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Exploring the Gendered Nature of Leadership Development for Female Student-Athletes at The United States Naval Academy

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Exploring the Gendered Nature of Leadership Development for Female Student-Athletes at The

United States Naval Academy

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Exploring the Gendered Nature of Leadership Development for Female Student-Athletes at The

United States Naval Academy

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University of Connecticut

2019

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Gender roles are pervasive social constructions that influence how behaviors are perceived. Gender roles, and the stereotypes created by them, include a strong association with appropriate conduct for men and women (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In many American institutions, leadership is understood primarily as a masculine domain. Stereotypical masculine, agentic attributes such as confidence, competitiveness and assertiveness are associated with good leadership (Eagly, 1987), leaving women in leadership roles to face a complex struggle to gain respect as leaders. Because social expectations around effective leadership behaviors are strongly associated with stereotypically masculine attributes, there is a resulting incongruence between the female gender role and perceived leadership qualities (Heilman, 2001). This incongruence is particularly stark in typically male-dominated environments. Two historically notable male-dominated institutions, the military and athletics, are the focal context for this study, as I investigate the experiences of female student-athletes at military service academies.

Female student-athletes at the United States Naval Academy simultaneously develop leadership skills for their future military careers and their athletic pursuits as they work to compete at the Division I level. Like other service academies, the Naval Academy educates and trains commissioned officers for the United States Armed Forces: therefore, all student-athletes at the Naval Academy are being prepared for leadership roles in a military career. While leadership development of all students at the Naval Academy is a priority, the military is a male-dominated and gendered institution. Similarly, the realm of athletics is male-dominated and predicated on a gender dichotomy.

The Problem

Female student-athletes may be perceived by their peers and leaders as lacking the proper leadership skills to be successful athletic or military leaders, and thus may face greater challenges to advancement than their male peers who adhere to gender roles in their leadership development and leadership styles. Numerous research studies demonstrate the challenges female leaders face, specifically in male-dominated institutions, including the military and athletics. Because of the multiple challenges women face in earning leadership positions, there continues to be a dearth of women in leadership roles in both the military and athletics. While over half of Americans identify as women, as of 2011, only 16 percent of all military uniformed officers were women (PBS, 2011). There has been little progress over the last decade in the proportion of women achieving ranks preceding general or admiral, as women make up roughly 10.6% of Army colonels, 14.1% of Air Force colonels, 2.3% of Marine Corps colonels, and 11.6% of Navy captains (Youssef, 2019). The gender gap is even more stark at the top military leadership levels, where women make up only 9 percent of the military's admirals and generals (Youssef, 2019). Similarly, men dominate leadership positions in sport organizations in the U.S. At the intercollegiate level, men tend to hold the most powerful leadership position (i.e. Division I athletic director), are nearly the exclusive coaches of men's sports, as well as hold a greater percentage of head coaching positions of women's sports (Burton, 2015). Even at the professional level, women hold fewer than 25% of senior leadership positions across the U.S. professional sports leagues (Burton, 2015). Considering this data, it is clear that the organizational demography of both military and athletic leadership is heavily overrepresented by men, which then serves to reinforce the notion of masculinity and masculine leadership as the norm in both institutions.

Female student-athletes at the Naval Academy develop leadership skills for their future careers, but doing so in two intersecting male-dominated domains. Women seeking leadership roles in both the military and athletics are placed in the double bind of either conforming to masculine ideals or performing their leadership duties in a more stereotypically feminine manner, both of which can increase their vulnerability to negative perceptions and sanctions (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Thus, the problem I propose exists for female student-athletes at the Naval Academy is finding a way to navigate conflicting gender roles in the military and athletics, as they develop leadership skills for both their military and athletic careers, and prepare to be leaders in at least one male-dominated institutions (i.e., the U.S. Navy).

Conceptual Framework

Gender role stereotypes are pervasive in everyday life, and consist of socially shared and understood conscious and unconscious beliefs about attributes of men and women (Biddle, 1979), as well as a strong association with appropriate conduct for men and women (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Gender stereotyping is defined as the belief that certain traits and capabilities are more likely to be found in one sex than the other (Schein, 1978). Social role theory suggests that there are qualities and behaviors believed to be appropriate for each gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002), therefore making it a useful framework for understanding and explaining gender role stereotyping, specifically in terms of leadership.

Building off of social role theory, role congruity theory posits that perceived gender roles may conflict with expectations of leadership roles and behaviors. This is particularly common in occupations and institutions that contain an overrepresentation of one sex (Eagly, Karau & Makhijani, 1995). Women tend to be devalued while holding leadership positions in male-dominated fields, as well as when they exhibit more stereotypically masculine leadership styles

(Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Role congruity theory suggests gender role stereotyping of leadership positions contributes to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, as well as negative perceptions of women in leadership positions, leading women to face several disadvantages when occupying leadership positions (Eagly, 2007).

The concept of the double bind for women, which draws from social role theory and role congruity theory, is an important framework to consider in this study. The double bind for women has been described as the way in which women must act outside of their socially constructed gender roles in order to be respected as leaders, but then experience backlash for this violation of gender norms (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women in leadership positions, most particularly in male-dominated institutions, need to negotiate cultural definitions of femininity, while simultaneously navigating environments in which agentic traits, more commonly associated with masculinity, are celebrated and valued. Women seeking leadership roles are placed in a double bind of either conforming to masculine ideals in their leadership style, or performing their leadership duties in a more stereotypically feminine manner. Either alternative can increase their vulnerability to negative perceptions and disapproval (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

With social role theory and role congruity theory in mind, this study uses a postmodern feminist theoretical framework to explore the unique and individualized ways in which student-athletes at the Naval Academy navigate and make meaning of their leadership development. Postmodern feminist theory focuses on "unearthing [women's] subjugated knowledge" (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 3) and challenges the common essentialist assumption that all women share a prescribed set of "fixed essential qualities" (Weedon, 1987, p. 175). The essentialist view of male and female leadership is predicated upon the notion of gender characteristics as unchanging. The essentialist view of unalterable gender characteristics thus ignores the ways

gender is socially constructed, as well as the consequences of associating leadership behaviors with masculinity while characterizing women leaders as motivated by an ethic of care (Fine, 2009). Postmodern feminism critiques the essentialist view of equating leadership with men. Postmodern feminists question the association of socially constructed male behaviors with leadership skills, and the simultaneous devaluing of female identities (Davey, 2008).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which female student-athletes at the Naval Academy navigate socially constructed gender roles in their military and athletic leadership development. This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the ways in which female student-athletes at the Naval Academy experience their leadership development in the typically male-dominated institutions of the military and athletics. Specifically, this study considers how female student athletes navigate their gender throughout their experience in developing leadership skills in both the military and athletics. The following questions guide the study broadly:

1. How do female student-athletes at the Naval Academy understand and conceptualize good leadership?

2. How do female student-athletes experience leadership development at the Naval Academy?

3. How do female student-athletes at the Naval Academy understand and perceive women in leadership?

Study Significance

This study proffers a unique viewpoint in scholarship around the role of gender in leadership development. By focusing on female student athletes at the Naval Academy, this

study explores gender and leadership development in two male-dominated institutions simultaneously, the military and athletics. This study contributes to the greater body of research on the role gender plays in leadership development and how leaders are perceived, and provides a unique perspective in its analysis of participants who simultaneously navigate their gender in two male-dominated domains. This research can provide additional information to better understand why women develop different leadership skills from their male counterparts, and the ways their leadership development process is impacted by their gender among other identities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Gender Stereotypes and Leadership

Gender roles have long been defined as socially shared and understood beliefs about attributes of men and women (Biddle, 1979). In addition to shared beliefs about gendered attributes, gender roles include a strong association with appropriate conduct for men and women (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Social role theory is useful in explaining gender-role stereotyping in the evaluation of leaders. This framework suggests there are qualities and behavioral tendencies believed to be applicable and appropriate for each gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Eagly (1987) noted that "many of these expectations are normative in the sense that they describe qualities or behavioral tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex" (p. 13). More recent research suggests gender roles continue to differ significantly, wherein communal attributes such as supportive, sympathetic, nurturing, and gentle are more strongly associated with femininity and the female gender role (Eagly, 1987). Agentic attributes, such as assertive, confident, competitive, and dominant are more strongly associated with the male gender role (Eagly, 1987; Bosak & Sczesny, 2011). Gender stereotyping, exemplified above, is defined as "the belief that a set of traits and abilities is more likely to be found among one sex than the other" (Schein, 1978, p. 259). Gender, like other types of social status, forms status hierarchies based on the values associated with each gender and their corresponding stereotypes (Berger et al. 1977).

Many of the early studies focused on the differences in perceived stereotypes of men and women generally suggested that men are perceived as more socially suited for leadership roles than women (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). This perception stemmed from the stereotypical traits and abilities associated with men and women respectively. For instance, an early survey in the study of gender and leadership conducted by Bowman, Worthy, and Greyser (1965, p. 28) indicated

that women were perceived as "temperamentally unfit" for managerial positions, along with other similar negative perceptions. Alternatively, early studies conducted by Broverman and colleagues (Broverman et al., 1970; Broverman et al., 1972) identified traits predominately associated with men as more positive, such as competency and rationality. Traits associated with women were more negative and tended to be limited to more emotional characteristics such as compassion and expressiveness. Further, recent work on leadership roles shows that they are still mainly defined in masculine (i.e., agentic) terms, despite the increasing recognition on the value of female attributes in such roles (Koenig et al., 2001). Because social expectations regarding effective leadership behaviors are strongly associated with stereotypically masculine attributes such as competitive, assertive and decisive, there is a resulting incongruence between the female gender role and perceived leadership qualities (Heilman, 2001).

Gender and the U.S. Military

Although senior military leadership indicate their institutions have attempted to create an environment that encourages and supports the leadership of male and female service members, and students at service academies, traditional military leadership models are been male-oriented, male-dominated, and therefore pose challenges for women in the military (Youngman, 2001). The military was, until recently, highly gender-segregated which limited women's ability to compete with men (Pellerin, 2015) and despite gender integration efforts, men represent 84% of active duty forces and are retained at almost twice the rate of women in combat specialties (U.S. Department of Defense, 2016). In addition to representation, military culture reinforces a hyper-masculine identity among servicemembers, with the ideal warrior being portrayed as brave, unemotional, fit, and ready to fight (Archer, 2013). This social construction of the ideal

masculine warrior is built through training and everyday military life and culture, which may then influence leadership styles and perceptions (Smith, Rosenstein, Nikolov, & Chaney, 2018).

Military duties are typically perceived as contrary to societal expectations for appropriate roles for women (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995), forcing female military leaders to combat stereotypes and social constructions of gender roles to be effective leaders. Further, because the military has been traditionally viewed as a masculine occupation (Youngman, 2001), military leaders tasked with selecting or promoting others to be leaders or rating peers on leadership ability may be influenced by traditional gender norms and stereotypes to look for personal qualities that are more often associated with men than women.

Gendered beliefs and stereotypes that reinforce women's perceived inferior position relative to men include notably gendered language in performance evaluations for leaders, using descriptive and proscriptive characteristics (Smith, Rosenstein, Nikolov, & Chaney, 2018). Descriptive characteristics are generally positive qualities that reinforce how one should behave, whereas proscriptive characteristics are more generally negative qualities that reinforce how one should not behave (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Leader evaluation research finds the agentic-communal dichotomy plays a role in gendered differences in leader performance evaluations, due to the high valuation of agentic characteristics and disvaluing of communal characteristics (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014; Smith, Rosenstein, Nikolov, & Chaney, 2018). Because women are described to be communal and men to be agentic, women leaders are often evaluated as being status incongruent. As Smith, Rosenstein, Nikolov, and Chaney (2018) explain, "Women leaders (people of lower gender status in a position of higher status) often receive more proscriptive feedback because they are violating the gender status hierarchy" (p. 160). The military and leadership positions are both traditionally masculine domains, thus men are considered to be

status congruent whereas women are status incongruent in military leadership, as shown by research examining evaluations of women and men training to be military officers (Smith et al., 2018). In their study on performance evaluations of Midshipmen at the Naval Academy, the position of the participants in this study, Smith and colleagues found that women received more feminine attributes (i.e. compassionate, energetic, gossip) and men received more male attributes (i.e. competent, logical, level-headed, arrogant) (Smith et al., 2018).

Gender and Sport

Like the military, sport historically too has been a male-dominated institution, and continues to be an institution defined by hegemonic masculinity, in which men's power and privilege are naturalized over women (Sabo & Jansen, 1992). Normative notions of masculinity such as physical strength, aggression, and competitiveness are evident throughout athletics as the dominant paradigm, whereas societal expectations of femininity do not align with sport (Connell, 1990). Thus, sport for athletes, administrators and coaches, is considered a natural environment for men, and an unnatural one for women (Whisenant, Pedersen, & Obenour, 2002). Within the context of sport organizations, women face ongoing organizational structure and practices that perpetuate male dominance (Sibson, 2010). While women have made some progress through gender equity policies, those very policies are not properly valued and adhered to within a male-dominated sport-context: therefore, failing to effectively reflect deeper valuing and acceptance of gender equity within sport organizations (Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

Considering intercollegiate athletics specifically, with the passage of Title IX in 1972, an act intended to expand opportunities for women through its requirement for gender equity, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) gained control of women's athletics. The rise of the NCAA led to the demise of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women

(AIAW) in 1982, which since its creation in 1971, provided an opportunity for women not only to participate in sports, but also to lead and govern them (Acosta & Carpenter, 2002). While Title IX was groundbreaking legislation in its expansion of opportunities for female athletes to participate in sports at the intercollegiate level, there was a corresponding vast reduction in the percentage of women in leadership roles in athletic departments, both in coaching and administration (Whisenant, Pedersen, & Obenour, 2002). While Title IX and its enforcement created significant progress in terms of male-dominance in athletic participation, a male-dominant culture has become even more entrenched in athletic leadership roles, leading to a vast underrepresentation of women in athletic administrative and coaching positions (Bryson, 1987).

More recent research shows that intercollegiate athletics continues to be sex-segregated through traditional gender role stereotyping, where men are in more senior leadership positions and women are represented in more subordinate, less influential positions (Burton, Barr, Fink, & Bruening, 2009). Overall, women in intercollegiate athletics are underrepresented, marginalized to particular positions that minimize their leadership roles, and paid less for their work (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008). Because leadership ability is more generally ascribed to men who exhibit agentic qualities, than to women who display more communal characteristics (Eagly & Karau, 2002), a prejudice may exist against potential female leaders in intercollegiate athletics (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008).

Intersection of Military and Sport – Social Role Theory & Role Congruity Theory

Gender stereotyping is prevalent in occupations in which one gender is more commonly represented. The military is traditionally viewed as a masculine occupation (Youngman, 2001), as has sport with a vast underrepresentation of women in athletic leadership roles (Whisenant et al., 2002). In terms of representation, institutional culture, and socially accepted leadership

styles, research demonstrates that sport and the military are male-dominated and male-centric

institutions. Further, in all institutions, but especially so in male-dominated institutions such as

the military and athletics, expectations about successful leadership behaviors are associated with

attributes that are typically understood to be associated with masculinity and male gender roles,

which results in women seeking leadership positions being more prone to role conflict than their

male counterparts (Eagly et al. 1994), and women in leadership positions tending to be judged as

more hostile (e.g., devious, selfish and bitter) than their male counterparts, even when utilizing

similar leadership styles (Heilman, Block, & Martell, 1995).

      Considering women in leadership, the social role stereotypes suggesting that "women

take care and men take charge" (Hoyt & Burnette, 2013, p. 1307) affect how women are viewed

and evaluated in leadership roles. Role congruity theory provides an explanation for this gender

stereotyping in leadership positions by positing that perceived gender roles may conflict with

expectations regarding leadership roles and behaviors, especially when an occupation contains an

overrepresentation of one sex (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). Further, women leaders tend

to be devalued when holding leadership positions in male-dominated areas or fields and when

they exhibit leadership styles that are more stereotypically masculine in nature (Eagly,

Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). The theoretical framework of role congruity theory also posits that

the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions may be the result of gender role

stereotyping of leadership positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Thus, women face a disadvantage in

leadership due to prejudice against female leaders and resistance when women occupy leadership

positions (Eagly, 2007).

      Evolving from social role theory and role congruity theory is the concept of a double bind

for women, in which they must act outside of their socially constructed and learned gender roles

in order to be respected as leaders, but then experience backlash and prejudice for this violation

(Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women in leadership positions, particularly in male-dominated

institutions such as the military and sport, have to negotiate cultural definitions of femininity, as

well as environments in which agentic traits are celebrated and valued. Female leaders are

expected to be tough, confident and strong, yet when they display these attributes, they are

perceived as overly aggressive and selfish, along with other negative interpretations (Shaw &

Hoeber, 2003). Women seeking leadership roles are placed in this double bind of either

conforming to masculine ideals or performing their leadership duties in a more stereotypically

feminine manner, both of which can increase their vulnerability to negative perceptions and

sanctions (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Servant Leadership

While transactional and transformational leadership are the most discussed and arguably

most common types of leadership, research in athletics and the military have primarily centered

on transformational leadership and the influence of those leadership styles on organizational

performance and outcomes (Burton & Peachey, 2009; Kent & Chelladurai, 2001; Yammarino &

Bass, 1990; Yammarino, Spangler, & Bass, 1993). Yet more recent research is moving away

from traditional studies of transformational and transactional leadership toward an emphasis on

interaction between leader and follower and shared perspectives as pivotal elements (van

Dierendonck, 2011). The alternative approach, servant leadership, posits that organizational

objectives are best achieved when the growth, development and well-being of those who

comprise the organization are valued and facilitated (Stone et al., 2004). Servant leadership has

been defined recently as being oriented around "someone or something other than the leader,

one-on-one interactions between leaders and followers, and an overarching concern towards the

wellbeing of the wider organizational stakeholders and larger community" (Eva et al., 2018, p.

4). The crucial aspect of servant leadership that differentiates it from other perspectives on

leadership is the underlying personal motivation for taking on leadership responsibility.

Specifically, the prioritization of others reflects the leader's belief that leading others requires

moving away from self-orientation (Eva et al., 2018).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Subjectivity Statement

When considering research related to leadership development of female athletes at service academies, several factors about my professional experience, personal history, and identity need to be addressed. As an undergraduate student, I majored in Sport Management and minored in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, demonstrating academic experience around these subjects, as well as my interest in gender equity in athletics. I came across this topic due to my friendship with student-athletes at the U.S. Naval Academy, in conjunction with my studies on female leadership in the sport industry.

I have significant experience in athletic environments, specifically at the Division I level, and around women's sports. As a Graduate Assistant with the University of Connecticut Women's Basketball program, I had constant exposure to a Division I Athletic Department and team atmosphere. Additionally, I have personal leadership experience as a captain and coach of competitive ultimate frisbee teams. My experiences in these athletic environments shape my beliefs about leadership in athletics, specifically on women's teams. My beliefs about sport fall in between functionalist and critical theories. While I see the value in sport as a vehicle for positive social change, I also find the sport industry to be a microcosm of a patriarchal, white-dominated, heteronormative American society. Coming from an upper-middle class family of high academic achievers in Connecticut, I recognize my privilege in having access to participate in and spectate multiple sports while growing up. Additionally, as a female athlete and sports fan growing up in Connecticut, where the UConn Women's Basketball program is well respected and supported, I come from a community in which women's sports receive far more respect and support than in other parts of the country.

I have close personal relationships with several athletes at the United States Naval Academy, despite having no experience in or around the military myself. While holding the military and future military officers at service academies in high-regard, I am also informed by my opinions regarding the hyper masculine culture of the military. My personal interest in this topic stems from my interest in gender equity, specifically in organizations and institutions that have been historically male-dominated and patriarchal. My personal perspective as a white, upper-middle class, feminist from New England will certainly influence my work in studying leadership development of female athletes in a military environment, specifically concerning gender bias and social constructions of gender. Additionally, my professional experience in Division I athletics, with a highly competitive and successful program may influence my research on leadership in athletic environments. By being upfront about my subjectivity and sculpting broad interview questions that do not influence the research participants, I aim to maintain credibility as a researcher.

Study Site

The United States Naval Academy served as the setting for this study. The Naval Academy is one of three U.S. military service academies (the others are the United States Air Force Academy and the United States Military Academy), which are major military accession sources, in addition to the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and Officer Candidate School (OCS). The service academies, ROTC, and OCS prepare men and women to commission as officers in the military, but the military service academies are distinct in that they are four-year public colleges where students graduate with Bachelor of Science degrees and receive military, physical, and character training while preparing for commissions as military officers (Smith, Rosenstein, Nikolov, & Chaney, 2018). Students at the Naval Academy experience four years of

leader education and development programs that are specifically designed to prepare them for the military profession and leadership roles within the military. An emphasis on honor and integrity is an important part of this leader education, demonstrated by the honor concept all students, referred to as Midshipmen, must memorize and represent at all times. This emphasis on maintaining high standards of honor focuses on three primary facets of Midshipmen, "they do not lie, they do not cheat, they do not steal," particularly stipulating that Midshipmen are "persons of integrity: They stand for that which is right" (United States Naval Academy, 2019).

At the Naval Academy, Midshipmen both work and live in professional units, referred to as companies, in which there is little separation between professional and personal lives, and close relationships within companies both personally and professionally (Smith, Rosenstein, Nikolov, & Chaney, 2018). Company duties, carried out by Midshipmen within each company include leadership and organization, dissemination of information from Academy leadership, documentation, military leadership training, counseling and guidance. In conjunction with the educational aspect of the Naval Academy, Midshipmen gain practical leadership experience in their company duties and other military responsibilities.

The demographic makeup of the Naval Academy is predominately white and male. The most recent data from the Naval Academy Admissions office shows that in the incoming class of Midshipmen, 74% of the students are male and 26% are female (USNA, 2019). Further, 59% of the students are White, 12% are Hispanic, 11% are African-American, 16% are Asian American, and 12% identify as multiple races (United States Naval Academy, 2019).

In addition to military education and responsibilities, all students ("Midshipmen") are required to participate in athletics programs, either at the varsity, intramural or club level (United States Naval Academy, 2019). Athletics are important to the Naval Academy experience because

they challenge Midshipmen physically and encourage them to "be team builders and learn how to motivate others to excel" (United States Naval Academy, 2019). Further, the intention behind an athletic requirement is to teach Midshipmen to set high goals for themselves and their teammates, and find ways to achieve them. The Naval Academy uses athletics to teach Midshipmen teamwork, determination and leadership, and demonstrate how those assets translate to succeeding in combat. (United States Naval Academy, 2019). This study focuses on female student-athletes on Varsity teams at the Naval Academy, including lacrosse, soccer, tennis, swimming, rowing, and track and field.

Participants

I interviewed ten female varsity student-athletes at the U.S. Naval Academy as participants in this study. These participants are members of a variety of different athletic teams, hail from different geographic parts of the country, and have a variety of racial identities (Appendix A). Of the ten participants, five primarily identified as Black and five identified as White. All of these women participate on a varsity athletic team at the Naval Academy in addition to their various military and academic commitments.

Data was collected during a two-month period in the spring of 2019. To recruit participants, I relied on personal relationships I already had with female student athletes at the Naval Academy and snowball sampling to increase the sample size and ensure a diverse participant pool. An outlined summary of the purpose of the study and what study involvement would entail (e.g. time commitment, methodology, privacy) was shared prior to interviews. This outline included the request for a single one-hour interview in-person or via Skype, whatever was most convenient for the participant and her schedule, as well as the possibility for follow-up if any additional questions arose. Prior to the launch of the study, I received IRB approval for the

research (the IRB office at the University of Connecticut approved the research, and the Naval

Academy IRB office accepted the University of Connecticut's approval) and written consent

from all who participated.

Data Collection

This study used qualitative methods of research, specifically interviews. These one-on-

one interviews allowed the participants to be open and honest about sensitive topics and

experiences. Though I wanted to do in-person interviews, due to geographical and time

restraints, all interviews were done over video calls, either FaceTime or Skype. All interviews

were recorded using the Voice Recorder application on my personal cell phone. During

interviews participants were asked a series of questions regarding their experiences as an athlete

and student at the United States Naval Academy, as well as their perceptions regarding gender,

leadership and leadership development (Appendix B). I used the same questions for each

interview, though I did ask follow-up questions if the answer was unclear or if participant was

unclear on the question I asked. In order to establish credibility and trustworthiness of the data I

informed all participants that they were not required to participate and that they could refuse to

answer questions at any point in time (Shenton, 2004). The participants were encouraged to be

honest throughout the interview and informed that all direct references would be replaced with

pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. All audio recordings were kept on my password-

protected personal computer and will be destroyed after completion of this project.

The process was unique as I originally planned to conduct six interviews total, but then

expanded the scope of the project to include an additional four participants who identified as

Black. This was due to the impactful and diverse answers provided by the only Black participant

in the first group of six participants. This participant demonstrated that the scope of this project

needed to expand to include more diverse voices, as they could provide important data that could inform and improve this study. I received IRB approval to modify the study in this way, and all ten participants were asked the same questions and provided their informed consent.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. After transcribing, I listened to each interview and read through the transcriptions several times in order to prepare for the coding with a better understanding of participants' experiences and insight (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Before coding I created preliminary coding themes that were directly related to my research questions and existing literature (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I then used inductive coding as my primary coding method. This combination of approaches allowed me to relate the interview data to my research questions and goals while also being open to new discoveries based on the participants' experiences (Saldaña, 2016).

After this first coding cycle, I moved into a second stage of coding in which I merged themes and concepts into more accurate and descriptive codes, oftentimes combining the more focused preliminary codes into larger clusters of codes (Saldaña, 2016). This allowed for a greater understanding of the data and allowed me to begin establishing conceptual organization (Saldaña, 2016). Throughout this second cycle of coding I also used open coding to focus more directly on concepts, reorganize themes and develop new connections (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Axial coding allowed me to make connections between original codes and thus create a dynamic system of more developed codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After completing this cycle of coding, I focused the participants' responses into organized categories and subcategories that allowed for better understanding of the context and consequences of their experiences and perceptions.

Chapter 4: Findings

Servant Leadership

Considering the six areas of servant leadership conceptualized by van Dierendonck (2011) and colleagues (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015), including empowerment, stewardship, authenticity, providing direction, humility and interpersonal acceptance, this study demonstrated that the attributes participants considered to be associated with good leadership align very closely with servant leadership. The participants' descriptions of good leadership were most consistent with servant leadership, and somewhat transformational leadership, but they directly critiqued transactional leadership. Further, the leadership styles they choose to employ themselves and look for in superiors were largely aligned with von Dierendonck's six facets of servant leadership. The main themes that arose in interviews with participants on the topic of qualities of good leadership were empowering others, taking accountability, being genuine and honest, selflessness, and being accepting and open to make followers feel comfortable. These line up quite directly with the six facets of servant leadership. The emphasis on prioritizing followers' needs and empowering others to better serve them are consistent with research showing that servant leaders are authentic because of a drive for a cause greater than themselves, or a conviction to serve and make a positive difference for others (Eva et al., 2018).

Empowerment. First, several participants touched upon the importance of empowerment as a trait of a good leader. Eve explained her view of the most effective way to make others successful and accomplish a mission was, "that [it] has to come from within them. And you have to bring it out of them." Eve is explaining an important part of empowerment, encouraging followers to learn and take action, as well as fostering follower self-confidence. Sam shared a similar view of good leadership as she explained, "if you express your support and your confidence in the people around you, it really empowers people to get the job done and do it for

you and the team." Sam clarified that she was speaking about both athletic teams and the military in general, showing her consistent view of the value of empowering followers as a leader in both athletics and the military.

Selflessness. Another theme across almost all interviews was the value participants placed on selflessness as a leadership trait. Almost all participants touched upon the importance of putting the needs of followers and the greater cause above their self-interests, aligning with the stewardship facet of servant leadership. For instance, Amber explained that, in her opinion, the most important trait in a good leader was "looking out for your people and putting their interests and goals before your own." Similarly, Grace reiterated the importance of stewardship as she described, "someone of character that is selfless and motivated by making others better" as her vision of a good leader. Taylor also shared that as her leadership development progressed and she grew into more leadership roles, she was more "all about who can I influence, who can I help other than myself," and believed that being more selfless was the primary way of becoming a better leader. In some way every single participant, whether through anecdote, from describing the importance of putting others before oneself, to identifying selflessness verbally as an imperative leadership trait, touched upon the importance of a leader displaying stewardship.

Authenticity. The importance of authenticity also came up in a number of interviews, as several participants emphasized their belief in leaders being genuine. Eve explained how "effective you are when you are your true genuine self, leading other people" as opposed to being self-conscious and worried about you are perceived, rather than focusing your energy on supporting your followers. Eve argued that "being more genuine with people under you is what makes them effective and make them trust you."

Providing Direction. Another facet of servant leadership that several participants brought up were providing directions with clear expectations. In terms of being clear about expectations and customizing directions based on followers' abilities and needs, several participants discussed the need to hold followers to high standards, be very specific about expectations to guide followers properly, while still enabling followers to get jobs done in whatever way they see fit. This empowering, yet directed, leadership style is exemplified in Grace's explanation of the value in "finding out what they're good at." Grace explained that she has learned, through watching other leaders, that finding the strengths and interests of followers, and then assigning them to tasks and responsibilities that utilize those strengths and interests is more effective than more transactional approaches. Other participants discussed the importance of having clear, high standards for followers in order to set expectations and hold followers accountable, something they said was emphasized in military and athletic cultures.

Interpersonal Acceptance. The final facet of servant leadership, interpersonal acceptance, was the most common leadership component brought up by participants. Interpersonal acceptance, or creating an environment in which followers feel safe and comfortable, as well as building trusting relationships, was something every participant mentioned as an important piece of good leadership. The idea of caring about one's followers, about their happiness and comfort more than how they can serve your needs was prevalent among the participants' responses about good leadership. Eve explained, "the number one thing about good leadership is that you have to care." Like Eve, Lisa described good leadership as "having that respect to be compassionate to others and have that empathy if they need it, and being able to connect to people on a different level." Lisa is describing a service-oriented leadership style that prioritizes the well-being of the group and the followers specifically.

Similarly, Brittany listed "empathy and being personable" as the biggest aspects of good leadership, explaining that followers will respect a leader more if that leader shows they can relate to them and empathize or sympathize with their experiences.

Grace touched upon interpersonal acceptance as an important part of leading on her team, as she shared, "in the lacrosse locker room it's more of 'I'm going to get to know you and develop you as a human being,'" demonstrating her view of good leadership being founded upon interpersonal relationships that go beyond what a teammate can do on the field, but more so who they are as a person. Hope also stated that "compassion makes a good leader" before sharing an anecdote about the best leader she met at the Academy, a professor who happened to teach her hardest class. Hope explained that while she was struggling mightily in his class, this professor took the time to sit her down and tell her, "you're working so hard and I'm proud of you for not giving up...and you need to not stress and not carry everything." While she was struggling in his class, he shared with her that he had poor grades as a student at the Naval Academy, but that perseverance makes for a stronger officer. The servant leadership this professor displayed that stuck so strongly with Hope was the fact that

> he didn't have to do that, like he could have been like you suck at my class, be better. He actually sat down and spent time to connect with me and show me that the Navy is made out of all different types of people.

This is an important window into servant leadership, especially in the highly competitive and demanding military environment (similar to the athletic environment as well).

The aspects of leadership the participants valued most and emphasized as most important for a good leader to employ were far more aligned with servant leadership than either transactional or transformational leadership. With a range of anecdotes and descriptions, all of

the participants touched in some way on aspects of servant leadership when describing what they

saw as good leadership. With a variety of anecdotes and descriptions, the participants

consistently touched upon empowerment, stewardship, authenticity, providing direction, humility

and interpersonal acceptance as the facets of good leadership.

   The image of ideal leadership shared by many of the participants is consistent with

scholarly definitions of servant leadership, specifically the work of Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, van

Dierendonck and Liden, who define servant leadership as an "(1) other-oriented approach to

leadership (2) manifested through one-on-one prioritizing of follower individual needs and

interests, (3) and outward reorienting of their concern for self to stewards concerns for others

within the organization and the larger community" (2018, p. 114). Since the prevalence of

servant leadership in participants' responses is evident, this leads us to question whether servant

leadership is actively taught at the Naval Academy as the ideal form of leadership that future

Naval Officers should employ both in the military and in their athletic pursuits? Is servant

leadership the type of leadership young women who chose to serve their nation by attending a

service academy are attracted to, because of the ideals they already hold? And how exactly do

Naval Academy students develop their ideas around leadership and their leadership style?

Mentoring and Informal Leadership on Athletic Teams

   While the participants engaged in leadership development in their educational and

military experiences, they also engaged in leadership development in the less formal atmosphere

of their athletic teams. This informal all-female space fostered a uniquely impactful leadership

development environment that focused on mentoring, personal development, and genuine

support. Almost all of the participants discussed the primary distinction between their athletic

team and the military environment in their company as the athletic team being a more

comfortable, supportive and genuine space. They explained that a large reason for this emphasis on comfort, support and the ability to be one's genuine self in athletic spaces more than in military or company spaces is due to the lesser structure involved on teams compared to the military. However, the unique aspect of sports teams as one of the only all-female spaces for female athletes at the Naval Academy should also be considered as a factor in fostering athletic teams as supportive, communal spaces that create a form of escape from the rest of the militarized Naval Academy environment. The participants fostered a uniquely close bond with their athletic teammates because of their unique status as minorities in a male-dominated college and military environment, and the extremely demanding experience they went through together. Additionally, several participants discussed their teams as unique spaces in which anyone can lead, rather than only those with leadership billets or higher ranks in their companies and military spaces.

The first common theme in the participants' experiences on their various athletic teams was the distinction of their teams being more comfortable environments than the rest of the Naval Academy environment. Grace, a lacrosse player explained,

> people on the team are much more comfortable talking to each other compared to in the hall...once we're in the locker room there's no rank, you drop all of the military things and you just play lacrosse and talk to each other like you're teammates.

Sam, discussing her soccer teammates, explained that they "choose to make it more of a relaxed atmosphere where the focus is developing you as an individual with I think more love and care than your company does." This distinction between sports team and company went beyond just being comfortable, and speaks to a more communal environment with a servant style of leadership and mentoring than Sam felt in her other military experiences.

Grace described the reason for the higher level of comfort on the lacrosse team, in comparison to her overall military experience, as stemming from the lack of emphasis on structured leadership and rank in athletics, and from a form of leadership on the team that was more communal and supportive than their typical military leadership. Grace explained,

> You could be a squad leader that just knows nothing about your people. In the hall all you know is the statistics, like yeah they got an A on the PRT, they have an A GPA, they are ranked well among their classmates, they're good to go. Whereas in the lacrosse locker room it's more of I'm going to get to know you and develop you as a human being because you're a human being regardless of where we are…it's not as rigid, it's not as structured.

Here Grace is speaking to the deeper, more development relationships she views as being more prevalent in her athletic experiences compared to her military experiences. The descriptions from Grace and Sam of their teammates focusing on personal development as leaders is indicative of servant leadership, in which there is an emphasis on empowerment, stewardship and interpersonal acceptance (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). While their teammates may not serve as formal leaders through an elevated military rank, they opt into informal leadership roles within the team, which was more influential to many of the participants than formal leadership in military environments, especially when that formal leadership was more transactional due to the rigid nature of military rules and regulations.

Lisa, a soccer player, also discussed the mentoring nature of her team compared to her company and other military experiences. Lisa described this distinction as, "our team is more, not just do this because you have to, but see the why behind it, we're all going to do it together. It's just more mentoring and helping, not enforcing and lecturing as much." Lisa speaks to the

importance of support and the personal development of teammates as opposed to the focus on

structure and rules on the military side of her experience at the Naval Academy. Social science

research has long shown that mentoring is helpful women in professional setting to advance

towards leadership positions (Hill & Wheat, 2017; Schipani et al., 2009). Mentoring is shown to

be important to career development, but it also can serve as a social and psychological support

(Hill & Wheat, 2017; Schipani et al., 2009), demonstrated here by Lisa and her experience on the

soccer team. This focus on relationships and the personal development of teammates is distinct

from much of the leadership development in military spaces, and certainly could contribute to

the prevalence of participants describing their athletic teams as more comfortable spaces.

Another common theme in participants' discussions of their athletic experiences was the

ways in which people can be more genuine on their teams than in other aspects of their

experience at the Naval Academy, another facet of servant leadership (van Dierendonck &

Patterson, 2015). Eve, a track athlete, emphasized the ways in which her team allows her to be

more genuine than in any other aspects of her experience at the Naval Academy. Eve explained,

"especially with sports teams here, you can be more of yourself. You know, whenever you're in

company area you kind of always have to be aware of professionalism, and especially your plebe

and youngster year, when you go to your sports practices you really get to be more of your

genuine self." Eve is distinguishing her team as a space in which she can not only be more of her

genuine self, but also escape from the professional, structured world of her company space

operated entirely by military rules and culture. The track team, for Eve, was the one place where

she felt she could be her genuine self, something she emphasized as imperative for her leadership

development.

Grace provided insight into a possible explanation for this distinct comfortable and supportive team atmosphere that seems prevalent for all of the participants, regardless of the team on which they play. Grace argued female student-athletes at the Naval Academy foster a uniquely close bond with their athletic teammates. She attributed this tight bond to their unique status as minorities in a male-dominated college and military environment, and the extremely demanding experience they go through, thereby making their athletic team their only all-female space at the Naval Academy. Grace explained,

> We're the minority at this school by like a billion…We've been through a shit ton with plebe summer and all the things we have to deal with inside the hall that other people don't. So we are so into being with each other and creating that close knit group because it's so comfortable to us.

This sentiment is indicative of communal coping, a process in which stressors, in this case being a woman and feeling out of place in a masculine military environment, and a group of individuals experiencing that same stressor share responsibility for dealing with it (Tamminen & Gaudreau, 2014). In this way, the participants vocalized the ways the stressor of being underrepresented as women at the Naval Academy led them to build closer relationships with their female teammates. She went on to explain,

> That's why we love to be with each other so much because in that time when we're playing lacrosse, we are it. Ya know, everyone is the same, you have each other, and we're not in this environment where we're one out of 20.

Because of their minority status during the most of their Naval Academy experience and the constant structure and intense demands on them, the ability to create a comfortable, supportive environment on an all-female team was extremely valuable to Grace as a female student-athlete.

Several of the participants discussed the loyalty they feel on their teams, a sort of unique tight-knit relationship they have with their teammates. Hope explained that she knows that her teammates are "always in our corner." Taylor, a track athlete, described her team as her "home away from home." Sam's experience on the soccer team was similar, as she explained that "I love each and every one of my teammates" and said they had a feeling of "live together die together." This tight bond, of unyielding loyalty and commitment to teammates creates a unique network of female athletes at the Naval Academy. Grace argued her lacrosse team was so tightly-knit and appreciative of each other because their team environment was the only one in which they could escape from the challenges and pressures of being a student, especially a female student, at the Naval Academy, and do what they love with people who supported and cared for them. These sentiments are consistent with the theory of cohesion in sport psychology and military psychology, in addition to other areas of psychology (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998). Considering cohesion as the tendency for a group stick together and show unity in the pursuit of its objectives and the satisfaction of member needs (Carron et al., 1997), the participants' sentiments of feeling close-knit bonds are indicative of cohesion having a significant effect on their team dynamic and cultures.

Overperforming

Despite the emphasis on leadership development at the Naval Academy, some participants cited challenges to their leadership development, particularly in the form of stereotypes. These stereotypes of negative traits associated with their race and gender motivated them to overperform and attempt to exceed expectations in order to defy the negative stereotypes. Several participants spoke to the ways in which they held themselves to a higher standard and work extra hard in order to defy stereotypes and assumptions about their perceived

inferiority due to their gender, or the intersection of their race and gender. Several participants

explained the reasons why they felt the need to overperform, to hold themselves to a high

standard and defy stereotypes about African Americans, and specifically African-American

women at the Naval Academy.

Brittany described the social training she received as a child to cope with the racially

unjust institutions and racial stereotypes of Blackness being associated with aggression and

criminality that are prevalent in American culture. Brittany shared a lesson from her mother that

she still carries with her today, that "you are seen as a threat. It's not your fault, but you're seen

as something different, so it's better to just assimilate." This lesson first came while Brittany was

playing a youth sport that was predominately played by white children, and when she played that

sport, her mom would sometimes tell her, "you can't do that, that's too black." This occurred

when Brittany was very young, playing sports as an adolescent, but that lesson stuck with her

and still guided her as a college athlete, as a rower. She downplayed the challenges of

assimilating and feeling the need to control and hide parts of her genuine self in fear of them

being seen as "too black." She described, "It's not bad, you just have to learn how to navigate

both worlds a little bit." Yet white athletes did not seem to need to navigate any world but their

own. The privilege of being in the majority, of having institutions in which you fit the racial

mold and are considered the norm, benefits white athletes, even though the White participants in

this study did not recognize that privilege. This is consistent with the blindness privilege can

create, in which one aspect of privilege is not even realizing that privilege at all, as the privileged

individual assumes that their own experience is the norm.

Hope reiterated some of Brittany's points about constantly needing to move through the

world with the knowledge that there are stereotypes about you, influencing how you are

perceived in all that you do. Hope described the challenge of constantly feeling racialized

judgements as "you never get a time to not have on that face," specifically because so much of

the Midshipmen's merit rankings at the Academy (which then decide their preferences for

summer trainings and even their service selections, their military careers) depended on peer

rankings. The peer rankings were a significant reason for Hope to work hard to be perceived as

she felt she deserved to be, and not how her race or ethnicity may lead her peers to perceive her

based on their own socially constructed bias and stereotypes. Hope explained, "I'm a

professional and I'm going to defy the stereotypes that you have in your mind about me. And be

approachable and not aggressive." Although the participants framed their response to perceived

judgements due to stereotypes as additional motivation, the fact that stereotypes weighed on

them serves to be a distraction that can affect their ability to perform and succeed.

Further, several participants delved into the pressures to overachieve and exceed

expectations to defy racial stereotypes. They explained their motivation to do this was due to

their concerns about the pressures of representing their whole race. Because of their awareness of

the stereotypes surrounding Black women, several participants discussed their focus on never

feeding into negative racial stereotypes through their behavior or mistakes. Brittany explained

that making a mistake would reflect on Black women as a whole and this was "always my

biggest worry." She went on to explain that this sense of obligation was "why I feel like I need to

walk a tight line because I don't want to hold someone in my position, I don't want to stop a

woman, someone who is female from doing something. I don't want someone to be like it's

because she's black, I just don't want it to be attributed to anything." Brittany is speaking to her

awareness of negative stereotypes about her due to her gender and race. Although she used that

knowledge as motivation to defy stereotypes, it is still an added a psychological burden. She

went on to explain the importance, to her, of always exceeding expectations and avoiding any semblance of a mistake that could reflect on her gender or race. She said, "women and minorities are still on the come up, so I never want to take anything away. It's always on my mind." Brittany was worried about representing her whole identity group, something those in privileged majority never have to think about.

Hope and Taylor also spoke on the higher expectations Black students are held to, both through self-awareness, and because of the need to avoid unfair repercussions. Hope explained, "when it comes to Black leadership, it's that thing they say, where you have to be twice as good to get half as far." Taylor said the exact same thing as she explained, "they look for mistakes rather than being like oh yeah, this person is doing this right. They look for the negative more than the positive. Like you have to be twice as good to get half as far." Karen explained an instance of her mentally self-policing another African American student, despite realizing it was not healthy or fair, but simply a result of social constructions she internalized. Karen said, "it's probably bad that I think this way, but I know it's the truth. So, there's this one girl and I'm like, she could do a little bit, because we're under the radar, people are looking at us right. So, I'm like she could take care of her hair a little bit better." She explained she always goes out of her way to look presentable (despite the challenges Brittany spoke to about finding hair products that work for her) because of her mother's advice that she always had to work ten times harder just to keep up.

Four out of the five African-American participants, without prompting, brought up this lesson they were taught for navigating the world as Black women. They all explained it as shaping their day-to-day lives and how they see themselves and their Black women peers. Brittany explained her mother's advice as a child, to never act "too black" and the need to "learn

how to navigate both worlds a bit." These participants shared similar experiences of being taught from a young age, and then reinforced throughout much of their lives, that they would be held to a different standard. They also learned that they would have to overperform, be twice as good, just to get half as far. This is indicative of how stereotype-based expectations of inferiority create heavy psychological burdens (Eagly & Karauu, 2002; Heilman, 1995), as well as an added challenge the participants discussed needing to overcome in their leadership development process.

Gendering of Physical Standards

When asked about the differences in expectations based on gender, several participants brought up the different physical standards based on gender, and particularly the impact physical performance has on the legitimacy and respect of leaders. These comments stemmed from the participants points about gendered expectations about physicality. Grace explained, "there's more of an emphasis on the physical nature of men as leaders in the military" when asked about the different expectations of male and female leaders at the Naval Academy. Grace described the ways men gained respect by performing strongly and being a standout in the physical realm. She went on, "they're more focused on creating this idea of themselves as leaders who are very rigid, aggressive, and needs to be respected." This view aligns with the gendered stereotype of men as strong and aggressive, whereas women are stereotyped to be gentler and weaker (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002). In the military these gendered stereotypes play an important role, as the military requires strength and physical performance of all servicemembers, but sets different standards for men and women (Navy Physical Readiness Program, 2019).

Natalie explained how she perceives the different physical standards for men and women as reflective as natural biological differences, differences that only exist in terms of physical

challenges, not mental or military challenges. Natalie said, "Because academics-wise, it's very equal because males and females are just as smart, but with the physical standards, people know that guys are faster so whenever we have our physical test, the guys need to get a 10:30 in order to not fail, and for the girls it's like a 12:40." Natalie is speaking to the true differences in the military standards for men and women, and how the standard for women is lower. She goes on to explain how her peers perceive those different standards, as well as her own perception of the differing standards. Natalie went on, "And people are like that's so stupid, but that's just the way it is. Girls are not as fast as guys, that's just the way it is, you have to accept it and not make a huge deal out of it. Like if you can run faster, great, run faster, but for the girls who maybe can't run as fast, it's for them, not for you who is trying to break through this gender barrier because it's just the way that girls and guy are, that physically guys might be above us. And you just need to accept that." Natalie appears to have internalized the message that the male-dominated military leadership is sending about male and female physical capability. Despite being a starter on the Division 1, nationally ranked lacrosse team, and perfectly capable of acing the physical testing herself, she makes the argument that the gender-based standards create.

The gendering of physical standards, in the military environment that celebrates traditionally masculine traits such as toughness, dominance, and strength, is indicative of how embodied masculinity is both legitimized and rewarded, and how those who display it tend to achieve higher status within an organization (Steidl & Brookshire, 2018). Natalie knew she could meet the male standard, the one considered most valid and impressive, but conceded she thought other women may not be able to. She suggests that naturally, men are stronger and faster than women, therefore the gendered physical standards are something to abide by and leave unquestioned. Thus is seems Natalie internalized this message of female physical inferiority,

despite being an elite athlete and physical performer herself. This internalization of female physical inferiority is consistent with Bourdieu's (2001) theory that masculinity and femininity shape gender relations and identity in everyday life because they become imbedded into the individual's habits and beliefs about themselves. This happens both at the institutional level, demonstrated here by the different standards for military fitness standards based on gender, and at the individual level, where men and women hold themselves to different fitness standards and believe different things about what they are capable of based on their gender. These are socially constructed gender processes that come to seem natural due to their prevalence in society (Steidl & Brookshire, 2018). Further, existing literature shows that U.S. military physical training standards focus on exercises in which men tend to perform better, while excluding exercises in which women tend to perform more strongly (Cohn, 2000). While the military presents these standards as supposedly objective, they are not tied to job requirements and focus more on strength than technique. Despite the appeal of physical standards as a gender-neutral qualification, the types of physical tests as well as the different standards based on gender serve to construct women and women's physical bodies as inferior (Cohn, 2002; Steidl & Brookshire, 2018).

The implications of different physical standards based on gender goes beyond the physical training testing all Midshipmen must complete to maintain good standing at the Naval Academy. Particularly, respect for military leaders is contingent upon physical fitness, creating an added challenge for female leaders. As female students at the Naval Academy develop leadership skills for their future military careers, they have the added pressure of exceeding the female physical standards and defying gendered stereotypes of physical inferiority in order to gain respect and legitimacy, which are more naturally present for their male peers. Grace

explained the importance of physical strength and fitness in gaining respect in the military, especially as a leader. Grace said, "to be an officer in the Navy/Marine Corps, there is definitely the expectation that they be physically fit and demanding and aggressive, and war fighters and killers and stuff like that." If the expectation is to be physically fit, the fact that women have a lower standard of physical fitness seemed to suggest that there was a coordinated lower standard of leadership ability as well. Grace went on, "I hate to say it, but in the military, a female has to be physically fit or else nobody is going to respect them. Like nobody, more so in the Marine Corps, but everywhere you go, if you're not maxing everything, people aren't going to respect you as much as they should. So in order to be respected I would say that you have to have a high standard for every single thing." Grace reiterates the point that a portion of respect in the military stems from physical fitness and performance.

However, she believes that one not only needs to pass the fitness test, but needs to achieve the maximum score. She went on to clarify that it was only women who needed to meet the maximums on physical fitness tests, men could simply pass and still be respected physically. Grace explained, "as shitty as it is, I do feel pressured to be the most physically qualified female because that is what they respect, and I understand that so I'm going to do that. And that's totally fine with me, not a problem for me, but I can see that being a problem for other people." Grace appeared to embrace the challenge of having to be exceptional in order to gain the same respect that her male peers do for meeting the physical performance standard. Grace, as a Division I lacrosse athlete, was able to meet those physical challenges, but she acknowledged the flawed perception that women need to be exceptional in their fitness in order to gain respect. And she recognized that, for various reasons, one of which being the internalized messaging of inferiority,

some women may have a problem with the expectation of elite physical performance to gain

respect from their male peers and those they plan to lead.

Grace discussed the gender discrimination she saw in the Marine Corps during her

Leatherneck training: "for example at Leatherneck there would be these perfectly qualified

female officers in the Marine Corps that were great leaders who developed their peers and did

everything right and got all of their work done but they didn't max their fitness test. They were

totally fit to the general public, but since they weren't super stars males looked at them as

lesser." Grace makes an important observation that the standard women are expected to meet

may be lower than their male peers, yet they are expected to overcome the messaging that sends,

and perform well beyond that set standard to gain respect. This observation is aligned with

research demonstrating that the social construction of the military as a masculine organization, in

which women's bodies are seen as inferior (Cohn, 2002).

Natalie and Grace both are Division I athletes who knew they were capable of exceeding

the female physical standard in terms of their military requirements. Yet the existence of a lower

standard for women had an impact on how they perceived even their own performance. Natalie

seemed to internalize the message sent by the differing gender standards, stating that men were

naturally stronger and faster than women. Yet she based this concept solely on the fact that it

explains the different physical standards. Natalie, in her own right, played on a Division I

lacrosse team that is ranked in the top 15 nationally, yet she suggested that, as a female, she was

not as fit as her male peers. There are likely a good portion of male Midshipmen who are not as

fast or strong as Natalie, yet she has accepted the gendered physical differences as fact. Both

Natalie and Grace recognized that they must overperform and exceed the female physical

standard in order to be seen as equals by their male peers. But they also recognized that not all

female students can or want to exceed the female standard. However, because they vocalize the importance of physical performance in gaining respect as a military leader, something they were training to become, the different physical expectations based upon gender came to play an important role in their leadership development. Physical expectations played a specifically powerful role in stifling the leadership and leadership development of women who were not considered exceptionally physically fit, as well as pressuring already fit women into feeling as though they needed to overperform to gain a minimum amount of respect.

Intersection of Race and Gender

The effect of the intersection of race and gender emerged in the interviews with the Black women in this study. The intersection of race and gender was pervasive in all aspects of their experiences at the Naval Academy, which negatively impacted their ability to develop their leadership skills. Despite not being asked directly about their experiences with racial discrimination, all but one of the African American participants brought up instances of racial discrimination they had experienced or witnessed at the Naval Academy. While some of these racial incidents were outright, others were more subconscious displays of discrimination and bias. Several of the African American participants identified these incidents as racially based, but for others, they identified undertones of racial bias but did not identify these instances as being due to their race. This added challenge of racial discrimination, ranging from implicit to explicit, is indicative of the intersectional framework impacting black women in leadership. The participants in this study experienced challenges to their leadership development due to their gender, but the stereotypes associated with their gender were also impacted by their racial identity.

Brittany shared her experiences with racial discrimination both from her peers and institutionally, through policies that disproportionally impact students of color, specifically women. An example of institutionalized racial discrimination was the lack of resources and available supplies for the different needs of African American students. Brittany explained that until two years ago, the store on campus, the only place Midshipmen can shop as underclassmen, did not have hair products for black students' hair. Brittany said, "and that was after I got in trouble, I got caught running off the yard, but I was running off the yard to get hair products from the store because I couldn't get the kind I need here." Drawing on the intersectional framework, which posits that social identities are both interdependent and equally integral, (Crenshaw, 1989; Rosette et al., 2016) Brittany's experience with institutionalized discrimination is reflective of the challenges black women face as a result of the intersection of their race and gender.

Similarly, Brittany explained she was "terrorized by detailers during plebe summer because cutting hair doesn't really work with black hair," speaking to the ways her experience in receiving a mandatory haircut and the challenges of keeping her hair in regulations. Brittany explained she cut her hair to be within regulations before plebe summer, but she was under the impression she would have appropriate hair products, yet she did not. This led to a confrontation, in her words, "my hair was a big curly mess and they tried to tell me that I would have to shave it down. They threatened me three different times with a haircut." She explained this was a misunderstanding because the detailers "just did not understand what my hair was," leading her to receive demerits on her uniform because her hair was considered part of her uniform standards. This experience shows how institutionalized policies can disproportionately impact Black women at the Naval Academy, and demonstrates the intersectionality of their race and

gender, as those social identities are interdependent in who they are, as well as in how they influence their experiences as they navigate their world (Rosette et al., 2016). It is also indicative of the double jeopardy, or additional disadvantage, Black women leaders face due to the consequences of the Black and female subordinate identities (Crenshaw, 1989; Settles, 2006) in which White people are perceived as more typical leaders than Black people (Rosette et al, 2008) and men are perceived as more typical leaders than women (Heilman et al., 1989).

Hope, another African American participant, was more direct in her critique of the Naval Academy's handling of racial diversity. Hope, in discussing how challenging and miserable plebe summer can be for everyone, specified that, "you have issues with being a black female within your company that no one tells you about. You have systematic racism that fucks you but it's not in your face, and those things aren't talked about." Hope is speaking to the discomfort at the Naval Academy in even talking about race and racial diversity. Hope went on to explain the opposition to discussing racial diversity at the Academy, saying, "if you talk about diversity, that is the quickest way to start an argument." She described the tensions created by these discussions as she said, "I honestly think a race war would break out if we all got in a room to talk about diversity. I kid you not." Whether this is hyperbole or not, Hope was serious about her experiences with racial insensitivity at the Naval Academy. The intersection of race and gender impacted the overall experience of the Black women in this study, particularly in terms of their ability to develop leadership skills. The discrimination they faced, ranging from offensive comments from peers to institutional policies that disproportionally affect them, created an added challenge to earning credibility as leaders from their peers and military leadership.

Black athlete stereotypes

   The stereotype of the black athlete surfaced in the interview with Hope as she responded to the question about the difference in leadership styles and tactics on her athletic team compared to her company. Hope explained that while her White teammates were extremely loyal and supportive of her, she faces challenges that they do not in the military environment of the Naval Academy. Hope explained the racial stereotypes around athletes at the Naval Academy, sharing that she perceives there to be a commonly accepted assumption that African American students were accepted to the Academy due to their athletic talents, rather than academic achievements. This is indicative of the global stereotype of African Americans, which includes the expectation of laziness, athleticism and lack of intelligence (Devine, 1989; Moskowitz & Carter, 2018). This leads to the subtype of the black athlete, in which implicit bias leads a black athlete to be seen negatively, despite athleticism normally being seen in a positive light (Moskowitz & Carter, 2018).

   Hope shared anecdotes of professors and other students asking black students what sport they play, sending the message they assumed a black Midshipman was a recruited Division I athlete to be accepted into the Naval Academy. She shared that while the majority of questions her peers asked to get to know each other, they asked where they were from and what they were majoring in. However, she explained, "when they come to me, they go what sport do you play?" She explained her frustration with this racially biased question as she said, "that's not the only way black people get into the Academy. It's 2019. It peeves me beyond belief. You don't have to play a sport to get in." Several participants referenced this assumption around African American students being assumed to be student-athletes, because racial stereotypes lead their peers to falsely assume that athletics were the only avenue for African American students to be admitted

into the Naval Academy. The role of both athlete and teammate is distinctly different for Black

women and White women, as White women in athletics do not have this added burden of racial

stereotypes around their intelligence and work ethic. Further, stereotypes about Black athletes

impacted their leadership development, as they faced negative perceptions of their intelligence

and questions around whether they were of equal standing with their peers. This created an

environment in which they faced added scrutiny, leading to questions about their capability and

credibility as leaders.

Coping

The participants presented two common strategies for handling racial discrimination at

the Naval Academy: sticking together with other women, or particularly African American

women, who experienced similar challenges in order to create a sense of community, and

holding themselves to higher standards because of a perceived responsibility to represent their

whole gender or their race and gender. In terms of creating a sense of community with other

racial or gender minorities, three participants discussed the importance of creating relationships

with others who can relate to them and have often experienced similar things they have because

of their identity. Brittany described this creation of community as "a minority thing in general

where you look out for your people." Brittany was referring to both peers supporting each other

and providing an outlet or confidante where someone can feel comfortable sharing their concerns

or experiences, as well as leaders who recognize the challenges African American Midshipmen

face at the Naval Academy. This is indicative of the use of social support to cope with racial

discrimination (Brondolo et al., 2009; Thompson, 2006)

While Brittany discussed the added comfort in having a black officer mentor or

supervisor, Hope described the importance of having the support of black women peers. Hope

explained the role of "Black women groups" as an underground community, as the only place where "you can take that face off." Hope spoke to her experience in constantly feeling as though she is being watched, critiqued and judged because she was a minority both at the Naval Academy and on her team. She went on, "you can be loud now, you don't have to worry about stereotypes anymore, you can just be yourself in that space." This creation of a space for and of Black women provided a safe haven, a comfortable space where they could be their genuine selves and not worry about the judgement and stereotypes of their peers, and supports previous research into the use of social support for coping with racial discrimination (Thompson, 2006).

Taylor explained the need and value for a close relationship between Black women at the Naval Academy as she pointed out that "Black females make up only 1.7% of the Brigade." At an Academy of over 4,500 students, only 1.7% are Black women. This stark minority status results in, as Taylor said, "I know every Black female and we are close. We are close. Because we all go through that common struggle." The picture several participants painted in regards to racial discrimination at the Naval Academy suggests that Taylor was referring directly to a struggle in dealing with racially charged language, unjust policies, and outright discrimination that she has experienced or saw other Black students experience.

Gender Stereotypes

Almost all participants mentioned common gender stereotypes when asked about what they perceived to be the stereotypes surrounding men and women as leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, 1987). While they identified fairly similar stereotypes about male leaders, they also had similar critiques of stereotypical male leadership. In describing their perception of male leader stereotypes, common themes among the participants were tough, strong, unemotional, confident, and unquestioned.

Nearly every participant mentioned that the predominant leadership expectation of men was to be strong and never show weakness. These gendered expectations are consistent with gender research dating back to the 1970s. This research showed that gender roles are socially shared and understood beliefs about attributes of men and women (Biddle, 1979), and further, that these shared beliefs include a powerful association with appropriate conduct for men and women (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In line with this research, Natalie explained, "the expectation for men is that they're tough, strong, they're not weak, not emotional." This is indicative of social role theory in which certain expectations are believed to be desirable for each sex, and for men, those desirable traits are typically agentic, such as aggressive, confident and strong (Eagly, 1987). Karen described male leadership stereotypes in nearly the exact same terms, but critiqued this expectation, saying, "I think that can only go so far because obviously you're human and people want you to not put on a show for them." Karen is arguing that leaders who present as unemotional and completely devoid of weakness lack a certain leadership quality of being able to connect with followers, to be genuine. Grace explained the stereotype that male leaders have to be aggressive, that there is "more of an emphasis on the physical nature of men as leaders in the military."

This legitimacy as a leader stemming from physical strength is partially due to the emphasis on meeting physical standards in testing, but also on the historic alpha-male mentality of the military (Archer, 2013; Smith, Rosenstein, Nikolov, & Chaney, 2018). Grace explained, "already to be in the military, I think guys have a macho complex" and therefore there is an even more prevalent expectation "that they be physically fit and demanding and aggressive, and war fighters and killers." Grace's perception is rooted in long-standing military culture, and she pointed out that when male leaders deviated from that expectation by being compassionate and

nurturing towards students or followers, it was both uncommon and controversial. Some saw it

as a sign of weakness, whereas others saw it as a sign of strength. The participants seemed to be

using a very critical lens to analyze male leadership stereotypes, showing their knowledge and

familiarity with critical thinking around leadership and the types of leadership styles they valued.

Amber explained that in her experience male leaders "never really get questioned"

whereas female leaders often have to justify their decisions, hurting their credibility as leaders.

Amber went on to explain that it was easier for male leaders in that they were able to be

confident and productive because "people are more inclined to not blindly follow, but be like

yeah that's what's happening and follow it." Sam reiterated this perception of male leaders as

somehow naturally more credible and trusted as leaders as she explained how men are "assumed

to be a better leader or a better person overall." This supports research into role congruity theory,

which posits that perceived gender roles may conflict with expectations of leadership roles and

behaviors, particularly in occupations and institutions with an overrepresentation of one sex

(Eagly, Karau & Makhijani, 1995).

Both athletics and the military are predominantly male institutions, evidenced at the

Naval Academy through the demographics of the student body which is 72% male and 28%

female (U.S. News & World Report, 2019; U.S. Naval Academy, 2019), academic faculty

among whom 72% are male and 28% are female (Data USA, 2019), and athletics head coaches

at Navy where 83% are male and 17% are female (Navy Athletics, 2019). These demographics

demonstrate that the participants' identification of male leaders having more natural legitimacy

than their female counterparts aligns with role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Further,

several participants used the phrase that men "get things done," something that is often used to

justify more stern leadership styles. Hope explained that male leaders are often seen as holding

"people to standards, he takes his job seriously, he's so serious about his position." In that same breath, however, Hope went on to say that when female leaders take their jobs seriously and hold followers to standards, "it's not seen that way." These supposed productive stern leadership styles in men often are seen as a flaw in women leaders, something I will discuss in the next section.

Gender stereotypes were a prevalent theme in that the participants, almost across the board, pointed out similar stereotypes about women leaders. Adhering to typical female gender stereotypes, many participants, like Lisa, mentioned that "girls are supposed to be the nice, caring ones," perceived as meant to take on a more nurturing and communal leadership style than their male peers. It is also worth noting that Lisa refers here to her female peers as girls, although they are all over the age of eighteen and therefore women. Other participants used girls in place of women in the interviews, but called their male peers men or guys, never boys. Referring to women as girls suggests an association of women with less authority, maturity, and ability, especially in a leadership concept. This use of language serves to reinforce gender stereotypes, even coming, likely subconsciously, from the female participants.

Grace also pointed to the focus on relationship building and communal leadership explaining that a female professor is more like to "get to know you and want to know where you're from, much often than going into a class with a man." This common identification of women leaders being expected to be caring and compassionate aligns with much of the research in social science around female leadership regarding typical expectations of women to be communal (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014), but so too do the corresponding critiques of female leaders who do not adhere to typical gender norms in their leadership particularly. Interestingly, most participants focused more on the challenges female leaders face due to their lack of typical

gendered behavior and therefore their embodiment of stereotypically masculine leadership styles. Lisa spoke to the ways female leaders were policed in their display of emotions, explaining that female leaders "are expected to control their emotions a lot more," so even if angry or frustrated, not show that to followers, even though military culture expects and reinforces emotional displays of anger and frustration on the part of male leaders. This is consistent with research showing that women are perceived to be the more emotional sex (Gallup, 2000) and that women express all emotions more than men, save for anger and pride (Plant, Hyde, Keltner & Devine, 2000). Further, Lisa's point about female leaders policing their own displays of emotions is indicative of existing literature on leadership showing that emotional control is considered an aspect of good leadership, particularly being stable, level-headed and rational (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011; Brescoll, 2016), leading women leaders who are already considered more emotional than their male peers, to control emotional displays to prove their ability to make rational, objective decisions (Shields, 2002).

Responses to Female Leadership

The majority of participant answers regarding female leadership stereotypes and expectations included a substantial amount of negative responses from their peers in response to female leaders. There were a handful of themes that were extremely prevalent, in almost every single interview, and these included the idea that women leaders who are assertive, confident, rule followers, as required in the military culture, are immediately perceived by their peers as a "bitch," "annoying," or "bossy." Almost every participant mentioned that female leaders are held to higher standards in order to earn legitimacy and respect from their peers, superiors and followers.

Gendered Expectations

Amber, Sam Brittany and Taylor all mentioned that women who lead receive more criticism but less freedom, and are judged more harshly than their male peers. Amber began explaining her experiences seeing and hearing responses to female leadership by describing the prevalence of negative, stereotyped feedback for women leaders from their peers, saying that the most frequent comments regarding female leaders were "panicky and gossipy," whereas the most prevalent comments for male leaders were "confident, words like strong and athletic." This contrast was stark to Amber, who explained how female leaders were more scrutinized and "looked into more, questioned further" rather than being perceived as legitimate, competent leaders. When thinking about her company commanders, she explained seeing a distinct difference in how her current company commander, who was a woman, was treated compared to her former company commander, a man. Amber said her current company commander "definitely has to put in more work and do more background research with things, and set up more convincing arguments when things are happening" to gain respect and legitimacy than her previous company commander who was a man. Such observations are consistent with research demonstrating beliefs about gender and what behaviors men and women are expected to display, leading to women, in general, being considered less qualified for leadership roles than men (Brescoll, 2016; Eagly & Karau, 2007).

Sam shared her view quite succinctly as "girls never get that good dude factor." She elaborated explaining that even when women leaders at the Naval Academy were exceptional students, are physically fit, and had great integrity and personality traits, they may not rank highly among peers if not deemed "likable." Again such observations may be explained via role congruity theory, and that such backlash would push women leaders to choose between being

liked or being respected, thereby undermining their ability to earn respect and legitimacy in

positions of power (Brescoll, 2016; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman & Glick, 2008).

Sam summed this up by explaining, "I think that's the difference in expectations, that

there is a little more leeway for men when it comes to performance versus personality than there

is with women." This is indicative of role congruity theory, which helps explain why agentic

female leaders are perceived as competent and respectable, yet socially unattractive or unlikable

(Heilman et al., 2004; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Because women defy gender expectations when

leading with agentic traits, there is a perceived lack of fit, whereas men can adhere to gender

expectations in their leadership styles. All of these participant experiences were also indicative of

men being status congruent and women being status incongruent in military leadership (Smith,

Rosenstein, Nikolov, & Chaney, 2018). Put more simply, military leadership is seen as more

normal and natural when performed by men than women, giving men more freedom to lead in

various ways without being associated with proscriptive characteristics (Prentice & Carranza,

2002). Gender expectations are more pronounced in the hyper-masculinized military

environment, creating an additional challenge for female leaders.

Role (In)Congruence

In addition to these challenges for women to gain legitimacy and respect as leaders,

participants also shared that women who showed strong, confident, aggressive leadership skills

in their military or athletic leadership roles faced sharply negative responses. Further, in

responses to my question as to what the common responses are to female leadership, all ten

participants brought up negative responses female leaders received when they were perceived as

too aggressive, assertive, or strict. Some did not share the specific terminology they heard

women leaders receive for being aggressive or strict, but notably, eight of the ten participants

shared that, in some facet or another, that the term "bitch" was commonly used to describe a strong, aggressive woman leader. This directly aligns with research by Eagly, Makhhijani, and Klonsky (1992) who posited that women leaders tend to be devalued while holding leadership positions in male-dominated fields when they exhibit leadership styles that are stereotypically masculine.

The participants gave examples of instances in which women leaders faced criticism for displaying stereotypically masculine leadership styles, yet contrasted that feedback with the ways in which male leaders who used the same tactics were perceived. For instance, Lisa explained that she had to "table my emotions" when angry or frustrated by someone's mistake or lack of judgement as whomever she reprimanded "would probably go into his room to his friends and be like she is such a bitch, but if a guy did that to him, he'd be like my god he was so angry." In this way, it seems Lisa perceived male leaders as being able to be angry and express that emotion legitimately, whereas women leaders would face reproach and scorn for the same behavior. This is indicative of the status incongruence typically assigned to women leaders for defying gender stereotypes when leading with more stereotypically masculine behaviors (Smith et al., 2018). This perceived status incongruence often leads to negative perceptions and feedback for women leaders.

Almost all of the participants mentioned various experiences that showed them that women who lead are policed in how and when they show emotion. Female leaders at the Naval Academy oftentimes faced strong criticism, from their male peers and followers especially, for showing anger, frustration or aggression. Those very traits are taught as important and common training methods in the military (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995; Youngman, 2001), and when men showed aggression or anger, they were seen as strong, legitimate leaders, yet when women

did the same, they were often called a "bitch," overaggressive, or crazy. Female leaders at the

Naval Academy are expected to be tough, confident and strong because those agentic traits are

celebrated and valued in the military and in sport, yet when they display these attributes, they are

perceived as overly aggressive and selfish, as seen in prior research about women in sport

leadership (Shaw & Hoeber, 2003).

Karen reiterated a related sentiment as she explained her experiences around a female

detailer who yelled often as a leader. Karen shared that in response, "everyone was like damn

she's such a bitch." Karen viewed this criticism critically as she went on, "I don't think you

would call a man a bitch if he was yelling. It's so easy to fall into that bitchy category when

you're trying to lead or you're upset about something." These participants' experiences

regarding gender stereotypes and backlash for female leaders are consistent with research on role

congruity theory, as prescriptive gender stereotypes often contribute to backlash against women

leaders who defy gender stereotypes (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Jeong & Harrison, 2017).

Double Bind

Almost every participant reinforced the notion of a double bind for women in leadership,

though none of them referred to it by name. Each participant described experiences in which

female leaders were held to different standards from men, specifically the ways in which female

leaders are criticized for displaying agentic characteristics such as confidence, assertiveness,

aggression and strength, as described above. While these characteristics are celebrated and

reinforced in military and athletic culture, they are seen as a flaw when displayed by women

leaders. The participants also explained that simultaneously, female leaders are often criticized

for demonstrating more stereotypically feminine characteristics, such as being too sensitive,

emotional, and for being "pushovers."

These descriptions demonstrate the existence of a double bind for female leaders at the Naval Academy, both in military and athletic leadership. Their descriptions are indicative of the double bind theory which posits that women must act outside of their socially constructed gender roles in order to be respected as leaders, but then experience backlash for that violation (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Participants discussed how they saw female leaders being punished socially, through criticism, feedback, and lack of support. They understood this backlash to be a result of the perception that women leaders were either too aggressive and confident, too caring and too much of a pushover, or both sides of the spectrum simultaneously. This "lose-lose" situation as Lisa referred to it, was a clear indication of a double bind for female leaders at the Naval Academy.

While participants learned through social interactions that aggression and assertiveness were problematic leadership styles for women, they simultaneously found that nurturing, kind and compassionate leadership styles were also considered problematic, as women who led in such a way were perceived as "soft" and "pushovers." The combination of women being policed and criticized for leading with aggression and assertiveness, as well as with compassion and nurturing styles, creates the double bind that has been studied throughout women's leadership research. The double bind was an extremely prevalent theme in this study, as the participants discussed the "lose-lose" they experience as leaders. Lisa explained,

> a girl is just considered a bitch if she tries to be assertive and lay down the law, so it's pretty gendered, but girls are supposed to be the nice caring ones. And even when they are compassionate and all that, some of the guys think they're total pushovers. So it's a lose-lose.

Similarly, Natalie described the double bind as something she has experienced, and as a challenge she finds herself trying to navigate. Natalie explained the double bind women in leadership face as she said, "they need to find the balance between not being too aggressive, but if we're not aggressive enough, we're just like these flirty females, we don't care enough about the rules." Natalie clearly identifies the same "lose-lose" situation Lisa discussed. These participants explained that they feel as though no matter how they lead, they will be criticized. Whether for being too aggressive and therefore called a bitch, or for being too compassionate and patient, and therefore being labeled a "pushover" or disrespected as a "flirty" or "ditzy."

Hope identified the same limitations other participants discussed for women leaders, the criticism for being strong and following rules, as that can lead to a woman being identified as "bitchy and annoying," or as she summed up this perception, "if you stand up for yourself you're being bitchy for doing your job." Yet, if a woman wants to avoid that criticism and therefore does not confront people and hold them accountable, she is seen as "soft" and as if she "doesn't do anything." Hope explained that this results in an impossible situation for women in leadership positions. Hope said, "So you literally can't win. It's like a double-edged sword." Taylor reiterated a similar point, explaining "if a female follows the rules, it's like oh she's a bitch" and alternatively, if a woman is more relaxed, she is considered "a pushover or soft." This led Taylor to conclude, "it's kind of like a negative both ways, so you just keep your head down and move on." The participants' perception of criticism for female leaders for coming across as too masculine or as too feminine, leaving a small if not inexistent margin for error, is consistent with double bind theory research which demonstrates that women seeking leadership roles are placed in a double bind of either conforming to masculine ideals or performing their duties in a more

stereotypically feminine manner, yet both paths can increase their vulnerability to negative

perceptions and sanctions (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Chapter 5: Discussion

As a service academy, the Naval Academy has a unique mission of developing Midshipmen morally, mentally and physically into leaders who will be tasked with the responsibility of commanding enlisted service members upon graduation, and an honor concept focused on honor and integrity that is central to their experience as Midshipmen. This separates the students who attend the Naval Academy from non-service academy students, as a primary purpose of the Naval Academy is for students to develop leadership skills and prepare for a career as a military officer. Consequently, the college experience for female student-athletes, the focus of this study, is particularly unique at the Naval Academy. Considering the first broader question guiding this study, the findings demonstrate that female student-athletes at the Naval Academy understand and conceptualize effective leadership primarily in the context of servant leadership. While it is unclear whether servant leadership is directly being taught, it is the type of leadership most embraced by the participants.

The participants provided substantial data showing that the type of leadership they developed at the Naval Academy is servant leadership, a form of leadership that focuses primarily on the well-being and needs of the followers and community to which the leader belongs. Servant leadership is a people-centered leadership approach involving an ethical component, an emphasis on integrity and honesty. Servant leadership was strongly embraced as the most effective form of leadership from the participants' perspectives. Female students' understanding of effective leadership as focusing on empowerment, selflessness, and compassion aligns with a service-academy environment that is built upon a commitment to serving one's country while maintaining high standards of honor and integrity. These female student-athletes were also grappling with female gender stereotypes and understand common criticism for female

leaders who display more aggressive and rigid leadership. This may contribute to why they embraced servant leadership, in that it is a form of leadership that can potentially help them navigate the gender stereotypes and double bind they see facing women in leadership roles.

Considering the second research question, much of the participants' leadership development outside of the classroom and military environment stemmed from mentoring and informal leadership, specifically from their athletic teams. A common theme for several participants was the value of their athletic team as a communal space and an escape from the structured and rigid military environment at the Naval Academy. As the only all-female space many participants' have at the Naval Academy, athletic teams are unique in that they are more comfortable spaces that participants describe as offering more opportunity for genuine connection and leadership development, as leaders on teams opt into leading informally, rather than needing an official leadership billet as they do on the military side.

The role of gender stereotypes is also noticeable in the physical standard tests that students at the Naval Academy have to take every semester and the impact of the gendered physical standards on the leadership development of female students. The military requires strength and physical performance of all servicemembers, but sets different standards for men and women (Navy Physical Readiness Program, 2019). Some students at the Naval Academy, including several participants, have internalized the resulting message of female physical inferiority, despite being varsity elite athletes extremely fit. This internalization of female physical inferiority is consistent with Pierre Bourdieu's theory that masculinity and femininity shape gender relations and identity in everyday life because they become imbedded into the individual's habits and beliefs about themselves (Bourdieu, 2001). This occurs both at the institutional level, demonstrated here by the different standards for military fitness standards

based on gender, and in how individuals believe different things about what they are capable of based on their gender. The perception of female physical inferiority then impacts the leadership development of female students as they are socialized to believe that they must overperform and greatly exceed the female physical standards in order to earn legitimacy and respect among their peers. Because the military has a hypermasculine culture that places male leaders as the norm and male physical standards as the true standards, women face an uphill battle in earning legitimacy and respect as leaders.

Further, a significant theme of the intersection of race and gender emerged in the experiences of the Black participants in terms of their leadership development. The Black women in this study discussed the added challenges they and other Black women face due to the intersection of their race and gender, as both aspects of their identity are impacted by stereotypes and even outright discrimination, making their leadership experience particularly challenging. The participants demonstrated the impact of gender and racial stereotypes on their experiences at the Naval Academy, particularly in terms of how they were perceived as stereotypical Black athletes, and in their leadership development, a primary purpose of their Naval Academy education. There were noticeable institutional policies that disproportionately affected Black women, in addition to stereotypes and discrimination that have a significant impact on the overall experience of the Black participants. These racial stereotypes were particularly impactful in terms of their leadership development, as they pointed to negative perceptions about their own leadership and identity, due to the intersection of their race and gender.

To cope with racial stereotypes and discrimination at the Naval Academy, participants worked to build relationships with other African American women who are experiencing similar challenges in order to create a sense of community with others who can relate to them, and also

held themselves to higher standards because of a perceived responsibility to represent their

whole race and gender. Those who felt the pressures of racial stereotypes and discrimination held

themselves to a higher standard and worked extra hard in order to defy those stereotypes.

The third research question guiding this study considers how female student-athletes at

the Naval Academy understand and perceive women in leadership. While the Naval Academy

provides phenomenal educational and leadership development opportunities, the participants

understand the challenges women in leadership face. The participants understood that women

leaders were often perceived as unnatural leaders, demonstrated by the need for women to

exceed physical standards, substantiate their arguments, and overperform far more than their

male peers, while their male peers are perceived to have a more natural, inherent legitimacy and

respect as leaders. The participants also pointed to the ways in which female leaders often faced

criticism for their leadership styles, particularly when displaying stereotypically masculine

leadership styles. These challenges stemmed largely from gender stereotypes and role

incongruity.

The impact of gender stereotypes was demonstrated with personal experiences regarding

critical responses to female leaders, gender discrimination, and institutionally with differing

physical standards based on gender. Participants recognized the gender stereotypes ascribed to

them as women, and particularly as women leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, 1987). These

stereotypes of woman as gentle, nurturing, and compassionate, do not align with the stereotypes

associated with leadership, and the participants acknowledged that this lack of fit presented

problems for them in their leadership development, largely in the form of negative feedback and

responses. Almost every participant mentioned in some fashion that women leaders who are

assertive, confident, rule followers, as they need to be in the military culture, are perceived by

their peers as a "bitch," "annoying," or "bossy." This is indicative of the ways in which women

leaders tend to be devalued while holding leadership positions in male-dominated fields when

they exhibit leadership styles that are stereotypically masculine (Eagly, Makhhijani, & Klonsky,

1992). The responses to female leadership included predominately negative, stereotyped

feedback from their peers, with the most frequent comments regarding female leaders being

"panicky and gossipy" or "bitchy," whereas the most prevalent comments for male leaders were

confident, reliable, and strong. These experiences regarding gender stereotypes and backlash for

female leaders are consistent with research on role congruity theory, which describes the

backlash women leaders face for defying gender stereotypes (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Jeong &

Harrison, 2017).

Female leaders are held to different standards from men, specifically in that they are

criticized for displaying agentic characteristics such as confidence, assertiveness, aggression and

strength. While these characteristics are celebrated and reinforced in military and athletic culture,

they are seen as a flaw when displayed by women leaders. Simultaneously, female leaders are

often criticized for demonstrating more stereotypically feminine characteristics, such as being

too sensitive, emotional, and for being "pushovers." This is consistent with the notion of the

double bind, in which women must act outside of their socially constructed gender roles in order

to be respected as leaders, but then experience backlash for that violation (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

The impact of gender stereotypes was demonstrated with personal experiences regarding critical

responses to female leaders, gender discrimination, and institutionally with differing physical

standards based on gender.

Limitations

The most significant limitation to this research study is the limited amount of time available to interact with the participants, as there was only one interview. A longer time frame for interviews and particularly the opportunity for follow up interviews would add clarity and breadth of responses. Several participants brought up concepts that had not been considered in the interview questions, and coding brought out more themes that would have been interesting to explore, however, the constraints of this study did not allow for follow-up interaction. Follow-up interviews would allow for more depth and complexity in findings and themes, especially in extrapolating the impact of gender and race on the leadership development experience for women at the Naval Academy.

Future Research and Implications

This preliminary research study leaves room for future studies to expand and explore. Gender and racial stereotypes have a significant impact on the experiences of female student-athletes at the Naval Academy. While many of these stereotypes are long standing and socially constructed, others are reinforced institutionally and by leadership, both coaches and military officers. It would be informative to compare the experiences of male student-athletes to those of female student-athletes in order to see commonalities and differences, as well was if male student-athletes face any additional challenges or advantages to their leadership development due to their identities and the stereotypes stemming from them. Further, research into the Black experience at the Naval Academy would also be valuable in order to more deeply consider the impact of race on leadership development.

It was interesting to see how prevalent the concept of a double bind was in participants' experiences, and the ways in which they coped with and responded to the challenges they faced.

Considering the challenges women, particularly Black women, face, there should be further research and consideration into policy and educational changes that would better support women from institutional discrimination and disadvantages. The state of women in sport and in the military continues to develop, but bringing these topics to light can both validate the experiences of other women facing similar challenges, and guide future research into how to level the playing field and the battlefield.

The concept of stereotype threat is worthy of future research in the context of women's leadership development. Stereotype threat is the situation in which there is a negative stereotype about an identity group, leading members of that identity group to be concerned about being judged or treated negatively on the basis of that negative stereotype (Spencer, Logel & Davies, 2016), It would be valuable to explore whether stereotype threat is influencing women's, particularly Black women's, experiences or development.

Scholars in sport management and military leadership also need to better understand how servant leadership currently exists and functions in athletics and the military. Future research should examine if leaders in the military and in sport identify with characteristics of servant leadership, and further, if the use of servant leadership is associated with fewer ethical, compliance and integrity issues, or with more positive organizational culture. The participants in this study were drawn to servant leadership and embraced it as the ideal style of leadership. Performing servant leadership may be a way for them to mitigate the double bind, as it allows them to lead in a supportive, follower-centric, service-oriented way that will minimize the backlash they see women leaders receive. By connecting on an individual level with those they lead, and demonstrating their commitment to the personal development and needs of followers,

perhaps they see servant leadership as a way to negate some of the negative stereotypes of female leaders.

Important first steps for the Naval Academy leadership would be to further explore the impacts of gender, race and the intersection of the two, in leadership development. In order to address the negative experiences and perceptions of women leaders that were shown to exist in this study, the Naval Academy should implement more education for students, coaches, faculty and other leaders at the academy about the impact gender and racial stereotypes have on the perceptions of leadership. Additionally, more open conversations about gender and race, forcing more students to address their own privilege and better understand the experiences of their peers would be beneficial in addressing some of the challenges that this study brought to light.

In terms of athletics, there needs to be more education around the black athlete stereotype and more recognition of all the success Black men and women have at the Naval Academy outside of athletics. Additionally, coaches, sport administrators, and captains can do more to recognize the value of athletic teams as an opportunity for leadership development both informally through mentoring and formally. Sport leaders should provide more opportunities for leadership in team settings, both at the varsity level, and on club and intramural teams. This may allow some athletes to flourish in more comfortable and informal spaces, providing another avenue for their leadership development.

As this study has shown, servant leadership and gender and racial stereotypes warrant more study, in both the athletic and military spheres. Research considering the overlap of these concepts can help identify the factors that affect organizational culture in male dominated institutions, and therefore inform policy and decision makers on how to improve those cultures. A greater understanding of how social identities can be threatening and lead to added challenges

in the domain of leadership can help enable women and other underrepresented individuals to more wholly participate, succeed, and rise to more leadership roles in society

Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to explore the ways in which female student-athletes at the Naval Academy navigate socially constructed gender roles in their military and athletic leadership development, as well as explore how they understand and perceive women in leadership. The findings provided unique insight into the complex ways gender, and its intersection with race, shape the experience of student-athletes at the Naval Academy, particularly in how they develop their understanding of good leadership and develop their own leadership styles.

While aspects of servant leadership are being taught at the Naval Academy and align closely with the Academy's mission, the participants embrace it as the most effective type of leadership, and are developing the skills to employ servant leadership when given opportunities to lead themselves. Much of the participants' leadership development stemmed from leadership opportunities within their companies, as well as mentoring and informal leadership within their athletic teams. The participants discussed some additional challenges to their leadership development, likely due to their gender and the intersection of their race and gender. Some of the challenges that emerged were earning respect as leaders despite gendered physical standards and stereotypes, as well as the intersection of race and gender and Black athlete stereotypes for the Black participants.

Lastly, participants recognized that stereotypes of woman do not align with the stereotypes associated with leadership, resulting in a lack of fit. This role incongruity presented problems for them in their leadership development, largely in the form of negative feedback and

responses. The responses to female leadership included predominately negative, stereotyped feedback from their peers, with the most frequent comments regarding female leaders being "panicky and gossipy" or "bitchy," whereas the most prevalent comments for male leaders were confident, reliable, and strong. Female leaders are held to different standards from men, and the participants demonstrated the prevalence of the double bind. The participants have seen female leaders be punished socially, through criticism, feedback, and lack of support due to the perception that they are either too aggressive and confident, too caring and too much of a pushover, or both sides of the spectrum simultaneously, reflecting the experience of many women in leadership.

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Appendix A: Participants

Participant	Navy Athletic Team	Racial Identity	Year of Eligibility/Academic Class (*Captain)
Amber	Swimming	White	Senior/First Class*
Brittany	Rowing	Black	Senior/First Class
Eve	Track and Field	White	Senior/First Class
Grace	Lacrosse	White	Senior/ First Class
Hope	Lacrosse	Black	Sophomore/Third Class
Karen	Tennis	Black	Junior/Second Class
Lisa	Soccer	White	Senior/ First Class
Natalie	Lacrosse	White	Sophomore/ Third Class
Sam	Soccer	Black	Junior/Second Class*
Taylor	Track and Field	Black	Sophomore/Third Class

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1) Why did you decide to attend the Naval Academy and pursue a career as a military officer?

2) Who is the best leader you have met at Navy and what makes her/him a great leader?

   Can you describe an example where this leader displayed ideal leadership?

3) What behaviors, styles, and characteristics contribute to good leadership? (how would define good leadership?)

4) Describe the course of your leadership development, i.e. how have your leadership skills and styles changed/grown in your time at the Naval Academy? In your time on your team?

5) What are the expectations for you in your role as a leader?

6) What leadership style/behaviors do you think people respond best to and why? (Athletically and militarily)

7) What are the expectations for men as leaders? Are there any differences based on gender?

8) What kind of leadership styles do leaders on your team display when compared to leaders in your company (yourself included if you consider yourself a leader in either of those environments)? Is there any difference?

   How would you describe your coach's leadership style? Do you think it is effective?

9) In what way(s), if any, are responses to leadership by men different than responses to leadership by women? Are leadership styles perceived any differently based on the gender of the leader?

10) What role, if any, do you think gender plays in your overall experience at the Naval Academy?

11) Have you experienced any challenges or barriers to your leadership development at the Naval Academy? If so, please explain.

12) If you have received criticism or any negative responses to your leadership, what was the feedback and why do you think your leadership garnered a negative response?