Understanding the Organizational Culture and Oversight Factors That Foster Unethical Behavior in Army Senior Leaders: An Embedded Case Study

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Abstract

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Sexual misconduct in the Army can range from inappropriate behavior to criminal assault. Despite shared Army values, rigorous ethics training, and oversight mechanisms, cases of Army general officers (senior leaders) perpetuating and/or enabling sexual misconduct to continue. In fact, research and statistics indicate that the frequency and severity of sexual misconduct has not decreased over time (Acosta et al., 2021; Office of People Analytics, Department of Defense, 2021).

Existing literature suggests several possible contributing factors, including male-dominated, hyper-masculine military culture (Pang et al., 2021) and senior leaders and oversight committees' failure to observe and/or enforce standards of ethical behavior (O'Keefe et al., 2020; Pang et al., 2021).

This qualitative, embedded case study sought to identify and more deeply understand the organizational culture and oversight factors that foster or contribute to senior leaders' unethical behavior and sexual misconduct in the Army, despite high levels of discipline and training (Whetham, 2021). The study also explored how female officers navigate the risks of victimization. The study included the following methods and sources: publicly available archival documents, individual interviews with retired senior Army leaders, and individual interviews with active and retired Army soldiers.

The study's findings identified the following as organizational culture and oversight factors: institutional dysfunction and ethical deterioration; discrimination against women, and fear of retaliation; inability of senior leaders to balance professional and personal life; ethical dilemmas and abuse of power; challenges in accountability; corruption and military cover ups; and impunity and injustice in the face of misconduct. The study's findings identified the following as ways in which female officers attempt to cope and navigate risks: by empowering women in a male-dominated environment; supporting survivors of sexual trauma and ensuring justice.

Overall, the findings provide insight into why sexual misconduct thrives and oversight fails in the Army and concludes that more research and advocacy are needed to achieve a new model of oversight that promotes ethical leadership guided by Army values.

Table of Contents

List of Tables v
List of Figures vi
Acknowledgments vii
Dedication viii

Chapter 1: Introduction 1
- Problem Statement 3
- The Prevalence of Sexual Misconduct in the Military 5
- The Prevalence of Microaggressions in the Military 5
- Power Distance in the Army 6
- Male-Dominated Army Culture 7
- Female Officers Navigating the Male-Dominated Army Culture 8
- Coping with Senior Officers' Sexual Misconduct and Microaggressions 9
- The Role of Army Leaders 9
- The Potential Benefit of Organizational Leadership 11
- Purpose of the Study 11
- Research Questions 12
- Approach and Methods 12
- Outcomes Anticipated Prior to Data Collection and Analysis 12
- The Researcher 13
- Assumptions 15
- Rationale and Significance 15
- Definitions 16

Chapter 2: Literature Review 19
- Recent Cases of Senior Army Leaders' Misconduct 20
  - General Petraeus 20
  - Major General Wayne Grigsby 20
  - Brigadier General David Hamilton 21
  - Major General Scott Efflandt 21
  - Major General John J. Maher III 21
- Organizational Learning and Adult Learning: Selected Theories and Concepts 22
- Cultural Factors for Unethical Behaviors 25
  - Ethical Climate 26
  - Hegemonic Hyper-Masculine Culture 28
  - Hierarchical Culture 31
  - Loyalty and Cohesion 32
  - Synthesis of Cultural Factors 36
- Organizational Factors for Unethical Behaviors 36
  - Reporting System 37
  - Training and Development 42
  - Policies, Workforce, and Oversight 43
  - Synthesis of Organizational Factors 44

Protective Factors to Prevent Unethical Behaviors 45
Individual Protective factors 45
Leadership Efforts 46
Accountability 47
Character Development and Other Training Programs 49
Social Support 51
Synthesis of Protective Factors 52
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks 53
Edgar Schein's Theory of Organizational Culture 53
Amy Edmondson's Theory on Psychological Safety 54
Ethical Impact Theory 55
Critical Theory 57
Organizational Learning Theory 58
Synthesis of Theories into a Conceptual Framework 61
Summary 61

Chapter 3: Methods 64
Research Design and Rationale 64
Sample 67
Recruitment 68
Individual Interviews with Retired Senior Leaders in the Army 68
Individual Interviews with Active and Retired Soldiers in the Army 69
Data Collection 70
Individual Interviews with Retired Senior Leaders in the Army 70
Individual Interviews with Active and Retired Soldiers in the Army 70
Interviews 71
Ethical Considerations 71
Trustworthiness 74
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations 77
Summary 78

Chapter 4: Results and Findings 79
Coding Process 79
Phase 1 79
Phase 2 82
Phase 3 82
Results 82
Research Question 1 83
Theme 1: Institutional Dysfunction and Ethical Deterioration 85
Theme 2: Discrimination Against Minorities and Fear of Retaliation 87
Theme 3: Inability to Balance Professional and Personal Life in the Army 90
Theme 4: Ethical Dilemmas and Abuse of Power in the Army 91
Research Question 1: Themes 94
Institutional Dysfunction and Ethical Deterioration 94
Discrimination Against Minorities and Fear of Retaliation 94

Inability to Balance Professional and Personal Life in the Army.....95
Ethical Dilemmas and Abuse of Power in the Army.....95
Research Question 1: Findings.....96
Research Question 2.....96
Theme 5: Challenges in Accountability in the Army.....97
Theme 6: Corruption and Military Cover-ups.....100
Theme 7: Impunity and Injustice in the Face of Misconduct.....101
Research Question 2: Themes.....103
Challenges in Accountability in the Army.....103
Corruption and Military Cover-ups.....104
Impunity and Injustice in the Face of Misconduct.....104
Research Question 2: Findings.....104
Research Question 3.....105
Theme 8: Empowering Women in a Male-Dominated Environment.....105
Theme 9: Supporting Survivors of Trauma and Ensuring Justice.....107
Research Question 3: Themes.....109
Empowering Women in a Male-Dominated Environment.....109
Supporting Survivors of Trauma and Ensuring Justice.....110
Research Question 3: Findings.....110
Summary.....110

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion.....112
Institutional Dysfunction and Ethical Deterioration.....112
Discrimination Against Minorities and Fear of Retaliation.....113
Inability to Balance Professional and Personal Life in the Army.....114
Ethical Dilemmas and Abuse of Power in the Army.....116
Challenges in Accountability in the Army.....117
Corruption and Military Cover-ups.....118
Impunity and Injustice in the Face of Misconduct.....119
Empowering Women in a Male-Dominated Environment.....121
Supporting Survivors of Trauma and Ensuring Justice.....112
Summary.....123

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations.....124
Conclusion 1: Ethical Deterioration, Fear of Retaliation, Work-Life Imbalance, and Abuse of Power.....124
Conclusion 2: Bureaucracy, Corruption, and Impunity.....124
Conclusion 3: Empowering Women and Supporting Survivors.....125
Limitations of the Study.....125
Implications for Research: Method and Theory.....126
Recommendations for Future Research.....127
Implications for Practice: Positive Social Change.....128
Recommendations for Future Research.....129
Summary.....131

References.....133

Appendix A: Recruitment Email and Phone Script: Individual Interviews—Retired Senior Leaders 152
Appendix B: Informed Consent: Individual Interviews—Retired Senior Leaders 153
Appendix C: Recruitment Email and Phone Script: Individual Interviews—Active or Retired Soldiers 157
Appendix D: Informed Consent: Individual Interviews—Active or Retired Soldiers 158
Appendix E Individual Interview Questions—Retired Senior Leaders 162
Appendix F Individual Interview Questions—Active or Retired Soldiers 164
Appendix G Support Advocacy Information Sheet for Participants 166

List of Tables

Table 1 Topics, Frameworks, and Research Questions 25

Table 2 Length of Interviews and Transcribed Pages.....72

Table 3 Clustered Codes for Research Question 1 80

Table 4 Clustered Codes for Research Question 2 81

Table 5 Clustered Codes for Research Question 3 81

Table 6 Research Questions and Themes 83

Table 7 Connecting Themes and Codes.....84

Table 8 Connecting Themes and Codes.....97

Table 9 Connecting Themes and Codes.....106

List of Figures

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework 61

Acknowledgments

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Dedication

To the Army and to the leaders who use their power for good.

"The most important factor of all is character, which involves integrity, unselfish and devoted purpose, a sturdiness of bearing when everything goes wrong and all are critical, and a willingness to sacrifice self in the interest of the common good."

-George C. Marshall, General of the United States Army, 1944

Chapter 1: Introduction

Ethical behavior that reflects shared values is expected from individuals serving in the U.S. military (Kaptein, 2022; Whetham, 2021). Army values include loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage (U.S. Army, n.d.). The U.S. Army website notes the difficulty of "liv[ing] up to" Army values, and states that soldiers "learn these values in detail during Basic Combat Training" and then "they live them every day in everything they do" which is "what being a Soldier is all about" (U.S. Army, n.d.). This is reinforced by high levels of discipline and training (Whetham, 2021).

This emphasis on Army values and expectation that individuals behave ethically should preclude frequent and severe cases of misconduct, which can be defined as unlawful or wrongful conduct that is motivated by an intentional purpose or obstinate indifference to doing what is "right." Yet for some Army senior leaders at least some of the time, Army values may be more aspirational than reflective of their actual practice. Cases of senior Army leaders engaging in sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, predatory behavior, abuse of power, use of position or authority for sexual gain, sexual harassment, coercion, inappropriate relationships, and inappropriate behavior continue to occur. These behaviors are not uncommon, and many have been documented in literature and reports (Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 2020; Messervey & Squires, 2021; Murphy, 2019; Pang et al., 2021).

This is important and relevant for all Army officers and soldiers. At the U.S. House Armed Services Committee hearing on April 16, 2024, during Secretary Wormuth's testimony, she argued that new training for soldiers will help address sexual harassment and sexual assault "and start doing more to prevent those kinds of incidences." Secretary Wormuth stated that "a lot of our soldiers come in today and they just don't understand kind of the basic right and wrong"

and that “we need to teach our soldiers to respect each other . . . .” She reported that in the coming fall, every new Army soldier will complete new training and “lear[n] about that . . . .” She added that “our special trial council’s office . . . are starting to prosecute those kinds of cases” as well.

This study focused on the role and behavior of Army senior leaders because if they do not demonstrate Army values consistently, soldiers may not learn and develop a shared understanding of Army values, their present relevance, and how to demonstrate those through behavior. Training is important but not enough. Army soldiers enter the Army from many different starting points yet must adapt to circumstances as well as the role models they encounter. For instance, based on the behavior of senior leaders, do Army values such as “loyalty” and “duty” require Army officers and soldiers to hold colleagues accountable for misconduct, and if so, how? Should both women and men exhibit and be treated with respect? How does each officer and soldier understand values such as honor, integrity, and courage in the face of misconduct? Army senior leaders must model this behavior in order for soldiers to know what this means and why and when it matters.

For the purposes of the study and with an eye toward real organizational reform, misconduct is framed as an issue of ethics. Two Army values serve as guiding lights: integrity and respect. The Army defines integrity as “do[ing] what’s right, legally and morally” (U.S. Army, n.d.). Respect extends from this, which the Army defines as “treat[ing] people as they should be treated. . . . In the Soldier’s Code, we pledge to ‘treat others with dignity and respect while expecting others to do the same’” (U.S. Army, n.d.). The Army explains that respect “allows us to appreciate the best in other people” and act on the knowledge that “the Army is one team and each of us has something to contribute” (U.S. Army, n.d.).

Army senior leaders wield immense power and authority over junior soldiers. The Army, with its mission to defend the United States, comprises approximately 462,000 active duty personnel (~35% of the 1.3 million active duty members of the Military), including ~230,000 active duty women, representing ~15% of active-duty members and ~19% of active duty officers (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022). Senior leaders have a responsibility to both model and act toward soldiers in ways that reflect Army values. To act with integrity and respect means that senior leaders should not violate but rather take care of soldiers, and not discriminate or treat any individual differently due to their gender or race, or for any factor irrelevant to their contributions to the Army team and their country.

This qualitative, embedded case study sought to learn the organizational culture and oversight factors that foster or contribute to senior leaders' unethical behavior and sexual misconduct in the Army, despite high levels of discipline and training, and use the findings to make recommendations.

Problem Statement

All forms of sexual misconduct, as defined above, can result in negative consequences, which can range from unpleasant to catastrophic (Pang et al., 2021). An inappropriate relationship, one that crosses professional boundaries, can impact an individual's ability to perform their required duties. As the result of inappropriate relationships, some military officers have lost their jobs. Inappropriate behavior, understood as unwanted, offensive, or demeaning conduct, can compromise work environments and performance. Victims of sexual assault may experience lifelong traumatic effects (Bourke, 2021; Holliday & Monteith, 2019). Some female officers have suffered catastrophic outcomes and even had their lives stolen (Cooper, 2019); for example, according to prosecutors, Vanessa Guillén, a Fort Hood soldier, reported her colleagues

sexually harassed her before her supervisor, Specialist Aaron Robinson, murdered her in 2020 (Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 2020; McCarthy, 2023).

Different propositions have been put forward to explain unethical behavior, including sexual misconduct, in the military. Misconduct depends on contextual factors (Pang et al., 2021; Wang & Chen, 2021). Organizational factors affect individual conduct, including that of leaders (Whetham, 2021). The role of leadership is critical in either enabling or reducing and/or stopping sexual misconduct (Papapostolou, 2022).

The U.S. military, and specifically the Army, contributes to an organizational culture and systemic failure of oversight that can lead to sexual misconduct (Messervey & Squires, 2021). In the military, sexual misconduct has been associated with aggressive male behaviors (Pang et al., 2021). It can result from military masculine cultural norms, including supervisors and ethics oversight committees' failure to observe and/or enforce the ethics code (Keefe et al., 2020; Pang et al., 2021). This failure, including the failure to lead by example, has led to the prevalence of unethical behavior (O'Keefe et al., 2020) such as sexual misconduct. Other factors may include the influence of the situation (Marquis et al., 2017), Army officers being allocated to work with other officers with known criminal misconduct (Murphy, 2019), and ineffective martial law execution leading to minimal convictions (Warner & Armstrong, 2020).

Therefore, there is a need to identify and understand the organizational culture and oversight factors that enable unethical behavior, including sexual misconduct, among senior U.S. Army officers (Aquino et al., 2009; Wang & Chen, 2021). It is as important to identify and understand the coping mechanisms women use to navigate the risks and/or experiences of becoming victims (Bourke, 2021).

The Prevalence of Sexual Misconduct in the Military

Reported cases of a wide range of sexual misconduct are rampant, and research suggests that the frequency and severity have not changed significantly (Acosta et al., 2021; Office of People Analytics, 2021). For instance, during the Iraq war (2010-11), Major General Robert Caslen oversaw the response to the alleged misconduct of 78 regular and senior enlisted Army officers. The misconduct included inappropriate relationships. In 2021, multiple U.S. Army commanders had to leave the service for various reasons, including allegations of misconduct and counterproductive leadership behaviors (Spain et al., 2022).

Daniel et al. (2019), citing congressionally mandated 2016 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active-Duty members (WGRA) data, noted that in 2016, 3,982 military members experienced a sex-based military equal opportunity (SBMEO) violation and reported this to their supervising officer (Office of People Analytics, Department of Defense, 2016, as cited in Daniel et al., 2019). The 2021 WGRA report, which relied on a different survey approach, and defined sexual assault according to what is prohibited by the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), reported higher rates of sexual misconduct. It included 69,581 survey respondents, and found that 8.4% of women (19, 255 active service members) and 1.5% of men (16,620 active service members) reported being victims of indecent sexual contact during the survey year (Office of People Analytics, 2021). These statistics underline a present and recurrent problem despite conscious and deliberate policy, training, and structural efforts to reduce sexual misconduct in the military, including the Army.

The Prevalence of Microaggressions in the Military

Microaggressions are offensive, demeaning behaviors, insulting words, putdowns, or negations used by people from majority races or superiors when interacting with others, yet they

may be unaware that such behavior is demeaning towards the target individuals or groups. Microaggressions can be linked to racism, sexism, and many forms of discrimination and oppression (Sue et al., 2019). Though microaggressions largely originated in research from the lens of racial bias, microaggressive behaviors occur in many settings where human interactions exist (Butler, 2022; Sue et al., 2019). Microaggressions have negative effects on victims, including effects on mental health, stress and depression (Dimberg, 2020). Microaggressions also contribute to hostile work environments (Sue et al., 2019). When organizations tolerate microaggressions, they breed such behaviors (Sue et al., 2019).

Microaggressions are prevalent in many organizations, including the military. Dimberg (2020) found that among women in the Navy, junior women officers reported significantly higher frequencies of gender microaggressions compared to other groups. Brown et al. (2021) found that the military organizational climate significantly shaped microaggression behaviors and associated consequences across genders and races, such as leadership and group cohesion and duty effectiveness.

Power Distance in the Army

Power distance is the extent to which lower-ranked members of a group or organization such as the Army accept and expect power to be distributed. In organizations with a culture of high-power distance, individuals lower in the hierarchy accept and expect uneven power distribution, status, seniority, and an unequal reward system. In organizations with a culture of low-power distance, individuals value equal power distribution based on performance (The Culture Factor Group, 2022). High-power distance in the Army reflects the necessary discipline, command chain, and rank. Command chain and rank are particularly useful in war situations.

Though notable differences exist in military education (i.e., among military academies), military culture around the world emphasizes discipline and this is reinforced by organizational bureaucracy (Palaghia, 2019; Soeters & Recht, 1998). In comparing military discipline among 18 nations, Soeters and Recht (1998) identified a common international military culture driven by values and attitudes about discipline. Though necessary, military discipline increases the power distance between Army leadership and officers (Palaghia, 2019).

Male-Dominated Army Culture

The military is a male-dominated, hyper-masculine work environment (Acosta et al., 2021; Bourke, 2021; Brown et al., 2021; Department of Defense, Office of People Analytics, 2021; Warner & Armstrong, 2020). Male-dominated Army culture may increase the negative impacts of power distance. The gendered military is evident in the greater number of men than women. The number of women in the U.S. military has grown marginally over the years but remains small. In 2021, only 231,741 women were members, comprising only 17.3% of the active-duty force. Women comprised 21.4% (171,000) of the National Guard and Reserves (Department of Defense, 2022). This imbalance indicates male dominance in military culture (Brown et al., 2021; Hachey, 2020).

Further, male-dominated culture contributes to expectations that military soldiers shed what is perceived as femininity and embrace masculinity. Military masculinity emphasizes physical hardness, emotional toughness, aggressiveness, and robustness. In hegemonic male-dominated cultures such as that of hierarchical military organizations, masculinity governs all other genders (McCristall & Baggaley, 2019). As such, women who rise to leadership positions in the military are also expected to behave in masculine ways, as are female officers not in leadership positions. The case of Gen Karpinski, who led the Iraq contingent during the infamous

Abu Ghraib prison abuses, demonstrates the negative consequences of male-dominated culture on women as well as men (Papapostolou, 2022).

At the same time women are expected to adorn the masculinity shield, they are still expected to not betray the femininity assumed by their gender (McCristall & Baggaley, 2019). Policies addressing gender differences are widely focused on tackling discrimination, sexual assault, and victimization, not on addressing masculinity culture per se (McCristall & Baggaley, 2019).

Female Officers Navigating the Male-Dominated Army Culture

Women in the military must navigate both the advantages and the challenges associated with their gender in this context. Researchers have called for the U.S. military leadership to create an organizational environment and culture that enables women to thrive as male officers thrive. Challenging the gender stereotype must be deliberate, accompanied by developing and enforcing gender-cognizant policies (Russell, 2020). The military, both in terms of the leadership and the institution, must deal with gender-based discrimination and consciously eliminate structural disadvantages military women face in a male-dominated, hyper-masculine environment (Brown et al., 2021), as this contributes to sexual misconduct and associated trauma.

It is not well known how individual women should handle the social exclusion and role marginalization that may contribute to discrimination and sexual misconduct. Bridges et al. (2023) suggested that in addition to institutional support, women can navigate a male-dominated military culture through resilience. Portillo et al. (2021) conducted a study on de-gendering bathrooms in military bases and summarized techniques adopted by women in the military. Women adopted male mannerisms and, in some cases, downplayed sexual harassment and

microaggressions to fit within the male-dominated military culture. Other women strictly identified as soldiers and distanced themselves from femininity in the Army. To fit in the male-dominated culture, women have also challenged themselves and undertaken physical challenges similar to men.

Coping with Senior Officers' Sexual Misconduct and Microaggressions

Reporting perpetrators is considered a coping mechanism female Army officers use to deal with gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct (Daniel et al., 2019); and reports indicate that female officers do this correctly (Daniel et al., 2019; Office of People Analytics, Department of Defense, 2021).

Victims have a universal right to report misconduct when it occurs. Reporting cases is an integral part of U.S. Department of Defense misconduct prevention and response. As Acosta et al. (2021) recommended, military institutions should provide multiple confidential channels for reporting and provide options outside a victim's chain of command.

In addition to reporting, female officers use other coping mechanisms. Dimberg (2020) found that among 683 Army women who experienced microaggressions such as sexual objectification and being treated as second-class citizens, problem-focused engagement and emotion-focused disengagement moderated the effects of depression. These findings indicated that when facing challenges, including gender discrimination and sexual misconduct, women can use and develop strategies of resilience such as cognitive and emotional efficacy.

The Role of Army Leaders

Due to the prevalence of different forms of sexual misconduct in the military, supportive intervention and reinforcement of Army values and ethical conduct is critical. Army leaders play an important role.

Daniel et al. (2019) found that when military leaders took positive action and encouraged reporting, this was associated with decreased emotional distress, increased satisfaction with reporting the misconduct, decreased desertion intentions, and increased chances of remaining in the service. This finding demonstrates the importance of Army leaders' role in supporting and encouraging individuals who come forward to report misconduct and inappropriate behavior. This can mitigate potential negative consequences associated with violations that can impact individuals and the Army.

Vila-Vázquez et al. (2021) reported that since individual differences in moral identity and malevolent traits influence conduct, the degree to which Army officers identify with and demonstrate Army values, moral efficacy, and self-control impact the likelihood of misconduct. Therefore, organizational support is critical. Studies in non-military contexts show that where individuals felt supported by their organization, they identified with and embraced organizational values and increased organizational engagement. If Army leadership and culture do not support ethical behavior, the chances of misconduct and inappropriate behavior increase and vice versa.

Papapostolou (2022) noted that Army leaders' action or inaction inhibits or promotes misconduct. Research has demonstrated that in three high-profile Army misconduct cases—the Fat Leonard scandal, the sexual abuse and murder of SPC Vanessa Guillén, and the Abu Ghraib Prison scandal—leadership inaction contributed to or caused ethical failures (Blanchard & Broadwell, 2018). In all three cases, senior leaders cultivated a culture that normalized unethical behavior; they were aware and condoned and reinforced the misconduct. In addition, if officers are assigned to work with peers who have committed misconduct, this increases their chances of doing so because negative influence occurs through exposure (Murphy, 2019).

The Potential Benefit of Organizational Learning

Several theories guided the research as well as the framing and analysis of the study's research findings: organizational culture theory (Tajfel et al., 1979), psychological safety theory (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Edmondson & Mortensen, 2021), ethical impact theory (Giacalone et al., 2016), critical theory (Paradis et al., 2020), and organizational learning theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978). These theories are consistent with the study's objectives and findings and help explain how organizational culture and other factors may influence unethical behaviors, their negative consequences, the need to resolve them, and ways to improve and call for change.

In particular, organizational learning theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978) is useful for explaining how the military, as a whole organization, may benefit from and use organizational learning to prevent and protect victims of unethical behaviors. It is clear that as cases of sexual misconduct continue to occur in the military, including the Army (Acosta et al., 2021; Office of People Analytics, Department of Defense, 2021), organizations and individuals must learn new ways to prevent and address it. Organizational policy and cultural change is needed to correct errors and create proactive, constructive norms.

Purpose of the Study

This embedded case study aimed to identify and understand the cultural and organizational oversight factors that permitted sexual misconduct in Army senior leaders in five subcases. It explored cultural and organizational oversight factors that encourage U.S. Army senior leaders to be involved in unethical practices such as sexual misconduct. It also assessed factors that make ethics committees ineffective in dealing with unethical practices and misconduct, despite having ethical leadership skills and knowledge.

Further exploration of how female officers cope with sexual misconduct and microaggressions with one- to four-star Army senior leaders is necessary in order to understand, from the perceptions of soldiers, how and why the cultural and organizational oversight factors enabled the sexual misconduct in the Army.

Research Questions

Three research questions directed the study:

1. What cultural and organizational oversight factors enable U.S. Army senior leaders to be involved in inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct, despite having ethical skills and knowledge?
2. What cultural and organizational oversight factors make oversight authorities ineffective in dealing with inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct?
3. How do women in the Army learn to cope with cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army?

Approach and Methods

The following methods were used to collect data: archival document review, interviews with retired Army senior leaders and retired or active-duty soldiers in the Army.

The archival document review formed the basis for conducting further research with female aides of general officers on their experiences in the cases, reflections, and perceptions on why and what cultural and organizational oversight factors enabled the unethical, inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct.

Outcomes Anticipated Prior to Data Collection and Analysis

Based on the literature review and research study design, the anticipated outcomes were twofold. Archival review of reports on relief of duty, dismissal, or hearings of the five sexual

misconduct cases was expected to shed light on reasons and common or unique patterns relating to these cases the Army identified and addressed. Based on the facts from the archival reports, as well as perceptions of Army officers, the aim was to corroborate the reports and identify reasons for these unethical behaviors.

The Researcher

I started my career with the Army 22 years ago. My curiosity about this topic was triggered by observing senior leaders reach a pivotal point in their career and then make 'catastrophic mistakes.' Since I became an Army officer, I have been dedicated to leading a life of service, personal and professional growth, and lifelong learning based on a commitment to change. I strive to effect positive change on personal and systemic levels. Army values both inform and solidify this commitment, yet collectively, we have a long way to go to demonstrate these values more consistently.

I know from direct experience that the Army needs to further examine how cultural and organizational oversight factors contribute to unethical behaviors amongst senior officers. The 40th Chief of Staff of the Army General McConville was once quoted as saying, "Though we all aspire to live by the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, and personal courage, the Army has sometimes fallen short." In the same statement, General McConville stated, "Our ability to defend this country from all enemies, foreign and domestic, is founded upon a sacred trust with the American people." This trust that the American people hold so dear is being eroded by the unethical behavior in our senior ranks.

According to the 2020 demographics profile by Military OneSource, women comprise 15.5% of the Army's force. As a female active-duty mid-grade Army officer who knows

firsthand the challenges that women face in the military, reform is needed with the Army culture as it relates to ethics.

I was stationed at Fort Hood Texas at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when Vanessa Guillén was sexually assaulted and murdered by her supervisor. The profound courage of her family members to seek justice and to call out Army culture have brought about the necessary changes in the Army and hold senior leaders accountable in the Army serves as inspiration and is necessary. My own experience along with Vanessa Guillén's story inspired this research. The Me Too movement granted us all front-row seats into what powerful men get away with each and every day; yet individual justice and organizational reform elude most. When sexual misconduct occurs in the military, women can feel helpless in the face of a powerful institution and in their world, even more powerful male leaders.

The military's laws, standards, and rules were developed in a male-dominated culture where they were acceptable, and men may have even been encouraged to harass and demean women. Many leaders and officers who engage in sexual misconduct still cannot see their own behaviors as unethical and/or unlawful because it is ingrained in the culture and built into the very structure of the institution. Only recently did women gain access to this institution and have the opportunity to become infantry; only recently did the U.S. government require independent investigations of unethical sexual misconduct due to the lack of oversight within the military.

Army values offer a core moral compass that can bring leaders and officers alike into alignment with a shared understanding of why and how the Army should strive to eradicate sexual misconduct. Taking concrete steps to do so honors the trust of the people for whom we serve—and as important, the colleagues with whom we serve beside.

Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Unethical behavior in the Army by senior leaders and officers is a perennial problem that needs to be addressed.
2. Authorization and access to archival reports to conduct the secondary review of the reasons for the Army observed behavior are feasible.
3. The interviewed soldiers will be supported in willingly and voluntarily sharing their experiences without fear or restraint.
4. The study findings are intended to potentially benefit the military in developing informed policies and creating norms to prevent and stop sexual misconduct in the Army.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this study was anchored first on the persistent recurrence of sexual misconduct and inappropriate behavior involving senior leaders in the Army. Army leaders should act as custodians of military discipline and ethics. Despite this, cases of unethical conduct by Army officials and senior leaders are reported every year.

The rationale for this study was anchored second on the fact that statistics do not tell the full story. The narrative behind the numbers is not well known, despite numerous reports. Either the reports are not acted upon, or the U.S. Army organization is overwhelmed with unethical behavior and misconduct. Thus, this study's approach was based on the assumption that the organization's environment, culture, and oversight failure contributes to the problem.

The rationale was anchored third on the fact that three of the four cases reviewed indicated that inappropriate relationships had persisted for a while and were known to some

individuals, both junior and senior officials. This fact raises the question of why those who knew about these cases would not report them for up to 2 years, an issue necessitating further study.

This study's findings are significant for helping to explain why successful career military leaders involve themselves in sexual misconduct and the high level of ethical discipline they swear to maintain. The study's findings show how much Army culture and command chain contribute to sexual misconduct and inappropriate behavior. The study's findings offer insight into the ideal individual and organizational learning practices suitable for preventing and reducing misconduct. In terms of a better understanding of policy, the findings help explain why, despite well-thought-out military policy guidelines, sexual harassment cases are rampant year after year.

Definitions

Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct can be consensual or non-consensual sexual activities involving two or more persons. In the military context, the person aggressor is known as the "subject," while the victim is known as the "survivor." Outside the military, those who initiate or engage in sexual misconduct are also referred to as "perpetrators" or "offenders," while survivors are typically identified as "victims" (Pang et al., 2021). Sexual misconduct in the Army refers to behaviors that violate standards of professional and ethical conduct expected of its members. This includes sexual assault, use of position or authority for sexual gain, sexual harassment, inappropriate relationships, and inappropriate behavior. The Army's SHARP program (Sexual Harassment/Assault Response & Prevention) addresses these issues.

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are offensive, demeaning behaviors, insulting words, putdowns, or negations used by people from majority races or superiors when interacting with others. Micro-aggressors may not be aware their behavior is demeaning toward the target individuals or groups. Microaggressions are forms of or contribute to racism, sexism, gender discrimination and many forms of oppression (Sue et al., 2019).

Organizational Ethic Climate

Organizational ethic climate represents the total sum of workplace ethical risk factors that can shape a person's behavior and ethical decision making. Organizational ethics factors are directly related to the organization in which a person is employed (Messervey & Squires, 2021).

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is the personal ethical conduct of the leader and the leader's expectations that followers behave ethically. The ethical leadership-follower relationship is reciprocal. Ethical leaders can inspire ethical followership, but it is difficult to have ethical leaders if the followers are unethical (Whetham, 2021).

Unethical Behavior

In the Army, unethical behavior refers to actions that violate the established standards for professional and ethical conduct, guided by shared core values. These values include loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage (U.S. Army, n.d.). Unethical behavior can undermine the Army's mission. For example, "dishonesty" includes cheating, stealing, lying, falsifying documents, misrepresenting facts, or not telling the truth during official inquiries. "Conflict of interest" refers to engaging in activities or relationships that interfere or appear to interfere with one's ability to perform official duties objectively. The Army

refers to “fraternization” as engaging in relationships that compromise or appear to compromise the integrity of the chain of command or that are prohibited between ranks.

The Army relies on its member’s adherence to a high standard of ethical behavior to maintain trust, cohesion, discipline, professionalism, and readiness. Army regulation AR 600-20, Army Command Policy, addresses unethical behavior that violates professional conduct, leadership responsibilities, and treatment of personnel. This regulation encompasses a wide range of topics including the Army’s equal opportunity program, the Army’s sexual harassment/assault response and prevention program (SHARP), fraternization, and general responsibilities of commanders and leaders to maintain order, discipline, and an environment of professionalism and respect. Preventing and addressing unethical behavior is critical for the Army’s effectiveness and reputation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this embedded case study was to understand the cultural and organizational oversight factors that enable unethical workplace sexual misconduct in five cases within the Army. Such cases have become a problem in militaries around the world, including the U.S. Army (Spain et al., 2022). While these behaviors may be attributed to individual factors, organizational culture and oversight factors may also be at play, including military masculinity culture, systemic failures, and ineffective martial law execution leading to minimal convictions (Warner & Armstrong, 2020). This embedded case study was designed to uncover such factors, as well as possible protective factors that may help reduce or eliminate unethical behaviors within the Army.

This chapter explores the literature pertaining to these cultural and organizational factors, as well as possible protective factors that may help prevent unethical behaviors within the Army. This chapter contains a review of recent and relevant literature to frame the study's topics and theoretical and conceptual frameworks. To initiate this process, a search strategy will be employed using online databases and relevant key terms. The databases utilized for this review included Elsevier, Research Gate, and Google Scholar. The key terms used to obtain relevant literature for this study's topics were "unethical behaviors," "misconduct," "inappropriate behaviors," "military," "military culture," "masculine culture," "oversight," "organizational learning theory," "critical theory," "psychological safety theory," "organizational culture theory," and "ethical impact theory." These key terms were inputted into the databases individually and in combination, with a focus on recent works published from 2019 onwards. Some seminal works from 2018 and older are also included as foundational sources.

Recent Cases of Senior Army Leaders' Misconduct

In recent dismissals of senior Army leaders, the reasons cited include misconduct and inappropriate behaviors. Several were relieved of their positions due to misconduct (Bennett, 2016; Losey, 2021), gross mismanagement of Army personnel, or enabling a culture where misconduct, microaggressions, and corruption have thrived (Spain et al., 2022). Below are brief narratives of recent dismissals of high-profile generals from the Army.

General Petraeus

General David Petraeus was a four-star, powerful Army general and a Washington spy chief in 2012 after the revelation of a secret affair with his female biographer. The General resigned soon after the affair became public. The affair was not simply romantic but was seen as threatening national security because General Petraeus shared classified materials with his female biographer. General Petraeus was charged with a misdemeanor for his manner of handling classified materials. He was handed a two-year probation period and a $100,000 fine (Bennett, 2016).

Major General Wayne Grigsby

Major General Wayne Grigsby was forced to retire from commanding the First Infantry Division and stripped of one star in 2016 after an affair with a female captain. He had served in the military for over 35 years. Despite several warnings by General Grigsby's aides about the nature of the relationship with the female captain, he continued the affair. It was reported that the General gave the female officer preferential treatment, broke the chain of command, and put his interests ahead of those of the Army. Even though his case was not determined as fully physical, the General was in constant contact with the female officer (Brook, 2017).

Brigadier General David Hamilton

Brigadier General David Hamilton was in line for a second star in 2020 when a sexual misconduct case was filed against him by a subordinate officer. At the time of the accusation, he was serving as a director of operations for NATO's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps. He was demoted and had to retire at a lower rank of Colonel. The General was accused of inappropriate sexual contact and maltreatment. He acknowledged rubbing the junior officer's back inappropriately but denied all other allegations. The General discussed the matter with the subordinate officer in an attempt to alleviate the discomfort but never accepted fault (Rempfer, 2020).

Major General Scott Efflandt

Major General Scott Efflandt was relieved of his duties in 2020 as the commander of the Fort Hood unit after Sergeant Aaron Robinson sexually assaulted and murdered a female Army soldier, Specialist Vanessa Guillén (Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 2020; Losey, 2021). The matter brought to light the issue of recurrent sexual assault and harassment in the military, with reported cases either ignored or not addressed. The Fort Hood Independent Review Committee's (2020) review revealed that the command climate under General Efflandt enabled sexual misconduct to thrive, leaving victims helpless. In addition to General Efflandt being relieved of his command, the entire chain of command of SPC Guillén was dismissed (Losey, 2021).

Major General John J. Maher III

The sexual misconduct case involving Major General John J. Maher III was closed in late 1999. At the time of the hearing, General Maher was the Pentagon's Joint Staff Director of Operations. General Maher was convicted of having inappropriate sexual relationships with the

wives of two Army officers and an affair with a junior officer. Rather than dismissal, members of the closed-door hearing demoted the General, stripped him of his stars, and ordered him to retire as a Colonel. The affairs likely existed for over 2 years before the misconduct came to light. The private administration hearing was also necessitated by the reluctance of the witnesses to testify in a public military court (Graham, 1999).

The five cases described above underline several key issues about misconduct and inappropriate behavior in the Army. They involved senior Army leaders. In four of the five cases, the senior Army leaders were involved in inappropriate relationships. In the Fort Hood case, the General and the other senior commanders were found culpable of the death of a sexual assault victim. The inappropriate relationships persisted for a while and in three cases were known to some individuals in the Army, both junior and senior officials. Despite that, the misconduct was ignored or enabled. Except in murder of SPC Guillén, the females involved in the other three cases were not formally or officially punished whereas the Generals were either demoted or stripped of their stars.

These cases serve as indicators of an Army culture that enables sexual misconduct, in some cases, through oversight failures by leaders. As such, a full review of the cases can reveal the causes or reasons for why these cases occurred. Such data forms the basis for further investigations by interviewing Army officers about what they feel caused these cases and perhaps how the Army enables leaders to conduct unethical behaviors.

Organizational Learning and Adult Learning: selected theories and concepts

The literature review includes the following topics: (a) cultural factors influencing unethical behaviors, (b) organizational factors influencing unethical behaviors, (c) protective factors that may prevent unethical behaviors and their consequences, and (d) the theoretical and

conceptual frameworks that guided the study. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks include organizational culture theory (Tajfel et al., 1979), psychological safety theory (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Edmondson & Mortensen, 2021), ethical impact theory (Giacalone et al., 2016), critical theory (Paradis et al., 2020), and organizational learning theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978). The literature review includes a discussion, identification of gaps within the literature, and a synthesis of the literature.

The topics selected reflect potential answers to the research questions. The first topic involves the cultural factors that may influence unethical behaviors within the Army. Key concepts include ethical climate; the male-dominated, hyper-masculine culture of the Army; and the culture of loyalty and cohesion in military groups. Ethical climate is relevant to this study as it has been purported to influence unethical behaviors in members of an organization (Kim & Vandenberghe, 2020; Messervey & Squires, 2021). The hyper-masculine culture of the Army has also been cited as a possible factor promoting unethical behaviors (Bourke, 2021; Warner & Armstrong, 2020). The culture of loyalty and cohesion within military groups is relevant to this study because despite being perceived as positive constructs, they may promote unethical behaviors through peer or leadership effects (Hanges et al., 2020; Murphy, 2019), and may discourage the reporting of unethical behaviors (Bourke, 2021; Dariano & Oabel, 2021).

The second topic involves organizational factors that may influence unethical behaviors within the Army. This topic generally covers issues of reporting unethical behaviors, as not doing so enables Army leaders and officers to commit unethical behaviors (Acosta et al., 2021; Bourke, 2021). Another pertinent issue within this topic is insufficient training in terms of ethical education and character development, which can contribute to the prevalence of unethical behaviors (Acosta et al., 2021; Spain et al., 2022). These organizational factors highlight the

structural problems within the military, including the Army, that reduce awareness and accountability regarding unethical behaviors.

The third topic involves possible protective factors that may help prevent unethical behaviors or minimize their consequences. The concepts include resilience, leadership, accountability, and social support. These concepts are especially relevant to Research Question 3: How do women in the Army cope with cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army? They also highlight existing gaps in theory and practice regarding ways to prevent unethical behaviors in the Army.

The fourth topic involves the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used for this study. The theories help to explain how cultural and organizational factors may influence behaviors, why studying such factors is important, and what possible protective factors may be used to address unethical behaviors in the Army. Critical theory (Paradis et al., 2020) is relevant to Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 as it provides a means of critiquing the Army culture and promoting systemic changes to prevent further sexual misconduct in the Army. Organizational learning theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978) is relevant to Research Question 3 as it helps frame the ways in which the Army can address unethical behaviors within its members through the protective factors of organizational learning and change. Ethical impact theory (Giacalone et al., 2016) is relevant to Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 because it emphasizes the effects of unethical behaviors and the need to explore the underlying cultural and organizational factors that may lead to such behaviors. Psychological safety theory is relevant to Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 because its principles can help explain the reasons behind Army leaders and officers' ethical or unethical behaviors. Organizational culture theory (Tajfel et al., 1979) is relevant to Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 as it may help explain how Army leaders and officers perceive themselves

in relation to their unit, other officers, and the Army as a whole, which may subsequently influence their behaviors. These five theories form the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide the research questions as well as the data collection, analysis, and synthesis for this study (see Table 1).

Table 1

Topics, Frameworks, and Research Questions

Topic	Theoretical Framework	Research Question
Cultural factors	Organizational culture theory, psychological safety theory, ethical impact theory	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3
Organizational factors	Critical theory, ethical impact theory	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3
Protective factors	Organizational learning theory	RQ3

Cultural Factors for Unethical Behaviors

Factors related to organizational culture may influence unethical behaviors in the Army. The military culture emphasizes loyalty, duty, courage, honor, and integrity, which military members are expected to internalize along with other military values and norms (Hachey, 2020). Army leaders and officers are expected to internalize these values and adhere to the cultural norms. These should also form the basis of the work climate within the military, which is vital in preventing or promoting unethical behaviors (Hanges et al., 2020; Spain et al., 2022). In this section, elements of the Army culture and work climate are examined, as well as how they may influence unethical behaviors.

Ethical Climate

The work climate represents the perceptions shared by organization members, typically based on the policies, procedures and practices of the organization (Hanges et al., 2020). Unlike the more deeply rooted organizational culture, work climate relies on everyday events and conditions. The work climate is also shaped by other parties in the organization, most notably by leaders who serve as role models for organizational members (Spain et al., 2022). Ethical climate represents a specific dimension of the work climate that reflects the organization's shared perceptions of right or wrong behaviors (Spain et al., 2022). The ethical climate of a military branch or unit may thus influence its members' ethical or unethical behaviors.

Ethical climate has been explored in the literature in relation to behavioral outcomes (Kim & Vandenberghe, 2020; Matthews et al., 2021; Messervey & Squires, 2021). The behavioral outcomes described include ethical behaviors, unethical behaviors, decision-making, and counterproductive workplace behaviors (Messervey & Squires, 2021). In their report on sexual assault and harassment cases in the U.S. Army, Matthews et al. (2021) indicated that higher supervisor and unit climate scores were related to lower risk of sexual assault and harassment scores. Furthermore, higher separation rates were related to higher assault and harassment rates, which suggests that unit members who had a negative perception of the unit climate may have left the unit or the military altogether because of the perception that unethical behaviors were tolerated (Matthews et al., 2021).

Conversely, more positive perceptions of an organization's ethical climate were associated with an increase in members' self-efficacy (Messervey & Squires, 2021). This increase in self-efficacy aided individuals when they were presented with hypothetical unethical situations, allowing them to resist unethical decisions (Messervey & Squires, 2021). Ethical

climate also served as a moderator for ethical leadership such that the positive influence of ethical leadership on team ethical voice and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) towards individuals was stronger in more ethical climates (Kim & Vandenberghe, 2020). In other words, members in a strong ethical climate are more likely to respond to their leaders' ethical behaviors because they reflect the team's ethical norms, thereby increasing team members' probability of using an ethical voice and performing OCB towards individuals (Kim & Vandenberghe, 2020). Ethical climate may thus play various roles in either promoting or preventing unethical behaviors.

The aforementioned values inculcated in the military have led to a strong moral image of its ethical climate (Wolfendale & Portis, 2021). At times, the overemphasis on the moral image of the military ethical climate can be harmful as it de-emphasizes the structural issues of the military and places all fault on the individual who committed unethical behaviors (MacKenzie et al., 2020; Wolfendale & Portis, 2021). In MacKenzie et al.'s (2020) analysis of media portrayals of the military, they noted a paradox in which the military culture was portrayed as both innately dysfunctional and essential at the same time. The media indicated that violent behaviors such as sexual assault are to be expected in the military as a systemic part of military culture; however, they also stated that such aggressiveness was a necessary part of warfare. Furthermore, several media articles minimize the unethical behaviors to a single individual or unit rather than tackling the presence of such behaviors across the military (MacKenzie et al., 2020). The high moral standards and perceived ethical climate of the military may give off the impression that they can do no wrong, which may then encourage members to commit unethical behaviors.

Hegemonic Hyper-Masculine Culture

The military profession and field have long been known for the masculine and warrior cultures due to the military's history of being male-dominated and combat-related (Hachey, 2020; Warner & Armstrong, 2020). Even in the contemporary era, men continue to dominate the field, being around six times greater in number compared to women, which contributes to its hyper-masculine culture (Campos, 2021). Historically, the traits of physical strength, aggression, and control were expected of men in the military, depicting the ideal soldier (McCristall & Baggaley, 2019). Hegemonic masculinity preserves these ideals and the dominance of men over women (Hrytsenko et al., 2021; Karami et al., 2021; McCristall & Baggaley, 2019).

The hegemonic hyper-masculine culture of the military may be problematic as it not only attracts aggressive individuals (Bourke, 2021) but also incorporates such aggressive behaviors into their training (Stuart & Szeszeran, 2021). There has been an underlying belief around the military culture that fear is the best motivator for military performance, hence the physically and psychologically harsh training regiments. Such training can border on acts of bullying in the pretense of preparing soldiers for the harsh conditions of warfare (Stuart & Szeszeran, 2021). In cases of sexual assault, the hegemonic hyper-masculine culture may also result in gender biases that prevent commanders or other senior leaders from acting on reported cases (Warner & Armstrong, 2020). Victim blaming or perpetuation of rape myths that involve the false belief that victims are at fault for their own victimization are commonplace in the military and have hindered many reports, investigations, support, and prevention efforts for military sexual assault (Campos, 2021; McLean et al., 2022). Furthermore, the warrior culture may also serve as a barrier for victims who may perceive reporting as a weakness (Bourke, 2021; Brown et al., 2021; Lane & Fosher, 2020). There is a problematic belief within the military that persevering through

sexual assault is an act of toughness that is lauded, which contributes to the promotion of unethical behaviors (Lane & Fosher, 2020).

Gender biases manifest in many other ways in the military. In general, femininity is associated with weakness and deemed unsuitable for military work (MacKenzie et al., 2020; McCristall & Baggaley, 2019; Portillo et al., 2021). The mere issue of menstruation, which is a natural and regular occurrence for women, has been used by military men to discriminate against women and oppose women's presence in the field (Portillo et al., 2021). Male participants in Portillo et al.'s (2021) study expressed their disgust and disapproval towards menstruation, with some stating that menstruation made women more difficult to work with. In Vermeij's (2020) report involving female U.N. peace operations officers, 86 out of 142 women shared their experiences of being accused as "loose women" who had sexual relationships with senior leaders in exchange for favorable treatment while on deployment (p. 4). The women noted the double standards wherein their male colleagues who had children were praised while they were perceived as negligent mothers for concentrating on their military careers (Vermeij, 2020). McCristall and Baggaley (2019) also highlighted such double standards in the case of Janis Karpinski, who was described using words such as "caring" and "loves" her soldiers as her own children, words that were typically not used to describe male officers in her rank (p. 121). More gendered stereotypes were used to describe her after the cases at the Abu Ghraib prison were revealed, such as "react[ing] to the 'scandal' like a woman, stating that she was 'whining, making excuses and complaining that it's not her fault'" (McCristall & Baggaley, 2019, p. 121). Such gendered biases reinforce the hegemonic hyper-masculine culture of the military and the perceived inferiority of women.

Gender biases towards women do not come exclusively from men. Accounts of women criticizing or discriminating against fellow women in the military were presented by Vermeij (2020) and Zedlacher and Koeszegi (2021). Women in Vermeij's (2020) study reported frequent criticisms from fellow military women as a way to fit in with the male-dominated organization. Zedlacher and Koeszegi (2021) agreed, stating that acts of discrimination or even simple misogynistic statements towards fellow military women were coping strategies utilized by some military women who did not wish to challenge the predominant masculine culture. As a result of these gendered biases, military women are subjected to a double bind wherein they are perceived negatively regardless of whether they assert power similar to their male peers or display more stereotypically feminine behaviors (Davis et al., 2020; Karazi-Presler, 2021). For instance, female senior officers from Karazi-Presler's (2021) focus group study in Israel shared that they were criticized for openly displaying their emotions or for their feminine clothing styles. When they acted in more stereotypically masculine ways, they were still criticized and perceived as difficult to work with (Karazi-Presler, 2021). This double bind perpetrated by both men and women can perpetuate unethical behavior in the forms of discrimination or bullying within the military.

The issues related to hegemonic hyper-masculinity in the military may be compounded by intersectionality issues for women of color who have faced not only gender biases but also racial biases (Breslin et al., 2022; Brown et al., 2021; Vermeij, 2020; Ziesk-Socolov, 2021). Evidence for the added stigma associated with military women's race and ethnicity were presented by Brown et al. (2021) and Vermeij (2020), whose participants stressed the intolerance and prejudices they faced for their dark skin color. For example, Specialist Vanessa Guillén was a woman of color; she was of Hispanic descent (Ziesk-Socolov, 2021). Following Specialist

Guillén's murder, Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy referenced her case to highlight the barriers faced by service members of color in reporting sexual harassment (Ziesk-Socolov, 2021). Breslin et al. (2022), who investigated the prevalence and experiences of Black women in terms of sexual harassment in the U.S. military, found that 17.9% of Black women had experienced sexual harassment within 12 months of the survey, most of which persisted for a few months or more (Breslin et al., 2022). Notably, up to 25% of participants had indicated that sexual harassment experiences had led them to leave the military. From those who reported, approximately 48% had been told to drop the issue while around 46% had suffered consequences of being victim-blamed and receiving poorer treatment from their colleagues (Breslin et al., 2022). These findings emphasize the issue of hegemony within the military, in terms of gender and race or ethnicity. Powers et al. (2020) thus called for more research on social inequality factors that may contribute to this hegemony within the military.

Hierarchical Culture

Militaries are also known to follow a hierarchical or rules-based culture, wherein service members are expected to strictly follow orders from senior officers regardless of morality issues (Bourke, 2021; Brown et al., 2022; Campos, 2021; Stuart & Szeszeran, 2021). The hierarchical culture of the military was perceived to be necessary to maintain order within the organization (Campos, 2021; Stuart & Szeszeran, 2021). Coupled with authoritarian leadership styles, the well-defined work roles and formal rank structures have been established as core elements of the military to ensure that all duties and tasks are achieved with high performance standards (Stuart & Szeszeran, 2021). Anyone who does not meet such standards or disobeys orders from the upper ranks may be punished. Senior military officers may thus use this culture to legitimize their bullying and other unethical behaviors towards junior officers (Stuart & Szeszeran, 2021).

Bourke (2021) noted that up to 80% of identified offenders in the military were ranked higher than their victims. Notably, Brown et al. (2021) found that female officers also suffered discrimination from lower ranking officers. This finding may indicate a stronger effect of gender bias toward women compared to the hierarchical culture of the military. Nonetheless, hierarchy in the military is still pertinent, especially as it serves as a deterrent from reporting unethical behaviors because of the power held by those in the upper ranks (McDew, 2022). Such power serves as a safeguard for senior officers to employ abusive supervision without fear, while their victims keep silent out of fear (McDew, 2022). Brown et al. (2022) highlighted this issue in their article, indicating a need to shift from the hierarchical rules-based ethics commonly used in militaries to a values-based ethics, wherein officers relied on their own morality rather than the rules and orders of their seniors.

Loyalty and Cohesion

Loyalty and cohesion have been presented in the past as positive traits for military soldiers and units (Berry et al., 2021; Hurley et al., 2021; Piotrowski et al., 2020). Based on survey data from 83,344 U.S. soldiers, cohesion significantly and positively influenced perceived sexual harassment reporting climate (Hurley et al., 2021). Furthermore, peer support has been associated with OCB, implying that cooperation and mutual support are positive factors for ethical behaviors (Piotrowski et al., 2020). Loyalty is closely tied to cohesion as loyalty is typically driven by a need to belong (Berry et al., 2021). Past researchers cautioned, however, that strong loyalty and cohesion may bring negative effects when ethical decisions are involved as loyalty and cohesion could sway one’s moral judgment (Berry et al., 2021; Hurley et al., 2021).

In the military, loyalty and cohesion are highly lauded and promoted with the tribalism culture, as these elements were perceived to improve soldiers' performance (Wadham & Connor, 2023). However, loyalty and cohesion, albeit being typically positive traits, can also promote unethical behaviors. For instance, male participants in Portillo et al.'s (2021) qualitative study expressed their opposition to women joining the force due to their belief that women could disrupt the male cohesion of the military. The participants stated that having women within the area could impede their freedom to talk during male bonding, which implied that they would be discussing or joking about topics that women would find offensive (Portillo et al., 2021). This finding aligns with Stuart and Szeszeran's (2021) systematic review findings that individuals considered as outsiders from a group, such as women in the male-dominated military, were more likely to experience exclusion or bullying in the guise of preserving cohesion.

An apparent manifestation of the issue regarding cohesion in the military is the prevalence of hazing (Campos, 2021; Metzger et al., 2022; Zedlacher & Koeszegi, 2021). Hazing involves humiliating, degrading, abusive, or dangerous acts employed as initiation for new members into a group (Metzger et al., 2022). Although hazing has been forbidden in the U.S. military for decades, reports indicate that hazing persists, with up to 183 complaints filed in 2020 (Metzger et al., 2022). Unfortunately, not all military service members may be aware of the complex nature of hazing. In Metzger et al.'s (2022) qualitative study involving 10 U.S. service members, participants were unsure of what constitutes hazing, leaving out certain elements of hazing such as the roles of consent and intentionality. As another example, the abusive acts and torture within Abu Ghraib have been minimized as a form of hazing, with photographs showing soldiers shamelessly posing with defiled or dead bodies (Tidy, 2021).

Because of the belief that hazing builds cohesion, some service members may actually be proud of surviving such harmful practices and glad that it brought them closer to the group (Tidy, 2021; Zedlacher & Koeszegi, 2021). Furthermore, unlike the civilian workplace setting where employees who experience hazing may easily resign from the company, the military setting does not allow such affordances (B. J. Thomas et al., 2021). Hazing has been likened to humorous banter, which may also be a form of harassment, in that these behaviors are perceived as harmless necessities for forming strong bonds (Tidy, 2021). Zedlacher and Koeszegi (2021) further noted that the more extreme the hazing rituals, the stronger its perceived resulting bonds.

Aside from promoting unethical behaviors, the elements of loyalty and cohesion may also be used to deter service members from reporting their victimization (Bourke, 2021; Skopp et al., 2020; Stuart & Szeszeran, 2021). The loyalty code in most militaries strongly discourages whistleblowing (Bourke, 2021). In Skopp et al.'s (2020) qualitative study, participants shared their strong desire to preserve cohesion and how this compromised their boundary setting. Service members allowed their victimization to continue and refused to report so that they would not be excluded from the group or labeled as a traitor (Dariano & Oabel, 2021; Skopp et al., 2020). Bourke (2021) also shared a statement from a female soldier indicating that once an individual reports an unethical behavior, that individual will be perceived as the one responsible for destroying the team.

Because the Army as a whole generally promotes shared values and ethical behaviors, one may wonder about the impact of loyalty to the Army on unethical behaviors. Unfortunately, past researchers have indicated that soldiers are typically more loyal to small units or individuals rather than to the military as a whole (Connor et al., 2021; Dariano & Oabel, 2021; Zedlacher & Koeszegi, 2021). To demonstrate, Dariano and Oabel (2021) investigated the influence of

emotional closeness to the offender on peer reporting. They found that in scenarios involving high emotional closeness to the offender, a significant number of participants (20.6%) indicated that they would not perceive the offense as honor-related, which may imply some emotional biases based on personal loyalty (Dariano & Oabel, 2021). Furthermore, Australian retired service personnel have admitted that their main loyalty rested on their unit and their mates, while loyalty to the chain of command was only subsidiary and loyalty to the military or the nation was more abstract (Connor et al., 2021). The participants defended their small unit loyalty with the logic that the Army was built around the concept of teamwork (Connor et al., 2021). The perceived importance of small unit loyalty may thus be a contributing factor for unethical behaviors.

In line with the perceived importance of cohesion, past researchers have presented evidence for both peer effects and leader effects in pressuring service members to commit unethical behaviors (Hanges et al., 2020; Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021; Kim et al., 2021; Murphy, 2019). In their quantitative study regarding adverse peer effect, Murphy (2019) found that soldiers who were placed together with more peers with criminal backgrounds had significantly higher probability of committing major misconducts. Moreover, soldiers' misconducts were more likely to occur during the same month as the misconduct of a peer with criminal background (Murphy, 2019). In terms of leader effects, Hanges et al. (2020) shared the incident involving Lt. Col. Arthur Holland wherein his unethical behavior of flying to locations outside of guidelines was replicated by younger pilots. In their South Korean study, Kim et al. (2021) further found that supervisor incivility was significantly and positively related to subordinates' deviant behaviors. These findings highlight the significant influences of peers and leaders on military service members' unethical behaviors.

Synthesis of Cultural Factors

Various military cultural factors have been identified as contributing to the problem of unethical behaviors in the Army. In a field where ethical decisions are constantly made, the ethical climate within the military serves as a cultural factor because it could either function to promote or reduce unethical behaviors (Kim & Vandenberghe, 2020; Matthews et al., 2021; Messervey & Squires, 2021). The military has been known for its hegemonic hyper-masculine culture that promotes physical strength, aggression, and control, which could lead to unethical behaviors towards those considered weak or powerless, including military women (Hrytsenko et al., 2021; Karami et al., 2021; McCristall & Baggaley, 2019). Hierarchy is also a predominant part of military culture, which could allow senior leaders to abuse their power or for officers to conduct unethical behaviors under the guise of following orders (Bourke, 2021; Brown et al., 2022; Campos, 2021; Stuart & Szeszeran, 2021). Finally, the military culture promotes loyalty and cohesion, which may be used to rationalize bullying and discrimination towards those considered outsiders or to prevent reporting unethical behaviors as a way to preserve unit cohesion (Berry et al., 2021; Hurley et al., 2021; Piotrowski et al., 2020). These cultural factors may encourage or enable unethical behaviors, hinder oversight of such unethical behaviors, and influence senior leaders' behaviors within the Army.

Organizational Factors for Unethical Behaviors

Organizational factors may also influence unethical behaviors within the Army. Organizational efforts to prevent unethical behaviors in the military have mostly been considered mere bureaucratic responses that failed to address underlying factors for unethical behaviors (Bourke, 2021). This section covers such efforts in the forms of the military's systems, policies, procedures, and programs. This includes the military's system for reporting unethical behaviors

(Bourke, 2021; Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021; Lucas et al., 2022; Monea, 2022; Warner & Armstrong, 2020), the chain of command (Acosta et al., 2021; Bourke, 2021; Daniel et al., 2019; Kuhlenhoelter, 2021; MacKenzie et al., 2020; Warner & Armstrong, 2020), the possibility of institutional betrayal (Holliday & Monteith, 2019; Monteith et al., 2021), the possibility of revictimization (Holliday & Monteith, 2019; Warner & Armstrong, 2020), training and development (Acosta et al., 2021; Spain et al., 2022; Whetham, 2021), and lack of policies, workforce, and oversight (Acosta et al., 2021; Davis et al., 2020; MacKenzie et al., 2020; Powers et al., 2020; Wolfendale & Portis, 2021).

Reporting System

The U.S. military's inadequate system for reporting unethical behaviors, particularly for sexual assault cases, has been cited as an organizational factor that exacerbates the issue (Bourke, 2021; Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021; Lucas et al., 2022; Monea, 2022; Warner & Armstrong, 2020). In 2005, the U.S. military established categories of restricted and unrestricted reporting for sexual assault (Bourke, 2021; Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021; Warner & Armstrong, 2020). Every time a military health care professional receives reports of sexual assault from service members, they are obligated to notify the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) to ensure that the service members are informed of reporting options as well as their rights and available resources (Lucas et al., 2022).

To protect their privacy, in restricted reports, victims of sexual assault can choose to not disclose their identity, details of the assault or offenders' identities. Savitz (2021) noted, however, that such protection is not infallible, especially when the victim belongs to a small unit where they would be easy to identify. Restricted reports come with the benefits of receiving medical care, counseling, having a victim coordinator, and having a forensic exam without an

official investigation (Warner & Armstrong, 2020). This reporting option has led to an increase of restricted reports throughout the years, with the number rising from 435 in 2005 to 2,176 in 2020 (Monea, 2022). Restricted reports may have several advantages for the victim, but it does not promote accountability as the offender does not receive any punishment (Bourke, 2021; Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021). Furthermore, the increase in restricted reports may reflect service members' fears and concerns about possible consequences of an investigation, which highlights the organizational issue of the reporting system in the military (Monea, 2022).

Although the number of restricted reports has increased, the absolute number of unrestricted reports remains higher than restricted reports (Monea, 2022). In unrestricted reports, victims are required to disclose their identity and their offender's identity (Lucas et al., 2022; Savitz, 2021). Victims of sexual assault may prompt an unrestricted report through various means, such as through their chain of command, directly to the SAPRO, or through healthcare providers who can notify the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator office (SARC). Notably, restricted reports are converted into unrestricted reports at any moment that the chain of command finds out about the assault (Lucas et al., 2022). Unrestricted reports automatically lead to an official investigation, which makes it more ideal for tackling deeper organizational and cultural factors related to military sexual assault. Service members who have filed unrestricted reports have shared mostly negative experiences and indicated that they would probably not encourage others to do the same, prompting the need to improve this process (Mengeling et al., 2014).

Previous researchers have scrutinized this reporting system and possible associated issues (Acosta et al., 2021; Eliezer et al., 2020; Zedlacher & Koeszegi, 2021). For one, previous researchers have highlighted the factor of the victim's relationship with the offender (Eliezer et

al., 2020; Karl Umbrasas, 2022). Based on an investigation of victim behavior following 58 cases of military sexual assault, Karl Umbrasas (2022) found that only 36.1% of the cases involved some form of victim resistance, which the author attributed to the victim's familiarity with the offender. In their quantitative study, Eliezer et al. (2020) found that victims assaulted by intimate partners were less likely to report the assault compared to those assaulted by strangers (Eliezer et al., 2020). Furthermore, victims assaulted by intimate partners also expressed greater dissatisfaction from leadership responses to their reports. This finding reflected civilian contexts, which suggests that women assaulted by intimate partners, in general, may receive less empathy due to the rape myth that it can only be considered as rape if it was done by a stranger (Eliezer et al., 2020). Another issue with the reporting system is that reports are subject to the chain of command and may be dismissed before they reach senior leaders or higher military justice offices (Acosta et al., 2021; Daniel et al., 2019; Zedlacher & Koeszegi, 2021).

Senior leaders themselves may also dismiss the case due to several decision factors (Breslin et al., 2022; Eliezer et al., 2020; Griffith & Medeiros, 2020; Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021; Karl Umbrasas, 2022; Warner & Armstrong, 2020). One obvious factor for the inadequate reporting system is that sexual assault offenders may actually be part of the victim's chain of command, which immediately serves as a barrier for reporting (Brown et al., 2021; Vermeij, 2020). Offenders could also have strong relationships with the commander, which could influence their decisions regarding the case or the victim's decision to report (Brown et al., 2021). In making the decision to court martial an offender, commanders are pressured to think about how it will affect the unit's readiness, order, discipline, and accountability (Kuhlenhoelter, 2021; Warner & Armstrong, 2020). In some cases, commanders can use the offender's character as a defense and minimize certain acts as collateral misconduct (Warner & Armstrong, 2020).

Many victims of sexual harassment have shared how their commanders told them to simply drop the issue upon reporting the incident (Breslin et al., 2022; Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021).

The power held by the commander in making court martial decisions may lead to conflicts of interest, which often lean towards prioritizing warfare over victims' individual rights (Davis et al., 2020; Griffith & Medeiros, 2020; Kuhlenhoelter, 2021). Anecdotes from Davis et al.s' (2020) focus group report indicated commanders' mission-first mentality, where unethical behaviors are tolerated when they are committed by someone considered as essential to the unit. Griffith and Medeiros (2020) explained this phenomenon in terms of idiosyncrasy credits, which are the allowances made for one who has departed from a group norm but who also has a good job performance record or status in the organization. The more credits an offender has from their performance and status, the more tolerant leaders will be towards their unethical behaviors (Griffith & Medeiros, 2020). The multiple cases of sexual assault, suicides, and homicides at Fort Hood were purported to have been a result of such decision factors (Kuhlenhoelter, 2021).

Victims of unethical behaviors may be hesitant to report because of the institutional betrayal factor (Holliday & Monteith, 2019; Monteith et al., 2021). Institutional betrayal involves a breach of trust in a relationship that the survivor relied on for the sake of their survival or other pressing needs. For soldiers, the military may be perceived as a place of stability and safety. As such, experiences of military sexual trauma may lead to feelings of institutional betrayal. Furthermore, negative or inadequate responses by the military to reported sexual trauma may aggravate their feelings of institutional betrayal (Holliday & Monteith, 2019; Monteith et al., 2021). Because of these feelings of betrayal, victims of military sexual trauma may avoid subsequent help-seeking from military-related organizations, such as the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Veterans have admitted their reluctance to avail VHA services because it

was perceived as a branch of the military, from which their traumatic experiences stemmed (Holliday & Monteith, 2019). Dissatisfaction with the outcomes of reporting unethical behaviors has also been associated with reduced retention intentions, which may indicate a sense of betrayal and loss of trust (Daniel et al., 2019).

Another long-standing reason for not reporting unethical behaviors is the fear of retaliation (Acosta et al., 2021; Bourke, 2021; Farris et al., 2021; Kessler, 2021; Monea, 2022; Savitz, 2021; Vermeij, 2020; Ziesk-Socolov, 2021). Retaliation is often committed by higher ranking officers, which leaves the victim powerless against it (Farris et al., 2021). According to the 2012 Congressional Committee Chair, three-quarters of servicewomen who filed reports for sexual abuse indicated that they would not have done so again because of the effects it had on their military careers (Bourke, 2021). Human Rights Watch investigated military sexual assault reports in 2015 and discovered widespread retaliation against those who reported (Kessler, 2021). The reporters experienced a variety of detrimental outcomes, such as unfavorable changes in job responsibilities, unfavorable performance reviews, bullying, sanctions for minor infractions, and threats (Kessler, 2021). In 2017, there were 264 complaints of retaliation for reporting military sexual assault, around 75% of which involved retaliation from the chain of command (Monea, 2022). The case of Specialist Vanessa Guillén also involved a fear of retaliation as she had told her family and friends that her offenders included two senior ranking officers (Ziesk-Socolov, 2021). Even non-victims who witnessed a case of sexual assault or harassment may experience retaliation, which also deters them from reporting the incident (Savitz, 2021).

Aside from retaliation, reporting sexual assault cases may also lead to revictimization (Holliday & Monteith, 2019; Warner & Armstrong, 2020). Warner and Armstrong (2020)

purported that the investigative process of discussing the assault may be traumatic for victims. Furthermore, victims may have to undergo vaginal examination when seeking care for military sexual assault, which can exacerbate the experience of revictimization (Holliday & Monteith, 2019). The numerous factors presented above serve as possible deterrents for reporting unethical behaviors, particularly sexual assault and harassment in the military.

Training and Development

Despite the establishment of the SAPRO and their sexual assault training (Ziesk-Socolov, 2021), the insufficiency of training on ethics and character development continues to be an issue contributing to unethical behaviors in the military (Acosta et al., 2021; Spain et al., 2022; Whetham, 2021). In a seminal work, Holland et al. (2014) examined the relationship between exposure to DoD's sexual assault training and knowledge regarding sexual assault. The authors first noted that only 54% of the 26,505 U.S. military service members had experienced comprehensive training involving sexual assault actions, reporting mechanisms, interventions, and resources, while 30% described partial training and 7% described minimal training (Holland et al., 2014). Holland et al. further found that participants who received comprehensive training were significantly more knowledgeable regarding sexual assault protocols and resources than those with partial or minimal training, suggesting the need for more comprehensive training. More recently, Acosta et al. (2021) noted that current SAPRO training programs lack variations and interactive elements and are not theory-driven or implemented by prevention experts. Based on 61 focus groups with 493 active-duty members in 2019, SAPRO's prevention efforts were centered more around building awareness rather than skills (Acosta et al., 2021).

There have also been efforts toward character development for officers before they assume leadership positions (Whetham, 2021); however, such character development decreases

as officers increase in rank (Spain et al., 2022). It appears that character development is perceived as an enduring trait that stays with officers through time. This runs in contrast to the idea of ethical fading, wherein individuals' ethical standards erode over time and may be exacerbated by stress. Spain et al. (2022) suggested that the military should acknowledge that character, like fitness, is not permanent and needs to be constantly reinforced through more deliberate and incentivized character development programs.

Policies, Workforce, and Oversight

Previous researchers also highlighted the lack of policy, workforce, and oversight for preventing unethical behaviors (Acosta et al., 2021; Davis et al., 2020; MacKenzie et al., 2020; Powers et al., 2020; Wolfendale & Portis, 2021). Although the military supposedly has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual violence, this policy appears to be a mere formality (MacKenzie et al., 2020). In their analysis of print media, MacKenzie et al. (2020) found that this zero-tolerance script has been recycled for decades since the 1990s, often following debates regarding the issue, with minimal evidence of its effectiveness. Service members have also expressed that leadership efforts towards military sexual violence were often reactionary instead of preventive, while senior officers admitted that their trainings leaned more toward responding than preventing sexual assault (Davis et al., 2020). Previous researchers have further noted a lack of branch-specific or context-specific policies across the military, which may be necessary considering the discrepancies in the risks and prevalence of sexual violence in the different military branches and career fields (Matthews et al., 2021; Powers et al., 2020).

In their report, Acosta et al. (2021) noted a lack of workforce with specialized skills specifically targeted towards sexual assault and harassment prevention. The lack of oversight for Battalion Pay Agents in Wolfendale and Portis's (2021) study was also deemed as a problematic

organizational factor that presented soldiers with moral risks, which could then lead to unethical behaviors. The authors described the experiences of First Lieutenant Portis as a Battalion Pay Agent during Operation Iraqi Freedom, tasked with withdrawing large sums of money from a finance office and paying local contractors for construction projects and other micro-grants (Wolfendale & Portis, 2021). Portis described the minimal security and oversight from superiors during this process, expressing their surprise at how much trust their leaders placed on them to handle the money. Portis then shared how a fellow pay agent had taken advantage of this trust and kept the money for himself, stealing around 700,000 U.S. dollars. This pay agent was only caught because he had spent the money on a lavish lifestyle that raised suspicion. Other than that, no other measures were in place to prevent such incidents, such as inspections or internal inventories (Wolfendale & Portis, 2021). These deficiencies in policy may indicate that prevention of such behaviors is not a priority in the military.

Considering these deficiencies and gaps in the literature, previous researchers have called for more research involving organizational policies, procedures, and systems that influence sexual assault and harassment among other unethical behaviors (Daniel et al., 2019; Griffith & Medeiros, 2020; Kessler, 2021).

Synthesis of Organizational Factors

The military's systems, policies, procedures, and structures have been criticized within the literature as organizational factors that contribute to unethical behaviors. The U.S. military's reporting system has received much negative attention in the literature as an ineffective system that does not promote accountability, which then encourages more unethical behaviors (Bourke, 2021; Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021; Lucas et al., 2022; Monea, 2022; Warner & Armstrong, 2020). Previous researchers have further criticized the insufficiency of training and

development regarding ethics and character development, especially as military officers climb up the ranks (Acosta et al., 2021; Spain et al., 2022; Whetham, 2021). There has also been a lack of policy, workforce, and oversight specifically for preventing unethical behaviors, which suggests that it is not a priority of the military (Acosta et al., 2021; Davis et al., 2020; MacKenzie et al., 2020; Powers et al., 2020; Wolfendale & Portis, 2021). These organizational factors may add to the cultural factors previously discussed in encouraging and enabling unethical behaviors in the Army, hindering oversight for such unethical behaviors, and influencing senior leaders' behaviors and decisions within the Army.

Protective Factors to Prevent Unethical Behaviors

Potential protective factors may help prevent unethical behaviors or minimize their consequences. Aside from the negative factors that promote unethical behaviors in the military, previous researchers have also explored potential protective factors that may aid in prevention. Some protective factors identified within the literature involved individual characteristics such as resilience, and personal tactics for prevention (Bridges et al., 2023; Brown et al., 2021; Hrytsenko et al., 2021; C. L. Thomas et al., 2021). Leaders were also purported to play a significant role in prevention (Acosta et al., 2021; Hachey, 2020; Hanges et al., 2020; Harris et al., 2023; Kim & Vandenberghe, 2020; Messervey & Squires, 2021). Various other protective factors are explored in this section, with the idea that effective prevention involves a comprehensive system of detection of unethical behaviors, resolution of cases, protection of victims, urgent investigations, and appropriate sanctions on offenders (Hrytsenko et al., 2021).

Individual Protective Factors

Resilience has been cited as an individual protective factor against the negative consequences of being targeted by unethical behaviors (Bridges et al., 2023). Resilience involves

the ability to remain functional and healthy following adverse events. Resilient individuals are able to learn and adapt in uncertain conditions as well as during and following a crisis. A resilient individual may thus be able to report sexual assaults or harassment (Bridges et al., 2023). Female veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and experienced various traumatic events, including military sexual violence, have expressed the need for resilience-building efforts, such as veteran therapy groups, resiliency mentorship, and resiliency skills training (McKenzie et al., 2021). Bridges et al. (2023) described resilience as a product of individual and organizational efforts. As such, while having innately resilient service members may be beneficial, it is the military's responsibility to provide opportunities for service members to build resilience.

Female officers have also shared some improvised tactics that have helped them prevent inappropriate behaviors from their fellow officers (Brown et al., 2021; Hrytsenko et al., 2021; Vermeij, 2020). The most frequently reported tactic for protection was to be in a relationship or pretend to be in a relationship, particularly with another military man (Brown et al., 2021; Hrytsenko et al., 2021; Vermeij, 2020). Some participants in Brown et al.'s (2021) study have also stated that they hid weapons in their personal spaces for added protection. B. J. Thomas et al. (2021) found a significant relationship between sexual assault and physical activity, hypothesizing that some victims may use exercise as a coping mechanism. These tactics and the emphasis on resilience, however, are individual factors that do not solve the root of the problem.

Leadership Efforts

The onus is on leaders and their use of ethical leadership practice to compel officers to practice ethical behavior and avoid unethical ones. Leaders not only make crucial decisions for the organization but also serve as role models for subordinates and set the work climate (Hachey,

2020; Harris et al., 2023). Leadership has been associated with moral identity within the military (Messervey & Squires, 2021). In particular, transformational leaders were found to inspire subordinates to prioritize shared vision over their own interests (Messervey & Squires, 2021). In this way, transformational leaders may prevent subordinates' unethical behaviors that stem from perceived self-interest.

Ethical leadership has also been cited as a factor for preventing unethical behaviors (Foley et al., 2021; Hanges et al., 2020; Messervey & Squires, 2021). Ethical leadership involves the promotion of normatively acceptable behaviors through open communication, decision-making, and reinforcement, as well as through one's own actions and interpersonal interactions (Agrawal et al., 2020; Messervey & Squires, 2021). Similar to transformational leaders, ethical leaders also encourage working together towards a shared vision by fostering a sense of community (Hanges et al., 2020). In Kim and Vandenberghe's (2020) quantitative study involving the Republic of Korea Army, they found that ethical leadership significantly and positively influenced organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) toward individual and team moral efficacy. Similarly, Foley et al. (2021) presented evidence from 1,358 U.S. Army officers and soldiers showing the significant and positive influence of ethical leadership on OCB and affective commitment. By promoting ethical behaviors, ethical leaders may reduce the risk of unethical behaviors by their subordinates.

Accountability

With the prominence of unethical behavior reports that go unaddressed within the military, previous researchers have noted the need to emphasize accountability (Davis et al., 2020; Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021; Wolfendale & Portis, 2021). One way to promote accountability is for commanders to utilize the comprehensive list of administrative disciplinary

methods for different types of misconduct (Acosta et al., 2021). Employing immediate and appropriate sanctions was purported to help in sending a clear message across the organization regarding ethical norms and expectations (Acosta et al., 2021). To reduce the risk of retaliation, Kuhlenhoelter (2021) suggested widening the definition of retaliation to include various types of harassment and bullying. Such efforts could serve as catalyst for the much-needed cultural change discussed in the previous sections (Kuhlenhoelter, 2021).

Possible solutions to the poor reporting and justice systems have also been explored in literature. Acosta et al. (2021) emphasized the need for multiple avenues for reporting outside the victim's chain of command. Bourke (2021) noted that commanders and other senior officers involved in handling cases are not trained attorneys. Other researchers have thus suggested employing civilian or military lawyers outside of the chain of command to handle particularly complex cases such as sexual assault (Kessler, 2021; Monea, 2022; Ziesk-Socolov, 2021); however, Cox (2021) noted that such efforts may not be as effective as presumed, as observed in the cases of Australia, Canada, Israel, and the United Kingdom, where the number of sexual assault cases continue to increase while the number of cases prosecuted continue to decrease despite being handled by lawyers rather than commanders. Such organizational efforts may be insufficient to address the deep-rooted problem of unethical behaviors in the military without complimentary cultural efforts.

Continuous evaluations were also suggested as a way to promote accountability and reduce unethical behaviors (Acosta et al., 2021; Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021; Kaptein, 2022; Whetham, 2021). Kaptein (2022) presented the metaphor of the retreating cat effect to explain the need for constant evaluations. More instances of the cat or the evaluation team retreating meant more opportunities for the mice or the organization's members to misbehave

(Kaptein, 2022). The U.S. Congress has recognized the importance of evaluations and has taken measures to improve the evaluation system of the military (Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021). Since 2015, they modified performance appraisals for commanders to include how they were able to promote a climate in which sexual assault allegations are efficiently and fairly handled, and victims of unethical behavior can easily report incidents without fear of retaliation (Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021). Whetham (2021) further suggested establishing a team of trusted individuals who can either challenge or support commanders as needed and provide an outsider's perspective. Such strategies of evaluations would help ensure that the numerous efforts to improve the ethical climate and reduce unethical behaviors are actually working.

Character Development and Other Training Programs

Military officers are frequently placed in morally ambiguous positions that could lead to unethical behaviors (Brown et al., 2022). Previous researchers have thus called for increased character development and moral dilemma training to prepare military officers and commanders to face such situations (Brown et al., 2022; Spain et al., 2022). In such training, Cornwell and Korenman (2021) suggested focusing more on prevention of unethical behaviors rather than promotion of ethical behaviors. Based on their quantitative study involving U.S. Military Academy students, promotion-focused trainings were positively related to ethical behavior but not significantly related to unethical behavior (Cornwell & Korenman, 2021). Concurrently, prevention-focused trainings were significantly related to both increased ethical behaviors and reduced unethical behaviors (Cornwell & Korenman, 2021). Service members across studies have also noted that existing training formats are insufficient and unengaging (Davis et al., 2020; Skopp et al., 2020). They noted a need for more realistic trainings, such as real testimonials, vignettes, role plays, and small group discussions (Davis et al., 2020; Skopp et al., 2020).

Bystander intervention training has also been suggested for prevention of military sexual violence (Farmer, 2021; Skopp et al., 2020). According to participants of the Army Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Tiger Team (STT) focus groups, many soldiers would be willing to practice bystander intervention but did not have the knowledge and skills to do so (Skopp et al., 2020). Examining bystander intervention preferences, Skopp et al. (2020) found that soldiers would most likely delegate the incident to others, such as trusted agents. Only a few confident soldiers showed willingness to directly intervene with an incident, and mostly only if there were two or more bystanders present (Skopp et al., 2020). Military wives also showed willingness to practice bystander intervention but also noted the need for training (Farmer, 2021). Despite these recommendations, Eliezer et al. (2020) and Griffith and Medeiros (2020) noted that bystander intervention may not be effective due to the uneven power dynamics in the military and the fact that most sexual assault cases occurred in private with few witnesses. Nonetheless, bystander intervention training may be a useful addition to other prevention efforts and a catalyst for cultural change in the military.

More specific types of trainings were suggested in the literature. Zedlacher and Koeszegi (2021) recommended training and promoting more perceived feminine-associated traits in the military, such as cross-cultural skills, which could not only be useful in modern peacekeeping but also in reducing the hyper-masculine culture of the military. DuVivier et al. (2020) introduced the Gracie Defense Systems (GDS) workshop, which involved pre-emptive boundary setting, jiu-jitsu training, and self-defense techniques to prevent sexual assault. Based on their analysis of the workshop with 75 Air Force base personnel, the GDS was effective in improving awareness, self-efficacy, vigilance, self-determination, and reduced vulnerability, especially for female participants (DuVivier et al., 2020). Tirone et al. (2020) also noted that self-defense

treatment for victims of military sexual violence was effective in increasing self-defense self-efficacy. Participants from Farmer's (2021) study further emphasized the need for targeting specific populations in training, such as military wives who are also vulnerable to military sexual violence.

Social Support

Social support networks, advocates, helplines, and mentors are also invaluable resources for victims of unethical behaviors in the military (Bridges et al., 2023), including sexual assault and harassment. One way that the military can provide social support is through helplines (Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021; Zedlacher & Koeszegi, 2021). The Safe Helpline established by the DoD in 2011 is a 24/7 helpline providing confidential crisis support and information for service members (Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021). This helpline was purported to be an accessible source of social support as approximately one-third of sexual assault victims in 2019 had reported the incident to the helpline first; however, approximately 59% of helpline users did not make an official sexual assault report (Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021). The Australian Armed Forces has a similar 24/7 helpline that offers confidential support for all types of bullying; however, its effectiveness has yet to be statistically proven (Zedlacher & Koeszegi, 2021). These helplines may provide immediate relief or support for victims of unethical behavior, but there is still a lack of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and their impact on the wider problem of unethical behaviors in the military.

Because of the increased vulnerability of women as victims of unethical behaviors in the military, previous researchers have highlighted the importance of women's support (Bridges et al., 2023; Brown et al., 2021; Vermeij, 2020). Having a support group purely composed of women may allow military women a safe space within the larger hyper-masculine culture of the

military (Bridges et al., 2023). Female mentors were also cited as invaluable sources of support and advice for protecting themselves against sexual violence and discrimination (Brown et al., 2021; Vermeij, 2020). The military may utilize this strategy by establishing formal women's groups or mentorship programs (Bridges et al., 2023; Brown et al., 2021; Vermeij, 2020).

Victim advocates may also be sources of support for victims of unethical behaviors in the military (Bonnes & Palmer, 2022; Lucas et al., 2022). Victim advocates typically provide various services, such as contacting the victim at least every month, affirming that the victim has a safety plan, discussing options to support victims' decision-making, providing information and assistance with resources, accompanying the victim to legal and medical appointments, and serving as liaison between the victim and their chain of command when necessary. Victim advocates receive formal education and training to be eligible for such roles (Bonnes & Palmer 2022). Service members who file a restricted report through SAPRO are eligible to access such services from victim advocates (Lucas et al., 2022). Victim advocates are also invaluable support systems that provide victim-centered care (Bonnes & Palmer, 2022).

Synthesis of Protective Factors

The literature reviewed within this section contained potential protective factors that may help prevent unethical behaviors or minimize their consequences. Women in the military have shared individual protective factors that they have used to protect themselves against discrimination, sexual assault and sexual harassment (Brown et al., 2021; Hrytsenko et al., 2021; McKenzie et al., 2021; Vermeij, 2020). Previous researchers have also highlighted the important role of leaders in discouraging unethical behaviors through ethical leadership (Foley et al., 2021; Hanges et al., 2020; Kim & Vandenberghe, 2020; Messervey & Squires, 2021). Various suggestions have been made to improve accountability over unethical behaviors within the

military, including widening the criteria for punishable retaliation against reporting, expanding reporting avenues, and continuous evaluations (Acosta et al., 2021; Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021; Kaptein, 2022; Kessler, 2021; Kuhlenhoelter, 2021; Monea, 2022; Whetham, 2021; Ziesk-Socolov, 2021). There has also been a call for increased quantity and quality of character development and other training programs in the Army (Brown et al., 2022; Cornwell & Korenman, 2021; Farmer, 2021; Skopp et al., 2020; Spain et al., 2022; Zedlacher & Koeszegi, 2021). These protective factors represent the possible ways to protect women and other individuals from being victimized by unethical behaviors in the Army.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Five theories were used to address the research questions and frame the discussion of the research findings: critical theory (Paradis et al., 2020), organizational learning theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978), ethical impact theory (Giacalone et al., 2016), psychological safety theory (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Edmondson & Mortensen, 2021), and organizational culture theory (Tajfel et al., 1979). The rationale for the use of each theory and the resulting conceptual framework, which synthesizes and builds on all five theories, is discussed below.

Edgar Schein's Theory of Organizational Culture

The rationale for the use of Schein's theory of organizational culture (Giacalone et al., 2016) was as follows: it was used to understand and explain how organizational culture functions in the Army. According to Edger Schein, organizational culture comprises three major levels. The first level is the artifacts. The artifacts describe the describable, visible and overt aspects of an organization. The artifacts involve organizational tools, dress code, office design, policies, and branding. In simple terms, these are the visible things that can be seen in an organization. According to Edgar, the second level of organizational culture is espoused values (King &

Lawley, 2022). The espoused values are how people would describe the organization in current or aspirational terms. The espoused values would involve elements such as the value statements, social contracts, goals, and mission of an organization. The third level of the organizational culture is the underlying assumptions, which are unspoken, unconscious, and particular elements within an organization (Lam et al., 2021).

The theory was useful for the research and analysis in several ways. First, the behaviors of individuals in an organization would be described by the value that every organization sets for itself. The value system of an organization devises the conduct and behaviors that employees would be expected to follow. The expectations that people have within an organization would also be influenced by the underlying assumptions that have been set within the organization (Kaur Bagga et al., 2023). Every individual and organization have expectations. In the context of the Army, leaders and officers should know how to apply Army values and what the organization expects of them in terms of conduct that reflects those.

Amy Edmondson's Theory on Psychological Safety

The rationale for the use of ethical impact theory (Giacalone et al., 2016) was as follows: It was used to explain and understand the connection between leadership and psychological safety. The major aim of a leader in the organization is to ensure that employees are safe psychologically. To do this, leaders have to create an environment and space enabling people to step up, bring their full selves to work, and even make mistakes. Psychological safety can be enhanced in the organization through communication (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). The leader in the organization can support and/or work to change the quality and nature of the conversations on teams so that conversations are psychologically safe and productive. After making conversations align with the safety needs of employees, the outcomes can improve automatically.

Psychological safety is a major component in the determination of the overall performance and effectiveness of an organization (Edmondson & Mortensen, 2021). According to this theory, every organization must take seriously the psychological safety of its employees because this contributes to their conduct while carrying out duties. Psychologically safe individuals tend to demonstrate calmness and general good behavior while at work and interacting with others (Edmondson & Daley, 2020). Therefore, Army leaders' understanding the psychological safety needs of officers is important to establish the reason behind their behaviors. Their psychological safety levels may also determine their overall performance.

Ethical Impact Theory

The rationale for the use of ethical impact theory (Giacalone et al., 2016) was as follows: It was used to understand and explain how unethical behaviors negatively impact the well-being and job-related outcomes of those involved (Giacalone et al., 2016; Schwepker et al., 2021). The first two theories in the previous subsections help explain possible roots of unethical behaviors, and ethical impact theory (EIT) helps explain the possible effects of such behaviors and the need to examine the various factors that may encourage or discourage those.

The EIT is a human-centric theory in that it is focused on the individual rather than financial or organizational outcomes of unethical behaviors (Giacalone et al., 2016). Whereas ethical work environments are related to positive workplace effects and group creativity, unethical workplace behaviors negatively impact employee wellbeing and can lead to negative physical and psychological consequences. Three prominent forms of unethical behavior in the workplace, although not exhaustive, are discrimination, bullying, and organizational injustice, such as sexual misconduct in the Army. Sexual assault and harassment affect victims in part due to the ethics violations. A key principle under EIT is that all forms of unethical behavior,

regardless of degree, can negatively affect individual wellbeing (Giacalone et al., 2016). When individuals experience the effects of unethical behavior, the reaction to the unethical behavior is mediated by stress, trauma and poor health.

Another principle under the EIT is that unethical behavior negatively affects all involved within the organization. It harms the well-being of not just the victim employee but also witnesses, the perpetrators themselves, and other involved individuals, such as family members and co-workers (Giacalone et al., 2016; Schwepker et al., 2021).

EIT principles highlight the gravity and magnitude of the consequences of unethical behavior: whether small deviances or large actions, all forms of unethical behavior impact individuals. The theory also helps explain how individuals are affected by such conduct. Though few studies have been conducted using the EIT as framework, Schwepker et al.'s (2021) quantitative study regarding the relationships between perceived organizational ethics, work-related stress, and employee well-being serves as a useful example. Based on two sets of survey data from a total of 450 employees, Schwepker et al. (2021) concluded that organizational ethics, which involved ethical climate, ethical leadership, and corporate social responsibility, significantly and negatively influenced job-related stress, which in turn, significantly and negatively influenced employee well-being. Though the study did not focus specifically on behavior, organizational ethics reflect an absence of unethical behaviors. It also highlights the potential positive organizational factors that could help reduce unethical behaviors in the Army. As such, the findings indicated that the absence of unethical behaviors would most likely lead to improved employee well-being and reduced job-related stress (Schwepker et al., 2021).

As another example, Brown et al.'s (2021) qualitative study found evidence of the impacts of unethical behavior. The female veterans in their study shared the long-term

psychological effects of the discrimination and harassment they experienced in the military. For instance, one participant shared that they could not sleep properly unless they constantly checked that their bedroom door was locked even after their service in the military (Brown et al., 2021). These findings help explain the impacts of unethical behaviors in the Army.

Critical Theory

The rationale for the use of critical theory (Paradis et al., 2020) was as follows: it was used to examine the organizational factors that foster unethical behaviors in the Army. Critical theory is an anti-positivist theory that reflects the assumption that there are no universal rules for human behavior and ways of life at organizational levels. Contemporary critical theorists take an ontological stand, arguing that it is necessary to consider people's conditions, daily existence, and ways of thinking.

They emphasize the importance of appreciating the influence of characteristics such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, politics, and economics on everyday life (Paradis et al., 2020). Through this lens, critical theorists advocate against inequitable power dynamics, such as those observed in the military chain of command. They believe that human behaviors are both limited by social structures and also capable of disrupting such structures. Critical theory is based on the notion that one can change the world through the disruption of such oppressive structures.

Critical theory is useful for critiquing the Army, especially in light of repeated cases of sexual misconduct, because it functions as a male-dominated, positivist organization resistant to change (Portillo et al., 2021) with strict codes and rules for recruitment, behavior, and rank. Through the lens of critical theory, Army leaders and officers are both limited by military culture and policies and have the capacity to disrupt those (Holt, 2021; Paradis et al., 2020).

An example of the application of critical theory is Wadham and Connor's (2023) study of unethical behaviors within the Australian armed forces. They reviewed historical military records since the 1960s and noted the gendered nature of the military that favored men and significantly disadvantaged minority women and LGBTQ members. Although Australian military justice reforms to address these issues began in the 1990s, they continued to be ineffective in eliminating unethical behaviors. It was not until a major scandal occurred in 2011 that the Australian Defense Forces acknowledged the organizational factors that contributed to acts of sexual misconduct. Wadham and Connor's (2023) review emphasized the importance of critical theory in examining well-established and change-resistant structures such as the military.

In another study, Karazi-Presler (2021) also highlighted the change-resistant nature of the military, this time from the perspective of women who held senior leadership positions in the Israeli military. Based on their interviews, the women constructed self-images of authenticity and uniqueness, as well as symbolic boundaries between themselves and other women in the military. Through these strategies, Karazi-Presler noted that the women claimed their own power using the same gendered and oppressive approaches used against them. These findings highlight the need for critical theory in tackling the gendered issues of power and other organizational factors that foster unethical behaviors in the military (Karazi-Presler, 2021).

Organizational Learning Theory

The rationale for the use of organizational learning theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978) was as follows: organizational learning theory was used to explain how the military, as an organization, may possibly change to prevent unethical behaviors and protect victims of unethical behaviors.

Organizational learning theory provided insight on how to interrupt or halt unethical behavior and sexual misconduct in the Army, specifically by senior officers (Spain et al., 2022). It requires learning at individual and organizational levels. Individual learning should not be construed to mean organizational learning, despite individuals being members of an organization (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Organizational knowledge structures involve acting and learning (Ifenthaler et al., 2021). Members of an organization do not learn through habits but rather by testing a given set of knowledge. The learned knowledge guides actions and is understood when applied (Ifenthaler et al., 2021). Further, individuals learn and act for the organization (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Each individual holds a certain self-image that they compare with that of the organization, the public picture or map. To the individual, the self-image is incomplete until it reconciles with the organizational image or public map. Again, what actors say and what they do are not always the same. Thus, maps shape an individual's actions (Cody, 2014). Since individual and organizational learning are interdependent, an actor's knowledge must be congruent with the public maps (organizational image).

Argyris and Schön (1978) suggested three levels of organizational learning. First, in single-loop learning, errors are identified and addressed without changing existing organizational objectives, policies, or presumptions. Single-loop learning is reactive: It identifies variations from expected action and learning occurs when errors are corrected. Here the organization continues using existing policies. As research has shown, the military deals with sexual misconduct reactively (Daniel et al., 2019; Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 2020). The reactive approach aligns with single-loop learning, where Army officers are just compliant.

Second, in double-loop learning, organizational values, strategies, and presumptions are challenged to enact organizational change. Double-loop learning integrates feedback and

questions existing organizational systems and structures (Cody, 2014). Upon detection of errors, organizational learning is evident through developing new policies, norms, values and objectives. Through reflection, actors review how they contributed to the situation. In double-loop learning, Army leadership and military institutions would develop an environment that identifies and prevents misconduct (Cody, 2014).

Third, triple-loop learning involves a holistic transformation by training members to learn problem-solving skills (Argyris & Schön, 1978). When dealing with deep-rooted issues such as unethical behaviors in the military, it may be necessary to attempt all levels of organizational learning to enact organizational change. Organizations need ingenuity and willingness to collaborate to add more value and creativity. In order to achieve the objectives of an organization, it becomes necessary to involve everyone in the learning process so that the key aspects of success in the organization are mastered by everyone.

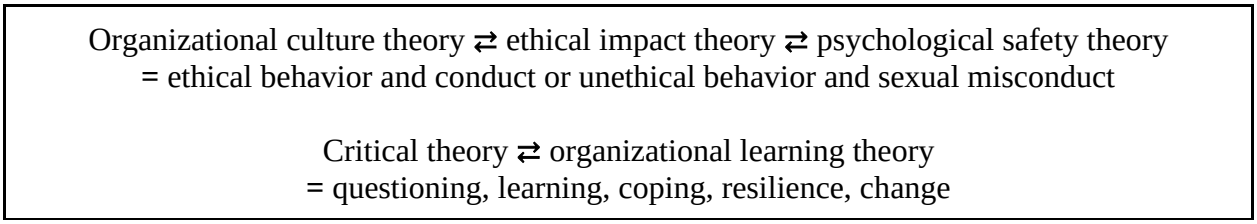
To demonstrate the applicability of organizational learning theory, Al Dari et al. (2021) investigated the influence of organizational culture and knowledge management on organizational learning. Based on survey results from 693 managers and leaders in the law enforcement sector of the United Arab Emirates, clan culture significantly and negatively influenced organizational learning. Conversely, hierarchical culture and knowledge technological capabilities both significantly and positively influenced organizational learning. The authors purported that the hierarchical culture's characteristics of uniformity, coordination, and efficiency allowed such organizations to adopt novel processes and expedite knowledge management (Al Dari et al., 2021). These findings highlight the potential of organizational learning as a protective factor against unethical behaviors within the military, which adopts a hierarchical culture (Bourke, 2021).

Synthesis of Theories into a Conceptual Framework

The theories discussed above shed light on the possibility of addressing unethical behaviors and their consequences within the Army. Organizational culture and psychological safety theories (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Edmondson & Mortensen, 2021) represent the potential roots of behavior determination. Ethical impact theory (Giacalone et al., 2016) sheds light on the possible consequences of unethical behaviors, emphasizing the need for further research studies, such as the present study, to address them. Critical theory (Paradis et al., 2020) highlights the organizational factors that foster unethical behaviors in the military and suggests the possibility that changes can be made to address these issues. Finally, organizational learning theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978) represents the possibility of addressing unethical behaviors through organizational change as a protective factor. The conceptual framework for this study based on these theories is thus presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Summary

The literature reviewed within this chapter provides evidence of possible organizational and cultural factors influencing unethical behaviors, including sexual misconduct. Cultural factors, such as poor ethical climate, the male-dominant, hyper-masculine culture of the military, and the possible adverse effects of loyalty and cohesion in military groups have been cited as possible contributors to unethical behaviors (Bourke, 2021; Dariano & Oabel, 2021; Hanges et

al., 2020; Kim & Vandenberghe, 2020; Messervey & Squires, 2021; Murphy, 2019; Warner & Armstrong, 2020). Based on principles of the psychological safety theory (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Edmondson & Mortensen, 2021), Army leaders and officers may enact unethical behaviors based on the environment that surrounds them. Principles of the psychological safety theory may also partly explain why Army officers and leaders enact or tolerate unethical behaviors for the sake of cohesion or loyalty to the predominant masculine in-group of the military.

Organizational factors, such as the poor reporting system, insufficient training and development, and lack of policy, workforce, and oversight further exacerbate the cultural issues of the military and contribute to the prevalence of unethical behaviors (Acosta et al., 2021; Bourke, 2021; Spain et al., 2022). Based on the critical theory lens (Paradis et al., 2020), these organizational factors form the social structures that may lead to unethical behaviors and should thus be challenged as a whole, in addition to addressing individual cases of unethical behaviors. When combined with cultural factors, these organizational factors present an environment wherein gender biases and other harmful beliefs are rampant and service members are discouraged from reporting the resulting unethical behaviors. The harmful consequences of such unethical behaviors are explained by the ethical impact theory (Giacalone et al., 2016), thus highlighting the need to study these factors and identify possible solutions to reduce unethical behaviors, including sexual misconduct, in the Army.

The literature also includes studies that have identified possible protective factors for preventing or reducing unethical behaviors and their negative consequences. Individual protective factors, such as resilience-building, have been suggested to prevent the negative consequences of unethical behaviors (Bridges et al., 2023; McKenzie et al., 2021); however,

these individual factors do not address the fundamental issues that promote unethical behaviors within the military. Based on the organizational learning theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978), changes involving such deep-rooted issues may require holistic transformation that targets the Army's organizational values, cultures, and systems as well as character development from service members to senior leaders. Ethical leadership and accountability may be necessary to address the root of the problem and prevent further unethical behaviors from occurring within the military (Acosta et al., 2021; Davis et al., 2020; Foley et al., 2021; Hachey, 2020; Hanges et al., 2020; Harris et al., 2023; Kim & Vandenberghe, 2020; Messervey & Squires, 2021; Wolfendale & Portis, 2021). Social support networks, advocates, helplines, and mentors have also been cited as possible protective factors for victims of unethical behaviors (Bonnes & Palmer, 2022; Bridges et al., 2023; Brown et al., 2021; Kamarck & Salazar Torreon, 2021; Zedlacher & Koeszegi, 2021).

It should be noted that these factors were mostly presented in theoretical articles rather than empirical studies, which highlights the need for more empirical evidence. There were also notably few studies incorporating the theories used within this study into the context of unethical behaviors in the military. These gaps in the literature served as points of interest for the present study, supporting its purpose. In the following chapter, the methodology for this present study is presented to explain how this purpose was achieved.

Chapter 3: Methods

This embedded case study sought to identify gaps and shed light, from the perspectives of soldiers and senior leaders, on the organizational culture and oversight factors that permit one- to four-star Army senior leaders to engage in sexual misconduct and microaggressions in five sub-cases, and to explore how female soldiers cope with and navigate the risks of victimization.

Sources included: (a) publicly available archival documents, (b) individual interviews with retired senior Army leaders, and (c) individual interviews with active and retired soldiers in the Army. Three research questions directed the study:

1. What cultural and organizational oversight factors enable U.S. Army senior leaders to be involved in inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct, despite having ethical skills and knowledge?
2. What cultural and organizational oversight factors make oversight authorities ineffective in dealing with inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct?
3. How do women in the Army learn to cope with cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army?

This chapter describes the methods used to achieve the aims and objectives of the study. This includes a description of the research design, rationale, site, sample, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and issues of trustworthiness. The chapter also includes a discussion of assumptions, limitations, and delimitations associated with the study; and concludes with a summary and outline of key points.

Research Design and Rationale

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of this study, a qualitative, embedded case study was implemented. The utilization of a qualitative, embedded case study approach in

research can yield comprehensive and in-depth information and understanding of intricate phenomena within their authentic settings (Cardano, 2020; Muzari et al., 2022). The reason for selecting this particular approach was to comprehend the cultural and organizational supervisory elements that can enable sexual misconduct of senior leaders in the Army.

A qualitative approach was used to explore the nuances and develop a comprehensive understanding of a complex problem in a particular context (Williams, 2019). The analysis of context was crucial for comprehending the reasons behind these incidents. Through the implementation of an embedded case study methodology, the study concentrated on the particular circumstances of each sub-case within the overarching case of the U.S. Army, thereby facilitating a comprehensive account of individual scenarios while simultaneously examining their interrelation with the wider organizational culture (Yin, 2018).

Embedded case studies facilitate the utilization of diverse data sources to attain a comprehensive understanding of the matter at hand (Yin, 2018). Various types of data can be collected for research purposes, such as interviews, documents, field notes, and observations. The utilization of multiple data sources enhances the resilience of the research findings (Johnson et al., 2020). The comprehension of dynamics over time can be facilitated through the use of case studies, which enable the examination of how these factors have undergone transformations across time. Unethical conduct is frequently attributed to a series of successive shortcomings or omissions, and a temporal examination can elucidate the progression of these factors (Kaptein, 2022).

The process of theory generation is often linked to qualitative research due to its inclination towards inductive reasoning (Englander, 2019). The results obtained from this study make a contribution to the development of novel theories pertaining to organizational behavior,

military culture, ethics, and oversight within hierarchical organizations (Messervey & Squires, 2021). Additionally, qualitative research prioritizes the examination of individuals' experiences and perceptions in comprehending the human perspective (Johnson et al., 2020). Within the scope of this investigation, comprehending the viewpoints and encounters of individuals involved in these cases provide crucial discernments into the underlying causes and rationales behind the occurrence of such incidents, surpassing the mere presentation of factual information.

The transferability of findings is a crucial aspect of case studies (Yin, 2018). Despite being specific to a particular case, the findings of this study have the potential to be applied to similar cases in other organizations or contexts. This is due to the broad scope of the phenomena being studied, which includes culture, oversight, and ethics (Williams, 2019). Alternative qualitative research designs were considered for this particular study, such as phenomenology, observation, and ethnography. However, the decision was ultimately made to adopt an embedded case study, as these alternative designs did not fully align with the problem and purpose of this research (Yin, 2018). Specifically, utilizing a qualitative, embedded case study methodology offered the chance to provide a more comprehensive, situational, and intricate explanation of the institutional elements that facilitate sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army. Additionally, this approach has the potential to extend the implications of the results to a wider scope.

The research design employed an embedded case study approach that focused on five specific, publicly known and documented cases of sexual misconduct in the Army. The study had three specific phases of research:

1. Publicly available archival documents. This review formed the basis for conducting further primary research with female aides of general officers on their experiences in the cases, as well as reflections and perceptions regarding cultural and organizational

oversight factors that enabled the unethical behavior and sexual misconduct. From this archival review, I learned the context, persons involved, and information that helped with the remaining phases of the study. This included the names of victims, witnesses, or bystanders within the chosen cases.

2. Individual interviews with three retired senior leaders in the Army. Through these interviews with retired senior leaders, I gained insight into their experiences, reflections, and perceptions regarding the cultural and organizational factors that contributed to sexual misconduct in the Army. This information helped provide context for the rest of the study.
3. Individual interviews with 15 active and retired soldiers in the Army. Through interviews with male or female active or retired soldiers in the Army, the cultural and organizational factors that contributed to sexual misconduct in the Army were further explored.

By exploring the above-mentioned archival documents and first-hand accounts, this study provided a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics contributing to sexual misconduct in the Army.

Sample

For phase 1, involving publicly available archival documents, the sample was selected using an a priori, purposive, and strategic method based on previous knowledge on the part of the researcher. Archival records were obtained via Congressional or departmental testimonies and hearings on senior leader misconduct.

For phases 2 and 3, the following inclusion criteria were used for the participant population: All participants were 18 years of age or older. For phrase two, individual interviews

with retired senior leaders in the Army, all participants were (a) retired and (b) previous senior leaders in the Army. For phase 3, individual interviews with active and retired soldiers in the Army, all participants were (a) active Army soldiers or (b) retired Army soldiers. No participant participated in multiple phases of the study.

The rationale for selecting this population is that they had knowledge of the organizational and cultural factors that contribute to sexual misconduct in the Army. Each of the participants offered a unique perspective regarding these matters.

Recruitment

Just as this study had two phases of data collection involving human participants, this study also had two phases of recruitment. The following section describes how and where participants were recruited and makes reference to recruitment materials in the appendices.

Individual Interviews with Retired Senior Leaders in the Army

Recruitment of these individuals included six steps. First, the researcher examined publicly available Department of Defense Investigator General reports regarding instances of sexual misconduct in the Army. Second, the researcher made note of any identified individuals or units in these reports in order to contact retired senior leaders who may have had knowledge of these instances through publicly available information on the Internet (phone, email, or social media). In addition, the researcher sought contact using information from her own personal network and personal address book. Third, to make initial contact, the researcher sent an initial email or social media direct message. Alternatively, the researcher attempted to phone potential participants. Regardless of how the researcher made initial contact, the researcher utilized a recruitment email or phone script (see Appendix A). In the case of phone contact, the researcher simply utilized the recruitment email text. Fourth, upon receiving the email, social media direct

message, or phone call, potential participants expressed interest in the study. Fifth, when the participant expresses interest, the researcher sent the informed consent form (see Appendix C) and "support advocacy information" (see Appendix G). Sixth, upon confirmation from the participant that they received the informed consent form, the researcher scheduled an interview with the participant.

Individual Interviews with Active and Retired Soldiers in the Army

Recruitment of these individuals included five steps:

1. The researcher made contact with active and retired soldiers in the Army from her own personal network and personal address book.
2. To make initial contact, the researcher sent an initial email or social media direct message. In some cases, the researcher attempted to phone the potential participant. Regardless of how the researcher made initial contact, the researcher utilized a recruitment email or phone script (see Appendix B). In the case of phone contact, the researcher simply utilized the recruitment email text.
3. Upon receiving the email, social media direct message, or phone call, the potential participant expressed interest in the study.
4. When the participant expressed interest, the researcher sent the informed consent form (see Appendix D) and "support advocacy information" (see "ppendix G).
5. Upon confirmation that the participant had received the informed consent form, the researcher scheduled an interview with the participant.

Data Collection

For phases 2 and 3, individual interviews were conducted with 18 active and retired senior leaders and soldiers in the Army. The interviews explored the organizational culture and oversight factors that foster Army senior leaders' sexual misconduct.

All interviewees consented to participate in a recorded interview. The consent and data collection process is described below.

Individual Interviews with Retired Senior Leaders in the Army

Upon arrival at the interview location, the researcher greeted the participant and asked them if they have any questions about the study or regarding the informed consent form. The researcher asked verbal permission to record the audio of the interview. The researcher collected the signed consent form. Finally, the researcher interviewed the participant utilizing the interview questions (see Appendix E). After the completion of the interview, the researcher gave the participants the Support Advocacy Information sheet (see Appendix G). This sheet provided a list of resources for participants, should they need emotional or psychological help arising from recalling traumatic events through participation in the study.

Individual Interviews with Active and Retired Soldiers in the Army

Upon arrival at the interview location, the researcher greeted the participant and asked them if they have any questions about the study or regarding the informed consent form. The researcher asked verbal permission to record the audio of the interview. The researcher collected the signed consent form. Finally, the researcher interviewed the participant utilizing the interview questions (see Appendix F). After the completion of the interview, the researcher gave the participants the Support Advocacy Information sheet (see Appendix G). This sheet provided

a list of resources for participants, should they need emotional or psychological help arising from recalling traumatic events through participation in the study.

Interviews

Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes, with the longest interview lasting approximately 1 hour. During this length of time, participants were able to express themselves fully, thus providing information sufficient for the researcher to answer the research questions.

After completing the interviews, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings and double-checked accuracy.

Table 2 below provides details on the time of each interview and the number of transcribed pages.

Ethical Considerations

When conducting this qualitative, embedded case study on the cultural and organizational factors that allow for unethical workplace behavior among U.S. Army leaders, the researcher took into account multiple ethical considerations. Adherence to the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research's (1979) principles documented in the *Belmont Report* were used to guide the ethical conduct in this study. The researcher was aware that prior to participating in the study, participants needed to possess a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives, methodologies, potential hazards, and advantages. Thus, the researcher obtained informed consent from each participant prior to commencing the research. The researcher apprised individuals that their involvement was voluntary, and they reserve the right to withdraw their participation at any point without facing any adverse consequences.

Table 2

Length of Interviews and Transcribed Pages

Participants	Length of Interview	Transcribed Pages
Participant 1	1:10:37	31
Participant 2	35:51	11
Participant 3	55:11	19
Participant 4	39:27	17
Participant 5	42:52	10
Participant 6	47:25	15
Participant 7	55:32	15
Participant 8	47:55	16
Participant 9	58:15	21
Participant 10	25:12	7
Participant 11	48:47	17
Participant 12	33:25	9
Participant 13	37:37	12
Participant 14	30:42	9
Participant 15	32:17	3
Participant 16	16:42	2
Participant 17	32:12	2
Participant 18	51:47	4

Note. Table showing details on length of interviews and transcribed pages.

The researcher transcribed and de-identified the data. Maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of participants is crucial in studies involving sensitive information (Yin, 2018). The researcher employed pseudonyms in lieu of actual identities and implemented a secure data storage system that restricts access solely to the researcher (Johnson et al., 2020). The researcher eliminated and concealed identifiable information in this report of findings and in all future publications. Furthermore, the researcher strived to mitigate potential psychological distress in order to ensure protection from harm. Considering the inherent characteristics of the research, the discourse pertaining to immoral conduct had the potential to elicit unease or psychological strain among the subjects. The provision of emotional support resources or the offering of debriefing sessions subsequent to interviews were offered in the event that a participant expressed such distress.

Maintaining data integrity is crucial in the case of a qualitative, embedded case study as well (Englander, 2019). Thus, measures were taken to ensure that all collected data was precise and free from any form of manipulation or misrepresentation. The proper handling of data analysis and interpretation is crucial to prevent any potential biases or misinterpretations (Cardano, 2020). The management of power dynamics is also a crucial consideration in the military context, given the hierarchical structure of the organization. Additionally, it is possible that power dynamics may exert an impact on the responses of participants (Yin, 2018). It was therefore imperative for the researcher to establish a conducive atmosphere that fostered unrestricted expression of participant experiences, devoid of any apprehension of retribution.

The researcher comprehended and demonstrated reverence for the distinct cultural conventions and protocols that are inherent to the U.S. Army (Messervey & Squires, 2021). Demonstrating respect towards participants can foster trust and promote a more candid exchange

of information. Collaboration with the military was necessary due to its sensitive nature (Kaptein, 2022). This helped ensure transparency and compliance with regulations and guidelines that the Army has in place regarding research of this nature. Because the dissertation may be published, it requires a pre-publication review from the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, Headquarters Department of the Army. Army policy Army Regulation 360-1 serves to protect the author and all service members. The researcher has made official contact via email and by phone with the current government information specialist and notified them that at the completion of the final dissertation, it will be available for her office for final approval. At the time of data collection and analysis, the researcher was not serving in a leadership role that would have created a conflict of interest when recruiting study subjects.

The research design, data collection, and data handling methods underwent review and approval by the University´s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical manner. The researcher upheld the ethical responsibility of accurately and honestly reporting their findings, which included the disclosure of any unanticipated outcomes (Englander, 2019). Therefore, the researcher made efforts to refrain from making sweeping generalizations and to ensure that the constraints of the research are explicitly delineated. By complying with these ethical considerations, the researcher upheld the credibility of the study while simultaneously honoring the rights and welfare of the involved participants.

Trustworthiness

Establishing and maintaining trustworthiness were key priorities in this study (Johnson et al., 2020). Research trustworthiness refers to a variety of processes and methods that ensure authentic, valid, reliable, and relevant information (Stahl & King, 2020). This included research

design, standardization of rigorous data collection and analysis procedures, reflection on participant engagement in data collection, triangulation, and peer review (Stahl & King, 2020).

The four main components of trustworthiness include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Williams, 2019). Credibility pertains to the degree to which the outcomes of the investigation are deemed plausible and reliable as precise portrayals of the phenomenon under examination. However, this is dependent on the researcher and their methods (Stahl & King, 2020). The utilization of an embedded case study design conferred credibility, as the analysis that is specific to the context can facilitate more precise depictions of the participants' experiences and perceptions (Yin, 2018). In order to attain credibility, the researcher:

- followed accepted methodologies and justified choices;
- used extended immersion with data to support factual, accurate results; and
- debriefed with peers comprised of a faculty chair and a subject matter expert, who reviewed the study's results and findings.

Dependability, also understood as reliability, is the major criterion of data quality (Kyngäs et al., 2020). It pertains to the degree of consistency and replicability of research outcomes across different points in time (Johnson et al., 2020). A reliable investigation is characterized by the ability of another researcher to replicate the same methodology and obtain comparable outcomes (Cardano, 2020). Dependability builds a detailed account of the processes used in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. In order to attain reliability, the researcher:

- meticulously documented the decisions and modifications to the research design throughout the course of the study; and

- undertook an audit trail that documented all activities, ranging from methods to data collection to analysis and interpretation (Englander, 2019), thus enabling traceability of results to their origins (Williams, 2019) and allowing for replication by others to achieve similar results.

Confirmability refers to objectivity, impartiality, or neutrality of the data and interpretations—that is, the findings are as close as possible to a reflection of the participants' experiences and ideas rather than the researchers' biases or preconceptions (Johnson et al., 2020; Stahl & King, 2020). In order to attain confirmability, the researcher:

- used reflexivity, which involves introspection regarding biases and how these may impact the research;
- used triangulation of theories and methods (Cardano, 2020); and
- used objective processes for coding and thematic analysis. The researcher employed thorough and systematic reading of the data and coded for emerging patterns in conjunction with theme generated codes until themes stopped emerging. The researcher used a consistent and transparent coding system where the initial line-by-line coding was later distilled to secondary codes. This categorical approach supported objectivity and minimized subjectivity in analyses.

All of the above processes supported trustworthiness, thus enabling the usefulness and transferability of the findings and results. Transferability pertains to the degree to which the outcomes of a study can be generalized to other environments, circumstances, or populations (Johnson et al., 2020; Stahl & King, 2020; Yin, 2018). Although case studies are usually limited to a particular context, they can provide significant insights and themes that could be relevant to other scenarios (Johnson et al., 2020). In order to attain transferability, the researcher fully

described all decisions, including setting, inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants, number of participants, and methods. This will enable other researchers to make informed assessments regarding the generalizability of the results and findings to other contexts. This investigation centered on the U.S. Army; however, the outcomes may be generalizable to other structured and regulated institutions.

These rigorous processes reflected each of the four principles, thus enabling trustworthiness and by extension, durable, valuable insights (Williams, 2019).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

When planning and carrying out this research, there were assumptions, limitations, and delimitations that warranted consideration as well. Assumptions are aspects of the research that are taken for granted but which cannot be directly verified (Cardano, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020). The first assumption made by the researcher was that participants were authentic and honest in their responses. Second, the researcher assumed that archival documents would provide sufficient evidence related to the problem and purpose of this study. Third, the researcher assumed that the semi-structured interview guide was sufficiently valid to address the research questions.

Limitations are aspects of the research that potentially detract from either the validity or reliability of the data (Cardano, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020). One of the main limitations that may exist in this study is that the researcher's interpretive bias affected the data analysis and presentation. Each of the aforementioned steps for ensuring data trustworthiness helped to reduce the impact of this limitation. A second limitation that may exist in this study is that the sensitive nature of the research topic may have inhibited honest or full disclosure on the part of participants (Johnson et al., 2020). The confidentiality of each participant was protected in order

to help reduce the impact of these limitations. A third limitation that may exist in this study is that power imbalances between the researcher and participants may have existed.

Delimitations are aspects of the research that limit the generalizability and scope (Cardano, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020). This study is delimited to officers in the U.S. Army who have held the rank of one to four stars. Therefore, the findings may not be fully applicable to any other rank within the U.S. Army or other branch of service. Additionally, this study was delimited to the specific site and context in which the research was conducted. Thus, findings may not be applicable to the U.S. Army in any other location beyond where the data were collected in this particular study.

Summary

While ethical conduct is typically anticipated from military personnel, instances of unethical behavior among U.S. Army officials are not infrequent. The objective of this embedded case study was to comprehend the cultural and organizational factors of oversight that facilitated the emergence of unethical workplace conduct in the five sub-cases. The present chapter contained a delineation of the methodologies that were employed to accomplish the intended goals and objectives of the research. This chapter described the research design, accompanied by a justification for its adoption. The subsequent sections of this chapter contained a description of the research sample. The subsequent sections outlined the procedures that were employed for data collection and analysis, along with a discussion on ethical considerations and matters pertaining to the trustworthiness of the research findings. The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations associated with study were then discussed.

Chapter 4: Results and Findings

This chapter includes a description of the coding process and codes, the detailed themes and results that address each research question, and a summary of the themes and findings.

Coding Process

Following confirmation of accurate transcription, the researcher used NVivo 14 software to code the data. NVivo 14 helps researchers identify codes and patterns. This research utilized Saldaña's (2013) recommendations to conduct the coding as outlined below.

All data were combined and entered into NVivo in order to facilitate the coding process. Data analysis took place in three phases. The first phase consisted of coding, and a patterned coding approach was used to identify patterns within and between cases according to Saldaña's (2014) recommendations. The second phase of the data analytical approach consisted of categorical aggregation, and an aggregation of themes that emerged from the first phase was performed. The third phase consisted of correspondence and the identification of patterns according to the recommendations of Stake (1995, 2008). All themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis phase were then grouped and presented in tabular format, along with annotations to illustrate their derivation. Example responses were also presented in order to document the derivation of themes and sub-themes.

Phase 1

Patterned coding is usually the first step (Mezmir, 2020; Saldaña, 2013). This means that information is scrutinized to comprehend the different, recurring patterns. For example, via an interview schedule, all emerging patterns were systematically coded to allow organization and comparison. Date scrutiny took place in an exacting manner and later revealed several underlying trends and relationships. Systematic coding procedures identified key themes and

motifs. This phase laid the basis for later stages of the coding process. Tables 3, 4, and 5 present clustered codes organized by the research questions and coding process.

Table 3

Clustered Codes for Research Question 1

Cluster 1: Institutional dysfunction and ethical deterioration	Cluster 2: Discrimination against minorities and fear of retaliation	Cluster 3: Inability to balance between professional and personal life in the Army	Cluster 4: Ethical dilemmas and abuse of power in the Army
* Forced to obey illegal instructions * Joking about misconducts among officers * Lack of accountability for senior officers' misconduct * Misusing the mentorship opportunities * Unwillingness to report misconduct	* Discriminating younger soldiers * Fear of losing one's career * Fear of not getting the support from the chain of command * Fear of retaliation thus do not report * Gender discrimination against women * Microaggressions against aides * Taking advantage of new recruits since they know nothing * Victim blaming	* Affairs happening during deployments * Environmental situations enabling misconduct * Junior officers taking interest in having relationships with seniors * Mixing professional and personal life while in service	* Going against ethical code of conduct * Manipulations to get promoted in rank * Nepotism practiced in the hiring process * Not taking the ethics code seriously * Power abused by officers * Unchecked power

Note. Table shows the clustered codes in respect to Research Question 1.

Table 4

Clustered Codes for Research Question 2

Cluster 1: Challenges in military accountability and organizational structure	Cluster 2: Corruption and military cover-ups in military hierarchies	Cluster 3: Impunity and injustice in the face of misconduct
* A lot of bureaucracy in the Army * Freedom to choose their aides * Gender imbalance in senior leadership positions * Negligence from military officers * No follow up of bad behaviors happening * No mechanisms to check for misconduct * Poor reporting systems	* Army siding with other officers to conceal the truth * Brushing cases under the rug * Connections with higher authorities * Favoritism among senior officers * Protecting the image of senior officers * Some leaders feel untouchable	* Destroying evidence of affairs * Easily getting away with misconduct cases * Facing lenient consequences of misconduct * Lack of sufficient evidence * Unfair judgment on cases

Note. Table shows the clustered codes in respect to Research Question 2.

Table 5

Clustered Codes for Research Question 3

Cluster 1: Empowering women in male- dominated environment	Cluster 2: Supporting survivors of trauma and ensuring justice
* Adapting to the male-dominated culture * Having personal boundaries * Maintain professionalism all through * Not being alone in a department or when on duty * Leading by example	* Going to rehabilitation to get some help * Providing counseling services * Training programs being organized * Having a government watchdog to report cases * Legal representation provided for them * Report using sexual assault hotlines

Note. Table shows the clustered codes in respect to research question 3.

Phase 2

Phase 2 involved categorical aggregation and refinement of themes from the initial coding. Next, the researcher isolated and rephrased ideas, and aggregated and refined themes (Mezmir, 2020; Saldaña, 2013). This involved coding into broader categories to allow for conceptualization on a higher level of abstraction. At the same time, the researcher described the themes according to the recommendations emphasized by Prosek and Gibson (2021). This involved establishing a relationship between the evident patterns and the described themes as well as drawing attention to insights and connections.

Phase 3

Phase 3 established correspondence between patterns and themes. This deepened insights and relationships within the resultant data (Mezmir, 2020; Saldaña, 2013). Next, the researcher created a table with a systematic layout that categorized and clarified themes and sub-themes. This also included example responses to clarify development of the theme for transparency and reliability in analyses (see Table 6).

Results

This research sought to explore the organizational culture and oversight factors that foster unethical behavior and sexual misconduct in Army senior leaders. The researcher conducted interviews and gained valuable insight to answer the three research questions. Nine themes were developed to answer the research questions. Table 6 below shows each research question and their respective themes.

Table 6

Research Questions and Themes

Research Question	Themes
RQ1 - What cultural and organizational oversight factors enable U.S. Army-senior leaders to be involved in inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct, despite having ethical skills and knowledge?	* Theme 1: Institutional dysfunction and ethical deterioration * Theme 2: Discrimination against minorities and fear of retaliation * Theme 3: Inability to balance between professional and personal life in the Army * Theme 4: Ethical dilemmas and abuse of power in the Army
RQ2 - What cultural and organizational oversight factors make oversight authorities ineffective in dealing with inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct?	* Theme 5: Challenges in military accountability and organizational structure * Theme 6: Corruption and military cover-ups in military hierarchies * Theme 7: Impunity and injustice in the face of misconduct
RQ3 - How do women in the Army learn to cope from cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army?	* Theme 8: Empowering women in a male-dominated environment * Theme 9: Supporting survivors of trauma and ensuring justice

Note. Table showing research questions and themes.

Research Question 1

What cultural and organizational oversight factors enable U.S. Army senior leaders to be involved in inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct, despite having ethical skills and knowledge?

In this research question, the researcher wanted to examine enabling factors permitting inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct among Army's senior leaders despite these leaders possessing ethical skills and knowledge. The researchers generated four themes to answer this research question. Table 7 below shows each theme and associated codes.

Table 7

Connecting Themes and Codes

Theme	Codes
Theme 1: Institutional Dysfunction and Ethical Deterioration	* Forced to obey illegal instructions * Joking about misconducts among officers * Lack of accountability for senior officers' misconduct * Misusing the mentorship opportunities * Unwillingness to report misconduct
Theme 2: Discrimination against Minorities and Fear of Retaliation	* Discriminating against younger soldiers * Fear of losing one's career * Fear of not getting the support from command * Fear of retaliation thus do not report * Gender discrimination against women * Microaggressions against aides * Taking advantage of new recruits since they may be unaware * Victim blaming
Theme 3: Inability to Balance between Professional and Personal Life in the Army	* Affairs happening during deployments * Environmental situations enabling misconduct * Junior officers taking interest in having relationships with seniors * Mixing professional and personal life while in service
Theme 4: Ethical Dilemmas and Abuse of Power in the Army	* Going against ethical code of conduct * Manipulation to get promoted in rank * Nepotism practiced in the hiring process * Not taking the ethics code seriously * Power abused by officers * Unchecked power

Note. Table showing themes and codes that were generated.

Theme 1: Institutional Dysfunction and Ethical Deterioration

Seven participants provided data to support this theme. Theme 1 highlighted the dysfunctionality that permits unethical behaviors to occur. Participants noted that senior leaders tend to give illegal instructions just because those under them are supposed to be loyal. Participant 12 narrated how new recruits would follow every instruction given by their seniors since they were green in the field. The participant said:

> …when you asked that, I think of the recruiting base where drill sergeant come in, they're responsible for the caring and feeding of these recruits and recruits coming in from the civilian sector and they're intimidated by all of that. They know nothing and they will comply with any instructions that drill sergeant, male or female, utters.

Participants also highlighted that senior leaders would not take unethical misconduct seriously and some of them would even joke about it during normal conversations. Participant 7 stated that senior officers would make fun of women in a sexual manner instead of engaging them as professional colleagues. The participant said:

> And because they were developed or indoctrinated with that type of uneducated, ignorant, immature mindset, then that permeates as they get to the senior ranks because it becomes okay for them to talk like that, make jokes like that, and then look at women in a sexual manner rather than looking at them as a professional colleague, a respectable colleague, or a leader.

Participant 11 also noted that senior leaders would crack jokes about sexual misconduct, and no one would correct them. He said:

> This is people that are considered, you look at him and think he's high in the rank. So, to hear this individual cracking that type of joke and nobody correcting him, it kind of showed me that this stuff is not as serious, they don't take it as serious as it should be.

Institutional dysfunction was also seen in the lack of accountability when senior leaders conducted any kind of misconduct. Participant 13 highlighted that Army senior leaders did not have anyone who would call them out when they engaged in inappropriate relationships, saying, "But unless you internalize 'em, and I don't think there's a true way to internalize them other

than if somebody sees you're not living by the Army values to call you out on it, peers won't call you out." Participant 10 also emphasized the point stating that leaders did what they wanted without questions being asked. He said, "then I think people just let people do what they want to do."

When it came to reporting abuse cases to relevant authorities, three participants pointed out that some Army members were unwilling to report their misconduct cases. For instance, Participant 5 noted that people would witness misconduct but never reported it. The participant said, "If people witness it, if they're doing it and it is witnessed and nobody's reporting it." Participant 13 also emphasized that officers would choose not to report cases since no one would take action. He said:

> And the other one is if it is truly consensual, and we've been in examples of people are just not going to report it because well, nothing's going to happen to that person, so why waste my time and have the possible bad come on me because I'm doing what's right and nothing's going to happen with it.

Officers who sought mentorship from their seniors also experienced sexual abuse. Participants indicated that senior officers took advantage of mentorship sessions held alone with junior officers. For instance, Participant 6 said that "a lot of predators hide behind mentorship." Participant 13 also narrated how senior leaders hide their predatory behavior behind mentorship and choose the cutest mentees. The participant said:

> But mentorship as a guy, that goes back to predatory behavior. Hey, I'm picking out the cutest, whoever in this case, if it's a male senior, I'm picking out the cutest female and I want a relationship with her. That's once again unethical and immoral, unethical, illegal, and that type of mentorship.

Participant 5 gave advice concerning choosing mentors. He advised junior officers to scrutinize potential mentors to avoid ending up with predators acting as mentors. The participant said:

> I just feel like you just got to be smart about who you pick as your mentor and be able to distinguish what is professional and what's not professional. So, if at the very first hint that this is not professional, then you need to speak up, you need to find a new mentor or you need to turn that person in or whatever.

This theme demonstrated how dysfunctionality in the Army and ethical deterioration enabled senior officers to engage in inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct. Participants narrated how senior leaders would engage in unethical behaviors without serious repercussions.

Theme 2: Discrimination Against Minorities and Fear of Retaliation

Eleven participants provided data to support this theme. Theme 2 highlighted discrimination against minorities,[1] fear of retaliation, and victim-blaming. Participant 1 noted that the rank of the soldiers plays a major role in intimidation. Participant 1 said:

> I think rank plays a big part at the junior level, because typically, subordinates are intimidated by rank. We are still subordinates to someone. I think it's just a natural intimidation. I don't think it's anything intentional by most leaders, although there are some that I think it may be intentional, but I think there is that level of intimidation. It depends on the leaders.

Participant 3 added to the argument on intimidation and stated, "this was built up from years of watching senior leaders come down to my formation and kind of prey on my young soldiers." Participant 4 also emphasized intimidation of soldiers in the lower ranks and the influence that is a result of this intimidation. Participant 4 stated:

> I think that's too much. I think that's too much. Everybody says the same thing. It's so funny because there's intimidation that plays into that. There's no way, I mean, as much as I can sit there and say, I can look at you with no rank in your chest, that's me. But most people, if I had a lieutenant that a general's going to talk to, he's going to be like, so I think that's too much. I could see a major in a lieutenant. I could see that even. But no, it's too much of a difference. Too many intimidations and influence going on.

[1] I use the term "minorities" to refer to individuals who are underrepresented in the U.S. Army.

Participant 3 and Participant 12 emphasized that senior soldiers took advantage of the junior soldiers due to their innocence, especially after their recruitment. In this regard, Participant 3 stated that "this was built up from years of watching senior leaders come down to my formation and kind of prey on my young soldiers."

Participants also highlighted that intimidation over potential loss of career. Participant 6 and Participant 11 noted that senior soldiers intimated those in the junior ranks as they had authority over their careers. Participant 11 stated, "So there's that fear of this individual could harm their career" and Participant 6 emphasized the career issue and stated:

> Even as such with the military culture, general officers can pick up the phone and say, Hey, Tom, Brenda, she's not going anywhere. Her career stops here. Or hey, this person is not suitable for the position because they hold that position of authority.

Participants also reported that of discrimination, victims fear that they would not get support from the chain of command following reporting. For example, Participant 1 stated:

> As females, especially young female officers, we are trying so hard to fit in. Oftentimes, we don't say anything. When you do say something, then there's that fear, "Oh, no one's going to believe me," especially if that officer that is behaving in that manner.

Participant 2 also noted the fear to report and stated, "So when we have a culture that we fear going to our leaders for help because we have these problems in our battalions, our companies, and our brigades." Participant 13 added that "but if a victim doesn't feel like they're going to get support by their chain of command, then they're not going to report it."

The participants highlighted that there were few reported cases due to fear of retaliation. Participant 1 emphasized this and stated:

> […] folks are fearful of going to the DOD IG for fear of retaliation. A lot of times, it was just accepted. Monitoring it, other than the hotlines and the DOD IG, those systems, I think there was a lot of fear of retaliation.

Participant 3 also argued that just like the senior soldiers would make a phone call to give a junior soldier an assignment they would also make a phone call to punish the soldier to enhance fear of reporting due to the fear of retaliation. In regard to this, Participant 3 stated:

> The retribution, it is the ability of a person of that rank to be able to make a phone call. And now your assignment you were going on, it is out of there. If a sergeant major can make a phone call to help one of his soldiers get an assignment, you would have to believe that a general or any person that is seasoned in the Army could also make a phone call to get an assignment canceled with little paperwork saying, Hey Craig. Yeah, Craig and I were at, we went to the war college together.

Participants emphasized that the established intimidating work environment made it hard for most of the junior soldiers to report any senior leader misconduct due to fears of retaliation through punishment, lack of promotion, and ruining their reputation. Participant 7 stated:

> And that, and the leaders know the type of atmosphere that they established either through intimidation or whatever in that picture, that will make people be slow to say something because people are afraid of reprisal or they're thinking about that eval, that promotion, that certain assignment or just their reputation […] observers as they're afraid to tell and call out those leaders.

Participant 8 emphasized the issue of fearing retaliation by stating "Well, I think it's kind of a scary situation for that person because of the difference in the rank structure, because you're kind of caught in between a rock and a hard place." Participant 13 also supported the issue of retaliation and noted, "And I mean there's a lot of ways that victims can report, but it still comes down to the victim […] to report out of fear of retaliation."

This theme demonstrated how discrimination and fear of retaliation made it hard for the junior soldiers to report the senior soldiers following any unethical behavior. This theme also demonstrated that the army's working culture involves an intimidating work environment making it easy for the senior leaders to take advantage of the junior soldiers. The junior soldiers lack support from the chain of command, which promotes unethical behaviors.

Theme 3: Inability to Balance Professional and Personal Life in the Army

Seven participants provided data to support this theme. Theme 3 demonstrated how there was an imbalance between the professional and personal lives of the soldiers. The soldiers mixed professional and personal life where they had affairs while on deployment or temporary duty (TDY) and junior soldiers had interest in having relationships with the senior officers. Participants established that during deployment the soldiers engaged in sexual affairs. Participant 13 supported this and stated:

> CEOs go on business trips and have affairs. I think TDY, probably the same with deployments, offers an opportunity where you're not trying to hide from whoever, or you can be more discreet. You're not worrying about going home at six o'clock to dinner with your spouse or your family. I mean in the chow hall, and if you're truly deployed, it's a 24/7 job with your eight hours of sleep in there. Hey, you might take your dinner back to your headquarters or whatever and you're eating with the troops or maybe, and it all comes down to self-awareness, but I do think there are more opportunities, probably more opportunities, TDY than deployment then home station.

With regards to the sexual affairs during deployment, Participant 2 stated that "Definitely. Oh man, there was so much fucking going on during deployments. It was crazy. And how do you think about sexual relationships when you deploy, you got a job to do. You're in imminent danger in a sense." According to the participants, while there were many sexual affairs during deployment, there were also cases of sexual assault as stated by Participant 5: "There was lots of incidents while deployed where there was sexual assault, rape and so forth."

The working environment for the soldiers, especially when they are deployed away from home for many years, promoted misconduct. Participant 1 stated, "Maybe she picks up on some predatorial behavior and advances, but she finds herself in a situation where maybe one thing led to another or whatever the case may be." Participant 3 also added to this and noted, "So it's those sorts of factors that I think create the environment that allows them to do it or not do it." Participant 5 added, "There was too many times where they were left alone. When access, when

someone has access, like I said, when that buddy system isn't used and two people are alone, that's when you allow."

While in service, soldiers end up mixing professional and personal life. Participant 5 stated:

> That's when professionalism can be thrown out the door, getting too comfortable with each other and so forth. Because you have no witnesses, you have no one that you have to uphold the standard in front of. So I guarantee you if that major, if they were never alone, there was always some battle buddy there, it would've never happened.

Participant 8 also mentioned how soldiers end up mixing professional and personal life. Participant 8 stated:

> So, because people joke around at work and do things and then you get a little bit more comfortable and then next thing you know it's more friendly and you think you guys have some kind of relationship together and something happens.

About the little distinction between professional and personal life, Participant 12 stated:

> Some of its ego. She was polished, good at what she did. And she somehow got close. I read where she was just popping up and oh, bring him, tell her, come on in. He got too familiar with the situation with the person. And that allowed his guards to come down against that sort of thing.

In summary, this theme demonstrated how soldiers ended up mixing their professional and personal lives. The soldiers engaged in personal relationships during deployment. The long time periods that the soldiers were deployed also enabled sexual assault. Junior officers took an interest in having relationships with seniors for job-related favors.

Theme 4: Ethical Dilemmas and Abuse of Power in the Army

Eight participants provided data to support this theme. Theme 4 demonstrated ethical dilemmas and abuse of power in the Army. The soldiers did not practice ethical conduct, nepotism was practiced in the hiring process, manipulation was practiced for soldiers to get a job promotion and the senior officers abused their power. According to Participant 8, there were

times when soldiers realized that they were doing the wrong thing but still went ahead and did it. Participant 8 stated:

> I think there's always going to be people who want to do the wrong thing, think they're doing the right thing, but do the wrong thing sometimes and just think, well, maybe I can just do this one time and get away with it. But it becomes to me become a pattern and it kind of leads you down the wrong path. Yeah. So, what do you think if that's the case in it? Sometimes it's a pattern of conduct and what we're seeing in recent years, it is a pattern. It's happening more commonly amongst general officers, probably even more so than in your day.

Participant 12 was in line with the argument by Participant 8 regarding the soldiers engaging in ethically wrong behaviors even when they were aware that they were wrong. Participant 12 stated, "But usually you do get caught because again, you throw all your morality, all ethics, everything, you throw it out the window because I have this carnal urge to do something with this person, engage and it happens."

Participants established that there are ethics that guide the officers while on duty but most of them do not take this seriously. Participant 11 emphasized the issue of officers not taking ethics seriously and stated:

> People don't think the same. They don't value the same thing. So, when it comes to the job, they view the army as honestly as a job versus being a career, something that, so ethics don't really come into play. Yes, we all know the army values [….] We know how to conduct ourselves and all of that thing, all that. But I don't think people take it as serious as we used to.

Participants 9 and 14 supported the issue of the officers going against ethical conduct even when aware. Participant 9 stated, "But I believe that's a result of individual characteristics as opposed to a cultural dynamic that promotes unethical behavior." Participant 14 stated, "but it's just, I think our system is uniquely designed for predatory behavior."

According to the participants, senior officers in the Army constantly abused power and used their power to serve their own interests and needs. Participant 3 emphasized the abuse of power issue. Participant 3 stated:

> And here's an unpopular truth. When you have nine times out of ten is not the demand that these people are attracted to the position. And if you stripped this man of those attributes and he just was some greeter at Walmart, you probably wouldn't think twice about it, but it's the seduction of power [….] but rank has its privileges and I've seen it in action, seen people get to a certain level and make decisions that if I would say a less powerful person in the military may they'd be in trouble or it wouldn't work out in their favor. Let's go with that. Whereas this person can make the same decision and oh, it's okay, that's no problem.

Participant 5 supported the abuse of power argument by stating:

> And when I think about it as far as how it happens, I always feel like because they're in that position of power that sometimes I feel like, especially when it comes to if the allegations are against another service member, I feel like that they were using their position as a position of power to prey or abuse that service member or like a quid pro quo type of scenario where that they want to do this, I can get you that promotion if you do this type of thing.

The senior officers also used their positions of power to manipulate the soldiers, especially those who were seeking job promotion. Participant 11 also emphasized the power manipulation issue. Participant 11 stated:

> They want to get that power that individual has, Hey, I have to take this because this person is responsible for me making it to the next level or could potentially be responsible for me getting to the next level. So, there's that fear there.

Data that supported this theme demonstrated that the senior officers misused their power to manipulate the junior soldiers. Through abuse of power, the senior officers went against expectations for ethical conduct. In some situations, the senior officers acted unethically even when they were aware that they were doing the wrong thing.

Research Question 1: Themes

Research Question 1 asked, "What cultural and organizational oversight factors enable U.S. Army senior leaders to be involved in inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct, despite having ethical skills and knowledge?" Overall, through an analysis of the interview transcripts and archival documents, four themes emerged including institutional dysfunction and ethical deterioration, discrimination against minorities and fear of retaliation, inability to balance professional and personal life in the Army and ethical dilemmas and abuse of power.

Institutional Dysfunction and Ethical Deterioration. First, the participants highlighted institutional dysfunction and ethical deterioration. The participants described misconduct amongst Army senior leaders and the lack of punishment and transparency. They described how trust was broken and the inability of the institution to provide proper oversight. For example, all participants described how culture and lack of oversight enabled sexual misconduct by turning a blind eye to how the institution views sexual misconduct of senior leaders. Lastly, some participants viewed mentorship as being misused by persons in positions of power.

Discrimination Against Minorities and Fear of Retaliation. Second, the participants and the archival documents highlighted institutional discrimination against minorities and fear of retaliation. The participants described how males in the Army are treated as the dominant gender and that males receive better treatment than women, particularly when it came to leadership positions and rank progression, which suggest gender discrimination against women. In addition, the participants explained that microaggression does occur against aides and that the fear of retaliation and victim blaming is a reason they do not speak out. Further, participants explained that minorities can be viewed as being less than their white counterparts, therefore allowing

misconduct by senior white officials. In interviews, some participants highlighted the need for the Army to "evolve with the times" as it relates to how senior leaders are viewed if they do not have what is considered a "wholesome family." They expressed that because as part of the culture, some Army leaders frown upon same-sex marriages and divorce, a form of discrimination, this may make senior leaders and officers more at risk of perpetuating and/or being victimized by sexual misconduct.

Inability to Balance Professional and Personal Life in the Army. Third, the participants and the archival documents highlighted the inability of senior leaders to balance professional and personal life in the Army. One theme that was consistent throughout participant interviews was the "you are a soldier 24 hours a day, 7 days a week." Because of this mentality, participants discussed an imbalance in work and personal lives across the Army. Participants discussed that most often affairs happen a lot because soldiers are taken away from their family members for an extensive period of time for deployments and TDY. Furthermore, participants explained that because of much time spent with coworkers there is a high risk of mixing personal and professional life during duty, thus forming inappropriate relationships.

Ethical Dilemmas and Abuse of Power in the Army. Fourth, the participants and the archival documents highlighted ethical dilemmas and abuse of power in the Army. Participants suggested that the Army's hierarchical structure puts a strain on the system not allowing ethics to be enforced. The participants viewed ethics as not being taken seriously. The participants also discussed nepotism in the hiring practices, manipulation to get promoted, and because of this unchecked power, these behaviors continue to persist.

Research Question 1: Findings

Based on what participants reported, the results indicated that:

- dysfunctionality in the Army and ethical deterioration enable senior officers to engage in inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct;
- senior leaders engage in unethical behaviors without serious repercussions;
- discrimination and fear of retaliation make it hard for the junior soldiers to report the senior soldiers following any unethical behavior;
- the Army's culture involves an intimidating work environment, making it easy for the senior leaders to take advantage of the junior soldiers;
- the junior soldiers lack support from the chain of command, which promotes unethical behaviors;
- soldiers end up mixing their professional and personal lives;
- the soldiers engage in personal relationships during deployment;
- the long periods that the soldiers are deployed enable sexual assault; and
- junior officers take an interest in having relationships with senior leaders for job-related favors.

Research Question 2

What cultural and organizational oversight factors make oversight authorities ineffective in dealing with inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct?

With this research question, the researcher wanted to learn the enabling factors that make oversight authorities ineffective in dealing with inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct among Army's senior leaders, despite having ethical skills and knowledge. Three

themes were generated to answer this research question. Table 8 below shows the theme and the codes that were used.

Table 8

Connecting Themes and Codes

Theme	Code
Theme 5: Challenges in Military Accountability and Organizational Structure	* A lot of bureaucracy in the Army * Freedom to choose their aides * Gender imbalance in senior leadership positions * Negligence from military officers * No follow up of bad behaviors happening * No mechanisms to check for misconduct * Poor reporting systems
Theme 6: Corruption and military Cover-ups in Military Hierarchies	* Army siding with other officers to conceal the truth * Brushing cases under the rug * Connections with higher authorities * Favoritism amongst senior officers * Protecting the image of senior officers * Some leaders feel untouchable
Theme 7: Impunity and Injustice in the Face of Misconduct	* Destroying evidence of affairs * Easily getting away with misconduct cases * Facing lenient consequences of misconduct * Lack of sufficient evidence * Unfair judgment on cases

Note. The table shows the themes and codes that were generated.

Theme 5: Challenges in Accountability in the Army

Eight participants provided data to support this theme. Theme 5 established the challenges in organizational culture and military accountability that made oversight authorities ineffective in dealing with inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct. Participant 3

stated, “However, it’s a long way from DC or where some policies get implemented down to the platoon level where it is boots on the ground. That’s a long way.” According to Participant 3, the Army has a lot of bureaucracy. The participants established that no one is willing to follow up on bad behaviors. Participant 4 stated:

> Do you think we’re paying enough attention to what’s going on? [….] No, Because you know why? They got it. They’re at the rank. They should know what’s going on. Yeah. Yeah. You would think that because I mean, even when we wash hands, yeah, you would think that. But no, we’re not.

Participant 2 also stated, “Well, it being overlooked by higher officials” as no one was willing to follow up on bad behaviors.

Gender imbalance in senior leadership was another issue raised concerning the challenges in military accountability and organizational structure. According to the participants, if more women were in the leadership position, then it would help solve the inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct. Participant 7 stated:

> When we have more women leaders in positions at that general officer level, they can see, understand, observe and kind of put measures in place or preventive measures in place, I guess I’ll say, because you got women, senior leaders in these positions. And so obviously our military is still heavily dominated by male general officers. And so if we put women leaders they are definitely able, capable and qualified of being flag GO (general officer) flag officers, and we have more women leaders in our ranks, I really do believe we would have less and less and less of these situations because we have female women leadership presence in our organizations. [….] But I think getting back to the sexual assault, sexual misconduct, misconduct, again, if we don’t have women leadership in our organizations, these inappropriate relationships or inappropriate situations, I think is going to be a continuation of the same thing.

Participant 2 also supported the gender imbalance issue by stating, “But to eliminate sexual misconduct, it would have to be more woman in the organization. That’s the only way the military would get away from any type of sexual misconduct.”

Participant 6 and Participant 7 also stated that negligence from military officers was also a major challenge in military accountability and organizational structure. Participant 6 stated:

> It's how an individual could possibly take advantage in that situation. And I know typically we look at the superiors being the ones to be in charge and to be decisive and understand the type of situation. But I also think in some cases they could possibly be preyed upon. I mean, not that I'm giving them any grace, but I think the dynamic is two ways, is what I would say. Meaning there's the influence there that can be taken or misinterpreted in a certain way, which will then influence a type of behavior back for the individual who's in the senior position to either action it or entertain it.

Participant 7 stated:

> Well, it's been proven that the military either is unwilling to do anything about it, they don't know how to do anything about it, they don't care to do anything about it. And if they can do anything about it, then why haven't they? And so, when you continue a trend of destruction, you're going to get even more destruction because you're not doing, you're putting any preventive measures in place. So, if I'm going to rob a bank, I robbed the second bank, a third bank, and I have not gotten arrested, have not gotten caught, although I'm on camera and there's witnesses, well, I haven't been arrested, so I'm going to continue robbing these banks until I'm arrested.

Participants also emphasized poor reporting systems as a challenge in the organizational structure. Participant 8 stated, "So, I think to me that she should have some kind of structure system to help her out or help him out." Participant 4 also stated that the responses to reports of sexual misconduct were inconsistent and unfair. Participant 4 also stated:

> And all my brothers told me, the only thing that's going to happen is you're going to get moved. That's it. You'll be moved out of the organization and then you'll be labeled. And I'm like, I believe that wholeheartedly. I believe I'm like, nothing will come of what I'm going to report. And it is probably a thought process amongst subordinates that there's a filter in between when I submit what I'm going to submit and before it gets to somebody who can do something about it, there's a filter of, well, let's take care of this. You know what the Army is saying, let's take care of it at the lowest level, right?

Data that supported this theme demonstrated that the Army has a lot of bureaucracy. The participants established that no one is willing to follow up on bad behaviors. Gender imbalance in senior leadership was another issue raised concerning the challenges in military accountability and organizational structure.

Theme 6: Corruption and Military Cover-ups

Six participants provided data to support this theme. This theme demonstrated the corruption in the military sector and how issues are covered up in the positions of power. The participants reported that the **A**rmy sides with officers to conceal the truth, the reported sexual harassment cases are never followed up on and the reputation of the senior officers is always protected. According to Participant 1, the truth concerning the reported sexual harassment cases is always concealed. Participant 1 stated:

> You watch my back, I'll watch yours. You help me, I'll help you. Especially even amongst GOs, 1, 2, 3 stars. That one star is always searching for the next rank, so you're going to do what you need to do to continue to fit in and become a part of the in crowd so that you can continue to excel. At that level, it's all about who you know.

Participant 7 also reported that the truth is always concealed by stating:

> Among general officers. That has not changed since day one. A lot of the senior leaders in those circles all know each other, and they've known each other since they was probably lieutenants, captains. They've all served with each other. They became great friends. Their families interact with each other. And so we have, because you have that type bond, you have this invisible trust [….] And then what's even worse is that if you have all males that have known each other for x amount of years and a decision maker and punishment is within that longstanding friendship, and obviously the consequences are going to be, well, nothing here, don't see any evidence of any wrongdoing.

The participants reported that since the senior officers always cover up for each other, most cases are not handled through the right channel. Participant 1 stated that "it was handled behind closed doors at the senior level." Participant 5 stated:

> You hear about someone doing something and then all of a sudden they're gone, but you don't know what really happened. So, for instance, when I was in Iraq, the division commander was having an inappropriate relationship and the next thing you know, you're told that he's going on R&R (rest and recuperation), he never comes back. You don't know what happened.

According to Participant 7, some violations were hidden and the cases were never solved. Participant 7 stated:

> I knew of personally, there were some violations that were basically kept quiet that no one really knew about, such as whether it was domestic violence, DUIs, whether it was sexual misconduct, and basically it was almost like, and it didn't happen because you didn't see any consequences for the behavior.

Participants reported that in most cases, officers with connections with the Army authorities, their violation cases were always hidden. Participant 7 stated:

> They're going to just tell me, hey, just make sure you're not broadcasting it too much what you're doing, but we're going to back you no matter what. And so because that happens, it's a trend and it's kind of like a partnership. We're going to keep doing what we got to do because we have the strength, the power, the influence that nothing is going to come our way.

Participant 5 established that there is favoritism in that senior leaders involved in violation cases are treated less harshly than the junior officers involved in such cases. Participant 5 stated:

> I think there is favoritism obviously, and I think just like I said, a junior enlisted person or senior NCO may be punished, punished more severely than a senior leader or someone that's got a lieutenant colonel or a colonel that's got 20 plus years may just be allowed to retire rather than being under UCMJ or losing stripes or losing rank or losing all this.

Data from this theme demonstrated how corruption and military cover-ups occurred in the Army. The participants reported that the senior officer's reputation is always protected no matter their involvement in a violation case. This depicted that there was favoritism as senior officers with the violation offense were never treated the same as junior officers accused of the same offense. The senior officers always cover up for each other; hence, most cases go unresolved.

Theme 7: Impunity and Injustice in the Face of Misconduct

Seven participants provided data to support this theme. This theme demonstrated the injustice issues faced by Army officers associated with misconduct. The participants reported that the injustice cases were many as most times, evidence was destroyed, and Army officers

faced lenient consequences of misconduct, lack of sufficient evidence, and unfair case judgment. Participant 11 reported that an officer once destroyed evidence after an investigation began. Participant 11 stated:

> And he had these pictures of naked women around his room, his bunker, and I remember when that investigation started, he had to take all of those down. I remember going down there, I was like, whoa, this empty in here now what happened?

In some situations, the cases lack sufficient evidence. Participant 13 stated, "They went to Leavenworth shut and dry case. You take that same case, and she says it was rape and he says it was consensual, and there's no proof either way."

Participants also reported that in most cases officers get away with misconduct. Participant 3 stated:

> It is not, they've been elevated to this or they're going to take over this or whatever, they're being moved and you don't know where they going. It's hush hush and you be like, Hmm, but of course we can't go ask what's going on.

Participant 11 also added on the issue of officers getting away with misconduct. Participant 11 stated:

> They got away with a lot of things that nobody in the unit would even think or even try to get away with. But nobody would say anything to 'em. And there was no one that had the guts to step up to that senior leader and say, Hey, what you're doing is wrong.

In situations where the officers failed to get away with the misconduct, they faced lenient consequences. Participant 1 emphasized this when they stated:

> You had a senior leader that misbehaved, some misconduct, it was they were quietly dismissed, allowed to retire, move, whatever, with full benefits, full pensions. It was just done quietly. Afterwards, you would hear about the reasons why so-and-so may have departed an organization or retired as quickly as they did. I think, back then, it was a culture of a lot of people were doing it, so it was accepted.

Participant 3 also emphasized the lenient consequences. Participant 3 stated:

> I've never seen it used not on, yeah, I've never seen it used. No, that's what I'm saying. They get that golden look. They've done misconduct, they got in trouble and they

> say, Hey, we just going to allow you to retire. Stop allowing that shit [….] And maybe sometimes they'll lose a star, but hey, if you just say four star losing a star or two, that don't mean nothing.

Participant 7 also reported the officers under investigation are moved to a different location and removed from their position, however, this is not always the case. Participant 7 stated:

> I don't know what we could do, what the Army could do to fix that situation besides pulling the individual that is being accused out of that position and maybe moving them somewhere else until the investigation is done and they get what they get. But even that, sometimes that can be hit or miss.

This theme demonstrated that the misconduct cases are not always handled fairly, and there are times that the officer affected may face injustice. During the investigation, some perpetrators may destroy evidence. In some situations, the case lacks sufficient evidence; hence, no one is held accountable. The perpetrators also get away with misconduct cases where there are no consequences and when there are consequences, those are lenient.

Research Question 2: Themes

Research Question 2 asked, "What cultural and organizational oversight factors make oversight authorities ineffective in dealing with inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct?" Overall, through an analysis of the interview transcripts and archival documents, three themes emerged including challenges in military accountability in the Army, corruption and military cover ups, and impunity and injustice in the face of misconduct.

Challenges in Accountability in the Army. First, the participants and the archival documents highlighted the challenges in accountability in the Army. Participants agreed that there is a lot of bureaucracy in the Army and poor reporting systems. Participants also agreed that there were no mechanisms to check for misconduct and no follow-up of bad behaviors happening. In addition, some participants illuminated the fact that because senior leaders have

freedom to choose their aides, this causes nepotism and senior leaders choosing females to whom they may be attracted. Gender imbalance in senior leadership positions seemed to be a recurring theme across participants. The participants discussed the need to have more females in leadership positions as this could lessen misconduct.

Corruption and Military Cover-ups. Second, the participants and the archival documents highlighted the persistent corruption and military cover ups in the Army. Participants noted that most often the Army sides with senior officers to conceal the truth, brushing cases under the rug because the senior leaders have a connection with higher authorities. Participants also suggest that there was a good amount of favoritism among senior officers as to ensure that they have each other's back. Furthermore, participants felt senior leaders act as though they are "untouchable."

Impunity and Injustice in the Face of Misconduct. Third, the participants and the archival documents highlighted the impunity and injustice in the face of misconduct. Participants explained that most senior leaders get away with misconduct and felt that there was an unfair process and judgment when misconduct comes to light. Participants also discussed that because of the lack of sufficient evidence, senior leaders most likely go unpunished. Lastly, some participants agreed that there was no transparency as to what happened when a senior leader is punished.

Research Question 2: Findings

Based on what the participants reported, the results indicated that:

- the Army has a lot of bureaucracy;
- no one is willing to follow up on bad behaviors;

- gender imbalance in senior leadership is a challenge for accountability and organizational structure;
- corruption and military cover-ups occur in the Army;
- the senior officer's reputation is protected, no matter their involvement in a violation case;
- there is favoritism, as senior officers with the violation offense are not treated the same as junior officers accused of the same offense; and
- senior officers cover up for each other; hence, most cases go unresolved.

Research Question 3

How do women in the Army learn to cope with cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army?

With this research question, the researcher wanted to find out how women in the Army learn to cope with cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army. Two themes were generated to answer this research question. Table 9 below shows the theme and the codes that were used.

Theme 8: Empowering Women in a Male-Dominated Environment

Data from seven participant interviews contributed to this theme. This theme demonstrated that empowering women in male-dominated environments can help them cope with cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army. The participants reported that having personal and professional boundaries, ensuring that they stay in a safe environment, being a good example to the junior officers, and adjusting to the male-dominated ,culture can help women cope with sexual misconduct in the U.S Army. According to

Table 9

Connecting Themes and Codes

Theme	Code
Theme 8: Empowering Women in a Male-Dominated Environment	* Adapting to the male-dominated culture * Having personal boundaries * Maintain professionalism all through * Not being alone in a department or when on duty * Leading by example
Theme 9: Supporting Survivors of Trauma and Ensuring Justice	* Going to rehabilitation to get some help * Providing counseling services * Training programs being organized * Having a government watchdog to report cases * Legal representation provided for them * Report using sexual assault hotlines

Note. Table shows the themes and codes that were generated.

Participant 4, women need to adjust to the male-dominated work environment. Participant 4 stated:

> It's easier for you to adjust to them instead of them adjust to you just simply for the fact that, they've been doing this male thing for so long, they can cut up amongst themselves and there's no harm or foul.

According to Participant 3, having personal boundaries is crucial. In this regard, Participant 3 stated:

> Just try and read the tea leaves and not let yourself be put in that situation. Like, Hey, hey, can you come up to the room? Y'all on a trip? You on a trip somewhere and hey, can you come into the room so we can discuss? Well probably better the meet in the lobby. But then again, we can't talk about sensitive topics in the lobby [….] And see, and that's where I think women really need to be paying attention. The touching of your hair, the hand on the shoulder. Whoa, why are you violating this person's personal space? You'd never do that to a guy. So it's a tough one. It's so subjective and you really got to be paying attention to it. But I would say if a woman experiences it, she not only needs to check it, she needs to report it.

Participants also reported that it is crucial for Army leaders to lead by example. Participant 5 stated:

> I truly feel that just the standard, you just have to uphold the standard, whether it's a character, the Army values or whatever you have on the spot, corrections is one of the best tools that you can use. If you see something wrong, you correct it. I truly believe that. And as you go up the chain, if you start doing that early, you will continue to do that as you go up the chain.

Participant 12 stated, "I think you have to lead from the front. You got, you can't have any scandals, chief of staff of the Army, sec def, all that health stuff aside care." Participant 7 also stated, "You have to separate, you have to be unbiased as a leader."

Participants also stressed the issue that women have to ensure that they are always in safe environments. Participant 3 stated, "limit circumstances or situations that would make it, that would create an opportunity for someone to act out character." Participant 4 stated:

> Well, I don't think they should be alone. I'm just trying to think back at when I had sent, because I had to send, I never sent a female by herself down there. There was always two. I just felt like there was just a power number. I didn't need her to be by herself. Same situation. Even if the roles were flopped, I always had to really look at that because our numbers, females, two males were really, really drastic. So, it was one of those, hey, battle buddy system for sure. That would help. And I was pretty stern commander just of my personality, but I just wanted them to understand that, Hey, I'm here. I'm still able to talk to you.

This theme demonstrated that empowering women in male-dominated environments can help them cope with cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army. This empowerment would be through ensuring women are always in safe environments and senior leaders take responsibility for ensuring they and male and female officers know how to develop and practice personal and professional boundaries.

Theme 9: Supporting Survivors of Trauma and Ensuring Justice

Data from seven participant interviews contributed to this theme. This theme established that supporting survivors of trauma and ensuring justice for sexual misconduct would help

women cope with cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army. According to the participants, some of the support services would include providing rehabilitation and counseling services, ensuring that all sexual misconduct cases are reported, and providing legal representation for the complainants. Participant 8 stated, "If you make mistake, try to find some help rehabilitation."

The participants reported that providing counseling services would help the Army women cope with the mental consequences of sexual assault. Participant 5 stated:

> And then once they do that, the military has the programs for sexual assault, the rape counselors and so forth. So, I feel like the programs are there to assist male or female with any type of issues that they might have. They just have to use them.

Participant 8 also stated, "they try to help the person out and try to get 'em some counseling." Participant 11 also emphasized the counseling recommendation and stated, "going to take them counseling and all that type of things to even begin to get over."

Participants also reported that organized training programs would also help the Army officers and leaders. Participant 12 stated, "We'll require them to do training. That training has to be ongoing. I think some courses here at my organization, you do 'em every year." Participant 8 added, "some training to make them see hey, because some people, they might not really know that they're doing." Participant 7 also stated:

> We have mandatory training, whether it's in person or online, well-based training that we have to do annually to kind of really check the block. And we have open discussions, and that's really the extent of it. But each command has policy letters stating the rules, the ethics, the requirements, and the guidelines by which we're supposed to conduct ourselves.

The participants also recommended that all sexual misconduct cases should always be reported. Participant 1 stated, "It's like retired general officers, retired sergeant majors, retired 06s that are almost like this ethics watchdog cell. It's unfortunate that we have to have something

like that, but it's still, it's a good thing." Participant 10 also recommended the use of watchdogs to ensure all cases are reported. Participant 10 stated:

> I think there needs to be a, I don't want to say devil's advocate, but we need to identify somebody to senior general officers staff that is going to be the watchdog to make sure that we're not going overboard and somebody's kind of there.

Participant 2 also stated:

> Similar to something like a watchdog, he gave the recommendation, we need something like a watchdog, not IG (Inspector General), but a separate entity that checks and balances what general officers are doing. And that's the whole sole purpose in life, particularly at the three-, four-star level because you do gain that much power and authority that you do just do what you want to do.

This theme demonstrated the need to support survivors of trauma and ensure justice for sexual misconduct to help women cope with cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army.

Research Question 3: Themes

Research Question 3 asked, "How do women in the Army learn to cope with cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army?" Overall, through an analysis of the interview transcripts and archival documents, two themes emerged including empowering women in a male-dominated environment and supporting survivors of trauma and ensuring justice. The findings are described below.

Empowering Women in a Male-Dominated Environment. First, the participants and the archival documents highlighted empowering women in a male-dominated environment as a way to cope. Participants discussed the complexities of adapting to the male-dominated culture in the Army. Participants suggested leading by example as a way to establish mutual trust. Some participants also suggested that having personal boundaries, maintaining professionalism and ensuring that one is never alone while on duty as ways for females to navigate the Army.

Participants also noted that reporting procedures need to be more specific when a subordinate finds themselves in a situation involving a senior leader.

Supporting Survivors of Trauma and Ensuring Justice. Second, the participants and the archival documents highlighted supporting survivors of trauma and ensuring justice as a coping mechanism. Participants discussed counseling services outside of the Army, training programs, and rehabilitation as methods by which to support survivors. In addition, some participants discussed the need for a government watchdog comprised of retirees that would oversee senior leaders' travel, potential ethics violations, and business practices.

Research Question 3: Findings

Based on what the participants reported, the results indicated that:

- empowering women in male-dominated environments can help them cope with cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army;
- this empowerment would be through ensuring women are always in safe environments and that senior leaders take responsibility for ensuring they and male and female officers know how to develop and practice personal and professional boundaries; and
- there is a need to support survivors of trauma and ensure justice for sexual misconduct to help women cope with cases of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct in the U.S. Army.

Summary

After the coding process, nine themes emerged which helped to address the three research questions. This chapter included a description of the coding process and codes with tables; the

detailed themes and results that address each research question; and a summary of the themes and findings. The next chapter presents an analysis and discussion of these findings.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

This chapter analyzes and discusses in depth the most salient themes and findings in the context of the literature. The identified themes are examined critically in relation to the prior research described in Chapter 2, how the individual themes either corroborate or contradict, or add new comprehensions to the existing literature on cultural and oversight factors facilitating misconduct in the Army. Through an examination of the ethical norms and the essential nature of the themes in the light of comparable and dissimilar past studies, this analysis acknowledges the position of this study in the context of broader understanding of the problem of unethical behavior and sexual misconduct in the Army.

Institutional Dysfunction and Ethical Deterioration

The theme of institutional dysfunction and ethical deterioration confirmed and extended knowledge in the discipline based on what was found in the peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2. Several studies discussed in Chapter 2 highlighted how organizational factors could contribute to unethical behaviors in the military. Murphy (2019) found that allocating officers to work with peers who had committed misconduct increased their chances of committing misconduct due to negative influence. This aligned with the theme of how dysfunction within the institution and deterioration of ethics could enable misconduct. Blanchard and Broadwell (2018) also discussed how lack of leadership or inaction by senior leaders was directly to blame for ethical failures in several high-profile U.S. Army misconduct cases. This supported how deterioration of leadership and oversight could result in a normalized unethical culture. While the literature discussed failures in policy and oversight (Daniel et al., 2019), the theme of institutional dysfunction and ethical deterioration extended knowledge by exploring specific cultural and systemic organizational issues that could permit misconduct beyond just policy

compliance. The findings of this theme provided a more holistic understanding of how the interplay between cultural, leadership, and organizational dysfunctions could compound to facilitate misconduct.

This theme helped explain how otherwise successful leaders and the institution as a whole could fail to uphold ethics. Understanding these deeper contextual factors was significant for developing solutions that reformed military culture and systems of oversight on an institutional level, not just through policy changes. Addressing root causes is key to preventing and reducing future recurrences of misconduct in the Army. This theme aligned with Edgar Schein's theory of organizational culture, which posited that cultural elements are formed over time through shared learning processes as an organization solves its problems (King & Lawley, 2022). The cultural dysfunction and ethical deterioration described in this theme suggested broken learning processes within the Army that had eroded ethics and accountability.

Discrimination Against Minorities and Fear of Retaliation

The results of this theme confirmed and extended knowledge about discrimination and fear of retaliation in the military. Brown et al. (2021) found that the military organizational climate significantly shaped microaggression behaviors across genders and races. According to the research by Dimberg (2020), the junior female officers of the Navy especially faced a higher number of gender-based microaggressions as compared to other military cohorts. Some of the interviewees experienced racial discrimination and micro-aggressions against the ethnic minority groups in the Army. A few of the participants also expressed their reservations about reporting misconduct in fear of being retaliated. This led to an understanding of how prejudice and fear of reprisal discourage the reporting of unprofessional conduct.

The theme is vital for understanding the failure of the Army in terms of ethical practices and monitoring. Reporting unethical behavior is one way to ensure there is limited misconduct (Daniel et al., 2019). However, the complaints of discrimination against some sections of the population, and the fears of retribution may act as an impediment. In this regard, studies have shown that employees who get support from their organization identify with the organizational values and this leads to the adoption of ethical conduct behavior (Vila-Vázquez et al., 2021). Lack of a fair work environment and fear of retribution may interfere with this support and therefore hinder ethical behavior. Addressing these issues could help improve reporting and overall compliance with the Army's standards of conduct. This theme related to the theory of psychological safety: an organization's climate must make people comfortable taking interpersonal risks such as reporting errors or misconduct (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). The discrimination and fears of retaliation described reduced psychological safety for women and especially minorities.

Inability to Balance Professional and Personal Life in the Army

The findings from this theme both confirmed and extended knowledge in the discipline. Previous studies have found that the military lifestyle often required extensive time commitments that interfered with personal and family life (O'Keefe et al., 2020; Spain et al., 2022). Military personnel were expected to devote significant discretionary time to their service, including long duty hours, deployments, and frequent relocations that disrupted spousal careers and children's education (Blanchard & Broadwell, 2018; Murphy, 2019). These lifestyle demands were seen to contribute to relationship issues, divorces, stress, and decreased well-being among military families (Cooper, 2019). These statements could be corroborated by the results under this theme, where the respondents list major time constraints affecting family bonding, recurrent relocations

that also interfered with family life, and continuously present obstacles in preserving steady relationships with others. The finding admittedly helped to better appreciate the techniques military personnel endeavored to engage in the efforts to reconcile their military service and personal lives. The participants indicated the ways to improve communication with spouses during deployments where they mentioned video conferences and ensuring maximum family time during reunion. These military coping strategies enhanced an understanding of how the soldiers face work-life balance challenges.

The significance of this theme stems from the problems of oversight in the organization and those cultural features that initiate negative practices among senior U.S. Army officers. Military personnel may find it difficult to strike a balance between work obligations and their personal life and this could be a source of stress and relationship problems (Cooper, 2019). Previous studies have identified the stresses as some potential factors that might influence moral decision-making as well as social resistance negatively if not well addressed (Blanchard & Broadwell, 2018; O'Keefe et al., 2020; Spain et al., 2022). Understanding specific work-life balance challenges and coping strategies employed by Army personnel could help cultural and policy reforms better support overall wellbeing and reduce misconduct-enabling stressors. The findings of this theme corresponded with organizational learning theory which viewed the organization as a social structure that must nurture learning at both the individual and collective levels (Argote et al., 2021). The inability to balance professional responsibilities with personal life could impair individual learning and wellbeing, affecting individual performance and organizational effectiveness.

Ethical Dilemmas and Abuse of Power in the Army

The findings of this theme confirmed and extended previous knowledge about ethical dilemmas and abuse of power in the military context. The findings resonated with the research Blanchard and Broadwell (2018) conducted which showed leadership inaction and lack of accountability directly enabled unethical behavior in two high-profile Army misconduct cases. The results of this theme also aligned with the study O'Keefe et al. (2020) performed demonstrating how failure to observe and enforce ethical codes by military supervisors could lead to increased unethical conduct. Many interviewed senior leaders mentioned the organizational culture that was cultivated by top officials played a significant role in allowing inappropriate behavior (Blanchard & Broadwell, 2018). This confirmed the observation by Murphy (2019) that allocating officers alongside peers with known criminal records increases their chances of committing misconduct. These interactions with the ex-military persons supported the argument by Vila-Vázquez et al. (2021) that the level of ethical behavior committed by an officer whose character is fully transformed and aligned with the Army values is closely connected to their moral conduct and degree of identification with the institution's values.

The results of this theme built upon the existing knowledge as the findings presented alternative perceptions of the senior Army officials with varied military careers. Whereas the majority of the past research was designed to discuss patterns or examine isolated cases, this research effort reached out to the multiplicity of stakeholders to gain deeper knowledge as to the functioning behind the power dynamics and the failure of the oversight mechanism that resulted in the breach of the established rules. The findings of this theme directly addressed a pressing issue because the occurrence of offense cases was still evident despite the presence of structured

education programs and policies (Warner & Armstrong, 2020). Addressing this properly could have helped restore public trust in the military institution. The corroborations and novel insights provided under this theme were crucial given its implications for curbing future norm breaches in the military setting by resolving organizational and cultural issues that facilitated ethical misconduct and abuse of power among Army officials. The findings of this theme correspond with the ideas from critical theory, which state that unfair power dynamics can adversely affect fairness (Paradis et al., 2020). The abuses of power and ethical failures described supported critical theory's assertions about the dark side of military hierarchy.

Challenges in Accountability in the Army

The findings of this theme confirmed some aspects discussed in the literature. Blanchard and Broadwell (2018) found leadership in action directly contributed to ethics failures in two high-profile Army misconduct cases studied, which aligned with Chapter 4's description of oversight failures enabling inappropriate behavior. Similarly, Murphy (2019) discussed how allocating officers to work with peers having committed prior misconduct increased their risk of misconduct, relating to the description of oversight failures. However, the findings also extended the understanding of the literature. Portillo et al. (2021) reviewed techniques women used to navigate their male-dominated environment but did not discuss weaknesses in accountability structures. The findings from the interview with the Army officers explored the issue of the oversight issues that happened to be the cause of the inappropriate relationships which were known by some people for a longer time but were never reported. These data provided a point of view that was not attested by the previous studies. The findings of this research stressed the necessity to evaluate misconduct channels, as Daniel et al. (2019) and Acosta et al. (2021) recommended in their research. The results of this theme provided a deeper exploration into the

hindrance of accountability including the proper use of the misconduct channels, but also the structural and cultural challenges that narrow the range of response. This expanded the literature by offering a more holistic analysis of impediments to military accountability.

The theme of challenges in accountability and organizational structure was important because failures in these areas directly enabled inappropriate behavior among senior leaders. Addressing identified structural oversight loopholes and cultural barriers was needed to strengthen the prevention of future recurrences discussed in Chapter 4. The problem of senior leader misconduct persisted partially due to lingering issues unresolved in these domains. Understanding such challenges fully could better guide solutions to curb misconduct trends within the Army. The results of this theme are related to organizational learning theory's emphasis on learning from failures through transparent reporting and feedback loops (Argote et al., 2021). The accountability and structural challenges reported could have short-circuited these important learning processes.

Corruption and Military Cover-ups

The findings from the embedded case study confirmed some aspects found in the literature described in Chapter 2 regarding corruption and cover-ups in military hierarchies. The literature documented how in three high-profile misconduct cases involving the U.S. Army, namely the Fat Leonard scandal, sexual assault and murder of SPC Vanessa Guillén, and the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, leadership inaction and lack of oversight directly contributed to the ethical failures in two cases and indirectly in the third case (Blanchard & Broadwell, 2018). This aligned with what was uncovered in the case study where senior Army leaders created a culture that normalized unethical behavior and was aware of misconduct cases but failed to take action. The literature also discussed how allocating officers to work with peers known to have

committed prior misconduct increases their chances of engaging in similar behavior due to the negative influence that occurs through exposure (Murphy, 2019). These confirmed findings from the case study where inappropriate relationships were allowed to persist for prolonged periods due to cover-ups within the command chain. The academic field gained an expanded scope of knowledge by providing evidence of how corruption and cover-ups had permeated the ranks and branches of the Army.

Corruption and cover-ups within the military force have further affected the misconduct issue in the system. When these practices were not recognized and assessed, it led to the growth of a toxic culture that became indifferent to unethical behavior as it was being approved and encouraged (Spain et al., 2022). This prevented the Army from fulfilling its directive and undervalued its reputation, loss of public trust, and encouraged tolerating misconduct issues as there was no support for victims for fear of retaliation (Mamaril, 2023). According to Spain et al. (2022), the attempts to cover up scandals allowed improper behavior to continue and even spread. This meant that dealing with the issue at hand was vital to finally stopping the recurrence of inappropriate acts by senior Army officers. Initiating the overhaul, which included the breakdown of the proper management and accountability systems, was central. The results of this theme were linked with the critical theory following a scenario of power structure whereby the power is distributed based on self-interest instead of integrity (Paradis et al., 2020). The corruption and the cover-ups exposed the elements of the critical theory at play in the military system.

Impunity and Injustice in the Face of Misconduct

The results of this theme add to and enhance the information from other studies. The analysis of Blanchard and Broadwell (2018) found that leadership missteps and lack of

accountability are the main forces that led to severe ethics failures like the Fat Leonard scandal and the Abu Ghraib prison incidents. The information from the interviews indicated similar models of leaders not attending to inappropriate conduct and taking no corrective actions. This is in agreement with an argument presented by Blanchard and Broadwell (2018) about the relationship between lax regulation and misconduct. Apart from the collective knowledge acquisition, testimonies from the soldiers have extended thoughts on the theme of how cover-ups are possible within military hierarchy systems. Interviewees of the study stated that sometimes senior soldier misconducts were covered under the pretext of protecting them while accountability was given much less priority. There was a tendency to suppress serious issues that eventually resulted in external reactions as depicted by Papapostolou (2022). This points to the image of a widespread culture of concealing wrongdoing in the military in order to maintain reputations and stave off humiliation, even if it means eroding the long-term integrity.

The comprehension of how corruption and cover-ups continue to flourish in organizational structures forms the grounds on which such matters should be addressed to avoid recurring misconduct cases. Ethical impact theory suggests that upgraded cases of unethical behavior may harm organizational climates through the corrosion of trust and inviolability in the long run (Giacalone et al., 2016). If concerning habits are not recognized and transformed, cultures with such hazardous behaviors will keep enduring and even assisting further in the violation of the act. The insights related to this theme carry strategic importance in regard to the shaping of further improvements in oversight and promotion of transparency in the military-bureaucratic system. This theme was in accordance with the ethical impact theory that unaddressed misconduct cases over time can erode organizational trust (Schwepker & Dimitriou,

2021). The propensities for immunity and injustice described reflected the predictions by ethical impact theory.

Empowering Women in a Male-Dominated Environment

The results of this theme confirmed the broadly discussed issues and also offered more knowledge about the empowerment of women in a patriarchal environment based on the interviews with female officers in the Army. Studies have shown that women adopted masculine gestures and disregarded sexual harassment to fit into a male-dominated military culture (Portillo et al., 2021). The interviews supported this, as the female officers disclosed a different dimension of their traits, distancing themselves from femininity and embracing masculine behavior as an avenue to gain recognition; this was demonstrated by their strong desire to be seen as physically tough. The interviews gave a deeper meaning presenting the fact that although this strategy helped them professionally, it led to mental distress and the demand to always prove themselves. According to the information gained from the interviews, some women masked their personalities, identities, and even convictions to conform. Previous literature has dealt with the problems that affect women with regard to discrimination, role marginalization, and structural support (Brown et al., 2021; Russell, 2020). The findings supported that the anticipated reasons for organizational challenges were valid. In addition to this, the interviews also contributed to wider knowledge by illustrating how women found strength in their informal communication with other peers and by seeking advice from senior women Army officers to enable them to endure such hardships. This social cohesion acted like a force-field that stirred many women's spirits, despite the barriers they experienced.

Understanding these experiences is important to addressing the problem of the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in the Army. The findings highlighted that

while individual agencies helped women acclimate, systemic organizational changes are needed to create an enabling environment where women can reach their leadership potential without compromising their wellbeing or other aspects of identity. The literature and findings together call for the Army to examine its culture and policies through a gender lens to build an inclusive organization. The findings of this theme are connected to concepts in organizational learning theory around maximizing the diversity of perspectives for more innovative solutions (Argote et al., 2021). The experiences of women officers spotlighted areas where the organization has more to learn. Below is the conceptual analysis of the main themes arising from the findings. The identified themes will be examined critically.

Supporting Survivors of Trauma and Ensuring Justice

The findings confirmed what Daniel et al. (2019) previously found regarding the importance of leadership support for victims of sexual misconduct. Daniel et al. (2019) reported that while military leadership encouraged reporting of sexual misconduct, it was associated with decreased emotional distress for victims and increased satisfaction with the reporting process. The reviewed document similarly noted the important role of leadership support in mitigating potential negative consequences for victims. The findings also extended previous research by highlighting specific coping strategies that women in the military adopted to handle trauma from sexual misconduct, such as problem-focused engagement and emotion-focused disengagement (Dimberg, 2020). This added new contextualized knowledge about techniques employed by military women to manage distress.

Additionally, the reviewed archival documents provided new insights into ensuring justice for victims of sexual misconduct in the military. For example, the documents discussed the utilization of reporting rights by victims (Daniel et al., 2019) as a means of seeking justice.

However, the documents noted the need for multiple confidential reporting channels and options outside the victim's chain of command to truly support victims (Acosta et al., 2021). This observation extended knowledge on improving reporting systems. This theme is related to theories of psychological safety emphasizing the importance of justice and support systems for reporting misconduct freely (Potipiroon & Wongpreedee, 2021). The coping strategies and importance of accountability validated these theoretical underpinnings.

Summary

What of the findings are most significant or compelling? In relation to existing research on the Army's organizational culture and oversight factors, including hierarchical, male-dominated, hypermasculine culture and systemic, bureaucratic obstacles, this study contributes knowledge and raises new questions about *how and why exactly* sexual misconduct persists in the Army, from the perspective of their own.

For instance, some participants indicated that the Army needs to "evolve with the times" as it relates to perceptions of who is who is not considered a part of a "wholesome family." If Army leaders discriminate openly against their own, this can lead to sexual misconduct. And furthermore, if the Army does not catch up on the times—in terms of what they consider right and good (e.g., male, straight, married)—then everything and everyone who falls outside of that is unworthy and/or unaccountable for acting as a true and ethical leader.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 6 provides recommendations for actions the Army could take, such as improving oversight and support for survivors. The implications of the study are discussed, considering how the findings could impact future policy and training approaches. The conclusion summarizes the main takeaways from the paper, emphasizing how the research contributes new insights and how the Army may better address enabling factors and handle such cases going forward. The researcher concludes with three overarching themes.

Conclusion 1: Ethical Deterioration, Fear of Retaliation, Work-Life Imbalance and Abuse of Power

The researcher concludes that the presence of ethical deterioration, fear of retaliation, work-life imbalance, and abuse of power in cases of sexual misconduct in the Army suggests systemic issues within the military culture. It implies a failure of leadership to uphold ethical standards, protect victims, and foster a healthy work environment. Additionally, it highlights the need for comprehensive reforms, including improved reporting mechanisms, better training on consent and boundaries, and stronger accountability measures for perpetrators.

Conclusion 2: Bureaucracy, Corruption, and Impunity

The researcher concludes that the hierarchical structure of the Army creates bureaucracy and layers of red tape that can slow down the reporting and investigation process for sexual misconduct cases in the Army. Corruption within the system can lead to cases being ignored or swept under the rug, allowing perpetrators to escape accountability. Furthermore, impunity leaves individuals feeling they can act without consequence, can embolden offenders and discourage victims from coming forward. Together, these factors undermine the effectiveness of

leaders responsible for addressing sexual misconduct, perpetuating a culture of silence and enabling further abuse.

Conclusion 3: Empowering Women and Supporting Survivors

The researcher concludes that empowering women and supporting survivors in the Army can help women cope with sexual misconduct by providing them with a sense of agency, validation, and resources needed to navigate. By empowering women, they can feel more confident in reporting incidents of sexual misconduct. Women need to feel they have support systems in place. Additionally, supporting victims through counseling, advocacy, and policies that prioritize their well-being can help them navigate the trauma and seek justice. Ultimately, creating a culture that values and respects women's experiences can foster resilience and healing in the face of sexual misconduct.

Limitations of the Study

This study had some limitations that may have affected the findings. As anticipated in the initial proposal, access to participants posed a challenge. While several retired senior leaders and soldiers responded initially expressing willingness to participate, few followed through with interviews due to the sensitive nature of the topics discussed. This limited the sample size and perspectives captured in the study. However, data saturation was reached with the participants who were interviewed. Contrary to what was expected, the assumed limitations around participants not sharing experiences freely due to fear of repercussions turned out to be a nonissue. Participants openly shared their reflections and perspectives during the interviews. Establishing rapport by discussing my background and interest in the topic helped assuage initial concerns about confidentiality and the use of the data.

An additional limitation that emerged during data analysis related to researcher bias. As an active-duty military officer passionate about ethical reform in the Army, there is a possibility that my preconceptions influenced how the data was interpreted. However, I took steps to mitigate this by having an external reviewer counter check the codes and themes that emerged to check for any evidence of bias in the analysis, as recommended by Carcary (2020). While the study had some limitations in terms of access and sample size, the trustworthiness of the findings was not significantly compromised. Further research incorporating perspectives from a larger sample could help validate and expand on these initial findings.

Implications for Research: Method and Theory

The research adopted a qualitative case study design that used archival documents and interviews to address the research questions in detail. These interviews created the opportunity to explore the cultural aspects and viewpoints of the main parties involved in the evaluation process that might not have been exposed through pure questionnaire responses. Though the small sample size had shortcomings, the findings of the study might be empirically supplemented by quantitative research and analysis. The study presented a new direction on how case study designs can be used productively to explore complex matters in military settings.

The applied frameworks provided an appropriate ground for the interpretation of the findings. Organizational learning theory provided a way to understand how the culture and oversight failures in the Army are factors that may unfavorably affect the learning process. Discrimination and retaliation confirmed the elements of ethical impact theory. Overall, the findings were largely consistent with these theories, thereby helping to affirm their applicability and extend theoretical understanding of their constructs in military settings.

Notably, organizational culture theory served as a coherent lens encompassing many themes. It posits cultures form from shared learning, and findings suggest failures in these processes eroded ethics over time (King & Lawley, 2022). This indicates cultural changes require addressing root causes as the theory proposes. Overall, the study advances methodology by demonstrating a case study's utility, while theoretically reinforcing selected frameworks and implying directions for their future use in the discipline.

Recommendations for Future Research

One area for future research is to examine the perspectives of junior enlisted soldiers on cultural and organizational factors enabling misconduct. While this study focused on the views of officers, a similar study exploring the experiences and views of junior enlisted personnel may provide additional insights. Junior enlisted soldiers work more closely with senior leaders on a daily basis and may have observed dynamics not captured in officer interviews. A representative sample of junior enlisted soldiers could help identify organizational or cultural norms from their unique vantage point. Another recommendation is to conduct a quantitative survey to understand the prevalence of certain perceptions found in this study's interviews. While interviews provided an in-depth understanding of certain viewpoints, a larger survey could assess how widely shared these views are across different ranks, genders, and occupations in the Army. An anonymous quantitative study may also uncover insights not disclosed in qualitative interviews. The current study's findings could help inform variables to measure.

Another recommendation for future research is to conduct a comparative study to investigate the cultural and organizational characteristics present in research in other branches of military services like the Air Force or Navy. The present study focused on the Army, but it is proposed that using similar research methods with another military branch would give more

information on both the differences and similarities across services. A cross-branch study could provide more knowledge of how the military functions as a whole by highlighting the common challenges as well as those unique to the Army. After this analytical study, the core results could be used as an efficient tool in a unified effort of the services' personnel for policy framework development.

Implications for Practice: Positive Social Change

The research findings have significant potential to address public social problems at all institutional levels within the Army. As individuals, enlightening soldiers on the cultural and oversight forces that can trigger bad behavior could enable them to rise above pressures and report if there is something they think is wrong. It can possibly put an end to the conduct by motivating one to perform a self-analysis of mistakes. The study results also imply reform at the organizational level in order to change the discriminatory atmosphere, provide work-life balance advisory support, and identify supervision loopholes. By reforming these institutional problems, the Army will be able to fulfill its commitment to the fundamental rights, honors, and respect of everyone.

Democratic designing of policies and transparent review of the reporting system with a gender lens may encourage more women to go further with their leadership, resulting in more equity. Formal and informal support networks can be further developed to identify and meet the needs of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. This may extend to comprehensive victim services, counseling, and training. It is crucial that training occurs regularly throughout Army members' careers, so that Army senior leaders also receive training. When the approach to addressing misconduct is comprehensive and transparent, this may help prevent trauma and

promote rebuilding of trust. After the implementation of organizational reforms, ethical culture may be promoted, hence preventing unethical acts from occurring and spreading.

At a societal level, the process of faith restoration in the military helps support the military performance and the confidence among the public that the armed forces swore to protect. This study's results provide the Army with policy recommendations on how to effectively realize this constitutional mission of fighting discrimination, harassment, and any other misconduct. The pledge for justice is proliferated through the branding of the Army as a respectable institution. Addressing root issues embedded at different levels of operation creates opportunities for productive development to work in the favor of both organizational ethics and the entire community.

Recommendations for Future Practice

The findings from this study are relevant for a variety of stakeholders seeking to strengthen ethical leadership in the Army. The results of the study provide the U.S. Army and the Department of Defense with a better understanding of the problems and oversight failures resulting in unacceptable misconduct which helps in the move towards improved ethical behavior from all personnel. The findings show that the solution lies in readdressing the underlying norms and learning processes at multiple levels, from policy to social structures, to better conform to the Army's mission to preserve soldiers from all harm, although system changes that include preventing discrimination and balancing work-life can effectively prevent future consequences in terms of equipment and readiness and in reputation terms as well.

Theoretical frameworks underlying military education policies, curricula, and practice as well as how to implement it should take into account certain implications to support its long-lasting impact. This research demonstrates that continuing organizational procedures, climate,

and, more important, power dynamics reinforce such norms. Educating future leaders on these subjects could help in the incorporation of these strategies for protecting integrity when confronted with operational pressures. Service members also may employ these lessons by reflecting on their own accountability and actively speaking out about witnessed issues with the aid of appropriate interpersonal channels. The findings can be used by advocates and lobbyists to back up their call for victim-oriented support programs and an alternative procedure for counteracting misconduct rather than further retaliation. Results might then be used to support specialist professionals like defense counsel, counselors, police investigation teams, and internal affairs staff in dealing with such private cases. Knowledge of factors that drive misconduct can enable an efficient approach to dealing with the first signs, while at the same time respecting the confidences of the victim. The findings provide a powerful base for the military sector and advocacy communities to argue for necessary policy changes based on effective practices. Implementing these recommendations may transform the military, including the Army, into a more open culture, and a better place to work.

As the researcher and author of *Understanding the Organizational Culture and Oversight Factors that Foster Unethical Behavior in Army Senior Leaders: An Embedded Case Study*, I plan to use the study's results to advocate for the House Armed Services Committee to add language to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This language would direct the military to add more rigorous expectations (i.e. professional standards and practices) as well as checks and balances that hold senior leaders accountable for ethical behavior and the prevention of misconduct.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to understand how organizational culture and oversight factors played a role in enabling sexual misconduct and inappropriate relationships among senior U.S. Army leaders. An embedded case study strategy was employed to explore the issue further. Organizational learning theory, critical theory, and ethical impact theory helped provide insight into the ways in which the culture and systems in the Army placed officers and personnel in positions where they did or could have committed misconduct. The literature review findings supported this. The recurrence of misconduct cases over the years despite policies, pointed to weaknesses in oversight, reporting systems, and culture. A masculine culture that is resistant to change was found to shape behaviors and experiences in the Army. However, individual resilience and leadership commitment to ethical standards were identified as protective factors.

The data collection and analysis refined the understanding of this issue. Through archival review and interviews, overlooked cultural enablers of misconduct such as masculine hierarchies, power differentials, and loyalty pressures were uncovered. Organizational factors like the allocation of officers to supervisors with misconduct history and passive oversight also emerged as explanatory. Additionally, coping mechanisms used by women such as distancing from feminine identity and downplaying misconduct exposed the challenges they face. These findings provide insights into why misconduct thrives and oversight fails. They challenge assumptions of single-loop learning and compliance as the norm. Overall, the study established that a symbiotic relationship exists among individuals, cultures, and systems in either promoting or curbing unethical behaviors in the Army.

We need to continue to research and advocate for a new model of oversight in the Army. This new model should revolutionize the way leaders function to promote ethical leadership

guided by Army values rather than the historical male-dominated model that blames, discriminates, and abuses female officers, making them victims rather than soldiers, putting the onus for survival on them.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Email and Phone Script: Individual Interviews—Retired Senior Leaders

Topic: Understanding the Organizational Culture and Oversight Factors That Foster Unethical Behavior in Army Senior Leaders
Principal Researcher: Jamie L. Hickman

You are invited to participate in this research study called "Understanding the Cultural and Organizational Oversight Factors That Foster Unethical Behavior in Army Senior Leaders." Despite the rigorous ethics training and oversight mechanisms in place, instances of sexual misconduct in the senior ranks (1-4 star general officers) persist in the US Army. This study seeks to identify gaps or organizational and cultural factors that contribute to sexual misconduct in the Army.

I am recruiting individuals who meet all of these criteria:

1. Are age 18 or older
2. Are retired from the Army
3. Served as an Army senior leader
4. A general officer at echelon 1 star or higher

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Participate in a 1:1 in-person audio-recorded interview in a private and quiet location of your choosing local to you for 30-60 minutes

During these activities, you will be asked questions such as:

- your experience as an Army senior leader
- your perceptions on organizational and culture factors that contribute to sexual misconduct in the Army
- How would you describe the Army's current organizational culture when it comes to ethics, integrity, and sexual conduct
- Have you observed any systemic pressures or incentives that might unintentionally encourage leaders to engage in sexual misconduct
- Are there any organizational goals or metrics that might unintentionally promote sexual misconduct
- Are there instances where the Army's traditional hierarchical structure might hinder open dialogue about sexual misconduct

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at Email: [redacted] Phone: [redacted]. Thank you for considering participating in this voluntary research!

Jamie L. Hickman

Appendix B

Informed Consent: Individual Interviews—Retired Senior Leaders

Topic: Understanding the Organizational Culture and Oversight Factors That Foster Unethical Behavior in Army Senior Leaders: Individual Interview Consent
Principal Researcher: Jamie L. Hickman

INTRODUCTION You are invited to participate in this research study called "Understanding the Cultural and Organizational Oversight Factors That Foster Unethical Behavior in Army Senior Leaders". You may qualify to take part in this research study because you are:

A. Are 18 years of age or older
B. Are retired, previous senior leader in the Army
C. Are a general officer at echelon 1 star or higher

Approximately 5 Army senior leaders and 16 active and retired Army Soldiers will participate in this study. It will take 30-60 minutes of your time to complete over the course of one day.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE? Instances of sexual misconduct in the senior ranks occur in the US Army. This study seeks to identify gaps or organizational and cultural factors that contribute to sexual misconduct in the Army, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and consensual inappropriate sexual relationships.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
If you decide to participate, the researcher will individually interview you in a private room of your choosing. During the individual interview, you will be asked to discuss your experiences as an Army senior leader and organizational and cultural factors within the Army with respect to sexual misconduct. Further, you will be asked about your thoughts about how and whether organizational and cultural factors within the Army contributes to sexual misconduct.

This interview will be audio-recorded. After the audio recording is transcribed the audio recording will be deleted. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will still be able to participate. The researcher will just take hand-notes. The interview will take approximately 30-60 minutes. You will be given a pseudonym in order to keep your identity confidential.

You will be asked questions such as:

1. How would you describe the Army's current organizational culture when it comes to ethics, integrity, and sexual conduct?
2. Have you observed any systemic pressures or incentives that might unintentionally encourage leaders to engage in sexual misconduct?
3. Are there any organizational goals or metrics that might unintentionally promote sexual misconduct?

4. Are there instances where the Army's traditional hierarchical structure might hinder open dialogue about sexual misconduct?

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There are some risks to consider. You might feel embarrassed to discuss problems that you experienced at the workplace or in your personal life concerning sexual misconduct in the Army.

Additionally, you may feel fear, discomfort and distress about the potential loss of confidentiality, retribution or retaliation. To mitigate these discomforts, you will be provided the Support Advocacy Information sheet for the event you would like to speak with someone before, during, and after this process concerning these feelings. Your confidentiality will be maintained in this study. You do not have to answer any questions or share anything you do not want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.

The researcher is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity. The study will use a pseudonym instead of your name and keep all information on a password protected computer, locked in a file drawer.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There is no direct benefit for you participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of organizational psychology to better understand in a hierarchal military structure the contributing factors that may promote sexual misconduct in the Army.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY? You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS? The study is over when you have completed the individual interview. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you have not finished. If you decide to leave the study before it is published, your information will be removed from the study.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY The researcher will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio recording will be written down and the audio recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym.

For quality assurance members of the Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review the transcripts of your interview with your pseudonym during this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your written permission or as required by U.S. or State law.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED? The results of this study will be published in journals used for a dissertation, and presented at academic conferences. Your identity will be

removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the primary researcher.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, **you will still be able to participate** in this research study.

_____I give my consent to be recorded

_____

Signature

_____I **do not** consent to be recorded

_____

Signature

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the primary researcher, Jamie Hickman, at [redacted] or at [redacted] **or** you can also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Lyle Yorks at [redacted].

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027, Box 151. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- I have read the Informed Consent Form and have been offered the opportunity to discuss the form with the researcher.
- I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at the researcher's professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the researcher will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- Your data will not be used in further research studies.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent Form document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study:

Print name: _____**Date**:___

Signature: _____

Appendix C

Recruitment Email and Phone Script: Individual Interviews—Active or Retired Soldiers

Topic: Understanding the Organizational Culture and Oversight Factors That Foster Unethical Behavior in Army Senior Leaders
Principal Researcher: Jamie L. Hickman

You are invited to participate in this research study called "Understanding the Cultural and Organizational Oversight Factor That Foster Unethical Behavior in Army Senior Leaders". Despite the rigorous ethics training and oversight mechanisms in place, instances of sexual misconduct in the senior ranks (1-4 star general officers) persist in the US Army. This study seeks to identify gaps or organizational and cultural factors that contribute to sexual misconduct in the Army.

I am recruiting individuals who meet all of these criteria:

1. Are age 18 or older
2. Are active or retired soldiers in the Army

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Participate in a 1:1 in-person audio-recorded interview in a private and quiet location of your choosing local to you for 30-60 minutes

During these activities, you will be asked questions such as:

- your experience and your experience with Army senior leaders
- your perceptions on organizational and culture factors that contribute to sexual misconduct in the Army
- How does the Army's organizational culture address the issue of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct among senior leaders
- What mechanisms does the U.S. Army have in place to monitor and check the behavior of senior leaders
- Are there specific cultural or systemic pressures that might contribute to senior leaders disregarding their ethical training
- How do the dynamics of power and rank influence relationships between senior leaders and subordinates
- In your view, are there areas within the Army where oversight might be less stringent or where sexual misconduct is more likely to be overlooked

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at Email: [redacted] Phone: [redacted]. Thank you for considering participating in this voluntary research!

Jamie L. Hickman

Appendix D

Informed Consent: Individual Interviews—Active or Retired Soldiers

Topic: Understanding the Organizational Culture and Oversight Factors That Foster Unethical Behavior in Army Senior Leaders: Individual Interview Consent Active or Retired Soldiers
Principal Researcher: Jamie L. Hickman

INTRODUCTION You are invited to participate in this research study called "Understanding the Cultural and Organizational Oversight Factors That Foster Unethical Behavior in Army Senior Leaders". You may qualify to take part in this research study because you are:

A. Are 18 years of age or older
B. Are retired or active soldier in the Army

Approximately 5 Army senior leaders (1-4 star General officers) and 16 active and retired Army Soldiers will participate in this study. It will take 30-60 minutes of your time to complete over the course of one day.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE? Instances of sexual misconduct in the senior ranks occur in the US Army. This study seeks to identify gaps or organizational and cultural factors that contribute to sexual misconduct in the Army, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and consensual inappropriate sexual relationships.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
If you decide to participate, the researcher will individually interview you in a private location of your choosing. During the individual interview, you will be asked to discuss your experiences with Army senior leaders and organizational and cultural factors within the Army with respect to sexual misconduct. Further, you will be asked about your thoughts about how and whether organizational and cultural factors within the Army contributes to sexual misconduct.

This interview will be audio-recorded. After the audio recording is transcribed the audio recording will be deleted. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will still be able to participate. The researcher will just take hand-notes. The interview will take approximately 30-60 minutes. You will be given a pseudonym in order to keep your identity confidential.

You will be asked questions such as:

1. How does the Army's organizational culture address the issue of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct among senior leaders?
2. What mechanisms does the U.S. Army have in place to monitor and check the behavior of senior leaders?
3. Are there specific cultural or systemic pressures that might contribute to senior leaders disregarding their ethical training?

4. How do the dynamics of power and rank influence relationships between senior leaders and subordinates?

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There are some risks to consider. You might feel embarrassed to discuss problems that you experienced at the workplace or in your personal life concerning sexual misconduct in the Army.

Additionally, you may feel fear, discomfort and distress about the potential loss of confidentiality, retribution or retaliation. To mitigate these discomforts, you will be provided the Support Advocacy Information sheet for the event you would like to speak with someone before, during, and after this process concerning these feelings. Your confidentiality will be maintained in this study. You do not have to answer any questions or share anything you do not want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.

The researcher is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity. The study will use a pseudonym instead of your name and keep all information on a password protected computer, locked in a file drawer.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There is no direct benefit for you participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of organizational psychology to better understand in a hierarchal military structure the contributing factors that may promote sexual misconduct in the Army.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY? You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS? The study is over when you have completed the individual interview. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you have not finished. If you decide to leave the study before it is published, your information will be removed from the study.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY The researcher will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio recording will be written down and the audio recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym.

For quality assurance members of the Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review the transcripts of your interview with your pseudonym during this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your written permission or as required by U.S. or State law.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED? The results of this study will be published in journals used for a dissertation, and presented at academic conferences. Your identity will be

removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. **Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published**. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the primary researcher.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, **you will still be able to participate** in this research study.

_____I give my consent to be recorded

_____

Signature

_____I **do not** consent to be recorded

_____

Signature

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the primary researcher, Jamie Hickman, at [redacted] or at [redacted] **or** you can also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Lyle Yorks at [redacted].

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027, Box 151. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- I have read the Informed Consent Form and have been offered the opportunity to discuss the form with the researcher.
- I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at the researcher's professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the researcher will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- Your data will not be used in further research studies.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent Form document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study:

Print name: _____ **Date**: __

Signature: _____

Appendix E

Individual Interview Questions—Retired Senior Leaders

Topic: Understanding the Organizational Culture and Oversight Factors That Foster Unethical Behavior in Army Senior Leaders: **(Individual Interview Questions Retired Senior Leader)**

Principal Researcher: Jamie L. Hickman

Senior Leader Perspective-One on One Interview

1. How would you describe the Army's current organizational culture when it comes to ethics, integrity, and sexual conduct?

2. Have you observed any systemic pressures or incentives that might unintentionally encourage leaders to engage in sexual misconduct?

3. Are there any organizational goals or metrics that might unintentionally promote sexual misconduct?

4. Are there instances where the Army's traditional hierarchical structure might hinder open dialogue about sexual misconduct?

5. How do the Army's training and development programs address the ethical challenges faced by senior leaders concerning sexual misconduct?

6. To what degree do senior leaders receive specific training or guidance on handling the unique ethical challenges concerning sexual misconduct?

7. How often do senior leaders interact with training or programs designed to remind and reinforce ethical conduct in personal relationships?

8. How does the Army's promotion system potentially influence decision-making at the senior leadership level concerning sexual misconduct?

9. How do external factors, such as political pressures or public perception, influence decision-making at the top levels concerning sexual misconduct?

10. In your view, are there adequate checks and balances to prevent sexual misconduct by Army senior leaders?

11. How does the Army ensure that its core values are consistently upheld, especially at higher levels of leadership?

12. What steps does the Army take to ensure that leaders who engage in sexual misconduct are held accountable?

13. How are ethical standards communicated and reinforced within the US Army leadership?

14. What mechanisms exist for reporting and addressing inappropriate behavior within the organization?

15. How does organizational culture influence the behavior of senior leaders regarding relationships and misconduct?

16. What training and support structures are in place to promote ethical conduct and prevent misconduct?

17. Are there any systemic issues or cultural norms that may inadvertently condone or overlook inappropriate behavior among senior leaders?

18. How does the chain of command respond to allegations of misconduct involving senior leaders?

19. What efforts are being made to create a culture of accountability and transparency within the US Army leadership?

20. How do power dynamics within the organization impact the likelihood of inappropriate relationships and misconduct among senior leaders?

21. Have there been any recent changes or initiatives aimed at addressing these issues within the organization?

22. How does the US Army compare to other organizations or branches of the military in terms of addressing and preventing such behavior among senior leaders?

Appendix F

Individual Interview Questions—Active or Retired Soldiers

Topic: Understanding the Organizational Culture and Oversight Factors That Foster Unethical Behavior in Army Senior Leaders: **(Individual Interview Questions Active or Retired Soldiers)**

Principal Researcher: Jamie L. Hickman

1. How does the Army's organizational culture address the issue of inappropriate relationships and sexual misconduct among senior leaders?

2. What mechanisms does the U.S. Army have in place to monitor and check the behavior of senior leaders?

3. Are there specific cultural or systemic pressures that might contribute to senior leaders disregarding their ethical training?

4. How do the dynamics of power and rank influence relationships between senior leaders and subordinates?

5. In your view, are there areas within the Army where oversight might be less stringent or where sexual misconduct is more likely to be overlooked?

6. How does the Army handle reports of sexual misconduct involving senior leaders, especially when compared to how it handles cases involving lower-ranked personnel?

7. Are there adequate protections in place for individuals who report sexual misconduct by senior leaders?

8. Do you believe the current training and development programs sufficiently address the unique challenges and temptations faced by senior leaders?

9. How does the Army ensure that its core values are internalized by all, including those in leadership roles?

10. What mechanisms exist for anonymous reporting of sexual misconduct, and are they utilized and effective?

11. Do you feel that the Army's response to reports of sexual misconduct by senior leaders is consistent and fair?

12. Are there external factors, such as media attention or political pressures that may influence how the Army addresses sexual misconduct allegations against senior leaders?

13. In your experience, are there certain environments or deployments where the risk of such sexual misconduct is higher?

14. How are ethical standards communicated and reinforced within the US Army leadership?

15. What mechanisms exist for reporting and addressing inappropriate behavior within the organization?

16. How does organizational culture influence the behavior of senior leaders regarding relationships and misconduct?

17. What training and support structures are in place to promote ethical conduct and prevent misconduct?

18. Are there any systemic issues or cultural norms that may inadvertently condone or overlook inappropriate behavior among senior leaders?

19. How does the chain of command respond to allegations of misconduct involving senior leaders?

20. What efforts are being made to create a culture of accountability and transparency within the US Army leadership?

21. How do power dynamics within the organization impact the likelihood of inappropriate relationships and misconduct among senior leaders?

22. Have there been any recent changes or initiatives aimed at addressing these issues within the organization?

23. How does the US Army compare to other organizations or branches of the military in terms of addressing and preventing such behavior among senior leaders?

Appendix G

Support Advocacy Information Sheet for Participants

Below are the available networks that you may utilize in the event you need support at any time:

- Service Women's Action Network (SWAN): This organization advocates for the rights and needs of women in the military and female veterans. They focus on issues like military sexual trauma, equal opportunities in the military, and healthcare for servicewomen and women veterans. **Contact **202-798-5570** info@servicewomen.org

- Women in Defense (WID): A National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) affiliate, WID provides women with a formal environment for professional growth through networking, education, and career development. rmccaffrey@NDIA.org
  (703) 247-2551

- Military Women's Coalition: This group seeks to unite and elevate the voices of military women by connecting and supporting diverse woman-focused military and veteran organizations. **(202) 798-5570** Email: mwc@servicewomen.org

- Women Veterans Alliance (WVA): While not exclusively for Department of Defense members, the WVA offers networking, mentorship, and resources for all women veterans.

- Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988 Then Press 1, or text 838255

- Suicide Hotline: If you or someone you know is suicidal or in a state of crisis, you can contact the Military Crisis Line 24 hours a day (988 and Press 1). You can also start a conversation via Military Suicide Awareness & Support | Military OneSource online chat or text (838255).

- Psychological Health Services and Resource Hotline: 1866-966-1020
  www.Heaalth.mil/PHRC open 24/7