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Organizational Conflict and Perceptions of Gender Equality in the United States Military

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Organizational Conflict and Perceptions of Gender Equality in the United States Military

by

April Coan

A Dissertation Presented to the
Halmos College of Arts and Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Nova Southeastern University
2020

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This dissertation was submitted by April Coan under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the Halmos College of Arts and Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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Dedication

To all who have served.

To all who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

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Abstract

Despite historical advancements toward gender equal policies, perceptions and attitudes regarding gender have the ability to impact the recruitment, retention, and promotion of gender minorities in the United States military. This quantitative study analyzed survey results from 493 military veterans regarding the perceptions and attitudes of gender equal statements, and sought to answer three research questions: 1) What factors predict perceptions and attitudes of gender equality in the United States military? 2) Do perceptions and attitudes of gender equality differ between different military branches? 3) Do demographic factors impact perceptions and attitudes of gender equality in the military? Chapter one of this dissertation introduces this study and its purpose, while chapter two discusses the historical background, literature review, and social theories that guided this study. Chapter three states the methodology of the study and outlines the design and limitations of this research. Chapter four presents the results of the study, which were obtained from descriptive statistics and analysis of a multiple regression, ANOVA, T-tests, and chi-squared tests. Results from the study concluded that gender, combat arms, generation, and military branch were significant variables in this research. Finally, chapter five summarizes findings, discusses follow up research, and acknowledges how this research and its results have contributed to the fields of conflict resolution and organizational behavior.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The feminist movement of the 20th century helped evolve gender roles and female participation in the United States labor force. Despite this progress, gender inequities persist in the forms of unequal pay and the lingering glass ceiling that has not been shattered in numerous industries throughout the United States. Although federal institutions, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, were created to protect U.S. citizens from many forms of discrimination, some of the same gender inequality concerns that affect women in the private sector are also experienced by women serving in the U.S. military.

Within the military, gender inequities can be seen in the sheer demographics of each military branch. According to a report by the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy (2017), women represented only 16.2% of military personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces in 2017, while the active duty female component of the military only comprised 15.94% (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 2017). The U.S. Air Force had the largest number of active duty enlisted women in its ranks, with 19.49% in 2017 [see Table 1]. In comparison, the U.S. Marine Corps fell far below Department of Defense (DoD) norms; in that recruitment and retention of active-duty enlisted personnel resulted in only 8.54% female representation in its ranks (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 2017). Furthermore, leadership in the military is male dominated. According to demographic statistics, women comprised only 5–9% of flag officers (i.e., the highest-ranking officers) in the U.S. Air Force, Army, and Navy in 2017. In the U.S. Marine Corps, female representation in the highest ranks were even more underwhelming, with women only accounting for 1% of flag officers (Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, 2017).

Table 1*Female Active Component Enlisted by Service (1970–2017)*

Year	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Total
1970	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%	1.4%	1.1%
1980	9.1%	6.5%	3.7%	11.3%	8.5%
1990	11.4%	9.8%	4.9%	14.0%	10.9%
2000	15.5%	13.6%	6.1%	19.3%	14.7%
2010	12.92%	15.96%	6.74%	19.34%	14.10%
2017	14.32%	19.4%	8.54%	19.49%	15.94%

Note. Data for Female Active Component Enlisted by Service (1970–2017) adapted from Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness (2017).

These demographics are indicative of the wide-ranging issues that affect gender and military membership. Despite the inequities that continue to affect gender in the military, progress in the last decade has taken the form of increased representation by military women in leadership roles, increased recruitment of women, more opportunities for women to serve in combat positions, and policy changes allowing transgender citizens to openly serve on active duty. With this in mind, this dissertation will take a deeper look into the wide-ranging attitudes towards and perceptions of policy changes within the U.S. military community to assess the most challenging factors obstructing gender-equal policy practices.

Conceptions of Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to the equal treatment of men and women in society with respect to equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities (UN Women, n.d.). In this context, gender does not refer to biological sex but is rather a social construct that refers to the social attributes associated with being male or female with respect to gender identity (e.g., male, female, or

neither). As such, the term *gender equality* can be used to mean universal equality regardless of gender, sex, or sexuality (Browne, 2018). It is important to note that gender equality does not just relate to the social inequalities associated with women but also the social inequalities that society enforces on men.

The concept of gender equality, which is widely recognized around the world, has been designated a fundamental human right (United Nations, n.d.). Although gender equality is often used to defend issues relating to cisgendered women, it is important to note that gender is a social construct that does not always fit neatly into a rigid binary notion of male and female. For some, gender can be fluid and transitional, which is the case for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals (Ghoshal & Knight, 2016). Therefore, when considering the definition of gender equality in this dissertation, the universal spectrum of all genders was considered.

Definitions of Perceptions and Attitudes

Although the words *perceptions* and *attitudes* are used interchangeably in daily conversation, there is a distinct difference between the meaning of each word. Perceptions are interpretations of external stimuli based on an individual's prior experience. When formulating perceptions, individuals interpret stimuli and organize them in ways that are meaningful to them to help develop assumptions and interpret situations (Dember et al., 2018).

In a social context, social perceptions are developed when individuals collect information about people, objects, or their surroundings using their senses or when they perceive or evaluate other groups based on past stimuli. In this way, individuals construct social perceptions by understanding the social world through various stimuli (Palmisano, 2001). To organize sensory data information about the social world, individuals also create structures of cognition known as schemas to categorize information. Schemas can be used to classify information about groups of

people, roles, events, and situations (Palmisano, 2001). Consequently, schemas can also develop into stereotypes based on perceptions of groups to which other individuals belong (Pickens, 2005).

Attitudes involve feelings and mindsets that direct an individual to act in a specific way (Pickens, 2005). Attitudes are most closely associated with evaluations of a person, object, or issue, and they can drive behavior. Simply put, attitudes are perceptions based on evaluations. The more positively a person evaluates something, the more positive that person's attitude will be towards that thing. In contrast, negative evaluations of something will likely cause negative attitudes (Bizer et al., 2005).

Furthermore, attitudes are often referred to when explaining someone's decisions, actions, or emotional reaction towards a person or object (Bizer et al., 2005). For example, phrases such as "my boss makes me angry" or "I don't like ice cream" reflect an individual's attitudes. Attitudes are also used to explain internal cognitions or beliefs. For example, the phrases "my boss should mind her own business" or "ice cream shouldn't be this expensive" reflect attitudes in the form of beliefs about an object or person (Pickens, 2005).

To measure attitudes, researchers have developed tools to analyze explicit and implicit measures. Explicit measures are direct statements that ask respondents to report their attitudes. An example of this measurement is the Likert Scale, which is used for survey responses. Implicit measurements are assessments that indirectly ask respondents to make inferences about their attitudes. An example of an implicit measurement is observational research of a participant's reactions to certain stimuli (Bizer et al., 2005).

Statement of Problem

Serving in the U.S. military is often viewed as an honor, but the honor and opportunity to serve has not always been equal for all genders. Although gender equality exists on paper under constitutional laws and international human rights charters, the institutional practice and adoption of full gender equality is far more complex. Despite recent policy changes towards gender equality in the military, research has revealed that negative perceptions and sexist attitudes still persist amongst military personnel and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) units (Do et al., 2013; Kurpius & Lucart, 2000; Matthews et al., 2009).

Statistics also show differences in the way each branch recruits, retains, and promotes female personnel (Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, 2013). Furthermore, research reveals that perceived gender differences, similar to the perceived gender differences that exist in the military, have been shown to exacerbate tensions by creating increased perceptions of emotional conflicts within intra-organizational groups (Hope Pelled, 1996). In addition to these tensions, politics has intensified the issue. As an example, gender tensions have been heightened through actions the Trump administration has taken to remove the rights of transgender military servicemembers to serve in the U.S. military (Levenson, 2018).

Research reveals that differences exist between the way in which groups evaluate each other in response to perceived differences and self-categorization (Hinojosa, 2010). Therefore, in an evolving military, it is important to examine gender equality with respect to all genders. Unfortunately, most research on the subject of gender equality and the military has solely examined how men perceive women, and very little research has examined the perceptions of how other groups, such as ciswomen or transgender military personnel, perceive themselves.

This research aims to fill this gap in knowledge and be inclusive of all genders by examining perceptions from minority gender populations in the military.

With current gender tensions and politics in mind, if gender equality is ever to be fully realized in the military, it must not only exist in policy but also in the hearts and minds of all individuals serving in the military. Since perceived gender differences are harmful to organizational cohesion, this research seeks to understand the problem by determining which variables affect perceptions of and attitudes towards gender equality in the U.S. Armed Forces. Furthermore, despite previous research conducted on organizational conflict and gender equality in the military, no research has identified differences in attitudes towards and perceptions of gender equality with regard to military branch. This research will bridge this gap by comparing survey responses from veterans in the U.S. Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between military branches. As a result, the following research questions guided this study:

RQ 1. What factors predict perceptions and attitudes of gender equality in the United States military?

RQ 2. Do perceptions and attitudes of gender equality differ between different military branches?

RQ 3. Do demographic factors impact perceptions and attitudes of gender equality in the military?

Since the nature of these research questions was to explain and predict phenomena through data collection, a quantitative study was selected as the best methodology for this research project. The data for variables collected in this study were age, generation, gender, ethnicity, education, military branch, combat arms specialty, the year participants joined the

military, years served in the military, and rank. Data for this quantitative study were collected using a survey instrument. A survey was determined to be the best data collection method for this research project since it would allow the researcher to capture large amounts representative data from many participants within a short period of time.

Purpose Statement

The U.S. military has experienced incredible change in gender diversity and inclusion initiatives within the last 50 years. In this organizational environment that involves constant change, it is important to understand the attitudes and perceptions that influence military personnel to ensure the success of gender-equality initiatives. Military organizational culture is not monolithic; therefore, not all military personnel view gender-equality initiatives in the same way. As a result, this research seeks to shed light on which variables influence views towards gender equality. Furthermore, 2018 marks the 100-year anniversary of women serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, making this research on gender and the U.S. military particularly timely.

With this in mind, the purpose of this research study is to explain which variables affect attitudes towards and perceptions of gender equality to determine the most challenging factors obstructing gender-equal policy practices within the military branches. A majority of the previous documented research on the subject, which will be discussed in the literature review section of this dissertation, has focused on the perceptions and attitudes of military men rather than the perceptions and attitudes of military women. Therefore, this research strives to fill this research gap by being more inclusive of attitudes and perceptions of women in the military. In addition, this research gathers information on perceptions of and attitudes towards transgender military servicemembers since there has been little documented research on this topic.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the background, problem, and purpose of this research study. In chapter two of this dissertation, the researcher will give a detailed historical background of the issues influencing gender equality in the military and discuss the three theories that guided the framework of this research study: liberal feminism, social identity theory, and gendered organizations. Chapter three will detail the methodology used to conduct this study as well as how data were collected, the steps taken to ensure data integrity, and which tests were used to analyze the data collected. Chapter four will offer research findings and data analysis results from both descriptive and inferential statistics. Lastly, chapter five will provide a summary of recommendations and conclusions and provide insight into the contributions of this research in the conflict resolution field.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this research study is to explore which variables affect attitudes towards and perceptions of gender equality in the military. In chapter one, the study's background, problem, and purpose for this research were introduced. In this section, the researcher will discuss the historical significance of this study, delving into United States military history with a focus on key milestones in gender diversity and inclusion initiatives. The researcher will also discuss academic literature regarding the topic and introduce the social theories that guided the framework of this study.

Historical Background

The United States military has historically limited women's participation in warfare. During the American Revolution and the U.S. Civil War, women served in the U.S. Armed Forces only through surreptitious means, by disguising themselves as men or boy soldiers (Righthand, 2011). One notable example of a female soldier serving in the American Revolution was Margaret Corbin, who was the first woman awarded a disability pension by the U.S. government. During the war, Margaret accompanied her husband, John Corbin, as a general helper until her husband was killed while defending his artillery position. After her husband fell in battle, Margaret took up his post and defended the post until she was shot in the arm (Penguin, 1998).

In the U.S. Civil War, women mostly served as nurses and spies (Tsui, 2006). However, the number of women who pushed through social and gender barriers to serve in the Civil War disguised as men is extraordinary. Although it is impossible to produce the exact number of women who served in the Civil War disguised as men, historians estimate that 250 women joined Confederate forces and up to 1000 women enlisted in the Union and Confederate armies

combined (Tsui, 2006). One noteworthy example was Frances Clayton, a woman who famously served in the Missouri military during the Civil War disguised as a man (Blanton, 1993). Clayton was said to have enlisted with her husband and fought alongside him until he was killed in 1862. After the death of her husband, her biological sex was discovered during the treatment of a bullet wound she received in battle (Tsui, 2006).

The status of females serving in the U.S. military did not change until 1918, when women were officially allowed to join the military as reservists. The female reservists who joined the military in 1918 served in a variety of administrative and clerical duties, and they were recruited for the sole purpose of releasing men to fight in the front lines during World War I (Holm, 1992). However, after World War II, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, which became public law in 1948, allowed women to join any military branch on active-duty status (Holm, 1992).

Although women could serve on active duty after 1948, their roles and opportunities were limited. At that time, women in the military were excluded from combat training, and they predominantly served in administrative and clerical positions. In addition, servicewomen were given rank limitations and were limited in their occupational roles; furthermore, they did not have access to the same legal protections and benefits as male servicemembers (Holm, 1992). In addition, President Harry S. Truman signed an executive order in 1951 that gave the Armed Forces permission to discharge any woman from service who became a parent either by birth or adoption ("Executive Order 10240," 1951). However, the same rule did not apply to male military servicemembers who became fathers. Due to this order, as many as 7,000 women were involuntary discharged without separation benefits ("H.R.5547," 2002).

By the 1960s and 1970s, women only accounted for 1.4% of U.S. military personnel. However, a major change in the military occurred in 1967, when Congress passed public law 90-130; 81 Stat. 374, which repealed the percentage limitations of women serving in the U.S. military (Kamarck, 2015). This repeal opened the door for female recruitment.

In 1972, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives passed the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Ginsburg, 2016). The passing of this amendment forced the Department of Defense (DoD) to scrutinize sex discrimination and gender inequality issues within the U.S. military. Although the Equal Rights Amendment ultimately was not ratified by all the states, the proposed amendment was useful in creating more awareness of gender-equality issues, and the federal government was pressured to take action against federal restrictions that actively discriminated against women (“Equal Rights Amendment,” 2016). As a result, the military gradually became a more supportive working environment for female servicemembers.

After the 1970s, weapons training for women became mandatory, and more opportunities and occupations were available for female servicemembers. Most importantly, restrictions on rank and promotions based on gender were repealed, and for the first time in U.S. history, women could advance to the ranks of general and admiral (Yoder, 2001). During this time, the U.S. military continued to evolve as it instituted more equal-opportunity work and training policies that benefitted women. For example, the policy to discharge women for parenthood was reversed, and by 1975, women could remain on active duty before and after pregnancy. Another important milestone in 1976 involved the military service academies opening admission to female students (Yoder, 2001). As a result of these changes to traditional military policies, the percentage of women in the U.S. Armed Forces increased from 1.1% in the 1970s to 8.5% by the 1980s (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness, 2017).

In the 1990s, gender equality continued to progress in the U.S. military. The massive deployment of women in Operation Desert Storm tested women's roles in combat zones in a way that had never been seen in the U.S. military before. During Desert Storm, over 40,000 women deployed to Iraq and its surrounding areas to support the war effort, a new record for servicewomen deployment at that time (Yoder, 2001). In addition to the groundbreaking number of women deployed, Operation Desert Storm also proved it was impossible to keep military servicewomen from harm's way, despite their non-combat designations. During the war, 16 women were killed, two women were taken prisoner, and one female pilot was captured and sexually assaulted by Iraqi soldiers (Kamarck, 2015). The massive deployment of women and the violence experienced by servicewomen during Desert Storm reinvigorated the discussion of women's roles in combat arms.

In 2015, a change to gender-equal policies in the U.S. military occurred once again when Defense Secretary Ashton Carter announced that all military occupations, including combat arms occupations, would be open to women by January 2016 (Pellerin, 2015). By 2016, the DoD again made an historical change when it allowed transgender individuals to serve openly in the U.S. military (U.S. Department of Defense, 2016b). Before this policy change, it was estimated that 150,000 transgender individuals had served in the U.S. military or were currently serving on active duty (Gates & Herman, 2014). Furthermore, according to a study conducted by the Rand Corporation, transgender or gender-nonconforming individuals comprised 1,320–6,630 of personnel on active duty, representing .1% or less of the military's active-duty component (Schaefer et al., 2016). However, after the election of Donald Trump in November 2016, the rights of transgender individuals to serve in the U.S. military were put in jeopardy as the

president and his administration sought to roll back policies regarding transgender individuals' ability to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.; Levenson, 2018).

Differences in Military Branches

Advances towards social equality have supported organizational changes within the U.S. military to be more inclusive of all gender identities. However, despite social and political pressure to improve gender integration and gender equality within the DoD, not all branches of the military have been equally receptive to gender-equal policies. For example, of all the military branches in the U.S. Armed Forces, the Marine Corps was the only branch to oppose the integration of women into combat arms. Marine Corps leadership argued that women in combat arms units were hazardous to Marine infantry unit cohesion. The Marine Corps supported its claim by conducting several studies on the issue that included data collected on female attrition rates and the combat effectiveness of gender-integrated units (Tilghman, 2015). These studies were later criticized for faulty methodology, and the Marine Corps Commandant's request for an exemption to gender-integration in the Marine Corps infantry was denied (Bowman & Wagner, 2015).

Furthermore, an examination of historical evidence reveals that each military branch has its own organizational culture, which may affect gender equality. This is most evident when examining differences between the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Marine Corps. The U.S. Marine Corps emphasizes history, tradition, and heritage. It also has a warrior reputation in which Marines see themselves as aggressive fighters skilled in close combat (Terriff, 2006). In contrast, the U.S. Air Force puts more emphasis on fighting with technology, such as aircrafts, missiles, and space systems, where servicemembers typically fight remotely. As a result, physical strength is secondary to technical acumen and expertise in the Air Force (Vermillion, 1996). In addition,

demographic data published by the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy in 2017 reveal that some military branches recruited and retained more female personnel than others. For example, the U.S. Air Force had the highest number of female servicemembers and women in flag officer positions (Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, 2017). Furthermore, the U.S. Air Force was the first military branch to introduce mixed-gender basic training units (Hillen, 1999). In contrast, the U.S. Marine Corps has the smallest percentage of women in its ranks and the fewest female flag officers (Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, 2017).

Consequences of Gender Bias and Sexism

In simplistic terms, sexism is a cultural assumption that one gender is superior and more deserving of power and preference over another. In patriarchal societies, sexism is often connected to presumptions of female inferiority and subordination (Bird, 1998). Consequently, several indications in U.S. military culture point to a strong preference for men over women (Goldstein, 2003). Evidence of gender bias in the military is apparent in the daily recruiting practices, advertisements, and slogans for each military branch, which have historically emphasized the contributions of men despite women participating in active duty in the U.S. military since 1948. For example, adages such as “every Marine a rifleman” (Brown, 2012, p. 105) and “a few good men” (Schogol, 2016, para. 16) allude to a tough fighting force of men, not women. Even government plaques for the Department of Veterans Affairs are emblazoned with an androcentric quote from Abraham Lincoln: “To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan” (Lawrence, 2020, para. 2). An unfortunate result of this institutionalized gender bias is the manifestation of sexist attitudes and perceptions against

women. Within organizations, these biases can take the form of benevolent sexism or hostile sexism.

Benevolent Sexism

Benevolent sexism exists in the form of oppressive attitudes that seek to limit women by referencing subjectively positive yet archaic stereotypes and gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Social constructions of feminine qualities, such as being nurturing or kind, are considered the opposites of masculine qualities (Goldstein, 2003). When considering benevolent sexist attitudes in the military, benevolent assumptions attributed to feminine qualities may also contribute to assumptions that women are not fit for the mental or physical distresses of combat.

Arguments based on benevolent sexist attitudes are prevalent in popular books on the subject of women and combat, such as Gutmann's *The Kinder, Gentler Military: How Political Correctness Affects Our Ability to Win Wars* (2000) and Maginnis' *Deadly Consequences: How Cowards Are Pushing Women Into Combat* (2013). Two popular threads of thought in these books are that women lack an innate warrior spirit needed for combat and that women do not have the physical capacity to endure long periods in battle. These arguments are not based on facts since women have a long history of serving in combat arms that predates the American Revolution (Holm, 1992; Goldstein, 2003).

Another common benevolent sexist argument is that women serving in combat will put men at risk because men will foolishly give up their lives to save their female comrades. As one Army colonel stated:

My concern with having both sexes in the same front line combat unit would be one of genetics. Throughout history men, especially American men, have been conditioned and trained to protect women. This will not be overcome easily and will result in men and

women possibly losing their lives in combat because some soldier ignored his primary duty. (Russell, 2016, para. 6)

This recurring argument about the primordial instincts of men to save women draws on stereotypes that are not linked to any factual basis. When held to scrutiny, the argument fails common logic because it is a double standard. For example, if a male soldier chose to sacrifice himself to save a male comrade, he would be considered a hero, but if he chose to sacrifice his life to save a female soldier, he would be considered foolish.

Hostile Sexism

Hostile sexism is defined as sexist antipathy that takes the form of negative evaluations of other genders (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The presence of hostile sexism in U.S. military units has been well-documented by the DoD and independent private researchers (Archer, 2013; Do et al., 2013; Kurpius & Lucart, 2000; Matthews et al., 2009; U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters, 2015). Since hostile sexism involves negative perceptions of and attitudes towards female servicemembers, hostile sexism even in its most benign form can affect the promotion of female military personnel and their ability to rise to the top of leadership positions.

Sexual Harassment

The effects of sexism and gender bias in the military can create other consequences, such as the prevalence of sexual harassment towards military women. Although sexual harassment is not as severe a charge as sexual assault, numerous studies have developed links between sexual harassment and sexual assault and concluded that an environment free of sexual harassment is important to preventing sexual assault (U. S. Department of Defense, 2015). Accordingly, a RAND study found that the total sexual harassment risk for military women and men was generally higher than sexual assault. However, the same study found that the U.S. Army and

Navy had very high correlations between sexual assault and harassment risks for the installations studied, while the U.S. Air Force and Marine Corps had comparatively lower correlations, although they were still high (Morrall et al., 2018).

Sexual Assault

Awareness of sexual assault in the military received public attention after the Tailhook Scandal in 1991, in which U.S. Navy and Marine Corps officers sexually harassed and assaulted several women during the Tailhook Association Convention in Las Vegas (“Tailhook scandal,” 2016). One of the victims, Lieutenant Paula Coughlin, reported the incident to her chain of command, but she was told the sexual harassment she experienced was a natural consequence of being near drunken male aviators. Charges were filed, and more victims came forward. After an investigation was conducted, disciplinary action was taken against 70 individuals, the careers of 14 admirals were ended, and for the first time, the U.S. military actively pursued the prevention and eradication of sexual harassment and violence within its ranks (“Tailhook scandal,” 2016).

Despite the DoD’s efforts to curb sexual harassment and sexual assault after the Tailhook Scandal, issues related to sexual violence continue to persist. Furthermore, data reveal that incidences of sexual assault differ in each branch of service. Based on data collected in anonymous surveys, it was estimated that up to 9.21% of female Marines experienced sexual assault in 2013 (Morrall et al., 2015b). Another study conducted by the RAND National Defense Research Institute in 2014 estimated that 7.86% of female Marines in the E1-E4 paygrade experienced sexual assault in the previous year, a higher percentage than any other branch. In contrast, the branch with the lowest estimates of sexual assault in the previous year was the U.S. Air Force, with an estimated percentage of 2.9% (Gore et al., 2015; Morrall et al., 2015a; Morrall et al., 2015b).

The issue of sexual violence in the military gained even more attention after the release of the documentary *The Invisible War*, which exposed incidences of rape and coverups of sexual violence in the U.S. Armed Forces (Dick, 2012). Following the release of the documentary, Congress conducted a hearing concerning sexual assault in the military. During a hearing at the U.S. Senate Subcommittee regarding sexual violence, Anu Bhagwati testified:

Military sexual violence is a personal issue for me. During my five years as a Marine officer, I experienced daily discrimination and sexual harassment. I was exposed to a culture rife with sexism, rape jokes, pornography, and widespread commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls in the United States and overseas...As a company commander at the School of Infantry, I ultimately chose to sacrifice my own career to file an equal opportunity investigation against an offending officer. I was given a gag order by my commanding officer, got a military protective order against the officer in question, lived in fear of retaliation and violence from both the offender and my own chain of command, and then watched in horror as the offender was not only promoted but also given command of my company. ("Testimony on Sexual Assaults," 2013, p. 8)

Despite numerous studies focusing on sexual assault and military women, it is important to note that sexual violence in the military is not solely a female issue; it affects all genders. Although female reports of sexual assault are higher, DoD reports showed that 893 men reported sexual assault in the military (McGraw, 2018). Furthermore, a RAND Military Workplace Study estimated that approximately 20,300 active-duty members of the military experienced sexual assault in the past year. Of that number, it was estimated that 6,902 victims (34%) were men (Gore et al., 2015).

To address sexual violence in the military, President Obama signed into law H.R.3304, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014. Among other national defense issues, the bill specifically addressed sexual assault in the military and included rights for all victims of all genders under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). The bill also required the mandatory dismissal or dishonorable discharge of a person found guilty under the UCMJ of attempted rape, sexual assault, or forcible sodomy (“H.R.3304,” 2013).

The Brass-Ceiling Effect

Another result of institutionalized sexism and gender bias is the glass ceiling effect. The term *glass ceiling* refers to obstacles or invisible barriers that block corporate women from top positions in the private sector. It is also often associated with gender inequality and the lack of economic opportunities afforded to women in the labor force (Chamberlain, 2004).

Coincidentally, the term *brass ceiling effect* has been coined to define the obstacles that exist to create a shortfall of female leadership in the highest ranks of the U.S. Armed Forces. The ban on women serving in combat arms was often blamed for contributing to the brass ceiling effect since it created an obstacle to female promotion in the military. As a result, female servicemembers sued former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and the Pentagon, echoing the sentiment that the ban on women serving in combat arms was a “brass ceiling hindering their advancement through the ranks” (Thompson, 2013, para. 13).

However, limiting women from combat arms is just one example of gender discrimination in a sea of plenty when considering U.S. military history. Likewise, the effects of these obstacle-inducing policies are evident in the pure demographics of female representation and leadership in each military branch. According to data collected by the Defense Manpower Data Center in 2013, female flag officers (ranks O7–O10), the highest-ranking officers in the

military, only accounted for 1% of Marine Corps leadership. In comparison, female flag officers accounted for 7–9% of the highest-ranking officers in the Army, Navy, and Air Force. These statistics also mirror data found in the enlisted ranks. In 2013, only 5.6% of the highest enlisted personnel (E7–E9) were women in the Marine Corps, while the Army, Navy and Air Force promoted 10.9%, 9.6%, and 17.8%, respectively, of its women to the highest enlisted ranks (Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, 2013).

Table 2

Male and Female Active-Duty Servicemembers by Branch and Pay Grade (2013)

Pay Grade	Army		Navy		Marine Corps		Air Force		Total DoD	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
E1–E4	199,144	32,899	101,831	28,585	108,324	9,085	96,813	21,601	506,112	92,170
E5–E6	123,920	16,579	90,840	15,601	39,919	2,926	87,510	21,389	342,189	56,495
E7–E9	50,358	6,203	26,315	2,805	13,541	815	28,341	6,121	118,555	15,944
W1–W5	14,244	1,490	1,511	93	1,933	116	N/A	N/A	17,688	1,699
O1–O3	40,725	10,004	24,943	6,089	11,734	984	28,463	8,371	105,865	25,448
O4–O6	24,471	4,707	18,198	2,791	6,114	274	23,365	4,294	75,148	12,066
O7–O10	303	23	214	22	82	1	278	27	877	73
Total	456,165	71,905	263,852	55,986	181,647	14,201	274,770	61,803	1,166,434	203,895
	528,070		319,838		195,848		326,573		1,370,329	

Note. Retrieved from *2013 Demographics: Profile of the military community* (Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, 2013).

Gender-Based Work Policies

When considering gender equality through a liberal feminist lens, it is important to note gender-based work policies. Gender-based work policies, such as policies associated with pregnancy, have largely been attributed to female needs. However, it is important to also discuss gender-based work policies that can lead to gender bias, such as maternity leave, which ignores

the needs of male parents. The history regarding gender-based work policies in the U.S. military will be discussed in the following subsections.

Pregnancy

Of all the gender-specific issues that have posed a challenge to the United States military, pregnancy has proven to be the most difficult. The U.S. All-Volunteer Force cannot be successful without its female servicemembers, which account for over 15% of the U.S. military. Consequently, pregnancy is a distinctly female issue that can affect the deployment flexibility of military units.

Initially, the military chose to minimize the impact of pregnancy by creating policies that would penalize women who became pregnant. One such policy was Executive Order 1024. This order, signed into law by President Harry Truman in 1951, made it legal for the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force to forcibly separate any women from service if she became a parent by birth or adoption (“Executive Order 10240,” 1951). Due to this order, as many as 7,000 women were involuntarily discharged without separation benefits (“H.R.5547,” 2002). Over time, however, the military changed its stance on pregnancy. Due to the needs of the all-volunteer force, women were eventually allowed to serve while pregnant (Yoder, 2001). However, pregnancy created another challenge for servicemembers - parenthood.

Parental Leave

Historically, women were assumed to be primarily responsible for the parental care of their children while in the military. When servicewomen were first given maternity leave, they were initially given six weeks—roughly one and a half months—of leave to spend time with their newborn children. Currently, all military branches allow up to 12 weeks of maternity leave or leave for primary caregivers (Ferdinando, 2016; Jordan, 2015).

Overall, maternity leave policies in the military are significant since 44.2% of women in the military have children (Clever & Segal, 2013). It is also estimated that between 15,000 and 16,000 births occur annually for active-duty women (Kamarck, 2016). As a result, maternity leave policies are an important factor when female servicemembers decide to pursue the challenging task of retaining their military careers while taking care of their families. In contrast, the paternity leave policy only permitted “10-days of non-chargeable leave of absence to be used in connection with the birth of the child” (Kamarck, 2016). An updated paternity leave policy in 2019 adopted the more gender-neutral term of *secondary caregiver leave* and allowed for 21 days of leave for members of the Army and Air Force. In contrast, the Marine Corps and Navy only provide 14 days of secondary caregiver leave (Kime, 2019).

Themes

A review of the literature shows six noteworthy themes on the topics of perceptions, attitudes, gender, and organizational conflict in the United States military: 1) military culture as a gendered organization, 2) gendered stereotypes affecting military personnel, 3) perceptions of gender in the military, 4) organizational culture and diversity affecting conflict, 5) masculinity and the military, and 6) transgender military personnel. A review of the literature in these categories will be described below.

Military Culture as a Gendered Organization

The idea of gendered organizations was brought forth by Acker (1990), who argued that organizational structures are not gender neutral and tend to favor men. Acker also proposed that positing work environments and organizational structures as gender-neutral was part of a larger system used to control marginalized groups in capitalist societies (1990). Scholars such as Britton (2000) and Sasson-Levy (2011) expanded upon Acker’s work on gendered organizations.

Britton argued that organizations are gendered to the extent to which they are dominated by male or female employees. In addition, occupations are gendered when they are historically, symbolically, and ideologically conceived as being masculine or feminine (Britton, 2000).

Sasson-Levy (2011) more directly discussed how the idea of gendered organizations affects the military. In an example used by the researcher, Sasson-Levy demonstrated how modern militaries, such as the Israel Defense Forces, remain gendered even though women are conscripted to serve in the military, similar to male conscripts. Sasson-Levy also discussed how gendered structures and policies, such as rank limitations and pregnancy waivers, affected the gendered culture of the military. In addition, Sasson-Levy argued that the deeply masculine culture of the military allowed men in the military to engage in chauvinistic behavior that would be frowned upon in non-military society. Other scholars, such as Arkin and Dobrofsky (1978), discussed how the values and norms of masculinity in military culture are structured by the military through the basic training experience. Arkin and Dobrofsky argued that the critical time in the military transition process (e.g., boot camp) played a significant role in developing attitudes towards masculinity.

Gendered Stereotypes Affecting Military Personnel

Another common theme in the literature is the preponderance of gendered stereotypes in the military. Several researchers discussed how perceived differences between the genders affected perceptions of women in national defense roles (Boldry et al., 2001; Boyce & Herd, 2003; Swers, 2007). The perceived differences were found to favor male leadership over female leadership. It was also found that gender stereotypes affected a large array of occupations and roles, including national defense organizations, Congressional leaders, and military cadets (Boldry et al., 2001; Swers, 2007).

Perceptions of Gender in the Military

Through quantitative research, several studies discovered that negative perceptions and sexist attitudes exist in ROTC units and military academies that train female cadets (Kurpius & Lucart, 2000; Matthews et al., 2009; Do et al., 2013). Other research revealed both positive and negative perceptions of gender-integrated units. For example, Gustavsen (2013) found that male respondents favored mixed-gender units and believed that more women present in military units created balance and encouraged men to work more cooperatively (Gustavsen, 2013).

However, most literature on gender in the military identifies negative perceptions of women in the military held by military men. For example, Boldry et al. (2001) investigated the perceptions of men and women towards gender and leadership in the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets. This study concluded that men, more than women, were perceived to possess more qualities necessary for leadership and military performance. Another qualitative study conducted by the DoD on Explosive Ordinance Disposal units found that male Marines experienced a lack of confidence in female Marines to perform their duties in combat billets (U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters, 2015).

Do (2005) researched cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy and found that male cadets with high levels of sexist beliefs did not believe in gender-equal opportunities for women in the military. Furthermore, in an independent qualitative study, Archer (2013) found that gendered stereotypes in the Marine Corps influenced the perceived abilities of female Marines and created a culture of double standards, which affected camaraderie, opportunities, and mentorship for women in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Organizational Culture and Diversity Affecting Conflict

A small volume of literature addressed how organizational culture and gender impacts intra-group conflicts. Chuang et al. (2004) proposed that organizational culture had a direct impact on intra-group conflict. They also posited that organizational culture moderated diversity and affected the way in which diverse groups function within an organization. Hope Pelled (1996) conducted field investigation research on perceptions of group conflict and found that gender dissimilarities increased the perception of emotional conflict and indirectly reduced perceived individual ratings of group productivity.

Masculinity and the Military

Numerous studies have been conducted on the male soldier's construction of masculinity in the military. A proposed hypothesis regarding masculinity in war culture is that war is a test of manhood and concepts of manhood and masculinity are attached to the warrior experience. As a result, masculinity is used as a societal tool to motivate young men to fight, therefore imposing on young men the burden of distressing experiences encountered in warfare (Goldstein, 2003). This hypothesis is supported by findings on recruiting practices in the U.S. military. Brown (2007) conducted content analysis research on the recruiting practices of the U.S. military from 1970 to 2007 and found that masculinity was the foundation of advertised appeal. Brown also discovered that each branch of the military constructed a different foundation of masculine ideals.

Furthermore, research shows that constructs of masculinity depend on contrasting definitions of femininity. In traditional views of masculinity, soldier's masculinities are reinforced by separating women from warfare roles. In this way, perceptions of home become feminized and perceptions of combat become masculinized (Goldstein, 2003). In congruence

with this concept, Barrett (1996) studied the U.S. Navy and found that male officers had contrasting definitions of femininity and that their definitions of masculinity were relationally constructed and dependent on the communities in which the officers served. For example, aviators in the study associated masculinity with autonomy and risk-taking, while surface warfare officers associated masculinity with themes of perseverance and endurance (Barrett, 1996). Another study that researched hegemony and concepts of masculinity in 43 young men from entry programs and ROTC units found that hierarchies of masculinity were created and that these hierarchies placed self-characteristics in positions of dominance while subordinating others that did not possess the same skills, rank, or characteristics. As a result, the young men interviewed situated and ranked themselves and their self-concept of masculinity at the top of their perceived masculinity ladders (Hinojosa, 2010).

Transgender Military Personnel

Transgender military experiences are a relatively new topic in social science research. Therefore, there is little research on gender equality and transgender experiences in the military. However, Parco et al. (2015) explored and documented transgender experiences in the military. This phenomenological study found that participants reported military experiences of strong gender binary differences and double standards based on gender. In a general study on heterosexual men and women measuring attitudes towards transgender people, Norton and Herek (2013) found that ratings of transgender people were strongly correlated with attitudes towards gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. The study also found that negative attitudes were most prevalent among heterosexual men and that negative attitudes were associated with other factors, such as binary conceptions of gender, political conservatism, and religious affiliation (Norton & Herek, 2013).

Ender et al. (2016) studied college students in U.S. military academies, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), and civilian undergraduate programs and found that military academy and ROTC cadets were least tolerant of transgender people in the military and in society. They also found that a research participant's background, such as their political ideology and religious affiliation, reduced the impact of the participant's military affiliation in the results of the study.

Theories

The research conducted for this dissertation was primarily influenced by three social theoretical lenses: 1) liberal feminism, 2) social identity theory, and 3) the theory of gendered organizations. The significance of how these theories influenced the analysis of this research project are detailed and described in the following sections.

Liberal Feminism

The struggle for gender equality is inherently motivated by feminism and the feminist movement. Feminism is a theoretical perspective focused on power relationships and inequalities between men and women. As a result, feminism views gender disparities as a social problem and tends to explore issues in society such as gender roles and gender stratification (Little, 2012). Although there are many theoretical branches of feminism, this research is strongly influenced by liberal feminism. Liberal feminism has strong ties to liberalism, which advocates for the respect of the individual and for the rights of that individual to be protected. Therefore, according to liberalism, individuals should enjoy a sphere of liberties with protected rights and entitlements by the state. As a result, strong links can be found between liberalism and government protections (Groenhout, 2002), and the ultimate goal of liberal feminists is to obtain gender equality and secure for women the same rights afforded to men (Goldstein, 2003).

Although there are many different forms of feminism, three general characteristics play a role in feminist theory. First, feminist theory acknowledges that individuals are treated differently in society based on their gender. Secondly, feminism views gender as a social construct that influences gender roles in society. Therefore, since gender is a social construct, the idea of binary gender roles are also constructions of society and are capable of change. Thirdly, feminist theory rejects the subordinate role often delineated to women based on cultural and social norms. Consequently, feminism recognizes that women are fully capable of being self-sufficient, independent human beings (Casad & Kasabian, 2009).

Modern feminism in Western civilization can be traced to the mid-14th century (Osborne, 2001). However, British feminist Mary Astell (1666–1731) is often recognized as one of the first liberal feminist activists. In her book *Reflections upon Marriage* (1706), Astell reflected on inequalities between men and women. During a time when women still did not have the right to vote, she also advocated for women to have the same equal educational rights as men in the early 18th century (Weedon, 2007). Famous feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor Mill, and John Stuart Mill followed her lead in advocating for gender equality and fought for women's suffrage and education equality. Whereas the first wave of feminists in the United States fought for women's right to vote, the second wave of feminists fought for women's liberation from the home and the right to work. Nowhere was this sentiment captured better than in Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique*, first published in 1963 (Friedan, 2010).

Twentieth-century feminists who organized in the 1950s and 1960s were active participants in women's liberation movements (Osborne, 2001) who fought for a range of feminist issues, such as reproductive rights, equal access to jobs, equal pay, and sexual harassment-free workplaces (McHugh, 2007; Osborne, 2001). The women's liberation

movement of the 1950s and 1960s was diverse, with many variations of feminist thought. Unlike radical feminists of the 1960s, who sought to end female oppression by dismantling the patriarchy, liberal feminists primarily focused on building change and equality through government and legal systems (Osborne, 2001). Liberal feminism at that time also stressed similarities between men and women and transcending notions of gender and sexual differences, concluding that both men and women are deserving of the same rights and opportunities (Groenhout, 2002).

There are many challenges to the tenets of liberal feminism, but the most dauntingly persistent one is likely the challenge by sociobiologists who assert that men and women are different. The differences argued by sociobiologists are mostly biological, rather than mental or emotional, and they emphasize the different roles men and women play in the reproductive process. In this area, it is difficult for liberal feminists to argue a counterpoint since pregnancy, giving birth, and breast-feeding are biologically innate female experiences and inherently different from any male experience (Groenhout, 2002). Sociobiologists also argue that cultural differences between men and women are simply social reflections of biological differences (Groenhout, 2002). In the context of the U.S. military and gender equality, the liberal feminist idea that women should be treated as equally as men (and vice versa) comes into question with regard to the female experience of giving birth and raising children. In recognizing sociobiological differences between men and women, the military has granted women maternal leave, but in recent years, gender-equality policies have put more pressure on organizational practices to treat men and women equally. As discussed in an earlier section in this chapter, parental leave for secondary caregivers is one result of these initiatives (Kime, 2019). Parental

leave is more in line with liberal feminist views, but even so, parental leave is not equal for both parents.

In the context of the U.S. military, proponents of liberal feminism seek to fully integrate women into society and all areas of public life. The influence of liberal feminism on the topic of perceptions of and attitudes towards gender equality in the military is significant, and the achievements of feminists in the last 200 years have indelibly changed the way in which female military servicemembers can serve their country. Although some might argue that we live in a post-feminist world in which military women have been given the opportunity to participate in all aspects of the military, including combat arms roles, perceptions of and attitudes towards these changes may paint a very different picture of how gender diversity and inclusion are incorporated in practice. Perceptions of female military servicemembers' work performance, competence, and overall contributions to a military organization affect their career mobility, promotions, and leadership opportunities. Furthermore, the idea of gender equality is deeply rooted in equal rights and is a conception attributed to all genders, including gender non-conforming and transgender persons. Therefore, the gender equality espoused by liberal feminism cannot be reached unless the contributions of all genders in the military are perceived as being equally valued to that of cisgendered military men.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory examines how group identity affects self-categorization, social comparison, and self-esteem. The theory posits that every person is motivated to maintain a positive image of themselves; therefore, individuals tend to think more highly of qualities or accomplishments that align with their personal identities. As a result, an in-group bias (i.e., the

tendency to favor the group to which an individual belongs over other groups) is formed (Ellemers, 2017).

This theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1978 to explain how perceived identity affiliations can affect favoritism towards in-groups versus out-groups (Ellemers, 2017; Tajfel, 1970; Vaughan, 2019). The theory maintains that individuals categorize themselves and other people based on many criteria linked to identity. As a result of self-categorization, in which individuals identify with one category and not the other, distinctions between in-groups and out-groups are formed (Ellemers, 2017).

Tajfel based his work on the importance of linking social identity theory to large-scale social structures and social movements towards political action (Vaughan, 2019). However, the most important aspect to this research on perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality in the military is the idea that social identity theory can explain intergroup discrimination. According to Tajfel (1970), “Intergroup discrimination is a feature of most modern societies” (para. 1) and “The attitudes of prejudice towards outgroups and the behavior of discrimination against outgroups clearly display a set of common characteristics” (para. 2).

Tajfel stated that intergroup discrimination can be demonstrated in attitudes and not just behavior. He also acknowledged that attitudes can be socially learned through a tendency to conform to the group (Tajfel, 1970). As a result, social identity theory is useful when explaining intergroup conflict (Ellemers, 2017). It is also a suitable theory to explain in-group favoritism and how individuals are inclined to think more highly of the groups with which they feel they identify while thinking less favorably of other groups with which they do not identify.

According to numerous studies conducted by Tajfel, perceptions of belonging in two distinct social categorizations (such as Protestant and Catholic or Democrat and Republican) can

trigger intergroup discrimination (Tajfel et al., 1979). Consequently, intergroup discrimination can occur within intergroup relations between in-groups and out-groups. Tajfel (1970) defined out-groups as the group perceived to be different from the in-group.

When examining the organizational structure of the U.S. military, it is important to identify the in-group and out-group under Tajfel's social identity theory. Based on historical background and traditional norms, the U.S. military is a male-dominated organization, and active-duty participation by women in the U.S. Armed Forces only account for 15% of military demographics. Due to this imbalance, in-groups and out-groups in the U.S. military can be determined by gender lines, where the in-group consists of cisgender male servicemembers. As a result, those designated with an out-group status may suffer from in-group discrimination created by perceived negative attitudes and perceptions toward the out-group gender identity.

Furthermore, social identity theory plays an even greater role in explaining perceptions of and attitudes towards gender identity in the military. Social identity theory maintains that individuals are likely to think more highly of those who have the same traits or qualities and think less of people who do not. In a military with an infrastructure composed of 85% men and 15% women (Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, 2013) and less than .1% transgender or gender non-conforming individuals (Schaefer et al, 2016), the perceptions and attitudes of the majority can have a powerful influence on the careers and opportunities of the minority.

In the context of organizational perceptions, social identity is not limited to demographic characteristics. It can also be linked to identities formed around organizations, work groups, departments, or cohorts, and it may have many positive social benefits. For example, the military has a strong network of individuals who identify as veterans due to their experience serving in

the military. Military veterans may also have strong personal identities connected to their branch of military service. However, even within these broad identities, in-groups and out-groups can be formed.

As discussed in a previous section in this chapter, a bias towards men is well-documented in military recruiting, especially in recruiting advertisements (Goldstein, 2003). Furthermore, the military has historically emphasized the notion of a brotherhood with military aphorisms such as “every Marine a rifleman” (Brown, 2012, p. 105) and “a few good men” (Schogol, 2016, para. 16). These aphorisms still exist even though women have served in the military since 1948 (Goldstein, 2003). Another example of gender bias towards gender out-groups in the military can be heard in military language. For example, even though all Marines are referred to as Marines, when women first joined the Marine Corps, gender distinctions existed. Marines who were female were often called “women Marines” or the more pejorative acronym BAMs, which in military slang stood for “Broad-Ass Marines” or “Broad-Axle Marines” (“Army & Navy – Marines: BAMs,” 1943; Zinko and Poblette, 2003). These are a few examples of how in-group and out-groups have been established along gender lines within the U.S. military. These historical practices have not only reinforced the otherness of minority genders in the U.S. military but also perpetuated an in-group bias within the organizational structures of each military branch.

Theory of Gendered Organizations

Acker’s (1990) theory of gendered organizations disputes the notion of gender-neutral organizational structures and meritocracies, such as the U.S. military. According to Acker, gendering of organizations occurs in five interacting processes. The first process involves constructing divisions along gender lines. For much of U.S. military history, the division of labor

across gender lines was strictly enforced. Women were historically limited to working in supporting and administrative staffing roles and were prohibited from serving in combat arms occupations (Holm, 1992).

A second process discussed in Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations is the construction of symbols and images that reinforce gendered division of labor. In the military, this is most evident in recruiting advertisements. Until recently, most recruiting videos featured men in combat and devoted very little attention to women (Holm, 1992). These recruiting advertisements appear to reinforce the idea that men fight in combat and women only play supporting roles in combat situations.

The third process that reinforces gendered structures involves organizational interactions between men and women that create patterns of dominance and submission (Acker, 1990). Evidence of this process exists in the historical background of military organizational structure. For decades, women were limited by quotas and job limitations, which affected their rank and status in each military branch, relegating them to roles of lesser power and influence (Holm, 1992).

The fourth process in Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations is the gendered component of identity. Evidence of this process exists in several examples in military culture. One example is the style of dress worn by men and women, which adds a structurally gendered component to military uniforms. When women first joined the Air Force, they were required to wear men's uniforms but with neckties. The female uniform was later changed to resemble flight attendant uniforms (Lockwood, 2014). Another example involves labeling women to distinguish them from men. For example, women in the Marine Corps were once called *Marinettes*, which separated them from the gender-neutral term of *Marine* (Simkins, 2018).

The final process that Acker (1990) defines is the presence of gendered substructures in daily work activities. The application of this process can best be observed through the annual physical fitness test taken by military servicemembers. These mandatory physical exams use different fitness standards based on gender. For example, in the Marine Corps, there is a two-tiered physical fitness requirement that is different for men and women (Schogol, 2017).

Theories Summary

When applied to the military, the three theories discussed in this section point to an organizational structure divided on gender lines. Through the lens of liberal feminism, gender equality in the military is an aspirational goal to be obtained for all genders. Currently, full gender equality is not realized, while transgender individual rights are threatened and opportunities for female personnel are stymied by negative perceptions. In addition, social identity theory examines the relationships between in-groups and out-groups within an organization. Therefore, the theory is useful in explaining the negative evaluations encountered by military women from military men. It can also be useful in explaining any other prejudices encountered by other out-groups in the military, such as transgender military personnel. Finally, through Acker's work, the extent of gender divisions within the military are apparent. It is evident that the military is not a gender-neutral meritocracy, as the military claims, but an organization affected by gender division and propelled by gendered processes. As a result, by utilizing the three theoretical lenses discussed in this section, a research design was developed to further analyze the research problem.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher provided an historical background regarding gender and the military. They also described a review of literature on gender and the military and summarized

similar studies that influenced this research. Lastly, the researcher summarized three social theories that provided contextual lenses through which to view the research problem. Drawing on the information gathered in chapter two of this dissertation, the researcher will utilize this information to formulate an effective research design and methodology to help answer the three research questions that guided this study. Details of this research methodology will be discussed in chapter three of this dissertation.

Chapter 3: Research Method

To determine the most challenging factors obstructing gender-equal policy practices within military branches, the researcher wished to explain which variables affect perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality in military veterans. In addition, the researcher hoped the results obtained from this research project would have the potential to benefit decisionmakers within the United States Department of Defense as they improve diversity and inclusion policies and training efforts within their organizations. To ascertain which variables affected attitudes towards and perceptions of gender-equal policies in the U.S. military, a quantitative research approach was used in this study. In addition, one of the main goals in this research was to identify if organizational culture (i.e., military branches) was a significant variable affecting perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality.

A literature review on the topic (discussed in chapter 2) revealed that previous research examined perceptions and attitudes toward women by military units, but none compared gender-equality results between U.S. military branches. This research aimed to fill this gap in knowledge. For this research study, data were collected from participants in the U.S. Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy. However, data collected from the U.S. Coast Guard were excluded from data analysis since the researcher received very few responses from Coast Guard veterans. More details regarding low response rates from Coast Guard veterans will be discussed in chapter four of this dissertation.

Overview of Research Study

A survey of participants' perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality was conducted in the fall of 2019. The purpose of this survey was to determine which variables predicted attitudes towards and perceptions of gender equality from military veterans. This research also

aimed to determine if organizational culture was a significant variable affecting perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality. The researcher tested this variable by comparing responses from veterans of different branches in the U.S. military. As a result, the following research questions provided the framework for this study:

RQ 1. What factors predict perceptions and attitudes of gender equality in the United States military?

RQ 2. Do perceptions and attitudes of gender equality differ between different military branches?

RQ 3. Do demographic factors impact perceptions and attitudes of gender equality in the military?

In this chapter, an explanation of the research design and survey instrument design will be discussed in detail. In addition, this chapter will explain how the researcher approached instrument validity, reliability, sampling, participant selection criteria, recruitment, and research limitations. Lastly, the steps taken to collect and analyze the data will be discussed. The results of this survey research will be reviewed in chapter four of this dissertation.

Research Design

Since individuals' perceptions and attitudes are shaped by their backgrounds, experiences, and social spaces, the researcher determined that quantitative survey research would be the best method to approach the design of this research project. Quantitative surveys are not only ideal for asking questions about attitudes and opinions but also for quantitative approaches since they allow researchers to capture large representative data from many participants within a short timeframe. Survey research also had the added benefit of providing standardized questions

to survey participants, which would reinforce the standardized procedure of data collection for this research project (Nardi, 2006).

Survey research would also allow the researcher to quickly collect data in two different categories: demographic data and survey answer data. The answers to these survey categories would be instrumental in assessing the relationship between demographics and perceptions and attitudes toward gender-equality statements in the survey. Furthermore, to determine which independent variables affected perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality, four tests were used in this study: multiple regression, T-tests, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and chi-square tests.

A multiple regression test was used to determine which independent variables were predictors of gender equality perceptions and attitudes. The independent variables in the multiple regression were demographic data obtained from participants. The dependent variable in the multiple regression was the Gender Equality Score (GES), which was the average to the total responses obtained from answers to the survey questions. To calculate the GES, the researcher totaled the survey responses for each participant, then calculated the response mean. As an example, if a participant responded with the following Likert scale ratings to the ten survey questions – 5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 2, 3 – the total would be 40. Therefore, the Gender Equality Score for that participant would be 4, which is the average of the answers to the ten survey questions (i.e. 40 divided by 10 equals 4).

To determine if organizational culture was a significant variable, an ANOVA test was conducted using military branch for the independent variable and the Gender Equality Score (GES) as the dependent variable. Additionally, ANOVA tests were used to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the way three or more groups responded to the survey.

Similarly, T-tests were used to compare survey responses for variables that had two different groups. Lastly, chi-square tests were used to determine the relationship between independent variables and responses to specific questions in the survey.

Research Participants

This section describes the population targeted for this study and the recruitment technique used to administer the quantitative survey. The survey administered in this study was designed to capture perceptions of and attitudes towards gender equality by targeting military veterans who served in the U.S. Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy. Specifically, the participant criteria for this research included the following:

1. Participants identified themselves as a veteran of the U.S. military; and
2. Participants served at least one year on active duty in the U.S. military.

Since this research sought to explore which variables affected perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality, the above participant criteria were selected to give the researcher a more diverse range of data. Furthermore, since a majority of research in the literature review assessed only male attitudes and perceptions of gender equality, this research purposely strived to include women's perceptions and attitudes to test the assumptions of social identity theory.

Recruitment

To locate a sufficient number of participants for this survey research, recruitment was conducted through two methods:

1. Social media solicitation: In this method, a link to the research study was provided through various social media platforms to gain volunteer research participants.

2. Outreach to veterans' organizations: In this method, an email was sent to veterans' organizations asking organizational leaders to distribute the survey link within their organizations.

Participants willing to complete the survey by either method could click the survey link, which led them to the survey in Google Forms. Within Google Forms, participants were required to complete a consent statement and then encouraged to complete the survey. If the consent statement was not signed, the participant could not complete the Google Forms survey. Once the survey was completed, the Google Forms online platform collected survey data and presented the data in a report, which the researcher then extracted into an Excel spreadsheet.

Sampling

Non-probability sampling was conducted for this research based on defined criteria of the target population. Unlike probability sampling, which involves the random selection of participants, non-probability sampling selects a portion of the population being studied (SurveyMonkey, n.d.). In this case, the portion of the population selected occurred through convenience sampling methods. Convenience sampling is often used when the target population meets practical criteria of the study, when they are easily accessible, and when they are willing to participate (Etikan et al., 2016). In this case, a large portion of the target population met the participant criteria, and they were easily accessible through social media and helpful in their willingness to contribute to this research study.

The sample size for this research was calculated using a sample-size calculator and target population numbers reported by the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics of living veterans by branch of service. According to veteran data population tables published on the organization's website, there were 19,631,359 active-duty veterans from the Air Force,

Army, Marine Corps, and Navy in 2015 (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2010). Unfortunately, no data were provided for veterans in the U.S. Coast Guard. Using the information provided by the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, a sample size of 385 survey participants was reached, with a confidence interval of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. Ultimately, 493 participants volunteered to take the survey and participate in this research.

Survey Instrument Design

Independent variables for the survey instrument used in this study were collected from demographic questions in the survey instrument. Demographic questions included information regarding the following specific areas: age, gender, ethnicity, education, military branch, combat arms specialty, year in which the participant joined the military, how many years the participant served, and the highest rank/paygrade achieved. Demographic information was added into SPSS under the appropriate variable type and label. In addition, the researcher determined the participants' generations based on responses to age demographic data (see Table 3).

Table 3

SPSS Data

Variable	Type	Label
Age	Scale	age
Generation	Nominal	generation
Gender	Nominal	gender
Ethnicity	Nominal	ethnicity
Education	Ordinal	education
Military Branch	Nominal	branch
Combat Arms	Nominal	combat
Year Joined Military	Scale	joined
How Many Years Served	Scale	served
Rank	Ordinal	rank

The survey instrument used in this study tested perceptions of and attitudes towards gender-equal statements. A survey was designed for this study by modifying previous surveys used to conduct similar research. Specifically, the design of this instrument drew from the following survey instruments: *Understanding Attitudes of Gender and Training at the U.S. Air Force Academy* (Do et al., 2013), *Attitudes Toward Gender Balance Measure* (Goldscheider et al., 2014), and the *Attitudes Towards Transgender Individuals* (ATTI) scale (Walch et al., 2012). Changes made to the questions from the above surveys included adding items to collect demographic information, adding questions relevant to current gender-equality issues, and removing non-applicable questions. All surveys modified for this study were survey instruments which the designers granted permission for use in non-commercial research and educational purposes. All survey instruments were obtained from the ProQuest PSYC TESTS database.

A copy of the survey instrument developed for this research can be found in Appendix A of this dissertation. The survey was designed to state ten close-ended gender-equality statements followed by one open-ended question in which participants were encouraged to add any information they thought was pertinent to their survey responses. Answers to the survey questions were recorded using a five-point Likert Scale to measure the intensity of agreement or disagreement to the survey statements (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Answers to the survey were recorded and analyzed using SPSS statistical software.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Testing the validity of survey instruments is useful to determine if the survey instrument measures what it is designed to measure. In other words, a validity test determines whether the survey instrument is the correct tool for the assessment. Testing survey instrument reliability is also important to determine if the results of the survey instrument are consistent. In other words,

reliability tests measure whether survey results will be different each time the survey is conducted (Nardi, 2006).

A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability and validity of the adapted survey instrument. For the purposes of the pilot study, the researcher collected responses from 84 volunteers ($N = 84$). From these 84 responses, the researcher determined the reliability and validity of the survey instrument by conducting factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha tests. Factor analysis was used to test the survey instrument's validity, and the Cronbach's alpha test was used to determine the survey instrument's internal reliability.

Based on the results of these tests, the researcher removed five gender-equality statements from the survey instrument because they failed to meet validity and reliability standards. After the pilot study was conducted and the survey instrument improved, the researcher moved to the second phase of the research study, which included a much larger sample from the population discussed in the sampling section of this chapter.

Data Analysis

Following the collection of data from the survey instrument, the researcher planned to analyze the data with both descriptive and inferential statistics. In the case of inferential statistics, data from the survey results were analyzed using multiple regression, ANOVA, T-tests, and chi-square tests. Details regarding how these tests were used to analyze the data will be discussed in the following subsections.

Multiple Regression

Multiple regression was chosen for data analysis because it allowed the researcher to test the strength of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables and make predictions based on their statistical significance. Multiple linear regression was also helpful in

predictive modeling because it allowed the researcher to test the strength of two or more independent variables at the same time (Urdan, 2011). In this study, the independent variables tested for statistical significance in the multiple regression were the answers to the demographic portion of the survey. The dependent variable in this research study was the Gender Equality Score (GES), a continuous variable. The GES was calculated by adding the Likert-score answers from the survey for each research participant and then dividing the score by the number of questions in the survey.

To determine if the multiple regression analysis was effective and accurate, several assumptions needed to be met: a linear relationship, multicollinearity, multivariate normality, and homoscedasticity. The researcher reviewed results for a linear relationship, multivariate normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity by examining scatterplots, normal p-plots, Durbin-Watson tests, and coefficient tables from SPSS output generated from the regression model. Results from these assumptions based on the regression model output will be discussed in chapter four of this dissertation.

ANOVA

An ANOVA test was conducted to test whether there was a significant difference between responses from research participants from different military branches. A one-way ANOVA can be conducted when there is one categorical (nominal) variable that has two or more groups. In addition, several assumptions must be met for an ANOVA test to be conducted with accuracy. These assumptions are 1) a homogeneity of variance, 2) a normal distribution of the population, and 3) an independence of cases. To clarify, independence of cases can be assumed when there is no indication that one individual in the study is influencing another individual's behavior (Field, 2013; Lane et al., 2017).

Homogeneity of variance is an assumption that the variances between the variables are stable or equal (Field, 2013). For homogeneity of variance to be determined, the researcher conducted a Levene's test. To determine normality, the researcher conducted tests for normality in SPSS, including the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests (Lane et al., 2017). The assumption of independence was met through proper research design in the data collection process.

A one-way ANOVA was chosen for this portion of the data analysis since it allowed the researcher to compare the means of various groups in the study to see if the group means were statistically significant from one another (Urdu, 2011). For example, the four groups compared for the military branch variable were the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy. In this case, the groups were determined using the information gathered from the "military branch" question in the demographic portion of the survey, while the continuous dependent variable was the Gender Equality Score. ANOVA was also used to test other categorical variables such as generation, ethnicity, education, and rank.

Independent Samples T-Test

T-tests are useful to calculate and compare statistically significant differences between the means of two variables (Nardi, 2006). Therefore, if the means of two independent groups are being compared, such as male group responses and female group responses, an independent samples T-test is the most appropriate statistical test for those two variables. For a T-test to be accurate, four assumptions must be met. These assumptions are a normal distribution, homogeneity of variance, one continuous variable, and an independent categorical variable with two groups (Field, 2013; Laerd Statistics, 2018b). As explained in the ANOVA section of this chapter, assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were met. Additionally, in this

study the T- test was used to test bivariate variables such as gender (male/female) and combat arms (yes/no) against a continuous variable, the Gender Equality Score. Therefore, all assumptions for the T-Test were met.

Chi-Square

A chi-square test should be used when variables are nominal or ordinal, the sample size of the groups being tested are unequal, or the assumptions of parametric tests have been violated. However, for a chi-square test to be used effectively, the following assumptions should also be met: 1) data should be frequencies or counts of cases not percentages, 2) categories of data should be mutually exclusive, 3) each subject may contribute data to only one cell, 4) groups must be independent, 5) there are two or more separate variable categories, and 6) the expected count for the cells should be five or more (McHugh, 2013). For this research study, all assumptions of the chi-square test were met, and each nominal and ordinal variable collected from the survey instrument (generation, gender, ethnicity, education, military branch, combat arms specialty, and rank) were tested using the chi-square test of independence.

In contrast to the multiple regression and ANOVA which analyzed responses to the overall survey score (the dependent variable), chi-square tests were used in this study to compare group responses to individual survey questions. Using chi-square results for individual questions allowed the researcher the opportunity to analyze the data from a microscopic lens and take a deeper look into how groups responded differently in the Likert scale to each of the survey questions. For example, if chi-square results to question one were statistically significant with respect to gender, the researcher could compare how men responded to the gender equality statement differently from women. Overall, the ANOVA, T-tests, and multiple regression were helpful to inform the researcher as to what variables affected perceptions and attitudes of gender

equality, but chi-square tests to individual survey questions gave the researcher the opportunity to reveal how variables affected perceptions and attitudes of gender equality statements.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher provided details regarding the research design of this research project. Specifically, the three research questions that guided this study were introduced, and plans were outlined to address research participant criteria, recruitment, sampling, survey instrument design, pilot testing, and proposed data analysis tests. Using the research design described in this methodology section, the researcher successfully collected data for this dissertation project. Results from the collected data of this research project will be explained in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

The purpose of this research study was to explain which variables affected perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality in military veterans in order to determine the most challenging factors obstructing gender-equal policy practices within military organizations. In the previous chapter, a research design for this project was fully outlined to provide a successful strategy for data collection and analysis. In this chapter, results from descriptive statistics as well as multiple regression, ANOVA, T-tests, and chi-square results will be presented.

Based on data results from 493 ($N = 493$) research participants, the researcher gained a greater understanding of which variables affect attitudes toward and perceptions of gender equality in the U.S. military. In the following sections, descriptive statistics will be presented to provide a general overview of the demographic data collected from the sample of research participants. Descriptive statistics of the data will then be followed by inferential statistical results from the multiple regression, ANOVA, T-tests, and chi-square tests.

Demographic Data

In this section, the researcher will discuss descriptive statistics analyzed from the demographic data collected from 493 ($N = 493$) survey participants in this research. Descriptive statistics will be divided into two sections: a sample overview of the demographic portion of the survey and a summary of responses to the ten survey questions.

Sample Overview

The target sample size for this research was 400 participants. However, the researcher exceeded this number and collected 493 ($N = 493$) responses from survey participants. It is important to note that not all of the 493 research participants responded to every question in the demographic portion of the survey. As a result, the sections presented in the following

descriptive portion of this data analysis will include the number of total responses received for that section.

Age

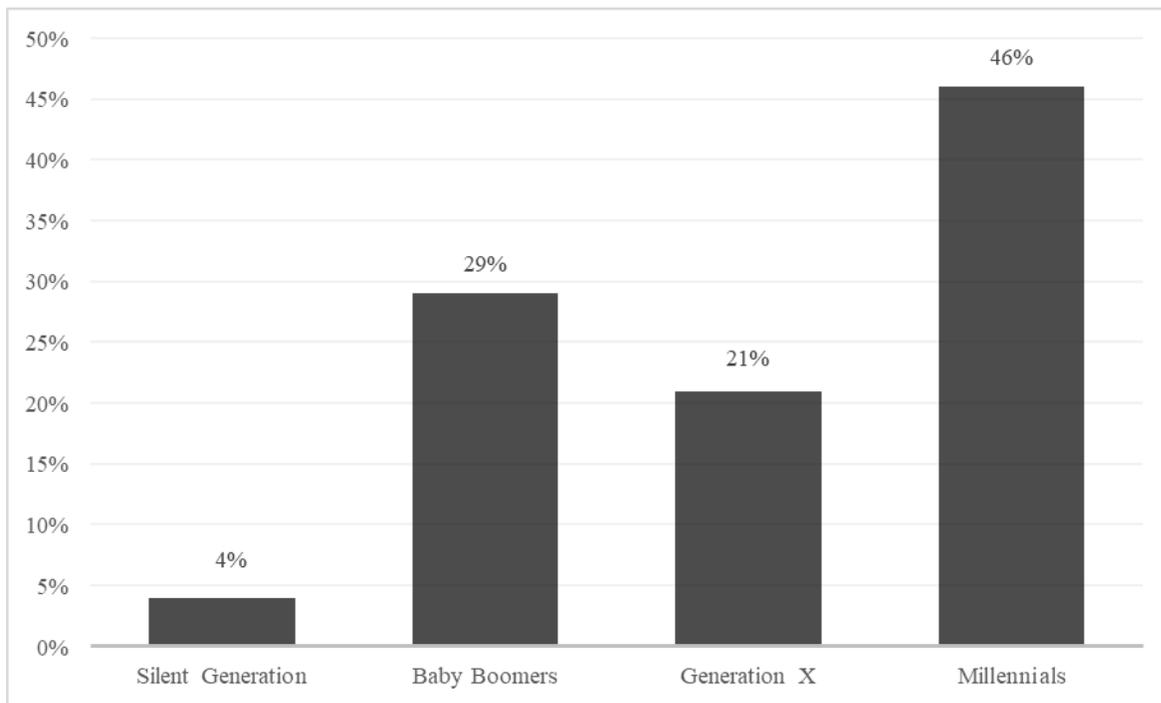
Of the participants, 473 ($n = 473$, $SD = 15.942$) responded to the age question (“What is your age?”) in the demographic portion of the survey. Descriptive statistics revealed that the average age of survey participants was 45.71 years old.

Generation

The generation variable was determined from the response to the age question in the survey. Of the 473 research participants ($n = 473$, $SD = .942$) who responded to the age question in the demographic portion of the survey, 4% were from the Silent Generation, 29% were Baby Boomers, 21% were Generation X, and 46% were Millennials [see Figure 1].

Figure 1

Percentage of Responses by Generation



Gender

Of the participants, 491 ($n = 491$, $SD = 1.001$) responded to the gender question (“To which gender identity do you most identify?”) in the demographic portion of the survey. Descriptive statistics revealed that 49.5% of the respondents identified as male, 49.7% identified as female, and .8% identified as gender variant/non-conforming. It is important to note that responses received from research participants who identified as gender variant/non-conforming were low. The researcher received only four responses from participants who identified as gender variant/non-conforming. As a result, data collected from this group were removed from inferential statistical analysis.

Ethnicity

In all, 488 participants ($n = 488$, $SD = 2.012$) responded to the ethnicity question (“Identify your ethnicity”) in the demographic portion of the survey. Descriptive statistics revealed that 63.2% respondents identified as White, 19.3% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 8.7% identified as Black, 4.5% identified as Multiracial, 2% identified as Other, 1.2% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% identified as Native American or American Indian.

Education

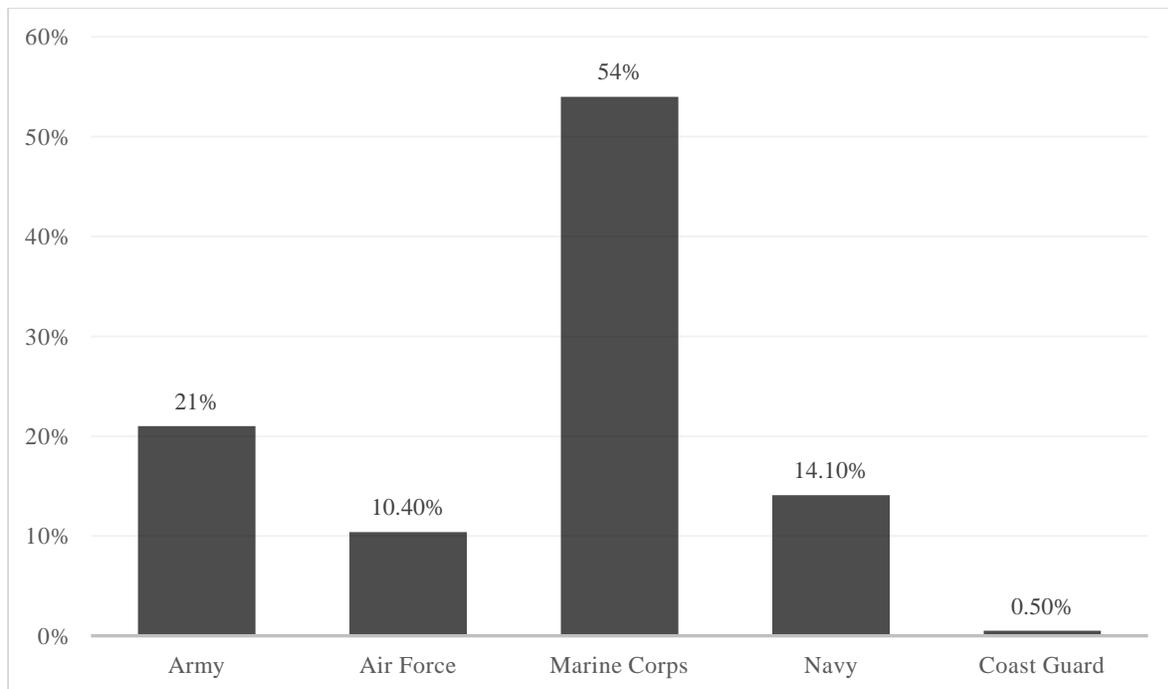
Of the participants, 486 ($n = 486$, $SD = 1.726$) responded to the education question (“Identify your level of education”) in the demographic portion of the survey. Descriptive statistics reveal that 31.4% of the participants had earned a master’s degree, 27.6% had earned a bachelor’s degree, 16.6% had obtained some college credit with no degree, 11% had earned an associate’s degree, 6.9% had earned a doctorate degree, 2.6% had obtained trade/technical/vocational training, 2.2% had earned a professional degree, and 1.6% had earned a high school diploma.

Branch

In all, 487 participants ($n = 487$, $SD = .852$) responded to the military branch question (“In which branch of the military did you serve?”) in the demographic portion of the survey. Descriptive statistics reveal that 54% of the participants had served in the U.S. Marine Corps, 21% had served in the U.S. Army, 14.1% had served in the U.S. Navy, 10.4% had served in the U.S. Air Force, and .5% had served in the U.S. Coast Guard. The researcher received only three responses from participants who served in the U.S. Coast Guard. As a result, data collected from this group were removed from inferential statistical analysis.

Figure 2

Percentage of Responses by Military Branch



Combat Arms

In total, 485 ($n = 485$, $SD = .471$) participants responded to the combat arms specialty question (“Did you serve in a combat arms specialty?”) in the demographic portion of the survey. Descriptive statistics reveal that 67.3% of the participants responded “No” and 32.7% responded “Yes.”

Joined Military

In all, 486 participants ($n = 486$, $SD = 15.691$) responded to the question asking about year of enlistment or commission (“In which year did you join the military?”). Descriptive statistics reveal that the mode for this variable was 2006, indicating that more participants in this research joined the military in that year than any other year.

Years Served

In all, 482 participants ($n = 482$, $SD = 8.40$) responded to the question asking how many years they had served in the U.S. military (“How many years did you serve in the military?”). Descriptive statistics reveal the average length of service was 10.3 years for participants in this study.

Rank

In all, 489 participants ($n = 489$, $SD = 1.85$) responded to the question about the highest rank obtained while serving in the military (“What was the highest rank you achieved in the military?”). Descriptive statistics reveal the highest ranks achieved for survey respondents were as follows: 64.1% E4–E6, 11.4% O4–O6, 9.7% E7–E9, 6.9% E1–E3, 6.3% O1–O3, 0.8% W4–W5, 0.4% W1–W3, and 0.4% O7 or above [see Table 4].

Table 4*Rank Demographics*

Rank	Percentage
E1–E3	6.9%
E4–E6	64.1%
E7–E9	9.7%
W1–W3	0.4%
W4–W5	0.8%
O1–O3	6.3%
O4–O6	11.4%
O7 or above	0.4%

Survey Responses

In the survey questions section of the survey instrument, participants were asked to rate their responses to ten gender-equality statements on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). In addition to the 10 survey questions, question 11 in the survey allowed participants to express their opinions freely and gave participants the opportunity to make comments regarding their answers to any of the survey questions. Responses to question 11 were used to explain survey responses to questions 1–10 in this survey research; these responses will be discussed in chapter five of this dissertation.

Question 1

In response to the statement “A society where men and women are equal is a good society,” 2.2% of participants responded strongly disagree, 2.6% responded disagree, 7.9% were neutral, 18.5% responded agree, and 68.8% responded strongly agree.

Question 2

In response to the statement “Women can do as well as men in military jobs,” 4.1% of research participants responded strongly disagree, 8.5% responded disagree, 16.1% were neutral, 29.3% responded agree, and 42.1% responded strongly agree.

Question 3

In response to the statement “Men can do as well as women in caring jobs,” 1.4% of research participants responded strongly disagree, 7.9% responded disagree, 21.1% were neutral, 27% responded agree, and 42.6% responded strongly agree.

Question 4

In response to the statement “Military men should be allowed the same length of parental leave as women,” 4.5% of research participants responded strongly disagree, 10.2% responded disagree, 15% were neutral, 19.3% responded agree, and 51% responded strongly agree.

Question 5

In response to the statement “Women perform as well in combat as men when they are properly trained,” 8.7% of research participants responded strongly disagree, 9.3% responded disagree, 16.6% were neutral, 24.3% responded agree, and 41% responded strongly agree.

Question 6

In response to the statement “Women should be expected to serve in combat in the front line,” 14.4% of research participants responded strongly disagree, 13% responded disagree, 21.1% were neutral, 20.9% responded agree, and 30.6% responded strongly agree.

Question 7

In response to the statement “Like men, women should be required to register for selective service,” 8.3% of research participants responded strongly disagree, 6.1% responded disagree, 10.5% were neutral, 14.4% responded agree, and 60.6% responded strongly agree.

Question 8

In response to the statement “Transgender individuals are capable of performing as well as non-transgender individuals in the military,” 16.7% of research participants responded strongly disagree, 12.8% responded disagree, 16.1% were neutral, 15.4% responded agree, and 39% responded strongly agree.

Question 9

In response to the statement “Transgender individuals should be accepted into the military,” 25.2% of research participants responded strongly disagree, 9.3% responded disagree, 16.5% were neutral, 11.8% responded agree, and 37.2% responded strongly agree.

Question 10

In response to the statement “There should be no restrictions on transgender individuals in the military,” 30% of research participants responded strongly disagree, 11.6% responded disagree, 17.8% were neutral, 10.3% responded agree, and 30.2% responded strongly agree.

Inferential Statistical Tests

To test the hypothesis of this research, four statistical tests were used to analyze the collected data: multiple regression, ANOVA, T-tests, and chi-square tests. In this section, the researcher will discuss the results from these statistical tests and identify any statistically significant outcomes from the data.

Multiple Regression

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which variables were predictors of military veterans' attitudes and perceptions. To conduct a multiple regression, a dependent variable was needed. The dependent variable used in this multiple regression model was the Gender Equality Score, which was calculated by averaging responses from each participant's answers to the ten survey questions. For example, answers in questions one through ten of the survey requested that participants respond to questions based on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). If a participant's answers to the ten survey questions were the following responses – 4,5,5,5,5,3,4,4,2,5 (added together equals 42) – then the Gender Equality Score for that participant would be 4.2 (42 divided by 10). Overall, the Gender Equality Score average to survey responses was 3.76 with a standard deviation of 0.916 (SD = 0.916).

For the multiple regression, four variables were entered into the model: age, gender, combat arms specialty, and years spent in military. Data analysis results from the multiple regression model showed that two variables were significant predictors of attitudes towards and perceptions of gender equality in the military. These two predictors were gender ($\beta = -0.360, p < .001$) and combat arms specialty ($\beta = -0.351, p = .001$). Together, these predictors accounted for 11.3% of the variance in the multiple regression model.

Furthermore, the researcher reviewed SPSS results to determine if the four assumptions of the regression model had been met. The assumptions reviewed were a linear relationship, multivariate normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. By examining scatterplots, normal p-plots, a Durbin-Watson test, and coefficient tables from SPSS output generated by the regression model, the researcher determined that all the assumptions for regression had been met and that accurate results could be determined from the multiple regression conducted from this

research. Although all the assumptions of the multiple regression were met, it should be noted that the R-squared value for the overall regression was low (11.3%), which indicates that only 11.3% of the data could be predicted from the regression model. Therefore, the model was not a good fit or predictor of 88.8% of the data collected from the participants. The implications of this finding will be discussed in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

ANOVA

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the average of survey responses amongst demographic groups. To answer the second research question that guided this study, the researcher used ANOVA to test the military branch variable. The four military groups analyzed in the ANOVA test were the U.S. Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy. The Coast Guard group was omitted from ANOVA testing since the researcher only received three survey responses from this group.

To run an ANOVA test for the military branch variable, the Gender Equality Score was used as a dependent variable, while the military groups variable was used as the independent variable. ANOVA test results revealed there was no statistically significant difference between military groups in this study ($F_{(3,480)} = 0.897, p = 0.443$). As a result, the researcher turned to non-parametric tests to analyze the data for the military branch variable. In addition, a Levene's test was conducted to test the assumption of homogeneity of variance. No significant p value was found from the Levene's test. Therefore, there was no significant difference in the variance between the variables, and the assumption of homogeneity was met.

Using ANOVA to test all demographic groups in this research, the researcher also tested the generation, education, ethnicity, and rank variables. Despite there being no significant findings for military branch, ANOVA findings provided significant results for the generation

variable ($F_{(3,466)} = 3.065, p = 0.028$). This significant finding is consistent with non-parametric test results, which will be discussed in the following section.

Independent Samples T-Test

Independent sample T-tests are useful to calculate if there is a statistically significant difference between the means of two independent groups within bivariate variables (Nardi, 2006). For this study, the means of two bivariate variables were compared. These variables were gender and combat arms. Each bivariate variable compared two categorical groups with a continuous variable, the Gender Equality Score. T-tests revealed that both gender [$t(484) = 7.05, p < .001$] and combat arms [$t(480) = 6.55, p < .001$] were statistically significant. It is important to note that although there were initially three groups in the gender variable, data from the gender variant/non-conforming group was removed due to low participant responses from that group.

Chi-Square

Multiple chi-square tests were performed to test the relationship between demographic variables and individual survey questions. The objective of conducting multiple chi-square tests on the survey data was to determine if variable groups were represented equally in the survey questions from responses to the Likert scale. The variables tested were generation, gender, ethnicity, education, military branch, combat arms specialty, and rank.

Chi-square test results provided statistical significance for the following variables: generation, gender, branch, and combat arms specialty. The results of these separate chi-square tests are presented in Table 5, which provide a visualization of results for chi-square tests conducted for each variable.

Table 5*Likert Scale Chi-square Test Results*

	Generation	Gender	Branch	Combat
Q1	$p = 0.743$	$p = 0.089$	--	$p = .006^*$
Q2	$p = .038^*$	$p < .001^{**}$	--	$p < .001^{**}$
Q3	--	$p < .001^{**}$	--	$p < .001^{**}$
Q4	--	$p < .001^{**}$	--	$p < .001^{**}$
Q5	--	$p < .001^{**}$	--	$p < .001^{**}$
Q6	--	$p < .001^{**}$	$p = .014^*$	$p = .003^*$
Q7	--	$p = 0.78$	--	$p = 0.35$
Q8	$p = .047^*$	$p < .001^{**}$	$p = 0.309$	$p < .001^{**}$
Q9	$p = .032^*$	$p < .001^{**}$	--	$p < .001^{**}$
Q10	--	$p < .001^{**}$	$p = 0.089$	$p < .001^{**}$

Note. One asterisk (*) indicates the p-value was significant. Double asterisks (**) indicate the p-value result was highly significant. Chi-square outcomes marked with double dashes (--) were inconclusive since the chi-square result for that variable and the corresponding survey question in the table presented an expected count less than 5 and therefore did not meet one of the assumptions of the chi-square test.

Generation

A chi-square was performed to examine the relationship between generation and answers to the survey questions. Chi-square results showed a significant relationship between generation and survey questions two ($X^2_{(12, 472)} = 21.69, p = 0.041, V = 0.214$), eight ($X^2_{(12, 472)} = 21.92, p = 0.038, V = 0.216$) and nine ($X^2_{(4, 472)} = 23.60, p = 0.023, V = 0.224$).

Gender

A chi-square was performed to examine the relationship between gender and answers to survey questions. Chi-square results show a significant relationship between gender and survey questions two ($X^2_{(4, 488)} = 48.80, p < .001, V = 0.316$), three ($X^2_{(4, 489)} = 21.87, p < .001, V = 0.212$), four ($X^2_{(4, 488)} = 32.29, p < .001, V = 0.257$), five ($X^2_{(4, 489)} = 39.57, p < .001, V = 0.284$), six ($X^2_{(4, 489)} = 27.50, p < .001, V = 0.237$), eight ($X^2_{(4, 488)} = 47.27, p < .001, V = 0.311$), nine ($X^2_{(4, 488)} = 37.32, p < .001, V = 0.277$), and 10 ($X^2_{(4, 489)} = 40.05, p < .001, V = 0.286$).

Branch

A chi-square was performed to examine the relationship between branch and answers to survey questions. Chi-square results show a significant relationship between branch and survey question six ($X^2_{(12, 484)} = 25.11, p = 0.014, V = 0.228$). Table 6 shows the relationship between question six (“Women should be expected to serve in combat in the front line”) and each of the military branches. The data show that more than any other branch, Marine Corps veterans had stronger negative views than what was expected (i.e., expected count) for women serving in combat arms roles. Aside from this finding, no other significant relationship was found between the military branch variable and chi-square tests.

Table 6

Military Branch and Responses to Question Six

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Branch	Air Force	Count	6	11	9	11	14	51
		Expected Count	7.5	6.6	10.6	10.9	15.4	51.0
		% within Q6	8.5%	17.5%	8.8%	10.7%	9.5%	10.5%
Army	Count	13	4	28	18	39	102	
	Expected Count	15.0	13.3	21.3	21.7	30.8	102.0	
	% within Q6	18.3%	6.3%	27.5%	17.5%	26.4%	20.9%	
Marine Corps	Count	44	38	51	64	65	262	
	Expected Count	38.4	34.1	54.7	55.8	79.0	262.0	
	% within Q6	62.0%	60.3%	50.0%	62.1%	43.9%	53.8%	
Navy	Count	8	10	13	10	28	69	
	Expected Count	10.1	9.0	14.4	14.7	20.8	69.0	
	% within Q6	11.3%	15.9%	12.7%	9.7%	18.9%	14.2%	

Total	Count	71	63	101	103	146	484
	Expected Count	71.0	63.0	101.0	103.0	146.0	484.0
	Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Combat

A chi-square was performed to examine the relationship between the combat arms variable and answers to survey questions. Chi-square results show a significant relationship between combat arms and survey questions one ($X^2_{(4, 485)} = 14.58, p = .006, V = 0.173$), two ($X^2_{(4, 484)} = 43.10, p < .001, V = .298$), three ($X^2_{(4, 485)} = 21.55, p < .001, V = 0.211$), four ($X^2_{(4, 484)} = 26.16, p < .001, V = 0.232$), five ($X^2_{(4, 485)} = 36.07, p < .001, V = 0.273$), six ($X^2_{(4, 485)} = 16.70, p = .002, V = 0.186$), eight ($X^2_{(4, 484)} = 46.97, p < .001, V = 0.312$), nine ($X^2_{(4, 484)} = 34.54, p < .001, V = 0.267$), and 10 ($X^2_{(4, 485)} = 26.07, p < .001, V = 0.232$).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher provided data analysis results from descriptive statistics as well as a multiple regression, ANOVA, T-tests, and chi-square tests from data collected from 493 research participants. Results from these statistical tests revealed that four demographic variables affected military veterans' perceptions of and attitudes toward gender equality. These variables were generation, gender, combat arms, and military branch. The implications of these findings will be discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

In chapter one of this dissertation, the researcher identified problems associated with gender equality policies and the U.S. military. The most significant problem identified was the negative perceptions and sexist attitudes that persisted amongst military servicemembers despite gender equal policy changes (Kurpius & Lucart, 2000; Matthews et al., 2009; Do et al., 2013). Furthermore, data from the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy (2013) show differences in the way each branch of the military recruits, retains, and promotes female personnel. As a result, the purpose of this research study was to explore which variables affected attitudes toward and perceptions of gender equality in military veterans to determine the most challenging factors obstructing gender-equal policy practices within U.S. military organizations.

To address the issues that guided this dissertation project, in this chapter the researcher will reflect on the findings summarized in chapter four, discuss implications, and make recommendations to advance social change in the area of organizational conflict in the military. However, before reflecting on the research findings, it is imperative to revisit the research questions that informed this study.

RQ 1. What factors predict perceptions and attitudes of gender equality in the United States military?

RQ 2. Do perceptions and attitudes of gender equality differ between different military branches?

RQ 3. Do demographic factors impact perceptions and attitudes of gender equality in the military?

Based on these research questions and the results provided in chapter four of this dissertation, the researcher confirmed or rejected the research questions' null hypotheses. Data analysis results revealed that four demographic variables either predicted attitudes and perceptions toward gender equality or had a significant relationship with attitudes and perception toward gender equality. These variables were gender, generation, combat arms specialty, and military branch.

Gender

The survey instrument used for this research recorded responses to gender equality statements on a five-point Likert scale. Based on these responses, a multiple regression revealed that gender was a predictor of attitudes and perceptions toward gender equality. As a result, the null hypothesis for research question one was rejected. Furthermore, T-test results reported a significant difference between the means of male responses and female responses to the survey instrument, and chi-square test results revealed that gender also had a significant relationship with every gender equality statement in the survey except for survey questions one and seven.

As discussed in chapter two, social identity theory encouraged the researcher to consider whether certain social identities, such as gender, would affect how respondents viewed gender equal policy statements. Results from the multiple regression, T-tests, and chi-square tests revealed that men and women perceive gender equality statements differently. To further understand why this is the case, the researcher turned to survey responses found in question 11, which was an open comment section that allowed participants to add any information they felt was relevant to the survey. From a broad overview of responses to question 11, women were generally more supportive of gender-equal roles in the military, including women serving in combat arms specialties, while male participants appeared supportive of gender equal roles in the

military as long as similar standards applied to both men and women. However, there were mixed opinions from male participants about women serving in combat infantry roles. To further explain the results to survey responses, the researcher has provided direct quotes from both female and male survey participants in the following subsections.

Female Survey Respondents

In survey responses to Question 11, some female respondents commented on their personal experiences and perceptions regarding women's equal capabilities to men. For example, one woman commented, "I served during Just Cause 89–90 and we as women did the same job as men and were hold [sic] to the same standard as men." Another female respondent mentioned "Females can excel at any job in the marines, my concern is their safety..."

Other participants gave more detailed personal accounts of their perceptions such as this participant who wrote "The women (14) in my shop were excellent at their jobs but not given the same opportunities as the men as it pertains to advancing or advancement and awards." Others were more reserved in their perceptions towards their gender, but still expressed the perception that women could perform all military jobs just as well as men as long as requirements were met. For example, one woman commented that "Women should 100% be allowed in combat roles so long as they meet the requirements set by the respective military branch they serve in." Another woman stated that "Although men tend to have greater physical strength, which may make it seem they are better suited for combat arms, I think women bring many other qualities to these roles, including both physical and mental strength."

Others specifically mentioned that women's physical capabilities are inherently different, but expressed the attitude that these physical capabilities should not be a hindrance towards gender equality. For example, one woman expressed that "While I agree women can handle the

rigors of combat, women's bodies are not made to withstand the rigors that infantry men are required to withstand," while another female respondent mentioned "Women are physically not as strong as men, therefore as long as they prove they can physically perform like a male they should be allowed front line [sic] the same counts for transgender." Another female participant also noted "While I do believe there are some military jobs that men are naturally better at than women due to their physical build, I do think there are many women capable of being successful in the same fields."

Finally, one participant even expressed a positive gender bias towards women in the military by expressing that "Women perform far more superior than men...hands down every time!"

Male Survey Respondents

Similarly, some male respondents commented on their positive perceptions of women's capabilities in the military. For example, one male respondent wrote "I believe women are more than capable of doing their job in a combat environment. I have seen them do it in Afghanistan." Another stated that "Some women can perform better than some men in combat and some men could be better than some women in caring jobs. You cannot make a blanket statement about either." The same respondent added "I've witnessed many women not able to handle combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. I've only seen one female Marine act like a total badass."

Other men, discussed their attitudes towards gender equal standards in the military for both men and women. As an example, one male respondent stated "I think females should be in infantry roles as long as the same exact standards apply to each gender." Similarly, another respondent stated "I believe that there should be one standard that everyone should be held to regardless of gender. I know strong, capable women who can surpass men in a number of ways."

Another respondent averred that “As long as everyone has the same tests (physical, knowledge, and skills tests), gender/sex should be a non-issue for any job.” Similarly, another male respondent commented “I believe all people should serve in the military and be assigned to a specialty where they can be proficient. The qualifications for proficiency should be at the same standard regardless of gender.”

However, not all male respondents had positive views toward gender equality. One male respondent stated “First, men and women are not physically equal. Although woman can perform well in combat they cannot perform all jobs equally well.” Another discussed his perceptions of women in combat roles by stating “Although women can perform certain tasks as well as men, they are not physically capable of sustaining the physical strains of combat as women are not built for combat operations.”

Combat Arms Specialty

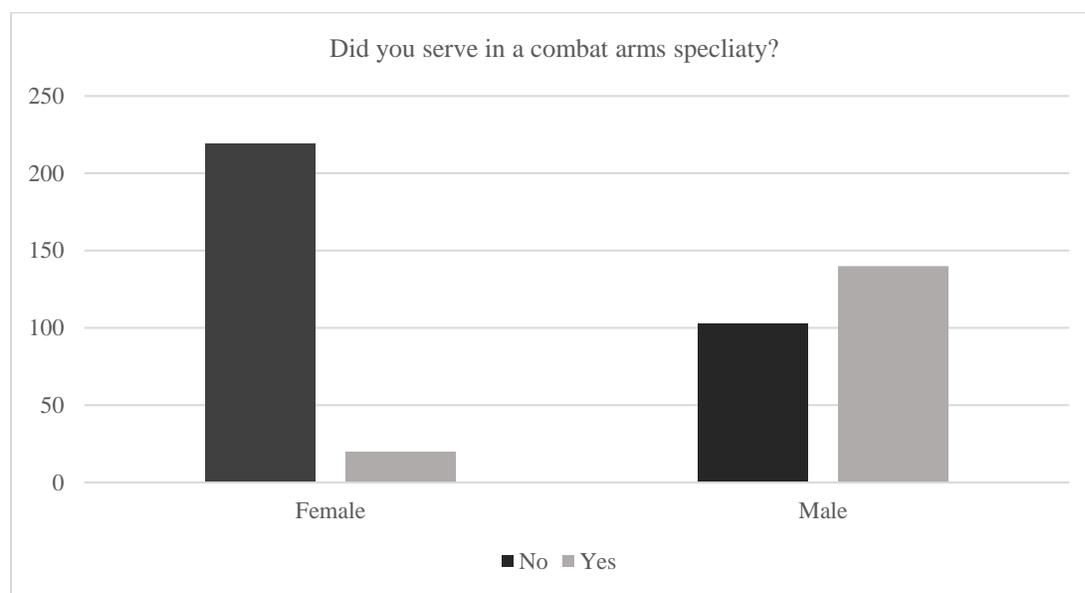
The combat arms specialty variable was also found to be a predictor of attitudes towards and perceptions of gender equality. Although gender and combat arms specialty were found to be statistically significant in the multiple regression, it is important to note that these two variables were found to only predict 11.3% of the multiple regression model and therefore were not found to be strong predictors of attitudes and perceptions toward gender equality in the military. As a result, the researcher relied on ANOVA, T-test, and chi-square test results to better understand the relationships between each variable in the research study. Chi-square test results revealed almost identical significance for tests conducted on the gender and combat arms specialty variables (see Tables 4 and 5).

To understand why chi-square results for the gender and combat arms variables were so similar, the researcher conducted a chi-square test of association to determine the strength of the

relationship between the two variables (Laerd Statistics, 2018a). The chi-square test of association revealed a strong relationship between the two variables with a highly significant X^2 value ($X^2_{(1, 482)} = 131.765, p < .001$). With these results in mind, there are several explanations for the strong association between the gender and combat arms variables. The most likely explanation that accounts for this strong relationship is that a majority of female respondents who participated in this study did not serve in a combat arms specialty. In contrast, most men in the survey did serve in a combat arms specialty [see Figure 3].

Figure 3

Gender and Combat Arms Bar Chart



Furthermore, survey responses to question eleven reveal that some men who served in combat arms roles had strong negative opinions of women serving in combat arms specialties. For example, one survey respondent stated “A sisterhood or transgenderhood didn’t produce the freedoms you and I have. By creating a cluster fuck in the social fabrication of our fighting units will destroy them from the inside out.” The same respondent added “I am a combat amphibious

reconnaissance Marine OEF veteran, 99% of females and TS ‘males’ could never handle the training or combat we did.”

In addition, other respondents discussed similar sentiments. One respondent stated “Military and ultimately combat is no place for social gender experimentation or exploitation. For those who never experienced combat, and the horrors and physical demands it incurs, will never understand or appreciate why women and transgenders will not work.” Another combat veteran commented “I will never agree with women being in direct combat units. Even if they are able to meet all requirements.” The same respondent added “It is NOT about the woman. It is about all the idiot guys that would do stupid things because there is a woman in their unit.”

Generation

To analyze survey results for the generation variable, survey participants were categorized into their respective generational groups based on age. The four generational groups in this research were the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials (Dimock, 2019). It is important to note that age was not found to be a significant variable during multiple regression testing. Instead, generational groups were found to be significant in ANOVA and chi-square tests.

An ANOVA test on the generation variable revealed a significant difference in survey responses between the four generational groups. In addition, chi-square tests revealed the generation variable had a significant relationship with questions two (“Women can do as well as men in military jobs”), four (“Military men should be allowed the same length of parental leave as women”), eight (“Transgender individuals are capable of performing as well as non-transgender individuals in the military”), and nine (“Transgender individuals should be accepted into the military”). To further understand the results of the chi-square tests for generation, the

researcher turned to responses to question 11. Of particular note were the many comments by participants from every generation on transgender individuals in the military.

Silent Generation

In response to survey Question 11, a majority of the Silent Generation commented on women in combat. For example, one individual stated “I guess I am old school and think we should protect our women from the harrows of combat. I think they can perform many roles as well or better than men, but not combat.” Another stated “Women can serve in the armed services to great advantage to themselves and our nation. However, they absolutely should not be in ground combat units.”

Others commented on the general concept of women in the military. For example, one individual from the Silent Generation stated, “I do not believe men and women were created equal, the roles in the military were designed for men not with women in mind.” Another stated “Military should not be a test bed for social programs. Also, mixing young men and young women in a combat unit will create a broad range of problems.” Reflecting on the survey, another individual stated “I did not always have these views. Over time and experience I changed my mind many times.”

Baby Boomers

In response to Question 11, many members of the Baby Boomer generation expressed their opinions on transgender individuals in the military. One Baby Boomer commented “I support the right of transgender to be in the military, I do not feel the military should be responsible for gender reassignment surgery.” Another stated “I never served with a transgender person so honestly need to have much more exposure for my answers to have merit.” While another mentioned “Women and Transgenders will ultimately be fully welcomed into combat

units with open arms by commanders due to low numbers of combat soldiers that are educated adequately so as to properly operate weapon systems.”

Another expressed opinions on the LGBTQ community serving in the military and stated “LGBTQ have been serving honorably longer than we have been alive, so the argument they can’t is moot.” The same respondent added “The problem lies more with the rest of us; our willful ignorance, bias, and predictions causes far more damage to military readiness than someone who lives on a different point on the gender or sexual orientation spectrum.” Another Baby Boomer respondent commented on gender equality impacting men in the military and stated “Men should be given the same length of parental leave if they are a single parent.”

Generation X

Members of the Generation X mostly commented on transgender individuals in the military and women in combat. For example, one individual stated “Transgender should be allowed to serve but the military shouldn’t pay for any medical costs associated with gender transformation or any behavioral health issues directly related to transgender issues.” Another stated “Although I believe there should be no restrictions or limitations to transgender soldiers or women in combat MOS’s, I do think there should be extensive training of military personnel and accommodations should be made.” The same respondent added “for not-fully-transitioned transgender individuals, it would especially be necessary during basic training where soldiers are required to bathe in open bathrooms.”

Another Generation X respondent stated “Transgender who are taking hormonal drugs should not be around the front lines and with a weapon. They pose a risk and they have a high suicide rate.” The same individual commented “Woman will be afforded lower standards to get into a combat specialty. Once they are in, they can disrupt a closely-knit group by weaponizing a

harassment or sexual harassment charge.” Another Generation X respondent averred “Some men shouldn’t be in combat. Some women shouldn’t be in combat. It has nothing to do with gender and everything to do with capability and will.”

Millennials

Similar to Generation X, a majority of Millennials who responded to Question 11 in the survey commented on transgender individuals in the military. One millennial commented “Transgenders can and should [sic] in the military as anyone else as long as they do not have any physical or psychological impairment that prevents them from doing so.” Another expressed “Although I have no issue with transgender in the military I do not think the government should bear the cost of gender assignments surgery,” while another stated “Transgenders have a higher suicide rate...add that to the 22 veterans a day taking their life and we got something even worse.” Another millennial expressed negative attitudes of women and transgender individuals in the military by stating “Women and the mentally ill (transgender) should not serve in the infantry. And the ‘transgender’ should not be allowed in the military.”

On the topic of women in the military, a millennial commented “As a woman who served in combat with other women who have served by my side women are not biologically made for it.” In contrast, another millennial expressed the opinion that “There are some women that are more capable in combat roles than some men. These roles should be based on the individual’s ability, not pre-determined by their gender. I’m better than some women but some women are better than me!”

Military Branch

To answer research question two, which questioned if there was a significant difference in perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality between the military branches, statistical

tests on the military branch variable were conducted. Academic literature on the topic (discussed in chapter 2) discussed how organizational culture can affect conflict and diversity. It also discussed how diverse groups function within an organization. As a result, the researcher tested the military branch variable to assess whether organizational culture affected attitudes and perceptions toward gender equality by conducting a multiple regression, a one-way ANOVA, and chi-square tests. The multiple regression revealed that military branch was not a significant predictor of attitudes and perceptions toward gender equality. Furthermore, the ANOVA revealed no significant difference in attitudes and perceptions toward gender equality between military branches. These results allowed the researcher to accept the null hypothesis for research question two of this study.

However, chi-square results told a different story. When chi-square tests were conducted to test the relationship between the military branch variable and individual survey questions, responses to question six, regarding women serving in combat roles, revealed a significant relationship. Overall, the three statistical tests conducted on the military branch variable reveal that military branch is not a strong variable of significance for this study. However, military branch does affect attitudes and perceptions toward gender equality as it relates to specific gender equality statements. Overall, the significant results from each of the chi-square tests conducted allowed the researcher to answer the third research question of this research project and conclude that demographic factors impact attitudes and perceptions toward gender equality in the military.

Comparison to Literature Review

The findings in this study indicate that specific demographic variables affect attitudes and perceptions toward gender equality in the military. The variables that significantly affected data

analysis results in this study were gender, combat arms, generation, and military branch. These findings are consistent with the social theories that informed this research in chapter two. These social theories (i.e., liberal feminism, social identity theory, and theory of gendered organizations) and how they relate to the findings in this study will be discussed in the following subsections.

Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism is a branch of feminist thought that frames gender inequalities through a classical liberal point of view, which emphasizes individual rights and freedoms (Goldstein, 2003). As discussed in chapter two, the goal of liberal feminism is to obtain gender equality for men and women so women have the same rights and opportunities as men (Goldstein, 2003).

For this research, liberal feminist views were expanded to be inclusive of all genders. With that said, from a liberal feminist standpoint, gender equality can be achieved when all genders in the military, including transgender individuals, have the same rights and opportunities to that of cisgendered military men, who have predominately and historically played a dominant social role in martial representation.

Since the purpose of this research study was to assess attitudes and perceptions toward gender equality in military personnel, liberal feminism was highly influential in selecting gender equality statements used in the survey instrument for this research project (see Appendix A). Based on the responses to the survey, men and women had significantly different responses to the gender equal statements presented in the survey. In addition, the survey questions that showed the most dynamic variations in response were questions regarding women in combat roles (question six) and transgender military servicemembers (questions eight, nine, and ten). From the information gathered from these results, the researcher determined that the most

challenging issues concerning gender equality in the military in the 21st century are related to women serving in combat roles and the full acceptance of transgender military servicemembers.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory can be helpful in explaining intergroup discrimination. Although more military roles have expanded to be inclusive of women and transgender individuals, these roles have traditionally been dominated by men. Therefore, the researcher was particularly interested in how social identity theory could be used to explain intergroup bias and in-group favoritism with respect to gender. According to social identity theory, individuals are more likely to think highly of the groups with which they feel they identify while thinking less favorably of other groups with which they do not identify (Vaughan, 2019; Tajifel, 1970). For this research, the researcher examined how group identities could affect survey results. Chi-square tests conducted on the survey data were the most revealing tests with regard to the impact of social identity theory.

In the military, men comprise 85% of the fighting force, and they have traditionally performed a majority of military roles throughout U.S. history. Within a social identity theory framework, where the in-group is the dominant group and the out-group is the subordinate group, military men can easily be categorized as the in-group due to their overrepresentation in the military, while women and transgender military servicemembers are relegated to an out-group status.

It is clear from chi-square results conducted on the data from this research that men and women in the U.S. military view gender-equality statements differently. Men appear to have stronger negative perceptions of other gender groups, while women appear to have more positive perceptions of their own group and other non-dominate military groups (e.g., transgender

individuals). This difference can best be observed in responses to survey statement six (“Women should be expected to serve in combat in the front line”), to which 149 women responded agree or strongly agree, while 103 men responded agree or strongly agree. Conversely, 45 women responded disagree or strongly disagree, while 89 men responded disagree and strongly disagree to the same gender-equality statement [see Table 7].

Table 7

Gender and Responses to Question Six

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	
Gender	Female	Count	18	27	51	58	91	245
		Expected Count	35.6	31.6	51.6	51.6	74.7	245.0
	Male	Count	53	36	52	45	58	244
		Expected Count	35.4	31.4	51.4	51.4	74.3	244.0
Total		Count	71	63	103	103	149	489
		Expected Count	71.0	63.0	103.0	103.0	149.0	489.0

Similar observations were made with other chi-square results in the study when examining gender as a variable. For example, for survey statement eight (“Transgender individuals are capable of performing as well as non-transgender individuals in the military”), 124 women responded strongly agree, which was 30 more than the expected count, while 64 men responded strongly agree, which was 30 less than the expected count. [see Table 8].

Table 8*Gender and Responses to Question Eight*

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Gender Female	Count	22	26	28	44	124	244
	Expected Count	41.0	31.5	39.5	38.0	94.0	244.0
Male	Count	60	37	51	32	64	244
	Expected Count	41.0	31.5	39.5	38.0	94.0	244.0
Total	Count	82	63	79	76	188	488
	Expected Count	82.0	63.0	79.0	76.0	188.0	488.0

Theory of Gendered Organizations

Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations disputes the idea that organizations are gender-neutral and proposed that the gendering of organizations occurs in five interacting processes: (1) the construction of divisions along gender lines, (2) the construction of symbols and images reinforcing gendered divisions of labor, (3) organizational interactions between men and women that create patterns of dominance and submission, (4) a gendered component of identity, and (5) the presence of gendered substructures in daily work activities (Acker, 1990).

In chapter two of this dissertation, clear examples of how the military has incorporated these five gendered processes were discussed in detail. However, in the last decade, the military has made efforts to reduce gendered processes and promote gender equality. Two efforts to reduce gendered processes include allowing transgender servicemembers to serve openly in the military and the removal of restrictions from women serving in combat roles. As organizations move towards change, there is a greater possibility that change can create tension and conflict. Coincidentally, the military's efforts to be more inclusive created disagreement within the DoD.

Most notably, the Marine Corps openly opposed allowing women in infantry units (Tilghman, 2015).

Furthermore, gender equality statements related to transgender military servicemembers and women in combat were the most dynamic and varied in opinion according to survey results for questions six, eight, nine, and ten. Accordingly, gender was conclusively a significant variable that affected survey responses to gender-equality statements. For question six (“Women should be expected to serve in combat in the front line”), 27.4% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 51.5% agreed or strongly agreed. For question eight (“Transgender individuals are capable of performing as well as non-transgender individuals in the military”), 29.5% of research participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 54.4% either agreed or strongly agreed. For question nine (“Transgender individuals should be accepted into the military”), 34.5% of research participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 49% of research participants either agreed or strongly agreed. Responses to question 10 (“There should be no restrictions on transgender individuals in the military”) were more divisive: 41.6% of research participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 40.5% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed.

It is clear from these survey responses that the military’s efforts to move towards change and be more inclusive have led to divisive opinions from military servicemembers. Survey results indicate that the military’s increased gender equality initiatives may have also increased organizational tensions based on strong opinions towards change. Without addressing military servicemembers’ concerns and conflicted opinions on these issues, it is possible for organizational tensions and conflict to escalate.

Limitations and Challenges

In this section, the researcher will address the limitations and challenges related to this study. The limitation on active-duty servicemembers' participation in this study, as discussed in chapter three, will be addressed. In addition, the researcher will reflect on three challenges they anticipated while conducting this study and discuss how these challenges were overcome.

Limitations

This study was limited to military veterans who had served for at least one year in the U.S. Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, or Navy. To obtain a deeper understanding of perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality, this study would have been enhanced by the participation of active-duty military servicemembers. However, to obtain the participation of active-duty military in the study, the researcher would have had to obtain permission from the military's Institutional Review Board, which could have significantly delayed this project.

Bias

Considerable efforts were taken in this research to eliminate bias. In order to eliminate bias, questions for this survey were obtained or modified from previous survey instruments. Specifically, gender equality statements used in this survey research were borrowed from the following survey instruments: *Understanding Attitudes of Gender and Training at the U.S. Air Force Academy* (Do et al., 2013), *Attitudes Toward Gender Balance Measure* (Goldscheider et al., 2014), and the *Attitudes Towards Transgender Individuals* (ATTI) scale (Walch et al., 2012). Additionally, Cronbach Alpha and factor analysis tests were conducted on the survey instrument to omit questions that were neither reliable nor valid.

Despite these efforts, the researcher received comments in survey question 11 from survey participants regarding a perceived bias in the study. One participant stated "I very much

appreciate your initiative with this survey, but it seems that you have not learned enough to ask the right questions without making the survey biased. Not your fault. The more you know.”

Echoing the same sentiment, another participant stated the “survey exists merely to support some preexisting confirmation bias in your end.” While another participant averred “I did not always have these views. Over time and experience I changed my mind many times. The questions are very generalized and almost force a biased point.”

Concerns of bias in any research project are important, and steps to eliminate bias should be taken to receive the most accurate results. The researcher believes these steps were taken for this study, but further qualitative research should be explored with open-ended questions to eliminate perceptions of bias in future studies. Additional comments on bias will be addressed in the recommendation section of this chapter.

Respondent Frustrations

The topics regarding this research were complex and survey respondents were limited in their answers due to the quantitative nature of the survey instrument. However, question eleven in the survey allowed participants to add any additional information they thought would be relevant to this research. Responses to question eleven reveal that participants had much more information they wished to express outside the narrow focus of the survey questions.

Furthermore, the respondents expressed their frustration with the limitations of the survey in their answers to question eleven. For example, one participant stated “The answers to these questions are more complex than agree or disagree,” while another stated “These questions lack specificity that may have prompted different responses.” Another survey participant expressed similar frustrations and stated “It’s a little more complicated than agree or disagree, but you know that.” Similarly, another participant commented “Hate answering so generally, when I

think folks should be taken as individuals.” Still, another survey respondent commented “Many of these questions need comment” and “Your survey is apt to generate skewed results as your questions do not permit sufficient elaboration.... I.e. it might be served by questions that touch on ‘why’.”

Survey research, such as the research conducted for this dissertation, innately incorporates a quantitative design format that limits participant responses to quantifiable answers. Likewise, the research for this dissertation project was always designed to be exploratory to discover which aspects of this research topic merited further study. However, frustrations from survey participants is a positive indication that military servicemembers have much more they would like to express about the topics in this study. Therefore, opportunities for more qualitative approaches to this research are recommended for future researchers who wish to explore topics of gender equality, organizational conflict, and diversity and inclusion initiatives in the military.

Demographic Challenges

Before beginning this study, the researcher anticipated that gathering responses from female participants would be challenging since women only comprise 15% of U.S. military personnel. For a study on gender equality, the researcher ideally wanted to obtain an equal number of male and female respondents. However, the challenges the researcher anticipated did not come to fruition. Due to convenience sampling and the researcher’s contacts with female military networks, the researcher obtained slightly more female respondents than male, with 49.5% males and 49.7% females participating in the study. However, gender-variant and non-conforming respondents only comprised .8% of the survey respondents. Due to such a low

response rate from the gender-variant and non-conforming group, data analysis tests conducted for perceptions and attitudes from this group were inconclusive.

In addition, the researcher anticipated challenges obtaining equitable responses from each military branch. The population of servicemembers varies in each branch of the military, and some military branches have more personnel than others. Specifically, the two smallest branches in the U.S. military are the U.S. Coast Guard and Marine Corps. The researcher overcame the challenge of obtaining responses from Marines due to the researcher's extensive connections within Marine Corps networks. As a result, the researcher obtained more responses from Marine Corps respondents than from any other military branch. In all, 54% of the survey participants were veterans of the Marine Corps, 21% were veterans of the Army, 14.1% were veterans of the Navy, 10.4% were veterans of the Air Force, and .6% were veterans of the Coast Guard. Unfortunately, the researcher could not obtain an adequate number of Coast Guard respondents since only three veterans from the Coast Guard responded to this study. As a result, tests conducted for perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality from members of the Coast Guard were inconclusive.

Recommendations

In this section, the researcher will address the limitations and challenges discussed in the previous sections of this research study. In addition, respondents' feedback regarding bias and frustration with the limitations of the survey will be addressed. Taking these concerns into consideration, the researcher will make recommendations for continued qualitative research on the subject and recommend research topics to fill research gaps regarding attitudes and perceptions toward gender equality in the military.

Active-Duty Respondents

Policies regarding gender in the military have experienced perpetual change. As a result, efforts should be made to gain further information on attitudes and perceptions toward gender equality policies from active duty military servicemembers. Active duty military servicemembers would be an excellent addition for further research since they would likely have had the opportunity to experience a military environment with women serving in combat roles. They also would likely have more experience serving in a military environment with transgender military servicemembers. As a result, they may have more feedback and opinions regarding gender-equal policies related to these topics. Therefore, this researcher recommends that future research into this topic is expanded to include active duty military servicemembers.

Transgender Military Servicemembers

Since the scope of this research closely examined gender-equal policies in the military, the researcher felt compelled to address gender policies that included all genders, including transgender military servicemembers. The literature review on this topic showed that very little research had been conducted on transgender military policies. Therefore, the researcher wished to address this research gap by including gender-equal statements that discussed the inclusivity of transgender military servicemembers.

Specifically, statements eight, nine, and ten in the survey asked respondents to rate their perceptions and attitudes toward gender-equal statements regarding transgender military servicemembers. These questions proved to elicit the most dynamic responses, and participants had much more input and opinions about transgender policies than any other statements in the survey.

Despite the researcher's efforts to fill research gaps on perceptions and attitudes toward transgender military policies, there is still very little information on how gender-variant, gender non-conforming, or transgender military servicemembers view gender-equal policies. As discussed in chapter four of this dissertation, responses from a non-cisgendered demographic in this survey were low, producing inconclusive results. Furthermore, there is very little academic research on gender-variant, non-conforming, and transgender military servicemembers. To better understand this population with regard to best practices for gender-equal policies, the researcher recommends that a separate study with a targeted examination of a non-cisgendered population be conducted in the future.

Qualitative Research

The purpose of this exploratory research was to uncover which variables impacted perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality. Data analysis of survey responses show that four variables in this research (i.e., gender, combat arms specialty, generation, and military branch) affected perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality in the military. Of these four, the two strongest variables that affected perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality were the gender and combat arms variables.

Although qualitative data were collected in this study from responses to question eleven, these responses were not useful for qualitative analysis since they were not collected systematically using qualitative research best practices. However, it is clear from the participants' responses to question eleven that military servicemembers have much more to say about these topics. Since the variables that affect perceptions and attitudes toward gender equality have now been identified through this research project, these research results can be a useful guide for future qualitative studies. As a result, it is recommended that qualitative

approaches to this research be conducted in the future with a focus on any of the four significant variables that affected this study (i.e., gender, combat arms specialty, generation, and military branch). In addition, a qualitative study into this research topic will have the benefit of mitigating perceptions of bias and reducing participant frustration since it would allow respondents to fully express their views on the topic.

Contributions and Conclusion

From this research, valuable insight was gained as to which variables affected attitudes and perceptions of gender equality in the United States military. Based on the data analysis results of this research, it is apparent there is a significant difference between the way men and women view gender-equal policies and statements. There is also a generational difference and, to a lesser extent, a difference in the way veterans from military branches and combat arms specialties perceive gender-equal policies. However, of the four statistically significant variables analyzed in this study, gender and generation appeared to make the greatest impact in the way gender equality statements were perceived. As a result, in the years ahead gender and generation are two factors that will likely be the greatest drivers of change affecting organizational conflict and gender equality in the United States military.

Furthermore, the research conducted in this study casts greater light on transgender individuals in the military. This was a purposeful and intentional effort by the researcher to fill a research gap that had largely ignored transgender military members in the United States military. Including gender equal statements about transgender military members in the research survey proved to be the most fruitful and interesting of all the questions. From these statements, the researcher was able to gather a diverse range of perceptions and attitudes from military veterans. As a result, this researcher believes the topic of transgender military members warrants much

more consideration in the future when discussing organizational behavior and organizational conflict in the military.

More broadly, this research offers a deeper look into gender equality in the United States military, which is traditionally male-dominated. As military and security organizations continue to change and develop more inclusive organizational structures, the information gained from this research can be used as a foundation to better inform the implementation of gender-equal initiatives for militaries and security sectors throughout the world. For example, when examining these differences in gender perceptions, certain questions come to mind, such as how will these differences in perceptions be addressed with diversity, equity, and inclusion training for military servicemembers, and what organizational impact will these changes have on training and deployments? Furthermore, some survey participants stated concerns about the safety of transgender servicemembers and women in combat roles. How will the military address these concerns for the future? These are all questions that merit consideration when exploring the complexities surrounding gender equal policies and the United States military.

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Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Demographic Questions

1. What is your age? _____ years
2. To which gender identity do you most identify?
 - A) Female
 - B) Male
 - C) Gender Variant/Non-conforming
3. Identify your ethnicity.
 - A) Asian/Pacific Islander
 - B) Black
 - C) Hispanic or Latino
 - D) Native American or American Indian
 - E) White
 - F) Other
 - G) Multiracial
 - H) Prefer not to answer
4. Identify your level of education.
 - A) High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
 - B) Some college credit, no degree
 - C) Trade/technical/vocational training
 - D) Associate degree
 - E) Bachelor's degree
 - F) Master's degree
 - G) Professional degree
 - H) Doctorate degree
5. In which branch of the military did you serve?
 - A) Air Force
 - B) Army
 - C) Coast Guard
 - D) Marine Corps
 - E) Navy
6. Did you serve in a combat arms specialty?
 - A) Yes
 - B) No
7. In which year did you join the military?

8. How many years did you serve in the military?
9. What was the highest rank you achieved in the military (Ex. E5 or O3)?

Survey Questions

Responses of agreement/disagreement are recorded on a 5-point Likert-type scale (where 1 corresponds to don't agree at all and 5 to agree completely).

1. A society where men and women are equal is a good society.
2. Women can do as well as men in military jobs.
3. Men can do as well as women in caring jobs.
4. Military men should be allowed the same length of parental leave as women.
5. Women perform as well in combat as men when they are properly trained.
6. Women should be expected to serve in combat in the front line.
7. Like men, women should be required to register for selective service.
8. Transgender individuals are capable of performing as well as non-transgender individuals in the military.
9. Transgender individuals should be accepted into the military.
10. There should be no restrictions on transgender individuals in the military.
11. If there's anything you would like to add, please feel free to express your opinions here:
_____.