finding 2: Racial considerations played an essential role in decisions to serve after achieving the rank of O-4 for African American officers serving in the CA ARNG.

Four out of five participants in this study identified that their experiences of mentorship (both as officers ranked O-1 to O-3 and after achieving the rank of O-4), included the realization that very few if any senior leaders "look like me." Previous literature on mentorship in the active-duty component of the military indicates that observed racial commonality plays an important role in an individual's ability to visualize their own potential (Zoroya, 2014). Disparities in representation of racial minority senior

officers, specifically in the ranks of lieutenant colonel, colonel, and general officers, versus their white, non-Hispanic counterparts was identified as an ongoing concern to U.S. Army leaders (Jelinek, 2011; Lim et al., 2009).

Participant 5 noted that lack of racial commonality with senior leaders drove perceptions of available mentorship opportunities: "if I had seen more senior African American leaders in the ranks, it would've given me more of an opportunity to possibly start a conversation." Participant 4 best summarized the importance of visualization as a junior officer:

> …to see somebody who looks like you, who understands where you come from, and you understand where they come from…. for them to have made it…. I think that is the implicit inspiration that is lost for our African American officers to be included in the density of African American officers of the more senior ranks.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Effective mentorship is essential for successful development of African American officers serving in the CA ARNG.

The literature on effective mentorship identifies a mentor as an individual with whom a relationship is built based on trust. This mentor often serves as a guide to the mentee and utilizes lived experiences and knowledge to provide insight on career and personal decisions (Crooks, 2013). Inzer and Crawford (2005) posited that individuals receiving formal mentoring through their organizations tend to experience higher rates of advancement opportunities compared with those who do not receive formal mentoring. Participants in this study identified that while formal mentorship was not an essential factor in decisions to continue on in service, informal mentorship across their career spans was a factor in their ability to be successful as officers. Participant 2 highlighted

informal mentorship as integral to achieving an initial commission entirely, as there were additional obstacles to overcome due to enrollment in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps as an international student. Several interview responses focused on the relationship development aspect of mentoring and indicated that achieving the rank of O-4 provided access to mentorship from the highest level of senior officers in the organization (i.e., flag officers or generals).

Conclusion 2: Advocacy is essential for successful development of African American officers serving in the CA ARNG.

The theme *the way forward* identified in this study introduced advocacy as an essential factor for success (and not mentorship alone) when looking at the development of African American officers in the CA ARNG. Analysis of multiple participant responses indicated that several of their experiences of mentorship would have been more effective if they had been accompanied by advocacy during the junior officer years. Participants 1, 3, and 5 clearly delineated between the mentorship received (when effective) and those actions where a mentor "went to bat" for them, often in a "behind closed doors" setting where decisions for promotions and advancements were made. This act of advocating for an individual was based in part on the relationships built through the mentorship process and often made the difference between being considered by military boards for opportunities and being overlooked entirely.

The influence of advocacy is critical when framed within the understanding of mentorship and its impact on career success and upward mobility (Sosik & Bouquillon, 2005). An unspoken understanding in many organizations is that "familiarity" is the doorway to opportunities. Participant 5 indicated that as a senior leader, it is through

building strong relationships between senior and junior officers that this familiarity is produced and opens the door for the mentor to connect that young officer with opportunities in those "behind closed door" settings.

Conclusion 3: Self-efficacy is essential for the long-term success of African American officers serving in the CA ARNG.

Albert Bandura (1997) utilized self-efficacy theory to posit that an individual's belief or confidence in their own abilities, coupled with positive outcome expectations, are core determinants to career success. Participant responses from interviews in this study clearly identified that many of the messages received as young officers (rank O-1 to O-3) regarding mentorship from senior officers included the requirement to "go and seek it." All participants noted that while senior leaders did not seek them out to provide mentorship, there was a required level of confidence in their abilities and skills to be successful prior to making O-4. Participant 2 specifically indicated that it was only after displaying a consistent three-year pattern of drive, fortitude, and determination that a senior leader took notice and began to actively set time to engage in building a mentoring relationship that later led to a rank promotion to O-5.

Conclusion 4: Resourcefulness is essential for the long-term success of African American officers serving in the CA ARNG.

Hu et al. (2008) identified that perceptions exist within the active-duty component of the U.S. Army that mentees prefer same-race/ethnic group mentoring relationships. As a result, military officers may believe there is a lack of mentors available to provide mentorship to African American Army officers . Previous literature indicates that African American Army officers who receive mentorship may not be receiving effective

mentorship due to the shortage of African American senior officers (Graves, 2016). As a reserve component of the U.S. Army, this presents as problematic for the CA ARNG.

With previous research identifying the lack of mentorship and ineffective mentorship as problematic for African American officers (Shane, 2007), those within the CA ARNG have no recourse but to utilize available mentors within the senior officer racial demographics (primarily Caucasian) for mentorship and career development expertise. All five participants in this study serve as examples to younger African American officers that achievement and success are possible within the CA ARNG. With a combined average of more than 20 years' experience at ranks higher than O-4, each of these officers has gleaned key skills and resources for successful advancement through the ranks, and each has also in turn mentored junior officers to "build the bench" for more officers of color to attain senior officer positions.

As an active-duty Army officer (Major), Dr. Hyo Jin Cho identified the necessity for minority officers to be resourceful in their approach to receiving mentorship, seeking to build relationships with individuals outside their own racial spectrums (2011). Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, Army Leadership, supports this with clear guidance for all individuals to "be active participants in their developmental process. They must not wait for a mentor to choose them but should take responsibility to be proactive in their own development" (Cho, 2013). African American officers within the CA ARNG are not exempt from this requirement and should be proactive in identifying potential mentors from the available pool of senior officers that align best with their individual goals for career progression and promotion.

Implications for Action

This section covers implications for action to improve the larger generalized population. These implications are derived logically from the conclusions identified within this study. While analyzing the study findings, the researcher identified two tangible actions that support the conclusions of this study.

Implication 1: Formal development and implementation of a mentoring program is essential to officer success.

This study highlighted participants' perceptions of mentorship in the CA ARNG. Participants unanimously indicated that the lack of an actual mentoring program resulted in them having to seek out mentorship on their own. Dreher and Ash (1990) and Scandura (1992) posited that organizations in which employees receive mentorship report higher levels of job and career satisfaction, career advancement opportunities, and increases in salaries. Effective mentorship that begins early in the careers of young African American officers may prove influential in reducing perceived barriers to promotion and advancements to positions of senior leadership. Successful development of the military officer needs to begin at the onset of that officer's career in the organization. While many leadership development courses focus on Army doctrine and understanding battlefield maneuvers, it is important to highlight the impact of establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships between junior and senior officers.

The experiential wisdom and operational knowledge that often accompanies a career of 15+ years of service (or as evidenced in this study, an average of 20 years) often gets minimized or overlooked by officers on both sides of the spectrum. It should be the organization's focus to "build the bench" of future leaders by connecting junior and senior officers through an official mentorship program that shapes pathways for

advancement and successful career outcomes. Utilization of this program may prove valuable in the leadership preparation and development of not only young African American officers, but other traditionally marginalized officer populations.

Implication 2: Communication of early onset cross-racial mentoring is important for both senior and junior officers.

"Racial-minority mentees should make more effort to garner mentors from other races" (Cho, 2011). While other literature corroborate Cho's (2011) assessment that racial-minority mentees should seek out cross-racial mentorship, this may inadvertently place the burden of ownership entirely on the minority mentee. This should not be the message that is communicated to either senior or junior officers in the military. Potential mentors and mentees should be equally responsible for developing these important relationships. Senior officers within the organization must be invested in and committed to taking the initiative to "reach down" and identify themselves as potential mentors to young officers to eradicate the notion that "it's all on me" as a young officer to find an appropriate candidate to provide mentorship throughout the initial years of commissioning.

Conversely, junior leaders have the responsibility to be open to, engaged in, and committed to being mentored by a senior officer regardless of the racial commonality shared between them. Moving out of comfort zones based on race or ethnicity is important for young officers to ensure they are prepared for advancement opportunities that may present themselves earlier in the career pathway. Inclusion of messaging that highlights shared responsibility may be most effective when combined with the military

education curriculums required for officer leadership and professional development courses.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study provided insight into how perceptions of mentorship played into the career longevity of African American officers serving in CA ARNG. The study sample of five participants was small and representative only of African American officers serving in the Army National Guard component of the organization and state in which the study was conducted. Continued research that is inclusive of other components and broadened to address additional populations of color with a larger, more diverse sample size may result in greater implications for the impact of mentorship on individual desires to remain in service after achieving the rank of O-4 (Major).

Recommendation 1: Additional research on the experiences of African American female officers

Literature that focuses on the lived experiences of African American female officers in the military is mainly limited to discussions of active-duty experiences and policy changes recommended from that research. It is recommended that future research places a focus on the experience of African American female officers and the impact of mentorship on perceptions of barriers that limit upward mobility (to positions of senior leadership) within the CA ARNG. African American women continue to remain underrepresented as senior leaders in the larger U.S. Army component (Rouse, 2019). As reserve components of this parent organization, it would follow that the disparity in representation is also prevalent within the Army Reserve and Army National Guard. With a growing number of African American women receiving commissions as officers into

the reserve components, additional studies that focus on the lived experiences of African American female officers in those components may yield insight into improving the mentorship process for female officers of color and "level the playing field" for potential advancements to senior officer ranks and leadership positions.

Recommendation 2: Replication study with other State National Guard organizations

It is recommended that a replication study be conducted to address similarly marginalized populations from additional state National Guard organizations. This may identify trends specific to not only geographic locations but may also provide contrasting data based on state-specific demographics (i.e., southern region states versus northern or western region states). The environmental circumstances may be a factor in these studies as the availability of more officers who identify as African American may be prevalent in other areas. Additionally, ideas of self-efficacy and opportunities for mentorship may be more readily available dependent upon the demographics of the state.

Recommendation 3: Additional study on impacts of mentorship in the California Air National Guard

This study represented a specific population with the California Army National Guard. As a reserve component of the U.S. Army, there is doctrine and guidance that dictates many boundaries for leaders to operate in regarding mentorship and leadership. The California Military Department also includes a reserve component of the U.S. Air Force (the California Air National Guard). As such, it is recommended that a phenomenological study be conducted to explore the perception of mentorship through the experiences of African American officers in the ranks of O-4 and above as it relates to their retention in the California Air National Guard. Strategies developed by this

component may yield additional resources to be shared with its Army counterpart and as such would provide a positive impact on the California Military Department.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

Based on the information drawn from the qualitative interviews and the literature, it can be concluded that African American officers serving in the CA ARNG benefit from the support that mentorship provides in navigating career pathways and leveling the field for promotions and advancements to positions of senior leadership. The findings from this research indicated that while mentorship may not play an essential role in desires to remain in service after achieving the rank of O-4, the benefits of having a mentor at earlier stages of participants' officer careers was undeniable.

This study highlights the influence of mentorship (when provided effectively) on opportunities for minority officers to promote at earlier ranks and be as competitive for promotion considerations as their counterparts (overwhelmingly, Caucasian males). This study also captured the individual voices and experiences of five African American officers (male and female) who successfully navigated the junior officer ranks and promoted into positions of senior leadership (at the O-5 level and above). These reported experiences provided clear descriptions of mentorship experiences and their influence (or in some cases, lack of influence), on their career longevity within the organization. With very little research highlighting the experiences of minority officers in the reserve components of the military, it is apparent that the impact of mentorship provided at early stages of a minority officer's career requires more attention.

As an African American male who has served in the military for 19 years—the last 13 years as a commissioned officer in the CA ARNG—this study brought to the

forefront many participant experiences that I also faced regarding mentorship and my desire to remain in service (having recently achieved the rank of Major). When I first received my commission as an officer, I was unsure what the transition from enlisted to officer entailed. My military experience up to that point included two combat deployments to Iraq and a plethora of experience as a first-line leader of 15-20 soldiers. My experiences as an enlisted soldier left me with positive and negative perceptions of officers that helped shape my own leadership philosophy and style. Unfortunately, mentorship was rarely discussed as a young lieutenant, with the exception of one individual telling me, "You need to go find a mentor and ask them to help guide you through your career." I embraced this counsel fully as I began to rise through the ranks. Instead of waiting for mentorship to find me, I actively sought out guidance and career development advice from multiple senior leaders during my first four years as an officer. While I do not fault any of the senior leaders within the organization for this, I strongly believe more opportunities may have been presented to me if the mentors I found had advocated for me early on in my career.

One initial factor for my interest in this topic was the perception that my racial identity did not position me to receive the same mentorship that I witnessed many of my Caucasian peers receiving early on. It is my interpretation that this disparity was not malicious or intentional on the part of senior officers but a result of a perpetuated culture that does not actively seek to break down barriers for officers of color within the organization. With the shift in societal norms and civilian organizations to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion, it is imperative that the CA ARNG prioritizes the development and implementation of a formal program to provide effective mentorship

and guidance to young officers (especially officers of color) and ensure equitable pathways to senior officer positions. I firmly posit that the experience of "none of the senior leaders look like me" will over time be reduced through this initiative and provide visual cues for future young African American officers to aspire to within the senior officer ranks.

This study enhances the literature by creating a voice for African American officers at all ranks in the military. It is my hope that findings and implications identified here will be of interest to the senior leaders of the California National Guard interested in investing their energies and efforts to remove barriers for officers of color and other marginalized populations within the organization. Additionally, understanding the positive impact that effective mentorship can have on career longevity, it is my desire that through this research, future generations of African American officers feel more supported and provided for in their career pathways with the organization. This increased feeling of support may result in higher rates of retention of African American officers after the rank of O-3 in the California Army National Guard.

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APPENDIX A

Invitation to Participate

DATE: XXXX

Dear XXXX,

My name is Larry Rankin, and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the School of Education at UMass Global University. This letter serves as an invitation for you to participate my dissertation research study.

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a phenomenological qualitative method study is to explore the perception of mentorship through the experiences of African American Officers (in the ranks of O-4 and above), as it relates to their retention in the California Army National Guard.

PROCEDURES: If you choose to participate in this study, you will be invited to participate in a one-on-one interview, lasting approximately 60 minutes, conducted either in person or through the Zoom platform. I will ask interview questions designed to allow you to share your experiences of mentorship throughout your military career. The interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: There are no major risks to your participation in this research study. The interview will be at a time and place, which is convenient for you.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: There are no major benefits to you for participating; nonetheless, a potential benefit may be that you will have an opportunity to identify strategies to inform best practice of inclusive leaders. The information for this study is intended to inform researchers and leaders in the military of the impact of mentorship on the career development of junior officers within the California Army National Guard.

ANONYMITY: If you agree to participate in the interview, you can be assured that it will be completely confidential. No names will be attached to any notes or records from the interview. All information will remain in locked files, accessible only to the researchers. No employer will have access to the interview information. You will be free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time. You are also encouraged to ask any questions that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. Feel free to contact the principal investigator, Larry Rankin by phone at 951-217-1498, to answer any questions or concerns you may have. If you have questions, comments, or concerns about the study or your rights as a participant, you may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMass Global University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, 949-341-7641.

Sincerely,

Larry Rankin
Doctoral Candidate, Ed.D.

APPENDIX B

UMass Global Bill of Rights

UMASS GLOBAL
A nonprofit affiliate of the University of Massachusetts

UMASS GLOBAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD Research

Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the UMASS GLOBAL Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The UMass Global Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

UMass Global IRB Adopted 2021

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM and AUDIO RECORDING

Responsible Investigator: Larry B. Rankin II

Purpose of Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Larry B. Rankin II, a doctoral student from the School of Education at UMass Global University (part of the Chapman University System). It is the purpose of this phenomenological qualitative method study to explore the perception of mentorship through the experiences of African American Officers (in the ranks of O-4 and above), as it relates to their retention in the California Army National Guard**.**

Participation in the Study: By participating in this study, I agree to participate in a one-on-one interview which will last approximately 60 minutes and will be audio recorded. I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.
b) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding the use of mentorship at early ranks in the California Army National Guard to improve upon rates of retention for African American officers past the rank of O-4 (Major). The findings will be available to me at the conclusion of the study and will provide new insights into best practices for developing junior officers at the onset of their careers. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.
c) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Larry B. Rankin II at lrankini@mail.umassglobal.edu or by phone at (951) 217-1498 or Dr. Carlos Guzman (Dissertation Chair) at cguzman@mail.umassglobal.edu.
d) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study, and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.
e) No information that identifies me will be released with my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed any my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the

Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMass Global University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the "Research Participants Bill of Rights." I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure set forth.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol and Script

Introduction Script

My name is Larry Rankin and I'm a doctoral candidate at UMass Global University in the Department of Organizational Leadership. I'm conducting research to explore the perception of mentorship through the experiences of African American Officers (in the ranks of O-4 and above), as it relates to their retention in the California Army National Guard.

I want to thank you for expressing your agreement to participate in this interview on mentorship. This interview is intended to explore clear information and provide depth to what was provided in the electronic survey.

As an officer in the CA ARNG, having achieved the rank of O-5 (Lieutenant Colonel) and higher, you are in a unique position to provide valuable feedback to the impact of mentorship on your career as a junior officer, and continuing into the senior officer ranks. I am conducting 5 interviews with officers like you. The information you give, along with the others, hopefully will provide insight into valuable strategies that the CA ARNG can implement into formalizing a mentorship program that develops African American officers in their junior ranks and sets them up for successful advancement to O-5 and higher in the organization. Additionally, as there is minimal research specific to the Army National Guard, this study will add to the current body of literature that targets the use of mentorship in developing successful leaders in the military.

During these interviews, I will be reading the questions verbatim from the script to ensure as much as possible, that all interviews with my study's participants are conducted in the same manner.

Informed Consent (Required for Dissertation Research)

I would like to remind you any information that is obtained in connection to this study will remain confidential. All of the data will be reported without reference to any individual(s) or any institution(s).

Did you receive and read the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via email and do you agree to participate in this research? I need to hear your affirmative answer, so it is recorded as confirmation of consent to participate. Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document?

We have scheduled an hour for the interview. At any point during the interview, you may ask that I skip a particular question or stop the interview altogether. For ease of our discussion and accuracy I will record our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent.

APPENDIX E

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 03-May-2020
Expiration Date N/A
Record ID 36507673

This is to certify that:

Larry Rankin

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME. Do not use for TransCelerate mutual recognition (see Completion Report).

Human Subjects Research (Curriculum Group)
Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Brandman University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w042d18d7-11bf-4c2e-840c-4991ae7e64b9-36507673

APPENDIX F

BUIRB Approval

Larry Rankin <lrankini@mail.umassglobal.edu>

IRB Application Approved: LARRY BERNARD RANKIN II

Institutional Review Board <my@umassglobal.edu> Mon, Apr 25, 2022 at 5:05 PM
Reply-To: webmaster@umassglobal.edu
To: lrankini@mail.umassglobal.edu
Cc: ddevore@umassglobal.edu, cguzman@umassglobal.edu, irb@umassglobal.edu

Dear LARRY BERNARD RANKIN II,

Congratulations! Your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the UMass Global Institutional Review Board. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If you need to modify your IRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at IRB.umassglobal.edu

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank You,

IRB
Academic Affairs
UMass Global
16355 Laguna Canyon Road
Irvine, CA 92618
irb@umassglobal.edu
www.umassglobal.edu

This email is an automated notification. If you have questions please email us at irb@umassglobal.edu.