THE ROLE OF MENTORING IN THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF RACIAL

MINORITY COMMISSIONED OFFICERS OF THE SEA SERVICES

by

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(Under the Direction of Laura L. Bierema)

ABSTRACT

The U.S. military has sought ways to increase the number of racial minorities in its ranks. Currently, there is a lack of racial minority commissioned officers in the senior ranks of the sea services (i.e., Coast Guard, Navy, and Marine Corps). Increasing the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of senior leaders requires the elimination of factors that disproportionately affect their promotion. This action research case study focused on a professional association that supports racial minority sea service commissioned officers.

The purpose of the action research case study was to explore how a professional association, whose membership functions in predominately White institutions, can privilege its members, who are primarily racial minorities, in their career development. Three research questions guided the study: (1) What are the factors that marginalize the career development of racial minority sea service commissioned officers? (2) How can a professional association privilege its members in career development using mentoring interventions? (3) How can association members, participating in a collaborative action inquiry process, create interventions to help privilege racial minority sea service

commissioned officers? The action research team employed qualitative research methods, including critical incident interviews, with 13 senior racial minority sea service commissioned officers to determine factors affecting their career development and advancement.

Three conclusions were drawn from the research. First, marginalization was evidence in sea service practices and procedures affecting racial minority sea service commissioned officers. Second, there was evidence of privileging occurring for the racial minority commissioned officer in their career development by a professional association whose mission is to support the sea services. Lastly, the findings support the need for the association to develop a strategy that creates opportunities for career development and advocates for the understanding of service culture for racial minority junior commissioned officers.

This research contributes to the understanding of organizational processes in management that affect racial minorities. It helps to fill the research gap regarding the effects of mentoring on racial minority commissioned officers. Finally, it demonstrates that using critical race theory themes to analyze military practices and policies can reveal areas of inequality.

INDEX WORDS: Marginalize, Privilege, Racial minority commissioned officers, Professional association, Career development, Critical race theory, Mentoring, Critical incident technique, Action research, Case study

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my son, my daughter-in-law, and my grandbaby, who were there with me at every juncture of this amazing journey with patience and understanding. A child is a precious gift from God, and my son has blessed me in many, many ways. Thank you to the favorite family, Chris, Anna, and Halle Marie!

I also dedicate this work to my mother of 96 years. I am able to accomplish so much in my life because of her love, understanding, and inspiration that guide me always. Thank you mother for all your sacrifices!

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(including our web designer, Kwan), the 20 mentoring pairs who participated in the

mentoring program pilot, and the professional association where this research was conducted,

thank you for your unwavering support and acknowledgement that our junior officers are our

future and need our guidance.

        I saved the best for the end! I want to acknowledge my six siblings, my extended

family, and friends, specifically my five unwavering girlfriends and a cousin who prayed,

encouraged, and gave me the support I needed to complete this amazing journey.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

For decades, the United States military has struggled to explain the low

representations of minorities and women in its senior ranks (Lim, Cho, & Curry, 2008).

In 2007, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) convened a diversity summit to address

this issue and to propose solutions. As a direct result of the summit, the president and

Congress established a Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC) in 2011 to

conduct a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of policies and practices that shape

diversity among military leaders (MLDC, 2012).

This, however, was not the first time a commission had been convened to address

diversity issues in the military. Two previous commissions had been authorized by

former U.S. presidents to find ways to support the military in recognizing all races,

ethnicities, and genders. One was the Fahy Committee, convened in 1948; the other, the

Gesell Committee, which was formed in 1962. These groups sought to assist the military

in understanding how to capitalize on the differences among the personnel within its

ranks.

President Truman created the Committee on Equality of Treatment and

Opportunity with the issuance of his Executive Order 9981, which opened the military

services to African Americans. In response to the order, the Fahy Committee (as it

became known) worked toward the goal of full integration of the military services.

Fourteen years later, President Kennedy established the Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Forces, otherwise known as the Gesell Committee. The Gesell recommendations focused on equal treatment for service members and their dependents, specifically minorities, in the areas of housing, education, transportation, recreation, community events, and other activities. Though this committee reported out in the early 1960s, these recommendations were not implemented fully until the late 1960s and early 1970s, after racial tensions erupted on military installations and ships (Gropman, 1978; MacGregor, 1981; MLDC, 2012).

In order to promote minority and women commissioned officers to top leadership positions, the military must retain them in their ranks. Perhaps more than any other time, the military needs support from associations and specialty groups to assist in developing and implementing solutions that address the lack of women and minority representation in its senior ranks. One recommended retention strategy involves using mentoring interventions as part of the services' career development programs (Lim et al., 2008; MLDC, 2012). At the 2007 DoD Diversity Summit, attendees frequently mentioned mentoring as a potentially effective career development strategy to improve the quality and diversity of the officer pipeline; however, the summit attendees did not elaborate on the type of mentoring program that would achieve the stated objective, nor did they provide a specific definition of mentoring (Lim et al., 2008). Later the MLDC (2012) found that educating service members about the promotion process early in their careers and mentoring them at all stages of the career process were important factors in their professional success.

The remainder of this chapter describes the professional association that served as the site for this action research (AR) case study. It also examines key theoretical and conceptual frameworks, identifies the research problem, and highlights the purpose and significance of the study.

<center>**National Naval Officers Association**</center>

Knouse and Webb (2000) cited special groups, such as the Women Officers Professional Association (WOPA) and the National Naval Officers Association (NNOA), as associations formed to support minorities and women in the military. These professional associations—which also include the Association of Naval Services Officers (ANSO), created to support Latinos sea service officers—offer their members structured guidance in the form of career counseling, psychosocial support, leadership development, comradery, and mentoring.

In 1972, a group of minority commissioned officers responsible for recruiting minority midshipmen for the U.S. Naval Academy founded NNOA. Frustrated by the lack of progress in recruiting and retaining minority leaders in the sea services—which include the Coast Guard, Navy, and Marine Corps—the group sought to create an association with the mission of working toward solutions to problems experienced by minority commissioned officers (NNOA, n.d.). The association's passion for supporting minority commissioned officers in the sea services and its role as a provider of solutions around diversity issues are closely linked. The ability to implement workable solutions related to minority issues in the sea services directly affects the membership's quality of life and career development. Because of the efforts of its founders, NNOA has a strong relationship with the sea services, enjoying the endorsement of the chiefs of the Navy,

Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. This relationship provides NNOA an avenue for keeping the sea service chiefs cognizant of issues experienced by its members, and together they focus on finding solutions (NNOA, 2013). As a result of these relationships, the sea services recognize NNOA as a credible resource for professional development and mentoring for its members, who are predominately minority sea service commissioned officers.

As a professional association respected within the sea services, NNOA, as stressed by the MLDC, can improve its process for educating its members about the promotion process early in their career and mentoring them at all stages of the process.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

A theoretical framework is the underlying structure, scaffolding, or frame of one's study (Merriam, 2009). Theories of career development and mentoring, as well as critical race theory (CRT), comprised a theoretical framework informing this case study of minority sea service commissioned officers as they advance in their careers. The study examined career development techniques (Hatung, 2013; Jepsen & Dickson, 2003; Peterson, Sampson, & Reardon, 1991) that NNOA could develop and pilot in an effort to privilege its members' career advancement. The cognitive skills of an individual represent an important component of career development; therefore, the cognitive information processing (CIP) perspective of career development, formulated by Peterson, Sampson, and Reardon (1991) for use in career advising, provided the foundation for mentoring training and learning modules developed for the NNOA mentoring pilot. In addition, empirical research on the mentoring benefits for organizations and protégés (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008; Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2010; Kram, 1985;

Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002) guided the formulation of the study's purpose and research questions. The study also focused on how the mentoring process could be used to privilege officers in their career development. Since NNOA's members function in predominately White institutions, CRT principles guided the action research team toward an understanding of how military culture, politics, and technology can marginalize career development of minority officers. The goal of critical inquiry is to critique, challenge, and transform human beings in an effort to empower them to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender (Closson, 2010; Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Chapter 2 includes a literature review of these theories.

A conceptual framework forces the researcher, at the beginning of a study, to select the most important factors, identify which relationships are likely to be most meaningful, and, consequently, determine what information should be collected and analyzed (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Career development and mentoring models developed, tested, and validated by experts in both fields assisted in determining which constructs were important for this research. The conceptual framework evolved as the study progressed (Miles et al., 2014). For example, the study did not originally focus on the career development of commissioned officers, but data analysis of the pilot interviews revealed the importance of individual continuous career planning for success in the military services. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework.
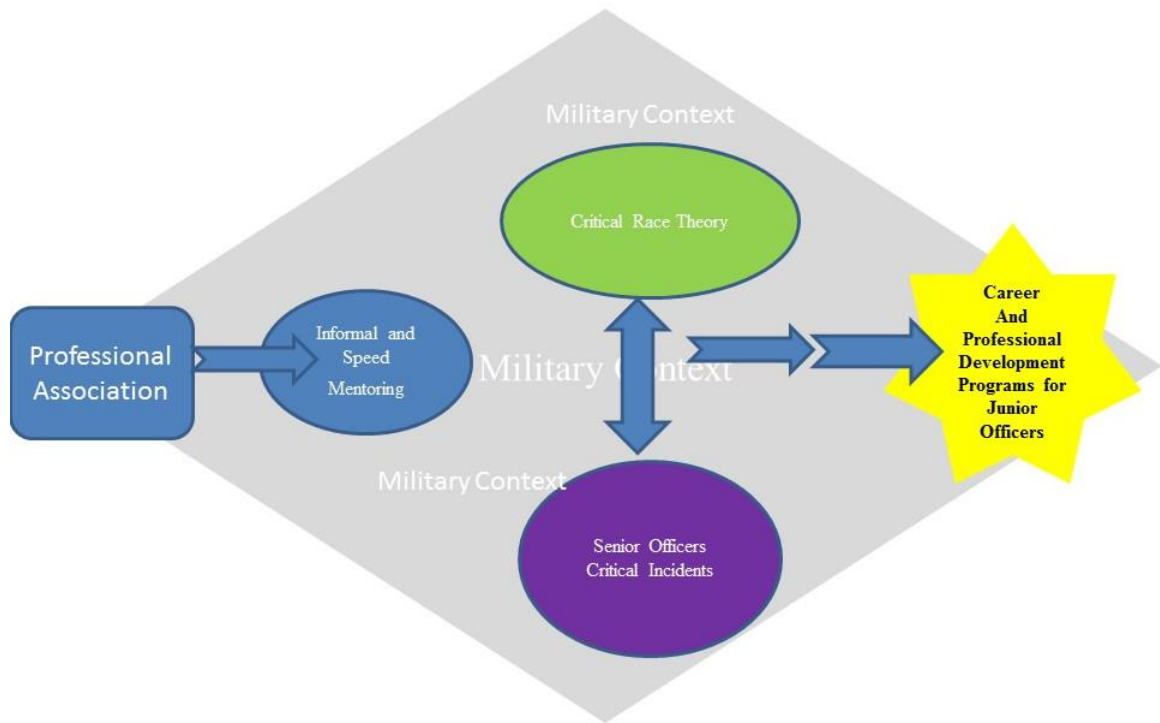
Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the action research case study.

Statement of the Problem

    The Coast Guard, Navy, and Marine Corps have spent a plethora of resources, time, and money to retain minority and women commissioned officers in their ranks, with some success; however, their programs have concentrated more on the recruitment of minority officers than on retention. At the 2007 DoD Diversity Summit, the services reported on their efforts to develop and execute programs specifically focused on managing their minority and women retention efforts with the goal of producing more women and minorities at the flag rank (Lim et al., 2008). (Flag rank is the equivalent of a chief executive officer in a corporation.) Members of NNOA, by virtue of their military role, were instrumental in orchestrating the programs reported on at the summit and later to the MLDC.

In the summer of 2013, NNOA's leadership wanted to enact changes in order to better document achievements of one aspect of its mission: mentoring. The organization's full mission is "to support the operational readiness of the sea services by providing professional development, mentoring, and support of cultural awareness" (NNOA, 2013, p. 4). By objectively reviewing its current mentoring efforts along with how it catalogues its successes, NNOA agreed, as part of this action research study, to collaborate around ways of improving the documentation of its benefits. For the purposes of this study, NNOA made available a board member as its point of contact. As the primary researcher, I formed an action research team (ART) consisting of association members who represented the services, who understood their service culture, and who were experienced in career planning and mentoring concepts. The board contact also served as a member of the ART. Problem identification was refined during the action research cycles and through continuous dialogue with NNOA leadership. Chapter 4 details the case study and outlines the steps of the ART in refining the problem and framing solutions.

Purpose and Research Questions

Thomas and Gabarro's (1999) research, which found that the trajectories of early-career minority executives at three civilian companies were different from those of White executives, reinforces the MLDC's findings around the importance of focusing on minority commissioned officers. Specifically, the researchers found that the movement of minority executives, regardless of their ethnic group, was characterized by punctuated equilibrium, meaning that their career was interrupted and that they moved at a significantly slower rate during their ascent to middle management. Thomas and Gabarro

attributed this slower advancement to minority executives repeatedly having to exceed performance standards and expectations.

There is a need to understand what professional events influence the career development of minority commissioned officers in the sea services. Are there specific events that contribute to their disengagement from their service? Because NNOA supports these officers and collaborates with sea service leadership around discovering solutions to improve their retention, the association is in a position to better understand their behavior, their career development strategies, and their career planning process, as well as the effects of these decisions on their career advancement.

The National Naval Officers Association touts widely its commitment to the career development of its members and, specifically, to mentoring its junior officers. It also encourages its chapters to host frequent career development lectures, discussions, and events, and to provide training on mentoring techniques (NNOA, 2013). Since NNOA supports the sea services, it has a desire to strengthen its career development program in order to provide consistent professional development and career advice to its members as a way of encouraging and motivating them to remain in their respective service. Noe, Greenberger, and Wang (2002) "concluded that mentored individuals (versus nonmentored) report more career and job satisfaction, promotions, higher incomes and lower turnover intentions and work alienation" (p. 130). Drawing from this conclusion, therefore, I hypothesized that NNOA could achieve more enhanced career development of its members using mentoring programs.

The purpose of this action research case study was to explore how NNOA, whose membership functions in predominately-white institutions, can privilege its members,

who are primarily racial minority, in their career development. The data collection

methods informed the primary research questions guiding this study:

1. What are the factors (technological, military, and political) that marginalize

   the career development of racial minority sea service commissioned officers?

2. How can a professional association privilege its members in career

   development using mentoring interventions?

3. How can professional association members, learning through a collaborative

   action inquiry process, create interventions to help privilege marginalized

   minority sea service commissioned officers?

Significance of the Study

By examining the factors that marginalize minority commissioned officers in their

career development and exploring how a professional association can support these

officers, this study offers a number of theoretical and practical contributions.

Theoretically, it expands upon the knowledge base for career development programs that

use mentoring as an intervention. The study was situated in a military context,

specifically the sea services, and in a professional association environment, providing an

additional context for understanding career development and mentoring. A professional

association context is important because it is not the primary source for career

development planning. The existing literature contains few studies that address

mentoring as a career development tool for racial minority commissioned officers; thus,

this study helps to fill this gap in the knowledge base. The study also addresses the

dearth of research around mentoring as a career development tool for minority

commissioned officers in predominately-white institutions. Understanding the complex

nature of the minority commissioned officer's career path and advancement concerns could make practical contributions in several ways. HR professionals could use the results of this study to inform the development of social programs that promote fairness and justice. This would be especially useful in creating or enhancing career development programs that address the needs of minority professionals, as well as programs developed in collaboration with professional associations. When considering the significant lack of minorities in the senior ranks of the military and corporate America, this study offers findings that respond to advancement concerns surrounding this specialty group.

Additionally, from this study, military leaders in the sea services could learn about factors affecting career development for minority commissioned officers and use this information in designing programs to improve their numbers in the officer ranks. Decision makers could also gain valuable insight into factors that marginalize the career development of racial minority professionals, thus contributing to how sea service leaders structure leadership development programs.

This study offers a profile of successful senior racial minority commissioned officers, which could help the sea services in several practical ways. Military leaders could use the profiles of critical incidents that shaped the career development of these minority senior commissioned officers to help reduce or eliminate those factors that hindered their advancement and to develop programs that facilitate career development and ultimately lead to promotion. Translating these results into the military leadership continuum of the sea services could also serve as a practical use of the findings, offering a critical review of human resources and leadership policies, procedures, and practices.

Definition of Terms

This action research case study uses terms with very specific meanings. This list of important terms and definitions are used frequently throughout the description of this action research case study and are defined as follows:

- *Sea services*—the U.S. Coast Guard, Navy, and Marine Corps

- *Commissioned officer*—a member of the military services who has a bachelor's degree and receives a commission from the president.

- *Flag officer*—an officer of the paygrade of O7 or above (see *paygrade* definition below); so called because the officer is entitled to fly a personal flag which indicates their rank.

- *Mentoring*—"a relationship developing between two people, one senior and more experienced (the mentor) and one junior and less experienced (the protégé) normally in the same organization, but not necessarily in the same chain of command for growth and development" (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 5).

- *Mentor*—a senior, more experienced person.

- *Paygrade*—used to denote the financial compensation to which a person is entitled (e.g., paygrade O1 applies to an Ensign in the Navy and Coast Guard, and a 1st Lieutenant in the Marine Corps).

- *Protégé*—a junior, less experienced person.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the three theories informing the action research case study—that is, mentoring, career development, and critical race theories—and the empirical and theoretical research associated with each. The purpose of the study was to explore how a professional association whose members function in predominately-white institutions can privilege its members, who are primarily minority sea service commissioned officers, in their career development. Three research questions guided the study: (1) What are the factors (technological, military, and political) that marginalize the career development of minority sea service commissioned officers? (2) How can a professional association privilege its members in career development using mentoring interventions? (3) How can professional association members, learning through a collaborative action inquiry process, create interventions to help privilege marginalized minority sea service commissioned officers? To answer these research questions, the study examined the critical career development and mentoring experiences of senior minority sea service commissioned officers. The ART used these critical experiences, along with the insights of the senior officers, to create career development strategies and mentoring interventions for the professional association membership.

This chapter opens with a discussion of the extant empirical literature on mentoring in the contexts of business and the military. This is followed by an examination of career development theory, with special attention given to the cognitive

information processing (CIP) model, which served as the foundation of the learning modules developed by the ART for the association members who participated in a pilot mentoring program for this study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of empirical studies related to critical race theory (CRT) and how CRT's tenets were used in analyzing the data collected for the study.

I conducted the literature review using the University of Georgia's GALILEO Interconnected Libraries (GIL) system and Google Scholar. I also searched databases such as EBSCO, ERIC, and PSYinfo. Keywords and key phrases used in the search included: mentoring; career development; mentoring in the military; career development and the military; military officer; diversity and mentoring; minority and mentoring; race and mentoring; mentoring and women; critical race theory; empirical studies; meta-analysis; and research in military mentoring and diversity. I reviewed books, journal articles, research studies, doctoral dissertations, government articles, and sea service directives, instructions, and websites.

Review of the Mentoring Literature

Concerns around the career development and advancement of minorities and women commissioned officers in the military led two different groups of military and civilian leaders—who were exploring ways to improve the quality and diversity of the officer pipeline—to recommend mentoring as a potentially effective career development strategy (Lim et al., 2008; MLDC, 2012). Therefore, to properly frame this study's exploration of ways to privilege minorities and women commissioned officers in their career development and advancement, it was appropriate to identify research in the mentoring field focused on individual career development, especially that of minorities

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and women. While not exhaustive, this review offers a critical examination of key findings from the mentoring literature in business and the military.

Within the field of business research, the literature on mentoring focuses primarily on the individual's career development and advancement rather than adult development and growth (Kram, 1985; Merriam, 1983). In the organizational literature, scholars have given strong emphasis to mentoring research; however, they have also acknowledged that this research area needs to give greater attention to race and gender (Blake-Beard, Murrell, & Thomas, 2007; Blass, Brouer, Perrewe', & Ferris, 2007; McDonald & Westphal, 2013; Ortiz-Walters, Eddleston, & Simione, 2010). Moreover, the scholarly mentoring research offers few empirical studies of mentoring in the military, and even fewer studies have focused on minorities and women. (For instance, I found one doctoral study that addressed the effects of mentoring on the retention of Hispanic nurses in the Army Nurse Corps.) This action research case study contributes to the gap in the mentoring literature by focusing on the mentoring experiences of the senior minority sea service commissioned officer.

This review of the mentoring literature begins with a consideration of mentoring in a business context, with specific attention given to mentoring types and functions. I then discuss the benefits of mentoring to protégés, mentors, and organizations in general and to minorities and women specifically. I follow that discussion with a section on mentoring research in a military context, allowing for a deeper understanding of what it means to be a mentor or to be mentored in the military.

Mentoring in a Business Context

To some, a mentor is a sponsor or coach, while to others it is someone who orients a new employee, maybe a new manager or a new college hire, to a company. Is this mentoring? In fact, the mentoring literature endorses all of these roles as mentoring relationships, but not all mentoring relationships serve all functions or are of the same quality. Therefore, it is important to understand the nature of mentoring in an organizational context. A structured mentoring program at the organizational level will likely offer the protégé opportunities for career development, which can lead to professional advancement and job satisfaction. It will also strive to meet the psychosocial needs of the protégé, such as instilling a sense of belonging and providing counseling. This type of mentoring is termed *formal mentoring*, one that involves organizational oversight (Baugh & Fagenson-Elan, 2007; Jones, 2012; Wanberg, Walsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Mentoring that occurs naturally in the workplace is termed *informal, or traditional, mentoring* (Kram, 1985; Wanberg et al., 2003). Acknowledging its origins in Greek mythology, Kram (1985) defined traditional mentoring as "a relationship between a young adult and an older, more experienced adult that helps the younger individual learn to navigate in the adult world and the world of work. A mentor contributes to the protégé's growth and career advancement" (p. 2). For this study, I relied upon Kram's definition of traditional mentoring along with certain clarifications from other mentoring scholars. Mentoring is a developing relationship between two people, one senior and more experienced (the mentor) and one junior and less experienced (the protégé), who are normally in the same organization but not necessarily in the same chain of command, for the purpose of fostering growth and development

(Kram 1985; Ragins & Kram, 2007; Wanberg et al., 2003). Ragins and Kram (2007)

clarified this specific relationship: "A core feature that defines a mentoring relationship

and distinguishes it from other types of personal relationships is that mentoring is a

developmental relationship that is embedded within the career context" (p. 5).

Alternative Sources of Career Developmental Support

The mentoring literature also embraces other concepts of mentoring, such as

developmental networks and peer mentoring, as alternative forms of individual career

development. In light of their significance as viable mentoring options for military

officers, especially minorities and women, they are worth describing here.

Developmental networks. In her seminal qualitative work on mentoring, Kram

(1985) discussed the idea of multiple developmental relationships (i.e., having more than

one mentor), which she characterized as "relationship constellation." These multiple

sources comprise networks of concurrent relationships that are specifically

developmental in nature (Kram, 1985). Kram stated that "relationships with bosses,

subordinates, and friends and family members can provide a range of developmental

functions" (p. 148); that is, "mentoring occurs as the protégé maintains concurrent

relationships with multiple mentors who take an active interest in and action to advance

the protégé's career by providing developmental assistance" (Higgins & Kram, 2001, p.

268). Molloy (2005) provided the reader with 20 years of scholarly research on the

transition from an exclusive focus on mentoring dyads to an integrative focus on

mentoring development networks. Her literature review found that,

although both instrumental and psychosocial support contributed to intrinsic

career success (e.g., subjective self-evaluations of career success or failure), only

instrumental network (networking with the intent to build relationships with those

who can provide significant career assistance) contributed to extrinsic career

success (operationalized as financial compensation and organizational grade). (p.

542)

Creating a constellation of mentors to assist in fulfilling different career development

needs represents a strategic move on the part of the protégé. In such a constellation, the

protégé receives not only the direct benefits of mentoring but also a broader exposure to

mentors at different levels in the organization as well as mentors outside of the

organization. Higgins and Thomas (2001) cautioned, however, that "it is the composition

and quality of an individual's entire constellation of developmental relationships that

account for long-run protégé outcomes such as organizational retention and promotion,

and multiple relationships assist with one's personal and career development" (p. 223).

Indeed, there is a strong consensus in the literature that protégés should connect with a

broad array of individuals, both in and outside the organizational setting, to fulfill career

developmental needs (Allen & Finkelstein, 2003; Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Kram,

1985).

　　　　Peer mentoring. Another form of career development that acts as an alternative

source for mentoring is peer mentoring. When opportunities to form traditional one-on-

one mentoring relationships with senior leaders in the organization are not available,

individuals may seek to form alliances with their peers. Peers are those individuals who

are at a similar organizational rank, pay status, and age. Peer relationships can serve as

avenues for minorities and women to become comfortable and "learn the ropes" of their

respective organizations, especially when they are new arrivals. Peer mentoring provides

some of the functions of traditional mentoring relationships such as information sharing, career strategizing, emotional support, and confirmation (Kram, 1985). Traditional mentoring provides more career functions than do peer relationships, but in general the two types of relationships offer the same psychosocial functions. Typically, individuals in peer relationships seek traditional mentors or employ a constellation of mentors to address career-related issues such as challenging assignments and protection (Allen & Finkelstein, 2003; McManus & Russell, 2007).

Mentoring functions. Table 1 depicts Kram's (1985) two-function model of traditional mentoring which is often cited in the mentoring literature. Career functions are those job-related functions, such as coaching and sponsorship that are afforded the protégé in a mentoring relationship. Psychosocial functions, such as friendship and acceptance, are associated with the protégé's welfare and happiness.

Table 1

Kram's (1985) Two-Function Model

	Career Functions	**Psychosocial Functions**
Description	Those aspects of the mentoring relationship that enhance career advancement	Those aspects of the mentoring relationship that enhance sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a profession role
Examples	- Sponsorship - Exposure-and-visibility - Coaching - Protection - Challenging assignments	- Role modeling - Acceptance-and-Confirmation - Counseling - Friendship

In a study of Army commissioned and senior noncommissioned officers by Steinberg and Foley (1999), a third mentoring function emerged: job coaching. The researchers customized these three functions for the Army participants, replacing psychosocial functions with personal development and career functions with career sponsoring. Job coaching was a separate factor of mentoring for the Army. Steinberg and Foley suggested that the unique environment of the Army, which stresses basic skill development as a critical skill for soldiers, explains the emergence of job coaching—or assistance at the task level—as a separate function.

A possible fourth function of the mentoring process, one critical to the military officer's career development, is political skill. Political skill is "the ability to effectively understand others at work, and use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ferris et al., 2005, p. 127). Blass and Ferris (2007) maintained that political skill is critical for military leader effectiveness and reputation, stating,

> Technical and tactical competencies are important, but they advocate that politically skilled individuals have a greater adaptive capacity and are better equipped to deal with uncertainty of future leadership challenges than those merely grounded in tactical and technical competencies. (Blass & Ferris, 2007, p. 6)

They also believed that mentoring relationships could facilitate the acquisition of political skill by developing adaptive capacity, which is inherent to political skill (Blass & Ferris, 2007). The opportunity to pass on informal organizational knowledge is important since the dominant group selectively passes on such informal information in

order to maintain the status quo, leading potentially to "political skill deficiency." Blass

et al. (2007) found that political skill deficiency was mediated in mentoring relationships

according to gender and ethnicity, such that mediation occurred for men and Caucasians

but not women and minorities. In addition, the effects of supervisory mentoring are

stronger when supervisors demonstrate a higher level of political skill (Sun, Pan, &

Chow, 2014). These findings provide strong justification for creating professional

opportunities for minorities and women commissioned sea service officers through the

mentoring process. A conceptualized four-function mentoring model combining

Steinberg and Foley's (1999) findings around protégé's in the military, Kram's (1985)

two-function model, and Blass and Ferris' (2007) notion of political skill is illustrative.

Table 2 outlines this conceptualization.

Table 2

Conceptual Four-Function Mentoring Model for Military Officers

	Career Functions	**Psychosocial Functions**	**Job Coaching Functions**	**Political Skill Functions**
Description	Those aspects of the mentoring relationship that enhance career advancement	Those aspects of the mentoring relationship that enhance one's sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a profession role	Those aspects of the mentoring relationship that assist at the task level	Those aspects of a mentoring relationship that enhance political skill
Examples	• Sponsorship • Exposure and visibility • Coaching • Protection • Challenging assignments	• Role modeling • Acceptance and confirmation • Counseling • Friendship	• Teaching job skills • Support and encouragement • Feedback on job accomplishment	• Situational awareness • Favorable impressions • Adaptation and fit

Benefits of Mentoring

Benefits for Minorities and Women

Offering equal access to mentoring relationships can be an important personnel strategy for organizations. Indeed, an organization should strive to create a supportive environment for all members of the team, especially those underrepresented in the workplace. To achieve this goal, leaders might establish a mentoring program that offers career opportunities, such as coaching and role modeling, and that assists in teaching organizational culture—both strategic goals of an effective mentoring program. Programs that allow for cross-gender relationships and/or mentoring between individuals with similar attitudes have shown success in the business arena (Brown, Zablah, & Bellenger, 2008; Dickson et al., 2014; Kao, Rogers, Spitzmueller, Lin, & Lin, 2014).

Scholars have reported that mentoring is especially valuable for women and minorities as an additional tool for chipping away at the "glass ceiling" (Forret, Turban, & Dougherty, 1996, p. 27) and "can buffer them from discrimination and help them get on the 'fast track' to advancement" (Ragins & Cotton, 1996, p. 37). However, Ragins and Cotton (1996) found that women face greater barriers to forming mentoring relationships than men do. Such barriers include lack of access to potential mentors, unwillingness of individuals to mentor them, disapproval of the mentoring relationship by supervisors and co-workers, and fears that the initiation of a mentoring relationship might be misconstrued as sexual in nature.

For minorities, a mentorship could improve their slower rate of advancement (brought on by repeatedly having to exceed performance standards and expectations) by helping them to get on the fast track (Thomas & Gabarro, 1999). In their study of Black

managers with an MBA, Brown, Zablah, and Bellenger (2008) found that attitudinal similarity was a more critical factor than demographic similarity in enhancing mentoring-driven affective commitment among Black managers. The quality of the mentoring relationship is also important. For example, McDonald and Westphal (2013), in examining the underrepresentation of minorities and women on corporate boards, found that "lower levels of mentoring from the incumbent director result in women and racial minority first-time directors receiving relatively fewer appointments to other boards" (p. 1169).

Though mentoring relationships for minorities and women for career development are often advocated, the practice occurs with far less regularity. Organizational leaders, however, can use research to assist in improving their mentoring programs' success. Such research has demonstrated that careful attention to mentor-protégé matching and the use of training have yielded positive results for organizations. For instance, it has been shown that a stronger relationship, in terms of both career and psychosocial functions, was evident when both the protégé and the mentor were male. The mentoring relationship also produced stronger career development outcomes when the mentor was male and the protégé was a non-Caucasian (Dickson et al., 2014). Leaders also must create organizational environments that are conducive to workplace mentoring—that is, environments that embrace learning, allow mentors and protégés ample time to interact, and support cross-race and cross-gender matching.

It is important to focus on minorities and women in the military, as their rise to the senior ranks has not been as rapid as their White male counterparts. In Thomas and Gabarro's (1999) study of three civilian companies, the single most robust pattern was

found in the movement of minority executives, regardless of their ethnic group—a movement characterized by "punctuated equilibrium." Minority executives move at a significantly slower rate in their ascent to middle management (Thomas & Gabarro, 1999). In addition, in studying the effects of race and gender on advancement in the workplace for women, Bell and Nkomo (2001) determined that one barrier was the inability to access informal networks within organizations. They found that very few of the African-American women managers had mentors and those whose bosses did challenge them in their careers did not provide psychosocial support. Bell and Nkomo also noted that oftentimes women were excluded from informal networks, an observation corroborated by Blass, Brouer, Perrewe', and Ferris's (2007) research around political skill deficiency, which showed that gender and race mediated political understanding for women and minorities. Aponte (2006), in her study of the effects of mentoring on Hispanic Army nurses' career advancement and retention, learned that Hispanic nurses left the Army because of "lack of trust and acceptance, lack of challenging assignments, discrimination due to accent or/and being bilingual, and marginalization by leaders in positions of power" (abstract). Thus, sea service leaders should develop an understanding of the reasons for such disengagement, and should address them, with a goal of increasing the retention of minorities and women commissioned officers.

Benefits for the Protégé

Much of the current literature confirms that protégés who have mentors benefit in the form of positive career outcomes (Allen, 2007; Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007; Budd, 2007; Dickson et al., 2014; Dougherty & Dreher, 2007; Hamlin & Sage, 2011; Hu, Wang, Sun, & Chen, 2008; Kammeyer-Muller & Judge, 2008). Reporting on a study of

top executives, Roche (1979) summarized the findings as follows: "Executives who have had a mentor earn more money at a younger age, are better educated, are more likely to follow a career plan, and, in turn, sponsor more protégés than executives who have not had a mentor" (pp. 14-15). More importantly, proactive protégés, those who take initiative, are more likely to receive the career and psychosocial support provided through the mentoring relationship (Ghosh, 2014, p. 376; Wanberg, Kammeyer-Mueller, & Marchese, 2006).

The effects of mentoring on protégés' behavioral attitudes have been shown to be positive as well. In a multidisciplinary meta-analysis comparing mentored and non-mentored individuals among youth, academics, and those in the workplace, results demonstrated that mentoring was related significantly to favorable behavioral, attitudinal, health-related, interpersonal, motivational, and career outcomes (Eby et al., 2008). In sum, being a protégé offers advantages in career development that are not always present for those individuals without mentors.

Benefits for the Mentor

A mentor who exhibits transformational leadership provides both career and psychosocial support to his or her protégé (Ghosh, 2014), and mentors who initiate the mentoring process oftentimes impart greater career benefits to their protégés (Scandura & Williams, 2001). A mentor will offer career advice, role modeling, and counseling; in order to accomplish these aspects of mentoring, the mentor needs to communicate well and be able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of his or her protégé as a way of providing appropriate assignments. Mentors also need to know that management supports mentoring (Eby, Lockwood, & Butts, 2006).

Given these expectations, what are the benefits of the mentoring relationship for the mentor? Some benefits include a sense of fulfillment in passing along wisdom to others, feeling better about oneself, and having one's reputation enhanced by a good protégé (Ragins & Scandura, 1999). Ghosh and Reio (2013) found that in contrast to non-mentors, mentors were more satisfied with their jobs and felt more committed to the organization. Ghosh and Reio's research established that mentoring is "reciprocal, collaborative, and not simply beneficial for the protégé" (p. 106). Another benefit for the mentor is that a mentoring relationship can buffer the negative consequences associated with job plateauing such as job satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intentions. Having mentoring experience and providing more career and psychosocial mentoring was associated with less job-content plateauing. In other words, mentoring others may help prevent plateauing from occurring in the first place (Allen, 2007).

Research has also measured the costs of mentoring for the mentor, such as "mentorship being more trouble than its worth, having a dysfunctional relationship, views by the organization of nepotism, and protégé reflects negatively on the mentor" (Ragins & Scandura, 1999, p. 498). Mentors without mentoring experience may lack a "realistic preview" of the relationship and, as a consequence, may overestimate the cost and underestimate the benefits of being a mentor (Ragins & Scandura, 1999, p. 504).

Benefits for the Organization

As noted in the previous two sections, mentoring is beneficial to both the mentor and the protégé, and the literature evidences that mentoring is beneficial to the organization as well. As a result, businesses and the military have begun creating formal or semi-formal mentoring programs to capitalize on the successes reported in the

mentoring literature. For example, Johnson and Andersen (2010) noted that "in the last three years alone, formal mentoring programs and online e-mentoring matching services have proliferated within the armed forces" (p. 113). Mentoring, however, does not occur in a vacuum; when creating a formal mentoring program, organizations must first foster a culture that encourages quality mentoring relationships. Organizations can potentially attract new college hires by offering formal mentoring programs (Allen & O'Brien, 2006) and reduce turnover intentions as employees experience increasing levels of perceived organizational and supervisory support, and job fit (Dawley & Andrews, 2010).

To ensure robust outcomes for formal mentoring programs, Baugh and Fagenson-Eland (2007) suggested that

> organizational practices and program features need to be identified that facilitate the ability of formal mentoring relationships to provide benefits equivalent to those of informal relationships, as well as conditions that allow organizations to capitalize on any advantages unique to formal relationship. (p. 250)

Studies have also provided solutions to improving the chances of a positive experience for mentoring pairs. Organizations should monitor mentors' lack of attention and distancing from the protégé, and also watch for manipulative behavior on the part of protégés. Leaders can accomplish this by providing training for mentors and protégés, matching mentors and protégés who are not separated by more than a few grade levels, and offering organizational support from the top (Baranik, Roling, & Eby, 2010; Dawley & Andrews, 2010; Fagenson-Eland, Baugh, & Lankau, 2005; Ghosh, Dierkes, & Falletta, 2011; Jones, 2012).

The benefits of mentoring are many, but not all mentoring is created equal, and researchers have raised questions about the quality of mentoring experiences. Some scholars argue, for instance, that only sponsorship involves advocacy for advancement and that racial minorities and women who advance the farthest have a network of mentors and corporate sponsors to encourage their professional development (Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010; Thomas, 2001).

Table 3

Mentoring Empirical Studies: Business

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
Kao, Rogers, Spitzmueller, M. Lin, & C. Lin, 2014	• Effects of mentor's gender and supervisory status on resilience in mentoring relationships. • How to effectively pair mentors and protégés in order to optimize employee well-being. • Investigates the moderating roles of the gender composition of the mentoring relationship and supervisory mentoring on this relationship.	• Quantitative • N=209 sales professionals out of 495 (42%) • Insurance company in northern Taiwan • Majority of participants were female (59.8%). • 65.1% of participants indicated that their mentors were female. • Average age of the sample was 33.39 years.	• Psychosocial mentoring was positively related to resilience. • Career mentoring and resilience were more positive in cross-gender mentoring relationships than in same-gender mentoring. • In same-gender and supervisory mentoring relationships, the positive effect of psychosocial mentoring on resilience was stronger compared to cross-gender and non-supervisory mentoring relationships.
Ghosh, 2014	• Antecedents of mentoring support • Meta-analysis of individual, relational, and structural or organizational factors using 3 career functions—career, psychosocial and role modeling	• Meta-analysis • N=39 peer-reviewed articles/studies, 6 dissertations, 1 study from a conference proceeding	• Protégés who take initiative are more likely to receive career + psychosocial support. • Mentors who exhibited transformational leadership provided both career and psychosocial support.
Dickson, Kirkpatrick-	• Untangling protégé self-reports of	• Meta-analysis • N= 61 articles	• Results show that career, psychosocial, and role

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
Husk, Kendall, Longabaugh, Patel, & Scielzo, 2014	mentoring functions • Understanding the relations between various types of protégés-reported mentoring functions—career support, psychosocial, and role modeling	• All from the protégé's perspective only • Moderators: protégé race and gender, mentor gender, context, formality, and duration	modeling were related to outcomes (e.g., promotions, turnover, salary, job and mentorship satisfaction), with role modeling being the strongest predictor. • Positive relationship between Psychosocial and Career Development and outcomes was stronger when both the protégé and the mentor were male than when they were female. • Positive relationship between CD and outcomes was stronger when the mentor was male and the protégé was a non-Caucasian.
Sun, Pan, & Chow, 2014	• Role of supervisor political skill in mentoring: dual motivational perspectives	• Quantitative • N=330; 82.5% subordinate-supervisor dyads from the People's Republic of China • Subordinates were frontline direct service staff. Supervisor-subordinate ratio of 1:2	• Supervisor political skill moderates the direct effect of supervisory mentoring on employee promotion ability. • The direct and indirect effects of supervisory mentoring are stronger when supervisors demonstrate a higher level of political skill.
McDonald & Westphal, 2013	• Low mentoring of women and minority first-time board directors and its negative effects on appointments to additional boards. • Explains the persistent underrepresentation of women and minorities among those who are seen as members of the "corporate elite" because they hold multiple corporate board seats.	• Quantitative • N-1302; 42% (3079 sent) • Qualitative N=22 corporate board directors: pre-test of the survey • Part of a larger study on corporate leadership	• The racial minority status of first-time directors reduces the number of additional board appointments received by reducing the amount of participation-process mentoring received. Fewer appointments to other boards of large corporations. The magnitude of this effect is notable. • The negative effect of female status on the level of participation-process mentoring received by a first-time director is significantly weaker (i.e., less negative) when there is a woman incumbent director on the board.

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
			• There is also a positive and significant interaction between the racial minority status of first-time directors and the presence of an incumbent who is a racial minority.
Ghosh & Reio, Jr., 2013	• Career benefits associated with mentoring for mentors • What factors contribute to the perception of learning?	• Meta-analysis • N = 18 studies • 3 career functions: career, psychosocial, and role modeling	• Mentors are more satisfied with their jobs and committed to the organization compared to those who do not mentor. • Mentoring is reciprocal and collaborative and not simply beneficial for protégé. • Providing psychosocial mentoring correlates with organizational commitment. • Providing role modeling is linked to increased job performance. • Turnover intent was not linked significantly to either of 3 functions.
Jones, 2012	• An analysis of learning outcomes within formal mentoring relationships • What learning happens and what are the factors that contribute to this learning in a formal mentoring relationship?	• Qualitative-pilot learning in an organizational context • N=6 dyads started, 5 dyads finished • 17 months long • Non-clinical staff members in postgraduate school • Healthcare in the UK	• Top management support of formal mentoring programs was linked to success and reduced frustration, but it did not appear to hinder accomplishing mentoring. • Impact of moderating factors: time constraints, volume of work, organizational changes; did not appear to affect learning or the ability to meet.
Hamlin & Sage, 2011	• Behavioral criteria of perceived mentoring effectiveness • What goes on inside the dyadic relationship?	• Qualitative/empirical • N= 20 • Critical incidents = 187 • Large New Zealand public sector organization	• Protégé: 11 positive and 4 negative behaviors contributing mentoring experiences. • Mentors: 9 positive and 3 negative behaviors.
Ghosh, Dierkes, & Falletta, 2011	Incivility spiral in mentoring relationships: Reconceptualizing negative mentoring as deviant workplace behavior	• Quantitative, N= 81; qualitative, N=25 • Demographically, the qualitative and quantitative survey respondents mirrored each other	• Mentor's distancing (lack of mentor's attention to protégé's career development) and manipulative behavior were related to the protégé instigating incivility

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
			against mentors. • Recommendations: (1) look at organizational position of the mentor, (2) training for mentors.
Ortiz-Walters, Eddleston, & Simione, 2010	• Satisfaction with mentoring relationships: Does gender identity matter? • To examine the effects of gender identity, feminine or masculine, on protégé's satisfaction with the performance of a mentor relationship; satisfaction as a mentoring outcome	• Quantitative • N= 456 managers and/or professionals from over 10 industries; 53% response rate • N= 456 managers were identified by in-career MBA students at large universities in the East (students earned extra course credit), N=86, 52% response (86 out of 166)	• Masculine protégés who strongly identified with their career roles reported being more satisfied with mentors who provided career development support. • Conversely, feminine protégés, who measured career success using socio-emotional-based criteria, reported being more satisfied with mentors who provided psychosocial support. • Limitations: Sample consisted of managers from a variety of male-dominated occupations. In addition, since the data were self-reported on a single survey, common method bias may also have been an issue.
Dawley, Andrews, & Bucklew, 2010	Enhancing the ties that bind: Mentoring as a moderator	• N = 610 employees split among 3 separate organizations	• Results suggest that mentoring becomes more effective in reducing turnover intentions as employees experience increasing levels of perceived organizational support, supervisor support, and job fit.
Baranik, Roling, & Eby, 2010	Why does mentoring work? The role of perceived organizational support	• N = 733 / 910 participants were initially recruited to participate in a larger nationwide study • 27 community treatment programs (CTPs) across the U.S. • 80% response rate; most counselors were Caucasian (60%) and female (64%).	• Perceived organizational support partly mediated the relationship between specific types of mentoring support and job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. Specifically, sponsorship, exposure, and visibility, and role modeling appear to be related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment through perceived organizational support.

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
			• Perceived organizational support did not appear to mediate the relationship between other specific forms of mentoring support and job satisfaction and organizational commitment.
Brown, Zablah, & Bellenger, 2008	• The role of mentoring in promoting organizational commitment among Black managers: An evaluation of the indirect effects of racial similarity and shared racial perspectives • Explored the mediated effects and attitudinal similarity of the affective commitment of Black managers	• Quantitative • N = 139 members of the National Black MBA Association (NBMBAA)	• The results suggest that attitudinal similarity is a more critical factor than demographic similarity in enhancing mentoring-driven affective commitment among Black managers. • Results revealed that in certain circumstances demographic similarity can actually have an adverse impact on the career benefits realized from mentoring relationships
Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008	A quantitative review of mentoring research: Test of a model	• Meta-analysis of mentoring research • N = 120 unique studies	• Mentoring and career outcomes were positive, including promotions, salary, job satisfaction, and career satisfaction. • The effects of mentoring on career outcomes ranged from moderate to weak. • Although mentoring is not useless to career success, it is not as important as the main effects of other influences on career success such as ability and personality human capital, networks, or even gender and race.
Blass, Brouer, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2007	• Politics understanding and networking ability as a function of mentoring: The roles of gender and race	• Quantitative • N = 139; 15% response rate • Business school graduates in U.S.	• A test of the "political skill deficiency" hypothesis, • Strong support that politics understanding mediated the relationship between mentoring and networking ability for men and Caucasians but not women and minorities

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
Eby, Lockwood, & Butts, 2006	Perceived support for mentoring: A multiple perspectives approach	• Quantitative • N = 458; 22% response rate • A survey was sent to 2,250 alumni of a large southeastern university who graduated in 1995. This graduation date was selected in an effort to capture individuals in their early career, since those in this career stage are most likely to be protégés • The majority (63%) of respondents were reporting on current mentoring relationships	• Study 1: Perceived management support for mentoring by protégé was positively related to career-related and psychosocial support; perceived mentor accountability for mentoring was negatively related to mentoring problems • Study 2: Mentors' perceptions of management support for mentoring were positively related to their belief that mentoring relationships were mutually beneficial. However, consistent with theories of self-determination, as mentors' perceptions of their own accountability in the relationship increased, their willingness to mentor in the future decreased.
Wanberg, Kammeyer-Mueller, Marchese, 2006	• Mentor and protégé predictors and outcomes of mentoring in a formal mentoring program Examined the predictors and outcomes of a 12-month formal mentoring program.	• Quantitative • N = 96 (23% of the original pairs) • Study included data from both mentors and protégés at the program launch, midway through the program, and at program close	• Mentor proactivity was related to more career and psychosocial mentoring. • Protégé's perceptions of similarity to the mentor were related to more psychosocial mentoring. • More mentoring was related to positive protégé and mentor outcomes, including improved protégé career clarity over the duration of the study.
Allen & O'Brien, 2006	Formal mentoring and organizational attraction	• Quantitative • N = 190 undergraduates	• Participants were more attracted to an organization when it was depicted as having a formal mentoring program.
Underhill, 2006	A meta-analytical review of the literature regarding the effectiveness of mentoring programs in corporate settings	• Meta-analysis • 14 studies with 88 different effect sizes and 13 career outcomes	• Informal mentoring provided a larger and more significant effect on career outcomes than formal mentoring. • The overall mean effect size of mentoring produced a larger and more significant effect on career outcomes than formal mentoring.

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
			• Limitation: The study only analyzed articles that reported information from both mentored and non-mentored individuals.
Gonza'lez-Figueroa & Young, 2005	Examined ethnic identity and mentoring in Latina professional women	• Quantitative • Survey N = 103; 34% response rate • Latina professional women with professional roles in the areas of business, academia, policy, and politics	• Findings indicated that the women's ethnic identity was consistent with a bicultural profile; some received mentoring and, if given a choice, would prefer to be mentored by someone of similar ethnicity. • Other hypotheses were not supported.
Fagenson-Eland, Baugh, & Lankau, 2005	• A dyadic investigation of the effect of relational demography on perceptions of mentoring activities • Examined the influence of demographic differences on congruence of mentors' and protégé's perception of developmental support and frequency of communication	• Quantitative • N = 27 mentoring dyads from two medium-sized high technology companies • Data collected from both mentors and protégés	• Results indicated significant congruence between mentor and protégé perceptions of developmental mentoring and frequency of communication • Differences between the mentor and protégé on organizational tenure and age reduced congruence of perceptions, whereas differences with respect to gender and education did not. • Limitations: Small sample size limited the statistical power of the analysis, and the inclusion of high technology companies limited generalizability.

Military Studies on Mentoring

This action research case study focused on the mentoring relationship as a means to improve the career development and advancement of minority commissioned officers in the sea services. A review of the mentoring literature from the past 15 years revealed 12 published studies on mentoring in the military, of which six were doctoral

dissertations. I chose a 15-year timeline to improve the chances of capturing studies that addressed (1) mentoring in the military and (2) mentoring of minorities and women. Two studies (Johnson et al., 1999; Steinberg & Foley, 1999) conducted slightly outside this timeframe (bringing the total to 14) were included because they addressed either the senior officer or minorities and women mentoring experience. The fact that so few studies were discovered suggests that many military studies are not accessible in the widely used research databases. The studies reviewed for the research all document, unequivocally, mentoring activities in the military. Second, they suggest a keen interest in mentoring phenomena among doctoral students. Third, though some of the studies reported on minorities and women, they did not do so to a substantial degree, and only one focused exclusively on racial minorities. Lastly, the studies revealed a concern among researchers about what qualifies as mentoring in a military context. Studies centering exclusively on the Marine Corps or the Coast Guard were not located, nor were studies addressing sea service minority commissioned officers. The studies covered the disciplines of healthcare and education, and also examined the perspectives of part-time and active-duty military officers. Table 4 is a summary of the branches of the armed forces represented by the 14 studies.

Table 4

Service Composition for the Military Studies

Branch of the Armed Forces	Number of Studies
Joint (Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps)	1
Army (includes 1 Army National Guard)	5
Air Force (includes 1 Air National Guard)	4
Navy 1 study on senior retired officers, 2 studies on individuals in the training pipeline for commissioned officers, and 1 study on participants in professional military education (PME)	4
Total Studies	**14**

The participants in the studies were mostly commissioned officers, with six of 14 studies reporting on mentoring activities for only commissioned officers (Aponte, 2006; Johnson et al., 1999; McGuire, 2007; Payne & Huffman, 2005; Prevosto, 2001; Tait, 2004). Four of these six studies focused only on Army officers, while two focused on joint senior officers (McGuire, 2007) and retired Navy Flag officers' mentoring experiences while on active duty (Johnson et al., 1999). Of the four Army commissioned officer studies, two were concerned with Army nurses; one examined mentoring and the career advancement of Hispanic Army nurses (Aponte, 2006), and the other explored the effect of mentoring on Army reserve nurse retention (Prevosto, 2001). Subjects for the other two Army studies included junior commissioned officers (Payne & Huffman, 2005) and part-time commissioned officers in the Army National Guard (Tait, 2004).

Two of the 14 studies focused on commissioned and noncommissioned officers in the Navy (Johnson & Andersen, 2015) and the Army (Steinberg & Foley, 1999). Two other studies (Eberle, 2007; Wells, 2014)—both associated with the Air Force—focused strictly on noncommissioned officers. Additionally, one study centered on mentoring at an active Air Force base, which included participants who were commissioned, noncommissioned, and federal civilian employees (Budd, 2007). See Table 5 for a summary of military participants.

Table 5

Participant Breakdown for Military Studies

Participant Type	Number of Studies
Commissioned	6
Noncommissioned	2
Commissioned and Noncommissioned	2
Commissioned Officer Training Pipeline	2
Commissioned Officers and Civilians	1
Commissioned, Noncommissioned & Civilians	1
Total Studies	**14**

The study of mentoring has concentrated in three major categories: youth, education, and the workplace. The military studies reviewed here encompassed education and workplace issues, but youth mentoring was not applicable. Five studies were conducted in an educational environment, two at professional military education schools (Johnson et al., 2015; McGuire, 2007), which are highly selective and therefore represent the "cream" of the senior ranks for the commissioned and noncommissioned

officer population. Two other studies focused on the prevalence of mentoring at the U.S.

Naval Academy, a premier four-year University that serves as the pipeline for training

commissioned officers (Baker, Hocevar, Johnson, 2003; Johnson, Lall, Holmes, Huwe, &

Nordlund, 2001). The fifth study in an educational environment looked at the mentoring

experiences of military and civilian faculty at the Air Force Academy (Sizer, 2008). The

remaining studies were applicable to the workplace environment, with two conducted in

the healthcare industry. Educational institutions in the military are ideal for capturing

data from e a large number of military personnel who are not distracted by operational

mission accomplishment, and gaining access to participant data for administering surveys

or interviews can be simpler than gaining access to a military database for military

participants in an operational environment.

All of the studies reported on informal mentoring and comprised self-reported

perceptions by the participants of mentoring behaviors rather than observed mentoring

behaviors. Several studies used a mixed-methods approach and produced rich data via

focus groups or one-on-one interviews. In one study that surveyed participants about

formal mentoring, respondents viewed formal matching efforts as somewhat

unsuccessful, at a 2.5 mean rating on a scale of 5. In addition, 3.7% of respondents

indicated that the mentor-mentee match was formed in the context of a formal mentoring

program (Johnson & Andersen, 2015). Similarly, there is evidence in the military

literature that formal mentoring programs do not provide equal access for everyone and

represent favoritism and sponsoring, which many believe undermine the order and

discipline of the military environment. This sentiment was expressed by retired Navy

admirals (Johnson et al., 1999) and in a study of commissioned and noncommissioned Army officers (Steinberg et al., 1999).

The military and business mentoring literature are similar in their lack of significant research that directly examines mentoring in the context of race. As stated earlier, some studies did report on outcomes associated with minority mentoring, though not to a substantial degree. The only published study found as part of this literature review that focused solely on minority mentoring outcomes was Aponte's (2006) doctoral research, which examined mentoring activities that influence career advancement for Hispanic nurses. The research sample size (N = 60) represented 47% of the total population of U.S. Army Hispanic nurses serving on active duty. Forty-one participants, or 68.3%, reported having no mentor. The research found that lack of trust, lack of challenging jobs, discrimination due to having an accent or being bilingual, and marginalization by leaders in positions of power were all reasons these active duty nurses cited for leaving the Army. Aponte also reported no significant association between mentored and non-mentored participants with regard to work effectiveness, career success, career development, and retention and promotion.

Another study of nurses in the Army Reserves reported a prevalence of mentoring at 42% (Prevosto, 2001). This study did not report demographics. Though the racial composition is not known, Thomas (2001) reported, "people of color who advance the furthest have a network of mentors and corporate sponsors to encourage their professional development" (p. 98). In addition, an Army National Guard study of commissioned officers reported a lack of diverse role models affecting the opportunities for and dimensions of mentoring for minority officers (Tate, 2004). In a large Army

study (8,500 mailed surveys with a 57% response rate) of senior commissioned and noncommissioned officers, Steinberg and Foley (1999) noted, "There was not a significant difference in the mentoring functions that majority and minority members received. While race was not a trigger for differential receipt of functions, rank of the protégé was an important predictor" (p. 365)."

Steinberg and Foley's (1999) research also reported on mentor behaviors in mentoring relationships. In focus group discussions, the researchers observed:

> When the mentor was asked to describe the mentoring they provided they described their helping and coaching as a function of their job as mentoring. However, when the same participants described the behavior of their mentor they often referred to a much more specific, one-on-one relationship involving personalized development, individual guidance, etc. They tended to describe a different behavior than what they had given in their own mentoring evolutions as mentors (p. 375).

Likewise, Budd (2007), in his study of mentors at an Air Force Base, stated, "The danger of informal mentoring programs is that mentoring is happening only in the minds of the mentors, not in their behaviors with their mentee" (p. 21).

With regard to organizational support, two Air Force studies—one on enlisted personnel and one on faculty, military, and civilian personnel at the Air Force Academy—reported low response rates but found there was not a statistically significant correlation between perceived organizational culture and perceived management support for mentoring. The latter study found that faculty members with mentors did have higher levels of job satisfaction than faculty members without mentors. A Navy study of

mentored midshipmen showed that they were significantly more satisfied with the Naval

Academy than non-mentored midshipmen, that they viewed mentorship as important, and

that they were more active mentors themselves (Baker, Hocevar, & Johnson, 2003). In

response to such findings, military leaders are showing support for mentoring by

establishing websites and publishing guidelines to move the military from infrequent,

random, and spontaneous mentoring relationships to more frequent, systematic, and

planned mentoring throughout the services. As stated by Johnson et al. (2015),

organizations that create some structure for facilitating mentor-protégée matches have

more junior members of the community getting mentored (Johnson & Andersen, 2015).

Table 6

Mentoring Empirical Studies: Military

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
Johnson & Andersen, 2015	• Mentoring in the U.S. Navy • The Navy Leader Development Strategy 2014	• Quantitative • Focus group • N = 149; 12 women • 55 (37%) pay grades 04/06; 94 (63%) pay grades E-8 or E-9 • Participants attended different senior professional development courses at the Naval War College • 110 White, 19 Black, 10 Hispanic, 5 Native American/Pacific Islanders	• Formal matching efforts tended to be viewed as somewhat unsuccessful (2.5 mean rating out of 5) • 91% had one significant mentor with the average being 3.5 important mentors • 95% of mentors were men; 93% had been senior naval officers, and 81% had been in participants' CoC; 55% of officers said their mentors were their commanding officer
Wells, 2014	• A correlation study of organizational culture and management support for mentoring among Air Force enlisted personnel • Evaluated the relationship between organizational culture	• Quantitative • Doctoral dissertation • 60 Air Force noncommissioned officers (enlisted personnel)	• No statistically significant correlation between perceived organizational culture and perceived management support for mentoring. • Limitation: Small response rate may have

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
	and the quality of management support for mentoring		attributed to the study outcome. • Recommendation: Expand the study to Air Force officers and government civilians.
Sizer, 2008	• The effects of mentoring on job satisfaction among military academicians • Examined faculty members' perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship.	• Quantitative survey • Doctoral dissertation • 614 out of 176 responded (29%) • Military and civilian faculty at the Air Force Academy	• Faculty members with mentors had higher levels of job satisfaction than faculty members without mentors. • Protégés' perceptions of the effect of mentoring relationship on job satisfaction did not reveal significant results.
Budd, 2007	• Mentoring in the Air Force • Discusses reaction of seniors officers to mentoring.	• Surveys and interviews conducted with commissioned and noncommissioned officers, and civilians at Kirtland AFB.	• Time to mentor is an issue • Mentoring should be formal when there are no documented performance outcomes demonstrating that mentoring is happening and is happening in an effective manner. • The danger of informal mentoring programs is that mentoring is happening only in the minds of the mentors, not in their behaviors with their mentees.
McGuire, 2007	• Joint perspective on mentoring by senior military officers (SMOs) in Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines • Examined the prevalence and contribution of mentoring relationships across the 4 services to SMOs (2005-06)	• Quantitative • Doctoral dissertation • 305 SMOs (pay grades 05 and 06) • Questionnaire sent to military officers at International College of the Armed Forces and National Defense University	• High prevalence of mentoring in all 4 services • Females had significantly more cross-gender mentoring relationships • For SMOs, 91% mentors, 87% protégés • 16 different mentoring functions • Semi-formal mentoring relationships provided more career-related mentoring and psychosocial than informal • SMOs with supervisors as their mentors received significantly more career

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
			related functions than SMOs mentored by non-supervisors
Eberle, 2007	• Online mentoring and the baby boomers' perspective • Air National Guard (ANG)	• Qualitative • Doctoral dissertation • Explored perceptions of prospective mentors, enlisted baby boomer members of an ANG unit in a New England state, and their willingness to participate in online mentoring	• Some in-person contact was necessary within an online mentoring program.
Aponte, 2006	• Mentoring: Career advancement for Hispanic Army nurses • Purpose was to determine and describe which behaviors or mentoring activities influenced career advancement, promotion, and retention among the officers	• Quantitative, interviews • Doctoral dissertation • N = 60 Hispanic participants • 41 (68.3%) indicated having no mentor • 19 (31.7%) currently had a mentor • 10 of the 60 were interviewed	• No significant association between mentored and non-mentored participants with regard to work effectiveness, career success, career development, retention, and promotion • Barriers causing participants to leave the Army: lack of trust and acceptance, challenging assignments, discrimination due to accent or being bilingual, and marginalization by leaders in positions of power
Payne & Huffman, 2005	• Longitudinal examination of the influence of mentoring on organizational commitment and turnover • Primary purpose was to identify factors that influence officers' career decisions and to assess the implications of such factors on personnel policy	• N = 1,334 U.S. Army officers responding to two surveys over a two-year period • Overall response rates were 63% (time 1; 1988) and 51% (time 2; 1989) • Majority of respondents were male (70%) and Caucasian (83%)	• Mentoring was positively related to affective commitment and continuance commitment, and negatively related to "turnover behavior." • Relationship with affective commitment was moderated by the conditions of mentorship (supervisory vs. nonsupervisory) but not by the type of mentoring support provided (career-related vs. psychosocial). • Affective commitment partially mediated the negative relationship between mentoring and actual turnover behavior 10 years later.

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
Tait, 2004	Purpose: To understand officers' beliefs and behaviors while serving as mentors	• Qualitative • Doctoral dissertation • Critical incident interviews • 9 ANG commissioned officer mentors	• Officers provided mentoring in ways similar to managers and leaders within the civilian environment • Context of the National Guard influences the pace and nature of mentoring • Lack of diverse role models impacts the opportunities for and dimensions of mentoring minority officers
Baker, Hocevar, & Johnson, 2003	Mentoring at the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA)	Quantitative survey of 568 USNA midshipmen	• 45% of midshipmen were mentored • 63% of women and 42% of men had mentors • Mentored midshipmen were significantly more satisfied with USNA, viewed mentorship as important, and were more active mentors
Johnson, Lall, Holmes, Howe, & Nordlund, 2001	• Mentoring experiences among Navy personnel • Mentoring prevalence among midshipmen	• Quantitative survey • 932 out of 576 third-year midshipmen • Minorities in sample reflected rate of third-year population at USNA	• 12 career functions 3 psychosocial functions • 40% experienced a mentor relationship. • 87% had a male mentor, and most were senior military personnel. • 74% male and 26% female even though only 15% of the sample reported having a mentor. • Length on the relationship was several years; mutually initiated
Prevosto, 2001	Effect of mentored relationships on satisfaction and intent to stay among company-grade officers in the USA Reserve Nurse Corps	• Quantitative survey • 300 nurses; 100 each in the position of Troop Program Unit, Individual Military Augmentee, or Individual Ready Reserve • Survey instrument was a combination of 3 previously used surveys	• 171 participants sent/returned the survey. • 72/171 reported a mentoring relationship; 84 also wrote comments. • Mentored group reported more satisfaction than the non-mentored group. • Mentored group reported more intent to stay than non-mentored group. • Study supports mentoring as a useful tool.

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
Johnson, Huwe, Fallow, Lall, Holmes, & Hall, 1999	• Does mentoring foster success? • To determine if the Navy's most successful officers, those who made rear admiral and above, benefited from mentors earlier in their career.	• Quantitative • Retired Navy Flag officers 1350/691 • Male: 99.4% and 4 women. • 96% Caucasian and Naval Academy Graduates • 463 mentored; 228 not mentored	• Mentor behaviors: offered acceptance and encouragement, enhanced career development. • Younger admirals were more likely to have been mentored than older admirals. • A few admirals interpreted mentoring as favoritism. • Some admirals did not have a mentor but wished they had.
Steinberg & Foley, 1999	• Mentoring in the U.S. Army • Was mentoring occurring/prevalent in the Army or was it just "talk"? • Do women and minorities have different mentoring experiences?	• Quantitative • Survey instrument added two items that were from pretesting, and all questions were tailored to the Army • 8,500 participants (57% response rate); commissioned and senior noncommissioned officers; 112 focus group participants • 81% White and 19% Black; no other races used due to low representation	• Neither minorities nor women were disadvantaged in the Army with regard to mentoring. • Differences occurred as a function of rank and organizational unit of those who were mentored. • Three dimensions of mentoring behaviors include personal development, job coaching, and career sponsoring. • Interviews revealed that what mentors did in mentoring evolutions they did not consider those same functions as mentoring when asked what mentoring functions were provided to them.

Mentoring Summary

In summary, the existing business and academic mentoring literature has examined the functions and outcomes of mentoring for the protégé, mentor, and organization. The evidence supports a number of benefits to the protégé and mentor as

compared to those not engaged in mentoring relationships, such as reduced turnover intentions, increased job and career satisfaction, higher salaries, and greater support for organizations that embrace mentoring. Moreover, previous scholarly research has debated the value of types of mentoring relationships (i.e., formal or informal), but more recent studies have focused on individual development within peer mentoring relationships and within developmental networks.

Empirical studies have also discussed the quality of mentoring received in cross-gender or same-gender mentoring relationships. For instance, in one study, mentoring relationships with White males appeared to produce benefits, but the quality of those relationships was lower for female protégés. Another study addressed the inability of women to access informal networks within organizations. Previous research has also suggested that attitudinal similarity in emotional commitment is a more critical factor than demographic similarity and that in certain circumstances demographic similarity can actually have an adverse impact on the career benefits among Black managers in mentoring relationships.

The vast majority of empirical studies on mentoring in the military are doctoral dissertations; very few academic scholars have researched or written about mentoring in this context. The reasons for this are unclear, but it is possible that large studies have been completed by research institutes within the military services but have not been released to the public. Exceptions include one study completed in 1999 by the Army Research Institute and reported on by Steinberg and Foley (1999), and a report on diversity in the military completed by the RAND Corporation (Lim et al., 2008) for DoD. The latter study served as the stimulus for the executive order forming the MLDC. The

literature review did not uncover any studies that had been completed by the Marine Corps or the Coast Guard, two of the three military services comprising this study.

Lastly, I noted the importance of focusing military mentoring research on racial minorities and women since their rise to the senior ranks has not been as rapid as that of their White male counterparts. For this reason, it is crucial to determine which types of mentoring relationships are more effective in improving rates of advancement among these populations.

The Process of Career Development

Rapid technological change and globalization have intensified the decoupling of individual careers from organizations, putting more emphasis on individuals for their own career development and creating an even greater need for mentoring (Baugh & Sullivan, 2005). As an individual enters into adulthood, engagement in career development activities often becomes more self-directed. Company-provided career development programs replace the high school career counselor and the university career service center. Hansen (1976), in her well-constructed argument for refocusing career education from a world or work view to a person-based perspective, stated that career development "is self-development—using the world of work as a vehicle for self-clarification since work is one major way in which individuals interact with their environment" (p. 44). The *2013-2014 Policy and Procedures Manual* of the National Career Development Association (2013) defines career development as "a continuous life process through which individuals explore activities, make decisions, and assume a variety of roles" (p. 6). Similarly, this study focusing on the commissioned officer's career development upon entrance into the military perceives career development as the officer's self-

development in making responsible decisions affecting his or her career. The officer

does this by exploring a many types of information and activities that contribute to well-

thought-out career decisions.

Commissioned Officer Career Development in the Sea Services

Officers in the sea services receive career development information via various

communications methods, with their career assignment officer providing the majority of

this information. The latter are job-specific assignment officers, or "communities," as

they are designated in the military. These communities manage websites containing

general and specific information about how to manage one's career. Collectively, this

guidance serves as a reminder to officers that they are responsible for their career and

should ensure that all information in their personnel record is up to date.

Each of the sea services also has an umbrella human resources website that

provides officer personnel and career information. The website for the Coast Guard, for

example, is the Human Resource Directorate, labeled the Coast Guard Career Central.

This website, coupled with the 1998 Coast Guard *Career Development Guide* (second

edition), provides officers with in-depth information regarding leadership, career paths,

assignments, professional development, and other career development-related topics.

Prepared by the Human Resource Directorate's Office of Leadership and Professional

Development, this one-source guidebook assists officers in making informed career

choices and serves as a tool for supervisors in counseling junior officers. It also provides

information about the officer personnel system and career planning in general, including

the value of various types of key job assignments, like executive and commanding

officer. The guide emphasizes that:

A successful career does not just happen: Officers must plan for future success

and satisfaction. Although there is no magic formula for success, understanding

the promotion system, postgraduate education, assignments, and other topics in

this guidebook can give an officer a strong start. Thus, officers are encouraged to

incorporate this information into their planning for a Coast Guard career (*The*

Coast Guard Officer Career Development Guidebook, 1998, p. 3).

 Similarly, naval officers can find a variety of career development services and

information on their Navy Personnel Command website. Officers can gain career insight

from officer promotion boards and assignments, and related career information such as

how to access one's online personnel record. There are also official Navy instructions,

notices, and messages that establish policies on various career-related subjects. In

addition to online resources, officers periodically have the opportunity to visit with career

development and assignment officers when they come to areas where the Navy

commands are concentrated to talk in person with the personnel responsible for their

assignments, giving them an opportunity to gain specific community knowledge. One

Navy community, for instance, sponsored a series of Junior Officer Training Symposia

(JOTS). Begun in 2008, the symposia were held at major Navy concentration areas and

provided a venue for junior officers (O-1 to O-4) in this community to discuss current

career development issues, expectations, opportunities, and challenges in a peer setting.

An officer in attendance at the symposia said, "I wish we had the JOTS program 20 years

ago. Young officers today have a better opportunity to learn more about multi-career

avenues and obtain exposure to senior officers. Twenty years ago you didn't have those

options" (Christmann, 2009, p. 1). As another officer in this community indicated, junior

officers must not only plan their careers but also seek out mentors for advice and counsel (Christmann, 2009). I was unable to verify that the symposia were currently in place.

Like the Coast Guard and Navy, the Marine Corps offers a career-related website to its personnel. Any Marine can access the Manpower & Reserve Affairs (M&RA) website; however, more specific and detailed information is only available to Marines with a common access card (CAC). The M&RA site provides information on promotions, special education programs, special assignments, career mapping, and career counseling, among other categories. These career development and assignment offices also make visits to Marnie concentration areas, providing briefs on significant issues and responding to the concerns of Marine officers.

As these examples demonstrate, career development information is available to the commissioned officer. The sea service websites are continuously updated, thereby providing the most current career information in a timely manner. The question for junior officers becomes when and how to use this information, which can be overwhelming to the newly commissioned officer who is learning a new job and, very likely, a new culture. Therefore, the cognitive information processing (CIP) model of readiness for career decision making informed this research (Peterson et al., 1991). Specifically, the mentoring pairs in the study were encouraged to use the CIP model as they made decisions affecting their careers, specifically the careers of the junior officers. The learning modules for leadership and career development written by the action research team members were also based on the CIP model when appropriate. The next section details CIP theory as well as the career development theories that support each aspect of the CIP model.

Cognitive Information Processing Theory

Peterson, Sampson, and Reardon's (1991) CIP theory is a cognitive approach to career decision making and problem solving that offers a systematic process for making career decisions. Cognitive information processing theory was appropriate for this action research case study because the focus was on the protégé (i.e., the junior officer) in decision-making and problem-solving skills related to his or her career. As the junior officer's skills are nurtured through mentoring, the desired outcome is sound career guidance, leading to sound career decisions by the junior officer. Using the CIP model, the ART connected the mentoring process of advising to the practice of career guidance in a systematic way, allowing the mentor to better guide the protégé.

The Cognitive Information Processing Model

The CIP model is a tri-level pyramid of information processing domains (see Figure 2). The foundation of the pyramid consists of the knowledge domain, which in turn comprises two subdomains: self-knowledge and occupational knowledge. Information stored in the knowledge domain combines in the information-processing and decision-skills domain—the second level of the pyramid—to aid in decision making. These decision skills include communication, analysis, synthesis, valuing, and execution (CASVE). At the top of the pyramid sits the executive processing domain, representing metacognitive skills. This is where thinking about one's reasoning and intellectual abilities occurs. This section discusses each domain and the corresponding career development theory that supports it. In addition, an example of how the CASVE process was used by sea service commissioned junior officers is included.

Within the knowledge domain of the CIP pyramid—the foundational layer of the model—resides self-knowledge (i.e., learning about and understanding oneself), including one's personal experiences and perceptions of one's interests, abilities, and values. Occupational knowledge, the other subdomain, represents one's knowledge about the world of work and its educational and training requirements. According to the CIP model, individuals develop a way of knowing about themselves that helps draw relationships between one's own characteristics and those required by occupations (Peterson et al., 1991). Peterson et al. (1991) used Holland's typological theory of career choices and development in creating these subdomains. Holland's basic premise is that when one possesses information about an individual, one can deduce much more about appropriate categories for that individual. A criticism of Holland's theory is that some have used it to determine "what I should be" instead of allowing it to promote responsible, independent, career problem solving and decision-making.
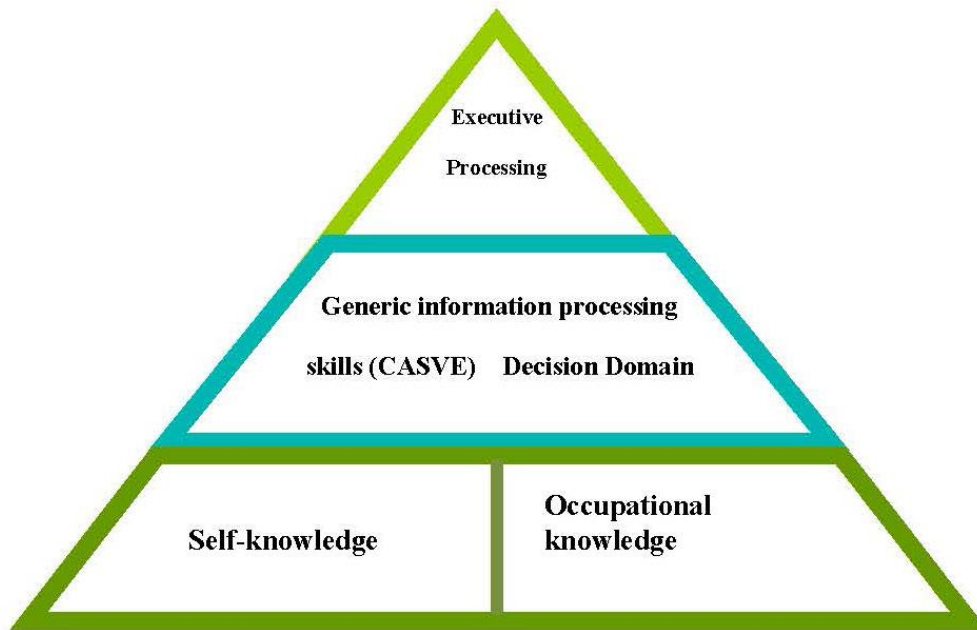
Figure 2. Cognitive information processing pyramid. Adapted from *Career Development and Services: A Cognitive Approach*, by G. W. Peterson, J. P. Sampson, and R. C. Reardon, 1991, p. 28. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.

The decision-making skills domain is composed of five information-processing skills. This domain is important because it is where career problem solving is accomplished. The individual perceives a gap in knowledge, determines options available, compares and contrasts the similarities and differences among those options, and then makes and executes a choice. This is referred to as the CASVE cycle of problem solving. Table 7 offers examples of the CASVE cycle in the career decision-making process for a junior officer.

Table 7

CASVE Cycle of Decision Making for Junior Officers

Decision-Making Skill	Description Of Action	Example
COMMUNICATION	Identifying a need	The Junior officer needs to be in a key enhancing job a minimum of 9 months before the next promotion board meets.
ANALYSIS	Framing need/problem in current situation	Two years before the promotion board, the officer determines what is needed to secure a key enhancing job (i.e., a division head job).
		Using community billets listings, mentor(s), and networking, the officer determines jobs available that meet his/her rotation date, qualifications, and desired location.
SYNTHESIS	Creating likely alternatives/courses of action	Discusses available jobs with mentor(s) then engages with community assignment officer.
		Requests assignment officer to pencil him/her in for job of his/her choice;
		or
		Rethinks job(s) based on discussions with assignment officer. Uses jobs provided by assignment officer to engage in another round of discussions with mentor(s) and boss.
VALUING	Prioritizing alternatives based on likelihood of success/failure.	The officer prioritizes jobs based on boss and mentor(s) input: a division officer job with 15 subordinates vs. a direct report to a very senior officer but only two subordinates.
EXECUTION	Implementing strategy	Protégé re-engages with assignment officer and negotiates for the chosen job emphasizing protégé's qualifications and availability for the job.

The Gelatt (1962, 1989) model mirrors the CASVE process, and it provides the basis for the second level of the pyramid. In this second level, the individual defines the purpose of the decision, gathers data from various sources, such as aptitude tests, engages in prediction systems by formulating plausible alternatives, examines the desirability of

each alternative, selects a course of action, and evaluates the outcome according to success criteria.

In the executive processing domain—the pinnacle of the pyramid—the individual makes effective use of the information obtained; he or she initiates, coordinates, and monitors the storage and retrieval of information. Three metacognition skills are especially pertinent to the use of information in career problem solving and decision making: self-talk, self-awareness, and control and monitoring (Peterson et al., 1991). Continuing with the example in Table 7, in the executive processing stage the junior officer becomes aware of his or her qualification level for a job. The junior officer also potentially becomes aware of what will not be an acceptable career-enhancing job. The situation is continuously monitored until the officer receives official assignment papers for the job because opportunities change with time. Additionally, in this domain, individual decision making accounts for the number of roles one plays and the growth and development of those roles. Super's (Super & Bacharach, 1957, as cited in Peterson et al., 1991) developmental self-concept theory speaks to the many roles an individual plays. Peterson et al. (1991) maintained that "development through Super's life stages and sub stages can be guided by the maturing of abilities and interests, by reality testing, and by development of self-concepts" (p. 74). The individual must account for the roles he or she plays and the growth and development of those roles in career decision making. Without satisfactory metacognitive skills, an individual's decisions can be ineffective and pose obstacles to meeting one's needs.

Table 8

Some Supporting Theories for the Cognitive Information Processing Model

Author(s)/Date(s)	Theory	CIP Pyramid	Contributions to CIP
Holland (1973, 1985)	Holland's typological theory of career choice and development	Integrates self-knowledge and occupational knowledge	Can limit independent career solving and decision making that CIP fosters Temptation is "test-and-tell strategy" of career decision
Gelatt (1962, 1989)	Gelatt model	Decision-making domain (CAVSE)	Fosters problem solving using a systematic process Encourages "reflective thinking"
Super & Bacharach (1957)	Super's developmental self-concept theory	• Executive domain • Self-talk • Self-awareness • Control and monitoring • Metacognitive skills	Emphasizes the importance of integrating higher and lower order decisions as well as short-term and long-term decisions—metacognitive skills Any decision must take into account the number of roles one plays and the growth and development of those roles

Note. Summarized from *Career Development and Services: A Cognitive Approach*, by G. W. Peterson, J. P. Sampson, and R. C. Reardon, 1991. pp. 53-79. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.

In its final report, the Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC) recommended that the military services should ensure that all service members are equally well prepared to manage their own career progression (MLDC, 2012). I have covered the career development and assignment tools that the services have made

available to the commissioned officer in this section to assist in planning their career. The MLDC also concluded that increasing the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of senior leadership requires eliminating barriers that disproportionately affect the career advancement of racial and ethnic minorities and women. With this important recommendation in mind, the next section addresses how the racial minority commissioned officer can become more aware on barriers to their career development.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is a framework for examining and understanding race and the persistence of racism (Closson, 2010) in the law and society. It arose in the mid-1970s with the early work of Derrick Bell (an African American) and Alan Freeman (a Caucasian), both of whom were deeply distressed over the slow pace of racial reform in the U.S. (Delgado, 1995). For this literature review, there was no research found associating CRT and the military; however, the following section describes and synthesizes studies, mostly in education, of CRT in an effort to illuminate the less obvious ways racial inequalities may persist in the sea services.

Critical race theory research in the social studies addressing race and racism has revealed the sometimes subtle ways in which policies can appear to adequately address race while at the same time marginalizing it (Closson, 2010; Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Heilig, Brown, & Brown, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998). In their article on race relations in the U.S. military, Burk and Espinoza (2012) stated that "the American military is widely regarded as an institution that has served and still serves as a model of positive race relations" (p. 402), adding that this judgment was not always warranted but rests on a compelling history of institutional reform. Despite this history, it

is worth questioning whether, in practice, such changes have actually favored the dominant race and marginalized the non-dominant race. The military pledges not to discriminate and believes it has aligned policies addressing race and racism in a way that creates equitable opportunities for all officers. Yet, at the 2007 DoD Diversity Summit, the military could not offer a plausible explanation for the low representations of minorities and women in its senior ranks (Lim et al., 2008). The summit reported that the military services were executing programs specifically focused on managing their minority and women retention efforts with the goal of promoting more women and minorities to the flag rank (Lim et al., 2008). This lack of diversity within the senior ranks is linked to many issues, such as retention of minority officers, ineffective personnel policies, and/or practices adopted by decision makers, and lack of minority officer role models in the senior ranks (Lim et al., 2008).

In her examination of the experiences of minority graduate students inside and outside of the social work education classroom, Daniel (2007) identified the lack of attention to race and diversity in supervisory relationships and to cultural and racial isolation as barriers to achievement. Similarly, these barriers to achieving diversity at the flag rank can arise at various points in a military career. Focusing on the early stages of an officer's career could help uncover valuable information for understanding issues and concerns that challenge minority officers. This AR case study will focus on using CRT to provide a voice to the career development and mentoring experiences of minority senior commissioned officers of the sea services.

Five key themes, or tenets, dominate CRT (see Table 9). The first tenet is that racism is not rare but normal in American society (Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic,

2012; Hylton, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Many believe that American race-relations

problems are behind us, pointing to the fact that the American people elected a Black

man to its highest office and that race issues and racial problems are outdated or at least

on the decline. While it is true that race riots are not erupting onboard military ships or

on bases as they did in the seventies, the fact that there are still "firsts" taking place in the

military with regard to achievements of racial minorities is a concern. Admiral (select)

Michelle Howard's promotion to Vice Chief of Naval Operations, in early 2014, made

her the first African-American woman in Pentagon history to attain four-star rank

(Macias, 2014). She is also the first female in the history of the Navy to achieve this

rank. The most senior rank of an African-American female in the Coast Guard had been

commander (pay grade 05) until 2015, when an African-American female earned the rank

of captain (paygrade 06), and in the Marine Corps, colonel (pay grade 06).

Table 9

Key Critical Race Theory Themes

Theme	Description
1. Racism is "normal, not aberrant in American society" [*]	CRT presents a challenge to the dominant ideas of objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity.
2. Interest convergence or material determinism	CRT goals are for social justice and transformation. The gains made through the legal system and state-sponsored racial equality are unsatisfactory and slow. Civil rights legislation has primarily benefited Whites.
3. Differential racialization	The idea that each race has its own origins and ever-evolving history. Social construction holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations. Society frequently chooses to ignore such higher order traits as personality, intelligence, and moral behavior.
4. Intersectionality and anti-essentialism	No person has a single, easily stated, unitary identity.
5. Marginalized voice	Centralized by naming realities. Employs storytelling to recount experiences with racism

[*] Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Hylton, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998.

The second tenet holds that CRT goals are for social justice and transformation. Critical race theory argues that the elimination of racism requires sweeping changes but that liberalism has no mechanism for such change. Rather, liberal legal practices support the painstakingly slow process of arguing legal precedence to gain citizen rights for people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The underrepresentation of minorities in the officer corps led to the implementation of affirmative action plans. According to Burk and Espinoza (2012), the military has been legally constrained by court decisions from

implementing policies it believes would create a more representative corps. They cited

examples of the federal courts not allowing promotion boards to consider how minority

status affects an officer's record before deciding whom to promote, or not allowing

military retirement boards to use racial preference as a factor when allocating involuntary

retirements related to downsizing the force.

A third theme of CRT is social construction, which proposes that race and races

are products of social thought and relations. They are not objective, inherent, or fixed,

nor do they correspond to biological or generic realities; instead, races are categories that

society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Furthermore, society frequently chooses to ignore such higher order traits as personality,

intelligence, and moral behavior (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Thomas, Edwards, Perry, and David (1998) conducted a quantitative content

analysis of Navy officer fitness reports to discern if racial bias existed among male

officers. (Fitness reports document officers' performance and are a key link in the

process of selecting an officer for promotion and key assignments.) One area of the

content analysis was the development of personality traits. The researchers found that

out of 26 personality traits (categorized by Thomas in 1987 from the comment section of

previous fitness reports), 12 yielded significant racial differences. The traits ascribed

more often to Black officers were *organized*, *motivated*, *aggressive*, *positive*, and

displays initiative; traits ascribed more often to White officers were *intelligent*, *thorough*,

flexible, *has perceptive*, *honest*, *energetic*, and *creative*. Thomas et al. (1998) concluded

that the traits ascribed more often to Black officers were no more or no less positive than

those ascribed more often to White officers.

Still, an extended analysis of Thomas et al.'s (1998) content analysis using a leadership-theory framework revealed that:

Certain descriptors were more likely to be associated with an early promotion recommendation, whereas other descriptors were more likely to be associated with regular or no promotion recommendations. More important, the descriptors associated with an early promotion recommendation were more often ascribed to White officers, whereas the descriptors associated with regular or no promotion recommendations were more often ascribed to Black officers (Johnson, 2001, p. 41).

Schwind and Laurence (2006) ranked the comments section of fitness reports, from which Thomas et al.'s (1998) 26 personality traits were developed, and found that the comments section is the second most important among three areas when selecting officers for promotion. The three areas are the ranking of an officer against peers, the comments section, and the numerical trait average. When looking at promotions to the pay grade of O7 (flag rank) and examining qualitative interviews of flag officers serving as panel members, the Schwind and Laurence (2006) research revealed the following illustrative comments which support that traits such as intelligent, flexible, is perceptive, and energetic are what promotion boards are wanting to see in order to promote an officer:

We certainly prefer the *outgoing personality* [Emphasis added], to one who's living in a shell, we certainly prefer the person who is self-confident, with a basis for it, to one who is constantly looking over his shoulder, or wondering if this is the "right" thing to do… That's another thing that runs through the thread of the

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flag board, kind of in the background, *intellectually* [Emphasis added], is the guy

intellectually capable of retaining large amounts of information and making sense

out of them. (Schwind & Laurence, 2006, pp. S98-S99)

The above statements, along with Johnson's (2001) extended trait analysis of Thomas et

al.'s (1998) 26 personality traits showing that Blacks are not ascribed the traits associated

with promotions, bring to question the bias nature of performance reports; hence, the

need for more research in this area. Black officers were missing significant traits such as

intelligent, *thorough*, *flexible*, *is perceptive*, *honest*, *energetic*, and *creative*. It appears

that fitness reports can be biased in favor of the dominant race.

Fourth, CRT scholars support the idea that no one has just one identity. For

instance, in one study, African-American and Latino graduate students in social work

reported wanting to be seen as not just people of color: "I also want them to see me and

understand me not necessarily as a woman of color but as an individual" (Daniel, 2007, p.

32).

Lastly, CRT departs from mainstream legal scholarship by sometimes employing

storytelling to "analyze the myths, presuppositions, and perceived wisdoms that make up

the common culture about race and that invariably render blacks and other minorities

one-down" (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv). According to Ladson-Billings (1998), the primary

reason that stories, or narratives, are deemed important among CRT scholars is that they

add necessary contextual contours to the seeming "objectivity" of the positivist

perspectives. Several scholars used this method to illustrate their encounters and

frustrations with the dominant culture (Cooper, Massey, & Graham, 2006; Griffin, Ward,

& Phillips, 2014). Navy Chaplain Parham, Jr., recounted one such story of the "good old

Zumwalt era" when speaking about Navy life for minority officers. Admiral Zumwalt

was Chief of Naval Operations (the top position in the Navy) during the early seventies

and was considered a proactive leader in support of racial equality in the Navy. After his

retirement, many of his programs were quietly dismantled, leading Chaplain Parham

(2010) to lament, "One hears of minority junior officers being thrown off ships, minority

officers receiving lower fitness reports, being passed over for promotion and then

released" (p. 284).

In the past, diversity issues in the military were discussed at length without any

marked progress; therefore, major institutional reform may be required for diversity goals

to be realized today (Lim et al., 2008). Career development programs designed by

associations for their membership can be a part of these changes. Critical race theory

provides a framework for analyzing the barriers identified as hindrances for minority

officer's achievement and for analyzing the interventions for removing those barriers.

When exploring the racial experiences of minorities, CRT studies in the social sciences

demonstrate that race is clearly a relevant and meaningful topic (Aleman, 2009;

Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011). These studies show that CRT can assist in

addressing cultural and racial isolation and the lack of attention to race and diversity in

supervisory relationships, and allow for the creation of programs that truly support

diversity (Daniel, 2007; McDowell, 2004). It is essential that career development

programs incorporate lessons from senior minority sea service officers who have

overcome factors that hinder the promotion of commissioned officers. The design of

such programs can include mentoring interventions that give minority junior officers the

opportunity to co-construct with their mentor outlets for voicing their differences with the

dominant culture in a positive manner while analyzing racial inequalities. Dialog about race and racism is crucial since it supports building a voice for those who are marginalized by the dominant culture. The ultimate agenda of NNOA—or any professional military association—should be to advocate for racial equality and social justice for all of its members.

Table 10 offers a detailed summary of the key empirical and theoretical CRT studies in this literature review.

Table 10

Empirical Studies on Critical Race Theory

Authors/Date	Subject/Purpose	Sample/Methodology	Findings/Implications
Griffin, Ward, & Phillips, 2014	• Black male faculty, critical race theory, and composite counter-storytelling • Narrates experiences of Black male faculty on traditionally White campuses	• Qualitative • Education • N = 11 • Male African American =11 • Females =0	A Black male assistant professor serves as a protagonist for reflecting on how his daily experiences incite racial battle fatigue, feed into imposter syndrome, and circumvent an inclusive campus community.
Heilig, Brown, & Brown, 2012	A critical race theory textual analysis of race and standards	• Education • A close textual analysis of how the Texas social studies standards address race, racism, and communities of color	• Uncovers the sometimes subtle ways that the standards can appear to adequately address race while at the same time marginalizing it—the "illusion of inclusion" • Offers insight into the mechanisms of marginalization in standards • A model of how to closely analyze such standards
Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011	• A critical race analysis of doctoral education • Critical inquiry and CRT are used to establish and describe an overarching and	• Qualitative • Education • N = 22	• A social narrative, "Am I going crazy?!" • Deconstructing the narrative into its core elements provides an extended definition that illustrates a dehumanizing cultural experience in the everyday

	powerful social narrative that informs, influences, and illustrates the endemic racism through which Black and Latina/o students struggle to persist in pursuit of the doctorate		lives of doctoral students. • Recommendation: Problematize these cultural norms to promote a more humanizing experience of doctoral education for black and Latina/o students.
Aleman, Jr., 2009	• "Niceness and Latina/o leadership in the politics of education" • Uses CRT as a way of preparing educational leaders to engage critically in the politics of education	• Qualitative • Education • N=8; 4 females, 4 males • Recognize silenced voices in qualitative data	Participants' political discourse is shaped by concepts such as "niceness," "respect," and "decorum," which ultimately limits their critique and silences the experiences of students in their communities.
Daniel, 2007	Critical race theory, graduate education and barriers to professionalization	• Education • Qualitative analysis • N=15 African-American and Latino graduate students	• Students' experiences are often characterized by marginalization and conflict. • Certain aspects of the professionalization process create and support forces that reproduce stratified social relations. These problematic relations have a negative impact on minority students threatening their persistence and professional development.
Cooper, Massey, & Graham, 2006	Being "Dixie" at a historically Black university: A White faculty member's exploration of Whiteness through the narratives of two Black faculty members	• Qualitative • Education • N = 3 • There is a great need for higher education faculty to understand the complexities of teaching students of diverse backgrounds	Told through the use of counterstories, the authors identified three themes or questions from their separate narratives: race, culture, and teaching. These mentoring stories offered an in-depth view of what it means to teach from three very different perspective: those of a White woman, a Black man, and a Black woman.
McDowell, 2004	• Exploring the racial experiences of therapists in training: A critical race theory perspective • Study focused on students'	• Qualitative analysis • N=8	Themes of racial awareness, racism, strength and resistance, and creating kinship resonated with literature on critical multicultural education and were consistent with tenets of CRT, including acknowledging

experiences in order to construct knowledge about race and racism in Marriage Family Training (MFT) education.	racism and recognizing the impact of multiple intersecting identities; interrogating socially constructed, dominant-culture knowledge; valuing voices from marginalized locations; and commitment to social justice.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the extant empirical literature on mentoring in the contexts of business and the military, and offered a critical examination of the three theories informing this study: mentoring, career information processing, and critical race theories. I also introduced the CIP model as an appropriate theoretical structure for mentors to use in providing career advisement to protégés. Additionally, I explored a four-function conceptual model for mentoring military officers which focuses on political skill (Foley, 1999), job coaching (Blass & Ferris, 2007), and career and psychosocial functions (Kram, 1985).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology used for the action research case study, including a discussion of data collection and data analysis. The purpose of the study was to explore how a professional association whose membership functions in predominately White institutions can privilege its members, who are primarily minority sea service commissioned officers, in their career development. Three research questions guided the study: (1) What are the factors (technological, military, and political) that marginalize the career development of racial minority sea service commissioned officers? (2) How can a professional association privilege its members in career development using mentoring interventions? (3) How can professional association members, learning through a collaborative action inquiry process, create interventions to help privilege racial minority sea service commissioned officers? In this chapter, I first review the study's qualitative research methodology, namely case study and action research, and offer a rationale for their use. Additional sections detail the data collection methods and analysis used in the action research cycles, including a pilot study. I then address validity and trustworthiness issues that arose during data collection and analysis, and identify potential limitations of the study, among which were my own subjectivity and assumptions as the primary researcher.

Design of the Study

This AR case study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach to collecting the primary data. Qualitative research was appropriate for this study since I was interested in uncovering the meaning that senior racial minority commissioned officers attached to critical career development and mentoring experiences as they advanced in their careers. Qualitative research is appropriate when one seeks to understand "the how" of things— how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the research relied on data related to critical incidents affecting the career progression of 13 minority active-duty senior officers over the span of their 30-plus years in the military. The action research team (ART), using semi-structured interviews, collected the critical incidents. In conjunction with the ART's interviews, I conducted two field observations and reviewed documents from the professional association (i.e., NNOA) and the sea services to support the construction of interventions. I also wanted to explore how a professional association could use information gathered from these critical incidents to privilege their racial minority members' career development and subsequent promotions in an environment influenced by the dominant race. The ART, using traditional action research and guided by the tenets of critical race theory (CRT), collaborated in analyzing the data and on developing the career development interventions based on data analysis. In action research, the researcher and the client work together to find solutions to agreed upon concerns. (In a later section, I provide more information about AR and its role in the design of the study.) The interventions sought to provide NNOA's members with emancipatory power in their efforts to take charge of their careers. As Merriam (2009)

noted, "At the heart of critical research are power dynamics and the fact that people unconsciously accept things the way they are, and in so doing, reinforce the status quo" (p. 35).

Qualitative Research

As discussed in Chapter 2, the academic and military literature does not document well the factors affecting the career development of racial minority commissioned officers in the sea services, which are predominately White institutions. The effects of military policies on racial minorities have not been fully explored by scholars. A qualitative approach is well suited to this under-examined issue; in the case of this study, it allowed for the discovery of how senior minority commissioned officers in the sea services collectively understood and overcame critical factors affecting their career development and promotions. The qualitative research study used CIT interviews, observations, and document reviews to collect data, along with reflections by the ART members, recordings of ART meetings, and researcher journals and memoranda. As noted by Merriam (2009),

> A basic qualitative study is the most common form and has as its goal understanding how people make sense of their experiences. Data are collected through interviews, observations, and documents and are analyzed inductively to address the research question posed. The other types of qualitative research such as phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory and critical race theory share exactly the same characteristics of basic qualitative study. (p. 37)

Merriam added, "The basic qualitative study has become a broad term that covers a number of orientations to research, all of which seek to not just understand what is going

on, but also to critique the way things are in hope of bringing about a more just society

(p. 35). Critical research was appropriate for this study because it sought not only to

learn how career development of sea service racial minority commissioned officers was

achieved from the perspective of the officer, but also critiqued career development

methods used by the sea services to advance the careers of these officers through the lens

of CRT.

Case Study

The use of the case study method in qualitative research can contribute to existing

knowledge about individual, group, organizational, social, political, or other related

phenomena (Yin, 2014). To study the forces at work during the career development of

minority sea service commissioned officers as they advanced in their careers, I chose a

descriptive case study, which Yin (2014) defined as one whose purpose is to describe a

phenomenon (a "case") in depth and in its real-world context, as opposed to explanatory

or exploratory case studies. An explanatory case study explains why or how a condition

came about, and an exploratory case study is designed to assist the researcher in defining

questions or procedures for use in subsequent research, which may or may not be a case

study (Yin, 2014). The real-world context of this case study was the military sea

services, and the case was a professional association supporting its members, who were

minority commissioned officers, in their career development. Critical incidents of career

development and mentoring of senior commissioned officers (spanning over 30 years of

military service) served as the units of analysis. Generally, a case study research design

benefits from its "how" and "why" questions "because such questions deal with

operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or

incidences" (Yin, 2014, p 10). The value of understanding how career development factors affect racial minority sea service officers over time contributed significantly to the intervention strategies chosen for examining these factors.

Action Research

This was a classic action research case study in that both the researcher and the professional association were engaged in a "collaborative change management or problem solving relationship … aimed at both solving a problem and generating new knowledge" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2012, p. 44). Coghlan and Brannick (2012) maintained that the following broad characteristics define action research: "Research *in* action, rather than research about action, a collaborative democratic partnership, research concurrent with action, and a sequence of events and an approach to problem solving" (p. 4). In addition, this was insider action research, as all members of the ART were active member of the client organization. Conducting research as an insider inspired the review of data and formulation of interventions.

Collaboration among team members was evident from the beginning of the study, and all ART members actively participated in discussions about NNOA's needs. The team members focused specific attention on their respective service's process of career development and mentoring. As all members of the ART were disciplined, military commissioned officers and passionate about their affiliation with NNOA, they embraced learning about and doing action research. The working procedures within the action research team coincided with Coghlan and Brannick's (2012) cyclic four-step action research cycle; each cycle consists of constructing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating the action, which leads to further planning. To that end, in the planning step

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the ART representatives from the Coast Guard and the Marine Corps each completed the required training for conducting interviews of the selected senior commissioned officers.

Action Research Cycles

The University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study in April 2014. The study involved several action research cycles. The team planned some cycles to overlap and others to occur concurrently. (Chapter 4 provides a detailed discussion of the actions taken in each cycle.) Figure 3 illustrates how each cycle unfolds, while Table 11 lists the specific proposed plans for the AR case study.

EVALUATING
ACTION

CONSTRUCTING

TAKING ACTION

PLANNING
ACTION
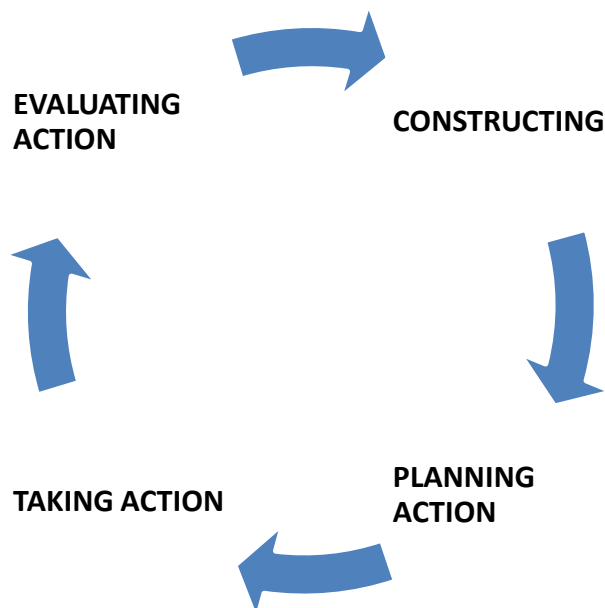
Figure 3. The action research cycle. Adapted from *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization* (3rd ed.), by D. Coghlan and T. Brannick, 2012, p. 8. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Table 11

Action Research Plan of Action and Milestones

Action Phase	Action Steps	Timeline
1	- Initial investigation as insider researcher in NNOA - Attended July 2013 training conference - Met with key board members - Observed speed mentoring board meeting - Reviewed documents	May - Sept. 2013
2	- Signed MOA - Recruited/trained ART members - Provided monthly/quarterly board updates	Sept. 2013 - ongoing
3	- ART discussed interventions: - Learning modules—what topics? - CIT interviews of senior officers by ART - Website hosting/design - Mentoring dyads—who? How many? - Mentoring training module - Develop a mentor handbook - Provide space on website for information sharing by the dyads - Evaluation metrics for intervention(s) - Software for learning module delivery - Professional FAQs on website for protégés—event mentoring - Blog on website from Senior Officers - Peer mentoring-How to accomplish this	Oct. 2013 - ongoing
4	Planned, wrote, and tested mentoring certification and learning modules to include mentoring training	Nov. 2013 – July 2015
5	Designed and consistently evaluated website	Nov. 2013 – Nov. 2015
6	Planned, conducted, and analyzed 3 pilot CIT interviews	Mar. – Dec. 2014
7	Evaluated software for learning module delivery	Mar. 2014-Nov. 2015
8	- Launched mentoring program pilot - Evaluated pilot	Dec. 2014 - Nov 2015 Jan 2016
9	Conducted remaining senior officer interviews with new interview protocol	May – Dec. 2015
10	Planned, wrote, and tested Professional FAQs for event mentoring	July-Dec. 2015

Action Research and Reflection

Refection is fundamental to action research. Not only is it an important part of the meta-learning of content, process, and premise (Coughlan & Brannick, 2012), but it also serves as an effective training tool. For these reasons, I used reflection for learning about and conducting action research. The process of reflecting added richly to the understanding I gained about AR and the client (i.e., the professional association). In addition, reflection was cathartic since it allowed me to appreciate certain challenges as opportunities and others as the roadblocks they were. Reflecting also revealed experiences from my own military career that created researcher subjectivity. I engaged in audio journaling as a way of appreciating my emotional responses to the study process, without allowing those feelings to knowingly affect the research outcomes. Significantly, the act of reflecting individually and collectively on our actions allowed the ART members to construct appropriate questions and to better understand the outcomes of our actions. During the initial startup phases, the team members reflected via electronic journaling, and we used those memos in data analysis. I continued to journal throughout the research, but the team began allotting time in our meetings for discussions on learning and the impact our actions were having on answering the research questions. I also treated meeting minutes as data sources and analyzed them accordingly.

Participant Selection

Creswell (2009) recommended that throughout the entire qualitative research process, the researcher should maintain a focus on learning the meaning that the participants attach to the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researcher brings to the research or writers express in the literature. There were three groups of participants

in this research case study. The first group comprised the action research team members, all of whom were members of NNOA and wanted to make a difference in its programs; they were invested in mentoring as a career development tool. The second group of participants included 13 senior officers—four from two of the three services and five from the other service. All senior officers were association members. We interviewed three of the senior officers for the pilot around mentoring and the other nine senior officers around the subject of career development and mentoring. The third group included the mentoring dyads, who were volunteers from NNOA.

Action Research Team

Members of NNOA comprised the ART, and they all participated in the study voluntarily. The initial association board representative declined the position of Board point of contact because the member perceived a lack of commitment to previous mentoring initiatives by the board and had competing family commitments. However, this individual did accept my invitation to be a team member. The Coast Guard representative to the association's board became the board's representative for this study.

The three initial team members, including me, determined the following criteria for action research team members. First, active-duty senior representatives from the three sea services represented by NNOA would participate. This was a critical criterion; the senior rank was necessary because service longevity implied a deeper understanding of service culture, leadership requirements, and history related to minority careers. We also needed these members to be conversant about their service requirements for promotion and retention. We determined that there would need to be junior officer representation on the team as well since the mentoring program would benefit this cadre of officers.

Unfortunately, the junior officer we invited to join the ART transitioned to a career-enhancing job and did not have the time to participate; instead, the team agreed to use the feedback from the protégés, who were junior officers, to represent this group. Additionally, it was agreed that members would be on a career path that consistently promoted to flag rank, would have a strong interest in mentoring, and would have a successful military career overall. The ART included representation from both genders.

As an AR intervention, the initial members participated in the recruitment of other members using the team's agreed upon criteria. A web designer was hired and also participated as a team member, periodically joining ART conference calls. I met once a week with the web designer and served as the liaison between the ART and the web designer. Table 12 details the composition and criteria of the ART.

Table 12

Action Research Team Composition and Criteria

Sea Service Represented	Post Command (either at 05 or/and 06 level)	NNOA Member	Mentoring Experience	Service Skill
Coast Guard	Yes	Yes	Selected as NNOA Coast Guard MOY*	Engineering
Coast Guard	Yes	Yes	Yes very active Coast Guard mentor	Lawyer
Marine Corps	Yes	Yes	Selected as NNOA Marine MOY	Communications
Navy	Yes	Yes	Yes / Naval Academy	Surface Warfare Officer (SWO)
Navy	Yes	Yes	Yes / NROTC* and JROTC	Human Resources
Navy	Yes	Yes	NROTC / Recruiting Experience	Human Resources

*MOY: Mentor of the Year; NROTC: Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps; JROTC: Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps

Action Research Team Charter

The initial ART members developed a team charter that provided guidelines for the integration of new team members. The charter also included information to encourage productive collaboration among members. As most team members were active-duty commissioned officers with primary jobs (and often additional military duties), it was appropriate to address time commitments with the ART. The charter allowed team members to determine the amount of time necessary to accomplish their assigned tasks. This also gave team members latitude in determining how a required action would be accomplished by its deadline. The ART met twice a month via conference call using software that recorded the team meetings and used online file-sharing software (i.e., Dropbox) and email to facilitate communication. There was one face-to-face meeting held in conjunction with a NNOA quarterly board meeting in the winter of 2014. Team members briefed the board on the progress of the study, and I used the meeting as an opportunity to observe board participants and ART interactions.

Senior Officer Participant Criteria

Each service representative on the ART provided criteria for the senior officer selection to ensure that we chose officers who could provide information that would assist in answering the research questions. Also, each service representative was familiar with his or her service qualifications and skills for being promoted to flag rank. For this study, we agreed that the interview participants would be:

1. minority flag officers (paygrade 07);

2. members of NNOA;

3. representative of the demographics of NNOA; and,

4. retired for no more than one year (if retired).

At the time of the study, the Coast Guard had only one racial minority flag officer who was a member of the association and on active duty with no recent retired racial minority flag officers. The team agreed to interview the next lower paygrade, which was captain (paygrade 06). These officers are leaders in their service and possess specific expertise, such a military operations, combat readiness, and are cognizant of policies that affect the career development of the commissioned officer. Moreover, being within one year or less after retirement from their service, they would still have relevant data and experiences. These criteria provided the best opportunity for understanding career development and the current mentoring culture in the sea services. In addition, they could provide service-specific information on policy concerning mentoring. Table 13 summarizes the criteria for selecting senior officers for participation and Table 14 is the profile of the actual participants.

Table 13

Senior Officer Participant Criteria

Paygrade	07 or above (an exception was made for the Coast Guard, which had only one flag officer who met this criterion plus the other criteria)
Military Status	Active duty or retired within one year
Career fields associated with advancement to flag or general officer rank	Navy: Surface/Aviation/Nuclear Marine Corps: Combat Arms Military Occupation Skill (MOS) Coast Guard: Combat Arms MOS
Race	Represents the demographic of the association
Equal # of Officers from the Sea Services	4 senior officers from each sea service that encompasses the majority of the criteria

Table 14

Flag Officers' Profiles

Name (Pseudonym)	Military Field	Type college Degree	Accession Source	Birth Region	Background for Military Service
FLAG 01 pilot	Combat Support	BS	Academy	South	None reported
FLAG 02 pilot	Line/Aviation/Combat Arms	BS	Academy	South	Military Child
FLAG 03 pilot	Line/Aviation/Combat Arms	BS	OCS	South	Sports/Father
FLAG 04	Line/Aviation/Combat Arms	BS	OCS	South/ North	Family/Greek
FLAG 05	Line/Aviation/Combat Arms	BS	College Commissioning Program/OCS	North	None Reported
FLAG 06	Combat Service Support	BS	College Commissioning Program/OCS	North	Greek
FLAG 07	Combat Support	BS	OCS	South	Prior Enlisted
FLAG 08	Line/Aviation/ Combat Arms	BS	Academy	Mid West	None reported
FLAG 09	Combat Service Support	BS	ROTC	South	Law Enforcement
FLAG 10	Combat Service Support	BS	College Commissioning Program/OCS	North	Boys and Girls Clubs
FLAG 11	Line/Aviation/ Combat Arms	BS	Service Commissioning Program/OCS	South	Prior Enlisted
FLAG 12	Combat Service Support	BS	ROTC	South	Family/ Greek
FLAG 13	Line/Aviation/ Combat Arms	BS	College Commissioning Program/OCS	South/ Pacific West	Father/ Military Child/ Greek

Mentoring Dyad Participant Criteria

The criteria for selection as a mentor or protégé were membership (active or inactive) in the association, willingness to volunteer, and completion of the "How To Be a Mentor/Protégé" online training developed by the ART. In addition, a mentor was required to have a paygrade of 04 or higher, and a protégé a paygrade between 01 and 03. (Paygrades 01 to 03 included junior officers, who were the target focus of the learning modules used in the mentoring pilot.) The ART service representatives were responsible for matching their volunteer mentors and protégés as they had access to the most accurate personnel information. The association president solicited the volunteers via email. Over 50 commissioned officers volunteered. After matching same service officers, then like or similar specialties within that service, and noting mentor and protégé paygrade requirements, the mentoring pilot included six Coast Guard pairs, nine Navy pairs, and five Marine pairs for a total of 40 participants.

Data Collection Methods

I used a number of data collection methods for this AR case study. Data were gathered from critical incident interviews of senior minority commissioned officers, a pilot study of three of these interviews, association and sea service documents, and participant observations at two NNOA events to include mentoring events at our annual training and development conferences. I also conducted CIT exit interviews with each ART member and used the meeting minutes and reflections of the ART members for data collection. The ART used statistical data from the mentoring pilot website, input from the web designer, and mentoring pairs to guide decisions on design changes for the site.

Critical Incident Interviews

Based on the selection criteria for flag officer participation, a group of 13 senior minority commissioned officers functioned as the sample for this study. Each ART service representative used the criteria to select senior officers from their respective service branch. Each service representative briefed the ART about his or her selections, and in turn the ART provided suggestions to verify that the team was selecting the best senior officers for the case study. The criteria for flag officer participation are included in Table 13 and the actual senor officer participant profiles are summarized in Table 14.

Critical Incident Technique

John Flanagan pioneered the critical incident technique (CIT) as a method for data collection during World War II. He defined the technique as "a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 327). Flanagan's technique outlined procedures for collecting observed incidents that have special significance and meet systematically defined criteria. Ellinger and Watkins (1998) documented the constructivist approach to CIT interviewing whereby the researcher collects participants' narratives of incidents as a means to increase understanding of behavior within an organizational. In 2004, Chell elaborated further on CIT interviewing. She defined CIT as follows:

> The critical interview technique is a qualitative interview procedure, which facilitates the investigation of significant occurrences (events, processes or issues), identified by the respondent, the way they are managed, and the outcomes in terms of perceived effects. The objective is to gain an understanding of the

incident from the perspective of the individual, taking into account cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. (p. 48)

For this study, I used Ellinger and Watkins' (1998) narrative analysis approach and Chell's (2004) six distinguishable steps of CIT:

1. introducing the CIT method and getting the interview under way;

2. focusing the theme and giving an account of oneself as a researcher to the respondent;

3. controlling the interview by probing the incidents and clarifying one's understanding;

4. concluding the interview;

5. addressing ethical issues; and

6. analyzing the data. (p.48)

As the researcher, I did not rely solely on my judgment in determining which incidents were critical and what categories were salient because such judgments represent limitations of CIT. Instead, I provided transcribed interviews to each senior officer and interviewer for review to ensure accuracy of its contents. By accomplishing this, I reduced the risk of mispresenting a critical incident.

Interview Preparation

The Coast Guard and Marine Corps representatives on the ART and I served as interviewers. Employing the service representatives as interviewers was appropriate to ensure correct interpretation of information because of the unique aspects of each service's culture, their different missions, and different promotion criteria. In preparation for conducting the interviews, each interviewer completed the required Collaborative

Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training for interviewing participants in a research study. This training meets federal mandates and the University of Georgia's (UGA) own institutional obligation to ensure a qualified and well-informed research body.

When preparing the team members for obtaining quality interviews, I used Chell's (2004) steps and coupled them with Anderson's (2012) interview guidelines, which include advice about preparing an interview protocol, recommendations on selecting participants, tips for contacting and scheduling interviews, and beginning, conducting, and closing the interview. I created a guide for conducting the interviews and distributed it to the appropriate ART members. The guide included the interview protocol, detailed step-by-step instructions, a sample article that used the CIT, and instructions for using www.freeconferencecall.com, the online software utilized to conduct all but one of the interviews. I also held one-on-one telephone calls with each interviewer to discuss the material and answer questions. The goal of the guide was to assist in ensuring that each interview followed the same steps, thus maximizing our opportunities for collecting critical incidents. By using the online software for recording each interview, we established a professional environment allowing for clear reception and ease of conversation, which enabled us to respect the senior officers' very demanding schedules by not having to reschedule interviews due to poor reception or equipment concerns. It also provided a clear recording of each interview, making transcription by a professional service much easier.

Pilot Study

For the pilot study, we interviewed one flag officer from the Coast Guard, Navy, and Marine Corps using the CIT. We conducted the Navy and Coast Guard interviews in

August 2014 and the Marine Corps interview in October 2014. The latter interview was delayed due to a job transition of an ART member, not to concerns from the chosen Marine Corps flag participant. The interviews provided information about critical mentoring incidents experienced by these officers as they advanced in their careers while working in predominately White institutions. At the time of the pilot, the research questions focused on barriers to a formal mentoring program.

The ART developed the initial interview protocol for the pilot, and in discussion with my dissertation committee, the protocol was refined. The interview protocol was further refined to focus on career development based on data collected in the pilot. Creswell (2009) and Yin (2104) suggested conducting a pilot study to refine interview questions and procedures. In addition, the ability to conduct pilot interviews allowed for further refinement of the interview protocol to meet the critical incident method of collecting critical incidents about the phenomenon being examined.

The interviewers were all seasoned commissioned officers familiar with conducting interviews; however, none of us had conducted this type of interview. We were all learning together "on the job." This was another reason for conducting a pilot study—to familiarize the interviewers with the chosen interview technique. We were also well acquainted with our service protocol in scheduling flag officer interviews. Each interviewer knew the flag officer interviewed, but the process still required the utmost attention to detail, military protocol, and sensitivity to the flag officer's military commitments. One interviewer conducted an in-person interview using the conference call software to record the conversation, but this interview yielded less than desirable quality, as the location used for the interview piped in periodic organizational

announcements, which were recorded over the interview conversation. Fortunately, the

majority of the participant's answers were audible. The critical incidents and themes are

summarized in Table 15.

Table 15

Subthemes from Critical Incident Interviews

Subtheme	Critical Incidents and Recommendation for Privileging Association Members
Command Climate	• Challenge of figuring out who is your supporter: "It starts out as a junior officer with some conversation around the lunch table. 'Hey, I did not realize that you were late for returning from liberty there, Lieutenant Smith.' Being alert to these backstabbing kinds of people, and *it gets more sophisticated the more senior you get.*" • "I don't go to the wardroom—I do not know how to handle the ugliness senior White officers display about President Obama. It makes me not feel safe, what are they saying about me, my performance. They are writing my performance report. *It is a barrier to career development and advancement for a minority officer, absolutely.* Do they have the same concerns about me moving up?" • "The command climate I was in concerned me. My mentor got me transferred early • The command climate was not positive. The training did not properly prepare me for the job. Some of my bosses had poor people skills." • "*Most people do not realize what they are doing. It is hard to put your finger on it.*" • Speaking Truth to Power: "You got to fix the climate."
Performance Report and the Supervisor	• Performance report: "Performance is key." • Performance report: "One bad performance report can *torpedo* your career." • "'Okay' will get you passed over! When I was a JO, feedback on my performance reports was not honest for what I wanted to accomplish." • Performance report: *"He tried to torpedo my career with a bad performance report."* • Performance reports and difficult bosses: *"You know in the military it only takes one performance report to really torpedo your future prospects."* • Disciplined: "I didn't know a uniform could change someone so much—make them act more disciplined" • Learning the process along the way: "I read, I was more mature than most when I came in, I had worked where I had worn a uniform and been in a discipline job. I was disciplined, I did a lot, and I had *'fire in my belly.'*" • Performance*: "Just do the Job-Lip Service—the Test.* I failed miserably in that test and I was fortunate that he did not hold it against me." • Honest feedback: "You have to have people that give you honest feedback." • Performance and mentoring: "*I have been burned a few times*… And so people outside the chain, you ask them how it is going and they say everything is wonderful. And the truth of the matter is it may not be wonderful, but we mentors can't always see the performance reports." • "One of mentors taught me the meaning of *true performance: It is the relentless pursuit of excellence.*" • "People that I didn't know were watching…. You always have to do your best regardless of where you go…. In those earlier days they were called 'sea daddies.' I didn't know who they were."

Subtheme	Critical Incidents and Recommendation for Privileging Association Members
	• Perfect your skill: "Do your very best within your capabilities; that is all we ask."
Isolation	• "I remember feeling *isolated*—I needed someone outside of the chain of command to talk to." • "I felt like an outsider in my command, like I did not belong." • *Silence-Supermarket critical incident* • "The KKK was staging a rally outside the base of my officer training facility when I checked in. This was in the early 80s." • *"We are the one of or two of."* • *Being the only one*: "I spoke at every event/program when I was stationed in xxx—there are not many minorities there." • Sense of belonging and fitting in: "And I remember as a JO I had a boss tell me that when I speak I sound Black." • "So the challenge was just feeling like I was in an organization that wanted me there. I still deal with issues from individuals from time to time." • *Being the "one of"*: *"Be there or be talked about, since you are the only you will be missed. There will be nine pairs of eyes out of ten pairs looking at you."* • "I was kind of looking for some on who looked like me –I had not had the most positive interactions with them—I eventually got there. *In my combat MOS it is only a few of us.* I fell back on what I knew—connecting with successful people." • "I look around and I am the only one: I did not even look at it that way. It did not really matter if there was a lot or not in my service. We all have the same moral fiber."
Key Assignments	• Privilege: "The dominant culture has things in one neat package. We do not." • Key assignments and performance report: "It's all about jobs—getting the right jobs." • "I am shocked by my career." • Prefect your skill: "My community has a system of checks and balances—so your career development is in that system—you work as a team—*you take time to prefect yourself.*" • Key assignments: '*Truth in advertisement*'—"My orders said one job, the command gave me a different job; do we get the competitive jobs? The high VIZ job; *Bloom where you are planted.*" • Key assignments and performance report: "If you don't get these two right it can be a *hard row to hoe.*" • Difficult problem you faced developing yourself: "I'd say every transition to increase responsibility and increase focus and spectrum that varied from my previous duties. There was a steep learning curve. *I sought advice and networked.*" • Key job assignment: "My assignment officer offered me a job that was not career enhancing and I was a senior officer. I talked it over with my mentors." • The board process and its fairness: "I think we have the best system of selecting officers through our board process. Gave examples."
Talent Management	• *"Cull the herd*: Everybody is not going to grow up to be a flag officer." • "We brief the service chief on our community—all communities do. We manage our talent." • *"The cream rises to the top.* Everybody is not going to be a flag officer." • *"We just do not have any"* (gave example of statistics *vs.* names and faces) • "We brief the service leader on our community. I was the community manager, and as a leader in my community, I/we did this. It is a snapshot of the community. In the last couple of years, it is called talent management—honing in on managing people and their talent…. We manage our community…. We reached out to our JOs." • *"It takes years to grow these officers.* We all do our part." • "It takes time to grow an officer. 22 years from now, you will see the fruits of our efforts to make 06s in my service."

Subtheme	Critical Incidents and Recommendation for Privileging Association Members
	• "Yes, we do that. It grew out of a commission."
Supervisors	• "He ensured the investigation was done properly…. My boss believed in me… He also said, 'Never give up. You are a great officer.'" • Mentoring: "I kind of shy away from my boss being my mentor. It is an open an honest relationship, mentoring is. *I don't want to share a hard decision with my boss until I want to*." • "There are no personality conflicts between seniors and juniors, meaning the senior gets his or her way unless it is a clear violation of the UCMJ or integrity standards. " • *"And the good news is that no matter how difficult the boss may be, you only have to serve them for a couple of years.*" • Supervisors as your mentor: "Maybe perceived as a problem with good order and discipline." • *"No one called me in to talk to me.* I don't remember phone calls being picked up saying this is what you need to do. I do not know if others had mentors. Again, that was not really something that we said or talked about. But, nobody really sits down and says, 'Hey, come and let me talk to you. *Nowhere in my career has this happened.*" • Mentoring: "There were a couple of times where I was offered different jobs. I remember a flag officer saying, *'No, this is not what you need to do.'* What the right job for me was not explained, though. No one really tells you what to do. I just had to look and listen and see what's next." • "My next assignment I was mentored by my bosses—I loved it, I felt safe."
Legal	• "Then there is the litigation backlash. *We lose our will.*" • *"You get what you get, right?* Is it legal to target an HBCU or HSI for a specific person?" • "I was honored he asked me…. I remember our service asking all flags to adopt a HBCU or HSI. My boss asked me to serve as the point person for his HBCU." • I remember feeling *isolated*. I needed someone outside of the chain of command to talk to."
Technology	• *"Connected but disciplined*…. I am not getting into trouble… I am not going to be an embarrassment." • "It is advancing our career. It is everywhere. Sharing information is easier. People call and tell me they see me on our service Facebook page. I can IM other service members. It is getting the word out." • "Everybody needs technology for development—so it is not just one specific group. We have improved but can do more." • *"We are our worst own enemy*…. You do not have to comment on everything on the internet." • "It is closing the gap. The bad is we need to get out more and build relationships." • Internet: "The 'will' to be successful: Everything is on the internet, now!" • Mentoring and technology: "I knew some people who had been successful so I reached out to them. *It was not instant communication when I was a JO.*" • "It is a different generation. I don't push a lot over the internet though—staying engaged—they remember the person who asked them how they were doing." • "They put their phone down and talk. They are shaped otherwise but we make them but their phones down."
Equal Opportunity	• EO complaints: "Required to have a 360 Degree profile done." • "A post command 06 white male needs that job. *It can be a better sell for them.*" • *"Every leadership problem is not an EO problem, but every EO problem is a leadership problem.*" • "We were *challenged in court* on our recruiting policy/slogan. *I remember.*"

Subtheme	Critical Incidents and Recommendation for Privileging Association Members
Build Relationships	• *"Push across the aisle. They do not have to."* • *"JOs have to start building those relationships early."* • *"We got to push across the service lines—especially for females."* • "I maintain contact with my mentors." • "I maintain those relationships over time." • Mentoring proactive protégé: "That's an ongoing relationship." • "I still see my *retired mentors* from the service. They always *say, "Call me if you ever need anything."* • "I really started to develop the relationships with mentors who are still my mentor today, even after 25+ years because the program entered the service under I was able to network with others in the same program. They are influential." • Mentoring: "I stay connected with my protégés." • "How comfortable are with yourself? A number of you are on the same road. *We did not recognize competition. Network. Maintain contact."*
Leader Qualities	• Leader qualities: "They will follow you to hell and back. Take interest in them and their families." • "Be humble. Be honest, so people will come to you." • Leaders: "As flag officers, we are very humble. The more senior you get the more humble you are that you get to serve others. You have to give back." • Leadership: "I rely on my junior folks: *You always need another set of eyes on it.*" • Perfect your skill: "We need people to invest in their careers/themselves and others."

Mentoring and Professional Association	• Mentorship program: "It has to be comprehensive: *Cradle to grave.* A structured program can work absolutely—gave a model of how it might work."
	• Institutionalizing it: "It's like a self-licking ice cream cone."
	• "Senior leaders in my service are supportive of building relationships with affinity groups. The affinity groups have provided professional development for minorities. One service chief required all sitting COs to go to an affinity group meeting."
	• "They exposed me to the association and the importance of being a member."
	• "Formal mentoring may work for JOs who need to get out of 'the corner'—be proactive. I have JOs who email long emails—I have asked them to use the enter key!"
	• 411 not a 911: "I have a few more of those kinds of stories—the NPS student who never finished the thesis who is not promoted and wonders why. Getting to that JO before he makes the mistake, before he lets something go too long before clearing it up."
	• Mentoring: "In the early days of my career the association, the networks, that is we got information."
	   • *"Did we even have the latest information?"*
	   • "Someone at the association said you have to have a *411 not a 911.*"
	• *Mentoring the millennials: "Well I don't see many JOs 'beating feet' to talk to flag officers as we did when I was coming along. I don't want to do an autopsy—you want to share success."*
	• "I remember feeling *isolated*—I needed someone outside of the chain of command to talk to."
	• Resources that helped: "The camaraderie, peer mentoring in informal settings" (gave examples).
	• "I am involved with my Greek fraternity and all Greek, whichever fraternity; in the military, we are one team."
	• Incorrect mentoring as a JO, this professional association was not helpful: "Were all conferences like this—negative and complaining, how do we get the white officer to understand our experience?"

Subtheme	Critical Incidents and Recommendation for Privileging Association Members
Mentoring	• "I had no mentor in the structured sense. *I cannot relate to having a mentor.*"
	• "My mentor, he challenged me. He helped me understand calculated risks" (gave examples).
	• "I see you young people who think they have it—maybe its pride. You got to be approachable to them. *Everyone wants to be known as having an impact in life.*"
	• *"My father* was my mentor. I was in sports. I made up in my mind that this is my career and I am going to do my best. I owed it to my service: They challenged me and they gave me the task so I owed it to them."
	• *"My family* was my mentor. They were not going to let me fail in college. Then I got peers and we mentored each other. I am the only flag officer from my college. I was not the stand out. My name is not on plaques there" (he gave more examples).
	• "Having a great *family* background helps—nurturing, motivating—It helps shape you."
	• *Role models: "*Give them a hand up: We come from all rungs of society, be a role model like those that went before you."
	• *Mentoring: "My mentor made me feel like I add value to the service.*"
	• *Dear John letter: "*I was in a *formal program* at headquarters—my mentor did not 'fit.'"
	• "My worst mentor was in a *formal program* in my service—It was horrible. It has been a lot of lip service not a lot of specifics."
	• *"Mentoring helps you catch up to 'them.'* I remember this one white male officer I was at OCS with…After all these years, I finally feel I'm on par with him…. I stay in touch with them."
	• "It is sometimes event mentoring."
	• *"I took a vested interested in my JOs.* I felt it important to start them out right. Here is what I did….Mentor is a new term for something I have been doing all my life."
	• *Role model:* "I thought I could connect with him because he was as minority officer…. I had a shaving question… *I will never forget that bad experience.* Never underestimate your impact on others."
	• *Role models: "*I like the coaching model and teamwork. I had some good role models early in my career that help shaped and set that same example for me."
	• Mentoring: "He set the course for me."
	• The mentor: "It started when he was the vice service chief, but he was probably the most positive mentor that I could have hoped to have. *He initiated the relationship.*"
	• "Mentors are in a position to see far beyond what you see—and do things for you."
	• "They consider me as a role model for them…. As I became senior, that is what I do now, is mentor quite a few people—recommendation letters, counseling not only those in my service but thinking about coming into the military. I really never realize how many people I may have affected."
	• "I have been fortunate because I have had some horrible leaders, [from whom I] learned what not to do, but I have had the benefit of some truly amazing people that I've worked for that have been phenomenal."

Participant Observations

It is usually desirable for the researcher to observe an event himself or herself

rather than having to rely on what others have seen or heard (Stake, 1995). For this

fieldwork, I attended three, three-day association conferences, observing mentoring

events and panel discussions on leadership, diversity, and women in the military. I also

observed parts of three association board of director meetings, including one meeting at

which the ART briefed the board members. This meeting gave me an opportunity to

observe the ART in action. In these events, I was a participant observer—that is,

someone who observes activities and is known to the group (Merriam, 2009).

Documents

Public records of NNOA and the sea services were excellent sources of historical

and current information. The ART members reviewed diversity, career development, and

mentoring policies for the sea services, as well as the association's annual reports and

operations and strategic plans. We also used NNOA's board meeting minutes and briefs

from past association training and development conferences to help frame our

interventions and provide knowledge on diversity, career development and mentoring

policies, taking careful note of how policy in these areas had evolved over time. The

majority of these documents were available for download from the official websites of

the sea services and the association. Historical documents also were obtained by using

Google Scholar and from personal files of NNOA members (including me). These

personal files yielded old sea service instructions and official service messages related to

diversity and mentoring, plus NNOA's past newsletters. Personal documents of mine,

such as reflection and research memos, documented my actions, experiences, and feelings

as I conducted the research. I also used photos taken by the official association

photographer and my own personal photographs from three NNOA training and

development conferences to support my observations and build the pilot website.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred throughout the interview and transcription processes. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) recommended that researchers develop a provisional "start list" of analytic codes prior to fieldwork—a practice they referred to as *deductive* coding. That list emerges from the theoretical framework, research questions, hypotheses, problem areas, and/or key variables that the researcher brings to the study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). In this AR case study, I developed deductive provisional codes from the research questions, my knowledge of NNOA and the sea services, and the academic and military literature. Using these deductive codes, I conducted a first-cycle manual coding of the interview with a Navy senior officer participant. I chose this participant because I am very familiar with Navy vernacular and culture. This allowed me to analyze the data from a point of strength while learning a new skill. I performed the first-cycle coding manually; that is, I annotated the hardcopy interview using the deductive codes. In the right hand margin, I annotated the words or phrases that described the deductive codes of rank structure, doctrine, military culture, etc. During the first cycle, I also used in-vivo coding, which uses words or phrases from a participant's own language to construct codes and categories (Miles et al., 2014). Using in-vivo coding along with my deductive codes allowed specific words and chunks of data to be identified related to critical incidents of career development, mentoring, and race. Table 15 presents the subtheme codes from the senior officer participant interviews.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Qualitative and case study research are prone to questions of validity and trustworthiness. Adopting an interpretive (not positivist) approach—in which this research originated—I incorporated the strategies recommended by Merriam (2009) for qualitative research. Merriam endorsed triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, the researcher's position or reflexivity, peer review/examination, audit trial, rich, thick descriptions to contextualize the study, and maximum variation in sample selection. Creswell (2009) also encouraged the use of triangulation, member checking, rich, thick description, and clarification of researcher bias to achieve accuracy and credibility of the findings. The following section describes how each of these qualitative research strategies was employed during data collection and analysis.

At the beginning of the research process, I created and maintained a case study database that included field notes, researcher memos, documents, audio and hardcopy interview transcripts, and observational notes collected during the research process. Yin (2014) suggested that the researcher should create such a database as a method of improving the reliability and quality of case study research. When aligned with Merriam's (2009) audit trail—a detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the study—a database strengthens the validity and trustworthiness of the findings.

I accomplished data triangulation by analyzing observations of speed-mentoring sessions (sessions conducted by the client and are similar to speed dating), critical incident interviews of the 13 senior officers in the sea services conducted by the ART,

minutes from the frequent ART meetings and exit interviews of the ART. The themes that emerged from the triangulation were justified by these records and provided data for credible findings. Creswell (2009) agreed with the establishment of themes by joining several sources or perspectives from participants, a process, he said, that adds validity to the study.

Member checking was accomplished by providing each senior officer with a copy of the interview transcript to verify the accuracy of the information. In addition, I conducted follow-up interviews or email exchanges with interview participants' to verify and crosscheck information derived from the interviews. The ART, made up of seasoned service officers, also crosschecked the data from the interviews with emerging themes, thereby further ensuring the accuracy of the themes. The evidence and findings were coupled with rich, thick descriptions from the critical incident interviews and dialogues from ART meetings to provide the reader with a way to understand the many mentoring experiences of the minority officer participants and to add emphasis to the instances when a mentor made a difference in the outcome of an officer's career development.

As a novice researcher learning qualitative research skills, I relied on the process of documenting (by handwritten, typed, and/or audio memos) my subjectivity and personal assumptions. The researcher memos included information that assisted in clarifying the preconceptions I held about mentoring as a career development tool for minority commissioned officers and the various processes and strategies of conducting research (Merriam, 2009; Miles, Huberman, & Creswell 2004). I categorized the memos under the following labels: *personal identity*, *professional identity*, and *graduate-student researcher* (Cox, 2012).

In discussing reliability in case study research, Yin (2014) stated that if a second researcher, following the same procedures as the first researcher, can conduct the same case again and achieve the same findings and conclusions, then the study is reliable. He clarified that the emphasis should be on doing the same case over, not on replicating the results of one case by doing another case study. Merriam (2009) maintained that qualitative research is conducted to explain the world as those in the world experience it and that reliability from the traditional perspective rests on the assumption that a study is more valid if repeated observations in the same study or replications of the entire study produce the same results. She contended that simply because a number of people have experienced the same phenomenon does not make the observations more reliable. By way of analogy, she pointed out that a faulty thermometer that consistently records boiling water at 85 degrees is reliable but not valid. A researcher who uses triangulation, peer examination, investigator position, and audit trial, she said, can ensure reliability.

One goal that I maintained throughout the research was to provide findings that the sea services could use to construct policy relating to mentoring and career development. Merriam (2009) addressed reliability and validity in qualitative research by stating, "Concerns of validity and reliability can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented" (p. 210). By accomplishing this, the researcher achieves rigor in the research. Merriam (2009) asserted, "To have any effect on either the practice or the theory of a field, research studies must be rigorously conducted" (p. 210). To achieve rigor in qualitative research, a researcher

must address internal validity (how research findings match reality), reliability (consistency), and external validity (transferability to other situations) (Merriam, 2009).

Researcher's Subjectivity and Biases

My heritage is a compilation of many races, as it is for most people. From an early age, my heritage reinforced the awareness that I was not a member of the privileged class. This knowledge has brought with it certain biases—that, for instance, I have to work harder and be better at most tasks than those who are in the privileged class. I identify with being the underdog. However, it was necessary to set aside these biases as a researcher. Merriam (2009) advocated that these prejudices and assumptions be *bracketed*, or temporarily set aside, so that the researcher can examine consciousness itself.

It is common practice for researchers to examine their biases and assumptions about the phenomenon of interest before embarking on a study (Merriam, 2009). Other areas that I examined as a researcher were the influence of education and the military on the research. Growing up in the South, I did not know many people who did not believe education was the key to improving their social status and that service in the military was a respectable job ranking directly behind being a teacher or church minister. Of course, this is not true of every locale and every person, but I did find that the officers associated with this research did relate to these statements. There were many also associated with a Greek sorority or fraternity, as am I, which can happen only if you attend college.

As an educated Black woman, I have used my education as the foundation for my career. Joining the military after graduating from college, I obtained my masters as a full time student at a military school, as it was a requirement for promotion. Affiliation with

the military moved me from the lower class to the middle class. As a researcher, I have balanced my views and biases by putting the needs of the association first.

I am also mindful not to judge others simply because they do not have the same belief systems as I. I try very hard not to assume that because I am tolerant of others' beliefs, they will be tolerant of mine. I know this is an assumption that I often subscribe to when communicating with others; I believe that you will listen to me and seek to understand me because I listened to your thoughts.

The influence of 30 years in the military and of serving as a senior officer for ten of those years (Navy 06) has instilled in me the belief that military officers are professionals and will accomplish their assigned task with proper guidance. These same attributes make me a part of the system I am seeking to change. Throughout this study, I had to consistently reflect and answer the question, "Am I objectively seeking solutions, or am I really so accustom to how we do things in the military that I see no issue."

Another assumption I entered this research with was that formal mentoring can be effective for the career development of junior officers in the NNOA, helping therefore to level the playing field for racial minority commissioned junior officers in the sea service. This was the primary focus of this action research case study but after the pilot interviews we changed the focus to career development interventions, such as mentoring, that assist in career advancement. This was more appropriate.

Lastly, in relation to NNOA—the professional association that served as my client—I am an insider. I was in the military for 30 years and have been an active member of this organization for over 30 years. I have always sought for NNOA to realize its full potential for assisting all of its members. Looking back upon my time with

the Navy and NNOA, I recognize that the association needs a stronger platform for mentoring officers. My desire to help NNOA create or enhance avenues for junior officers to access mentoring resources derives from my own desire, earlier in my military career, to seek mentoring without enduring the aggravation of making contact with seniors who might not want to serve as mentors.

Summary

This chapter presented the qualitative methods used in this study. The critical incident technique was the primary method of data collection and was used for interviews with thirteen senior officer participants in the sea services. I also used the CIT for the action research team members' exit interview. Thematic analysis of the data was accomplished using the constant comparative method. Issues of validity and trustworthiness were addressed to ensure the quality of the study.

CHAPTER 4

ACTION RESEARCH CASE STUDY REPORT

When a ship runs aground, chaos ensues instantly. Passengers panic as they make

sense of what is happening to them. They move frantically about looking for loved ones,

looking for a way off what they believe is a doomed ship, and looking for assistance from

the captain and crew. Meanwhile, the captain and crew are making every effort to

prevent injury or loss of life and to bring tranquility to the out-of-control ship and those

aboard it. They quickly recall and skillfully execute training on shipboard safety, even as

the situation around them may appear hopeless to others. As I consider the chaos of a

ship run aground, I see it as a fitting metaphor for the lack of warning an organization

receives when its programs begin to founder.

NNOA's business units, in particular, have experienced periods of lackluster

performance. Specifically, in the early nineties its financial solvency was in jeopardy

because of a lawsuit that lasted for years and concluded devastatingly, followed soon

after by financial hardships brought on by the Great Recession. The recession led to

lower attendance at NNOA's annual professional development and training conference

due to the sea services' reduced financial support to the association. In its human

resources unit, the association's labor force is all-volunteer, and the majority of those

who volunteer have a primary obligation to a military or civilian job. The military jobs

regularly require long workdays and deployments. For a few years, NNOA employed a

conference planner to plan its annual conference and an executive assistant to handle day-

to-day operations—but not at the same time. In 2013, the board of directors voted and the membership agreed to eliminate the executive assistant position for financial reasons. (The board had already eliminated the conference planner position in the late 1990s during the time of the lawsuit.)

Strong leadership from the board of directors and chapter presidents has averted major chaos within NNOA. However, the leaders have a personal responsibility to prepare for their own professional advancement while also ensuring that the association is operating properly—a juggling task they handle well. One responsibility is the planning and execution of NNOA's annual conference, which can bring all other association business to a halt if not organized efficiently. At the conference, the membership elects new board members and, depending on a leader's position, the months following the conference can see a slow return to the day-to-day proceedings of association business. This reality prompted one team member to reflect, "The Board is like a bucket with holes in it. People come in and then they leave. Whom you talk to today may not be around in a year or two." It is during such "high-tempo" times of leadership transition that an organization can miss warning signs that its programs are running aground. In the case of NNOA, some of the association's mission-oriented programs were showing signs of distress during these periods—signs that were missed as the leadership focused attention on conference planning, membership growth, and financial issues.

In this chapter, I provide the story of the action research case study. I describe how I entered the client system, how the action research team (ART) was formed, and how we constructed interventions based on a needs assessment. I also outline the action research cycles (chronologically, whenever possible, though many of the cycles and

stages overlapped or happened concurrently). This is a narrative of learning in action that

positively influenced the career development and advancement of the association's

membership. The following section offers a brief overview of the action research

process.

Action Research Cycles

During the action research process, multiple action cycles operate concurrently

(Coghlan & Brannick, 2012). Constructing, planning action, taking action, and

evaluating action are the four basic stages that comprise a cycle, with the first cycle

preceded by a pre-step phase that includes the researcher's entry into the client system

and the building of the action research team. This case story included three cycles: a

needs assessment, a mentoring program pilot, and critical incident interviews with senior

officers. Since the story took place in multiple successive and concurrent cycles of action

and reflection, the team members may have constructed in one cycle while evaluating

action in another. For example, the data collected in the pilot senior officer interviews

(phase 1 of cycle 3) fed into the mentoring program pilot (phase 2 of cycle 2) website

development. Table 16 outlines the action research cycles and dates for each cycle, and

offers a framework for the remainder of the chapter.

Table 16

Action Research Pre-Steps and Cycles

Pre-Step / Cycle	Action Steps	Timeline
Pre-Step	Initial investigation as insider researcher Attended July 2013 training conference Met with key board members Observed speed mentoring + board meeting Reviewed documents and websites	May – September 2013
Pre-Step	Signed MOA Recruited/trained ART members	September 2013 – May 2014
1. Needs Assessment	Reviewed survey data from speed mentoring event Determined ACADEMYWOMEN collaboration Determined chapter efforts from visits and discussion with leadership Reviewed DoD research	July 2013 – July 2014

2. Mentoring Program Pilot	Hired a web designer
	Developed mentoring training and certification for web delivery
	Evaluated and selected software for capturing mentoring
	Launched mentoring program pilot
	Surveyed mentoring program pilot participants via email
	Team members determined best ways to connect with junior officers:
	  • Professional FAQs—event mentoring
	  • Blogs on website
	  • Senior officers provide career development information via video
	Provided monthly/quarterly board updates
		July 2014 –
		December 2015

3. Senior Officer CIT Interviews	Planned, conducted, and analyzed pilot CIT interviews Conducted remaining senior officer interviews with new interview protocol	April 2013 – February 2015

Pre-Step: Framing and Selecting the Case Study

I began the entry process with my new prospective client feeling apprehensive, anxious, and generally overwhelmed by the entire doctoral-research experience. I say "prospective client" because I had spent the previous year working with another client

only to learn that it would not be possible for me, as an insider, to continue the research due to DoD regulations. With the new client, I chose once again to focus on a military organization in which I was an insider; I knew there were "skeletons in the closet" and that I would want to tread lightly during the entry process so as not to raise concerns about the study or inadvertently harm the association. Dutton, Fahey, and Narayana (1983, as cited in Coghlan & Brannick, 2012) recommended framing insider action research by "thinking in terms of issues, rather than problems or opportunities, which warrant attention is vital, as language and labels are of the utmost importance at the outset" when framing and selecting your insider project" (p. 54). No words were more applicable to my entry into the client system. Not surprisingly, during the entry process, the words I chose to label the concerns voiced about NNOA's mentoring efforts proved worrisome to some board members.

The Client System

In 1972, racial minority officers assigned to recruit high school students to the prestigious U.S. Naval Academy held a meeting to strategize ways to improve diversity representation at the academy. This meeting marked the founding of the National Naval Officers' Association (NNOA), whose membership now includes active-duty, reserve, and retired officers of the Coast Guard, Navy, and Marine Corps, midshipmen and cadets from the Naval Academy, the Coast Guard Academy, and Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC), and interested civilians. I am a life member of the association.

As a credible nonprofit organization, NNOA's mission is "to recruit and retain diversity officers for the Sea Services" (NNOA, 2013, p. 4). The Secretaries of the Navy and Homeland Security sanction the association along with each of the service chiefs.

NNOA members connect to one another via the board of directors and the 44 chapters located throughout the U.S. and overseas.

The association's annual professional development and training conference represents NNOA's signature event, where attendees receive information on professional development topics designed to enhance their knowledge while increasing overall awareness of issues affecting the sea services. The conference also offers attendees an opportunity to benefit from open dialogue with flag officers who are association members and with other sea service leaders such as the commandants of the Coast Guard and Marine Corps and the Chief of Naval Operations.

Entry Process

As a previous NNOA board member under several different presidents, I knew that major projects required board approval. My strategy was to understand the dynamics of the then-current board, determine an appropriate point of entry, and judiciously monitor the required tasks to gain approval for a memorandum of agreement (MOA). I did not plan a marketing campaign to persuade the board to implement a mentoring program accessible to all members, since mentoring was a focus of NNOA's mission, and, at the time, the association did not provide this service to all members. Instead, my prepared brief to the board included potential opportunities included in the study that could connect with NNOA's mission. I thought that would be sufficient, as the mentoring program needed improvement, and my services were free. However, as the entry process unfolded, I was indeed required to market the study to the board.

Contracting Process

In July 2013, at NNOA's annual professional development and training conference, I met over lunch with key board members, as well as the president. After this meeting, the president provided a board point of contact to assist in gaining board approval for the study. Four months later, the MOA was signed—but not without some obstacles. The month following the initial meeting, I briefed the board via conference call and encountered resistance by some board members related to costs and the overall need for establishing a mentoring program at the national level. To explain how the study would integrate with the existing program, I enlisted key members of the association who detailed the benefits of an expanded mentoring program to NNOA. It took longer than expected for the study to gain official approval because the board wanted to ensure that NNOA would not incur any cost, they were concerned that this effort would make existing mentoring efforts appear ineffective, and they were in the midst of planning the annual conference, resulting in very little work on the MOA. This was an important lesson learned regarding future business with the board. In his advice to organization development (OD) practitioners, Anderson (2012) pointed out that "even internal consultants must market one's services as a part of the job" (p. 104).

Anderson (2012) defined the contracting process as "one of developing an agreement with a client on the work to be performed" (p. 107). In my early written reflections, it is clear that the work I was to perform for the association was not well understood by either the board or me when we signed the MOA. The promises made with my client in the MOA were basic requirements, as both parties knew them. As confirmed by Anderson, "in their zeal to be hired for an assignment, consultants may also

overpromise results, offer an 'armchair' diagnosis without background data, or agree to implement an intervention or strategy without additional analysis" (p. 106). Some or all of these over-extensions may have taken place during negotiations with NNOA because the final MOA was not the MOA I submitted at the beginning of the negotiations.

Process for Informing the Client

The NNOA board received monthly and quarterly updates about the case study from their representative to the ART during their regular monthly conference calls and quarterly board meetings. Having the board representative on the ART was invaluable to providing accurate information at these meetings and for clarifying electronic status reports, which I created based on the team meetings. I then discussed the reports with the representative to ensure clarity and accuracy of the information. On several occasions, I had the opportunity to brief the board personally at the quarterly meeting via telephone or in person. Shortly after my July 2014 brief to the board, I was invited to give a short presentation to conference attendees in Quantico, Virginia, and was given an hour to brief the membership at the July 2015 conference in San Diego, California. The board and membership provided constructive comments at these meetings and were genuinely pleased with the progress of the case study. The representative to the ART did not seek reelection to the board in the summer of 2015, whereupon I volunteered as the chairperson for the dormant mentoring committee and began providing status reports to the board via this avenue, thus maintaining direct contact with the board. As the work of ART concluded, we began to function as the mentoring committee for the association.

Pre-Step: Recruiting the Action Research Team

The action research team members were also association members and volunteers. The president suggested the initial membership of the team, since the board wanted a point of contact with the board and someone who was already working in the area of mentoring for the association. The president's first choice declined the position of board point of contact because of the association's perceived lack of commitment to previous mentoring initiatives and competing family requirements, but did agree to serve as an ART member. The Coast Guard representative to the board became the point of contact. His passion for mentoring would soon become evident, as he was a very proactive member of the ART.

Action Research Team Charter

As our first task, the board representative and I developed a team charter as we waited for IRB approval of the research which was received in April 2014. The charter served as a tool for recruiting team members and provided the necessary information to aide in productive collaboration within the ART. As members would be on active duty with primary jobs and, sometimes, additional duty commitments, it was appropriate to address time requirements with the ART, giving team members more latitude in determining how a required action would be accomplished by the agreed upon ART due date.

Action Research Team Collaboration

The ART had 35 meetings by telephone (using a free online conference call service) and one face-to-face meeting during our over 24 months together. Meetings were recorded and made available to members. We shared documents and audio files

using Dropbox, online file-sharing software. Team members also spent time conducting

flag officers interviews, reviewing interview transcripts, matching mentoring dyads,

reviewing website software, writing and reviewing learning modules for use in the

mentoring program pilot. Team members were prepared to contribute to discussions

based on the agenda provided in advance of each meeting. Two team members

completed the online human research curriculum training provided by the Collaborative

Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) so they could conduct critical incident interviews

of their respective service's flag officers.

I followed a systematic pattern in forming the action research team. I contacted

each prospective member individually. This initial contact involved inviting them to be a

part of the team, discussing action research methodology, and describing the purpose of

the team. I then provided documents by email that framed the research, followed by

another call to answer any remaining questions the prospective member might have had.

(I did not assume they would contact me with questions.) By the time ART held its first

official telephone conference meeting, we all knew our purpose, as reflected in our

conversation regarding action research and our goals for the team. Our participatory

research did not require a "considerable amount of time and effort to establish rapport"

(Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 92) because of the pre-step of introducing members to the

team and because each of us knew (or knew about) at least one team member through

NNOA.

Team members were motivated to conduct the research, and most never missed a

meeting. If I was late in sending out a meeting agenda, a team member would email or

text me a reminder. One team member reflected on the value of having an agenda: "[It]

kept us focused, and time was not lost repeating or going over material." If a team

member missed a meeting, I corresponded with that individual via email or telephone to

ensure that the team had received his or her input regarding the discussed topic and to

make him or her aware of other issues raised during the meeting, as each of us

represented a separate component of the sea services, and input from all was crucial.

There were never any major concerns regarding group dynamics or bonding. Team

members were consistent in focusing their energies on providing a professional product

for the client; they yielded their point of view to the greater good of the association.

One topic in particular—cross-gender and cross-race mentoring relationships—

garnered incredibly rich dialogue and opposing reactions from the ART members. In the

end, we agreed that for the mentoring program pilot we would not limit our dyads to the

same race or the same gender. This was a working solution that all could support. In

addition, early on in our meetings, my journal notes contained several comments to

myself to let others speak. This concern dissipated, however, as each team members

began to take responsibility for an aspect of the research. When a member had the floor

for reporting on his or her area of responsibility, that person usually commented on other

aspects of the research, thereby allowing members' varied opinions on all topics to be

shared.

Action Research Team Members

The three initial ART members, including me, determined the initial criteria for

team membership. Members were to be active-duty senior commissioned officers, with

at least one member from each of the three sea services represented by NNOA. The

senior rank was necessary in order to include members who had served long enough to

understand service culture, their particular advancement system, and mentoring programs. We also sought members who were familiar with their service promotion and retention requirements. In addition, we determined that there should be junior officer representation on the team, since the mentoring program is designed to benefit this cadre of officers; therefore, their input would be valuable in understanding their needs. Unfortunately, a junior member was not consistently available, so we received input from the junior officers in the mentoring program pilot. Additionally, we agreed that each member should be on a career path that consistently promotes to flag rank, have a strong interest in mentoring, and have a successful military career overall. The ART would also include representation from both genders. The following is a brief description of the role and skills of each team member.

The Coast Guard Representative: The Navigator

At the time of the case study, the Coast Guard representative to the board had 39 years of military service, 14 as an enlisted person. An ART member from its inception, he had risen in the military ranks to the position of Captain (pay grade 06). His knowledge of Coast Guard practices and policies on diversity and inclusion of minority officers was invaluable in navigating the decision-making process for the team. He provided real-life scenarios faced by diversity officers, which helped to guide team discussions and decisions in meeting the needs of the ART's target audience. An engineering officer who had held numerous positions on Coast Guard cutters—including that of executive officer and commanding officer—his understanding of the plight of minority officers in the Coast Guard was invaluable. In one of his reflections, he stated that he was somewhat skeptical about the presumption that there were enough African-

American flag officers in the Coast Guard to meet the ART's requirement of interviewing four from each of the sea services. "The Coast Guard has only had three African-American officers," he stated, "and only one is currently on active duty."

On the subject of the amount of work required to complete this project, he expressed uncertainty about his ability to accommodate the necessary time commitment. In his role as the NNOA board representative, he was instrumental in obtaining board approval for the study. In addition, he orchestrated the team's creation of learning modules for leadership and career development. (These learning modules are currently used by mentoring dyads and are available on the team-developed website.) Reflecting on his ART experience, he said, "I am excited about the prospect of providing the association and the sea services with reliable data and procedures to support the association's reputation as the premier mentoring organization that the Sea Services rely on when they have concerns with minority officer retention." Indeed, he took advantage of every opportunity to include information regarding the mentoring pilot initiative in the context of his service leadership.

This ART member left the team after retiring in the summer of 2015. He recruited his replacement, of whom the board and the ART approved; however, his replacement did not serve as the Coast Guard representative to the board. The new Coast Guard representative was transitioning to a new job at the time of acceptance, and it was a few months before attendance at team meetings. It was refreshing for the team to welcome a new member with fresh thoughts and a similar passion for career development and mentoring.

The Navy Representative: The Combat System's Officer

A ship's sophisticated combat system is designed to support brief, intense engagements in which the full, simultaneous, operational capability of the ship, including maximum firepower of all weapons, will be employed to support national security. It is the responsibility of the combat systems officer to ensure the smooth operations of this capability. Our newest team member, the Navy representative, joined the ART in the summer of 2015 after learning about the study at the annual training and development conference. At that time, he was in his post-command tour serving on the Navy's staff in the Pentagon. In this position, he kept the team abreast of Navy policy that could influence how we constructed NNOA's mentoring program. As a surface-warfare officer, his community consistently promoted to the flag rank. His skillset assisted the team in understanding how best to develop mentoring tools that can be accessible when personnel are deployed at sea or in remote locations. He confirmed our concerns regarding connectivity issues when deployed and posed alternative solutions to related problems, such as the use of smartphone applications.

The Marine Corps Representative: The Communications Officer

A ship's communications officer is responsible for all secure and non-secure, tactical and non-tactical electronic communication. The Marine Corps representative of the ART provided significant leadership and service to the team in this area. A graduate of the Secretary of Defense's prestigious fellows program, he was passionate about mentoring. Reflecting on his own mentoring experience, he acknowledged that it "reinforced my belief that mentorship is absolutely necessary to help prepare a group of leaders to perform at a higher level than they are accustomed to." His organizational and

operational knowledge from private industry was also invaluable. As a guide for this study, the team used his prior mentoring program experiences in NNOA. About his assignment to the team, he noted, "It is my personal desire to see everyone meet their fullest potential—their God-given potential. Many people have different definitions and opinions about mentoring. Simply put, mentoring is counseling, advising, teaching, and assisting others in their life/professional journey."

The Member at Large: The Anchor

Our metaphorical anchor was a commissioned officer with a master's degree from the prestigious Naval Postgraduate School. This team member's knowledge of NNOA board policy was invaluable, as was the energy with which he tackled every task. We counted on this team member to keep us grounded. As with other team members, he possessed a passion for the history and culture of the association and for mentoring: "My main reason for getting involved is because I expected that the association would establish a mentoring program using this study as their template. It would be very disappointing to me to find out that it is an option for them and not something they are committed to adopting." The other team members echoed these sentiments.

The Researcher's Role

As the researcher, I did not want to stand at the helm all the time. All team members had great insight—from various vantage points—about mentoring program issues and the association. Since they were cognizant of what it meant to be mentored (two having assisted in developing programs in the past), it was easy and comfortable for me to pass the baton of leadership to different members. My professional skills as a human resources practitioner in the military as well as my experiences with the client at

the chapter and national levels provided me with the tools to guide when necessary and offer meaningful solutions, and share insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the association. In addition, as a seasoned military human resource officer, I had the background needed for understanding the unique career development concerns facing the association's membership. Therefore, I was well equipped to collaborate with the team and the association's leadership in exploring different avenues for determining the appropriate course of action for the development of a plan for improving our mentoring program.

The Interventions

The team meetings revealed a wealth of shared knowledge among team members for improving the existing mentoring program. Because all team members had experience with mentoring, we capitalized on these experiences to formulate possible interventions. Each team member took ownership of brainstorming how to address the mentoring issue and formulating interventions. We continually made course corrections based on needs-assessment results, evaluations of other interventions, reflections on our actions, and the advice of my dissertation committee. One such course correction came after the evaluation of the needs-assessment data and pilot interviews, when we decided to refocus our purpose and research question on career development and advancement.

The dissertation committee reminded me to keep the action research team's purpose and research questions at the forefront of the team meetings. Since the purpose and research questions had evolved based on data collected during the needs assessment and pilot interviews, this was certainly sage advice; doing so assisted us in our future data analysis. In a series of meetings (both asynchronous and synchronous) on the subject of

what it means to be *marginalized* or *privileged*, the team generated new ideas and new understandings of what these terms might convey in the context of the study. One team member asked:

> What do we mean by officers "who have been marginalized?" Is that an objective or subjective term? Is marginalization due to the strength of the officer's evaluation or someone's feeling of being marginalized? Alternatively, does it refer to someone who has received less than glamorous assignments, rendering them professionally marginalized? I ask because our definition can dramatically affect the officers that this applies to.

The team member continued:

> Assuming someone has had a less than stellar assignment, career, or officer evaluations, it is probably too late for anyone to intervene. This is where mentorship, as an intervention, is important early on in a career—junior officers need to be paired with career professionals who have proven successful in their careers. If you want to be successful, you have to know what successful people do.

This observation—which was also raised by senior officers during interviews—encouraged the team to focus more closely on its efforts, namely on how we were planning to deliver the career development tools via the Internet.

Cycle 1: Needs Assessment

The ART members accomplished a needs assessment of the association's mentoring program to discover what was happening at the time, what members wanted, and how to provide perennial mentoring to all members wishing to be mentored. We

constructed the original mentoring program by reviewing the association and chapter

websites and documents, attendance at annual conferences, and discussions with

association members and team members who were active at the board and chapter levels.

The program involved the formation of informal mentoring pairs at the annual conference

(or at the chapter level) in a two-hour speed-mentoring session (similar to a speed-dating

format). In September 2013, at the same time NNOA signed the MOA, it also added the

ability of members to connect to mentors by submitting a form on the national website.

(This initiative was separate from their agreement with me to explore new mentoring

opportunities for members.) At the chapter level, the association's operations manual

directs each chapter to have a mentoring program. The chapters do this by hosting career

development events and conducting speed-mentoring sessions. Some chapters are more

active and successful with these efforts than others. Table 17 summarizes the team's

efforts during the needs-assessment cycle.

Table 17

Cycle 1: Needs Assessment

AR Step	Action Taken	Dates
Constructing	Met with Board Constructed current program	July 2013 – Sept 2013
Planning Action	Researched what was already available Attended speed-mentoring event @ July 2013 conference What type mentoring?	July2013 – April 2014

Taking Action	Reviewed survey data from speed-mentoring
	   event
	Determined ACADEMYWOMEN collaboration
	Determined chapter efforts from visits and
	   discussions with leadership
	Reviewed DoD research
		September 2013 –
		July 2014

Evaluating Action	Data revealed that mentoring via the web is a viable option Tools on the web should be provided Training needed for how to conduct mentoring Active contact is needed with the junior officer	July 2014

Constructing the Issue

The team constructed the mentoring needs of the association by using data

gathered at the national and chapter levels. At the national level, we reviewed survey

data collected from attendees at a conference speed-mentoring event, and at the chapter

level, we spoke with chapter leadership and used team members' knowledge of activities

from their existing and previous chapters. We also had discussions with an organization

that had provided web-based mentoring for three years to Navy women in nontraditional

jobs. Lastly, we reviewed research from the MLDC on the evaluation and assessment of

policies and practices that shape diversity among leaders in all of the military services.

Planning and Taking Action

In this phase, The ART reviewed data from various Association mentoring events at the national and chapter level, specifically speed mentoring and mentoring workshops. We were apprised of chapter leaders concerns with a mentoring program with oversight at the national level and we reviewed reports from the AcademyWomen and DoD regarding mentoring.

Speed mentoring survey. The association's event planners, one of whom was the board representative to the ART, conducted a survey as part of a two-hour speed-mentoring session held at the 2013 conference and provided the data to the team on behalf of the association. The purpose of the survey was to obtain information to improve the session and to understand what attendees wanted in terms of mentoring from the association. Thirty-six active-duty commissioned officers completed the survey. The majority was affiliated with the Coast Guard (55%) and was male (67%). Most session attendees had served in the military for 15 or more years (42%), and those with 11 to 15 years or 10 years or less, respectively, comprised 30% of the survey respondents.

The event was a success, with attendees commenting that speed-mentoring is effective but that the 20-minute session with each senior officer was too short. They suggested topics for future events, including race and gender issues, how to accomplish career management, and how to address challenging leadership scenarios. Additional comments included:

- "I would not be here if it was not for the association."
- "We need an avenue to sign up for mentors at the conference."
- "We need mentor training for mentors."

- "A structured mentoring program does not work. Mentoring is a personal commitment that goes both ways. Tools to help facilitate it are useful, but I have not really seen a successful 'structured' or 'mandated' program."

Taking action. The ART took action by incorporating attendees' comments into the training and certification module for mentors and protégés, providing mentoring tools via a website, and creating learning modules around some of the suggested topics. Despite the success of the speed-mentoring events, the association did not hold a speed-mentoring event at the 2014 conference due to time constraints but did schedule the event for the 2015 conference.

Chapter visits. The chapter visits and team members' knowledge of their own chapter activities yielded several results. The ART ascertained that speed-mentoring events were being held at the chapters located in military-concentrated areas and that these same chapters sponsored separate events centering on leadership and the promotion process. A number of chapters were struggling with low membership and operational commitments, so they were not actively connecting with their members through these events. The leaders we spoke with expressed concerns about how mentor and protégé matching and mentor training would occur, and how time requirements placed on mentors would be addressed.

Taking action. The team addressed the concerns of the chapter leaders by researching matching software, researching training avenues for the mentoring dyads, and looking at virtual mentoring options so mentors and protégés could address time constraints by integrating mentoring into their schedules as appropriate.

AcademyWomen. We approached this organization after my advisor made me aware of its collaboration with the Navy around mentoring efforts for women. (This collaboration began after my retirement form the Navy.) The team's discussions with AcademyWomen centered on how the organization used matching software, how we could collaborate, and the outcomes of the organization's work with the Navy, since AcademyWomen had provided web-based mentoring for three years to Navy women in nontraditional jobs through the Navy Office of Women's Policy's directorate. The NavyWomen eMentor Leadership program's purpose was to help Navy women increase their career satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain in uniform.

Taking action. Our efforts to collaborate by using AcademyWomen's matching software proved cost prohibitive at the time, as this was a researcher-funded study. The organization did offer the opportunity to integrate the ART's efforts with a new program it was launching with the Department of Veteran's Affairs that offered one-on-one mentoring opportunities and peer mentoring using a discussion forum format. We felt, however, that by accepting the opportunity, we would be confronted in the future with choices concerning boundaries (Coghlan & Brannick, 2012). Therefore, we decided to decline the offer since the study purpose was still evolving, we were unsure how participation in the new program would influence our requirements for participant confidentiality, and it was not clear how we could measure program effectiveness. We did believe that there could be future collaboration with the organization, and we did incorporate their lessons learned as we explored Internet options for the association.

DoD research. The team reviewed some issue and decision papers and the final report of the Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC). The commission

offered four explanations for discrepancies in representation among senior military leaders: low racial and ethnic minority and female presence among initial officer accessions, lower representation of racial and ethnic minority and female officers in career fields associated with advancement to flag or general officer rank, lower retention of midlevel female service members across the enlisted and officer spectrum, and lower rates of advancement among racial and ethnic minority and female officers ((MLDC) 2012, p. xvi).

Taking action. We concentrated on the MLDC's findings in the area of eliminating barriers to career advancement:

> The Services should ensure that all service members are equally prepared to manage their own career progression. Related preparation steps include educating all service members about the promotion process early in their careers and mentoring them at all stages of the career process. Multiple occasions for preparation can help service members recognize career-enhancing opportunities and make choices that further their professional and personal goals ((MLDC), 2012, p. xvii).

Evaluating Action

After evaluating the needs assessment, the team was motivated by the success of the NavyWomen eMentor Leadership program created by AcademyWomen. We wanted to offer Internet mentoring; thus, we determined we would plan a mentoring pilot that would provide Internet tools for mentoring. We had already begun to prepare for qualitative interviews with senior officers to determine factors that had marginalized their career. By identifying these factors, we could begin to address them in ways that would

be applicable to the concerns facing minority officers on a daily basis. We were encouraged by the findings of Noe, Greenberger, and Wang (2002), who "concluded that mentored individuals (versus nonmentored) report more career and job satisfaction, promotions, higher incomes and lower turnover intentions and work alienation" (p. 130). Additionally, in reviewing the data from the needs assessment and discussions with my dissertation advisor, we revised the purpose and research questions to focus on the career development and advancement of minority sea service commissioned officers.

Cycle 2: The Mentoring Program Pilot

The action research team used information from the needs assessment to determine the feasibility of developing a mentoring program pilot that used Internet tools. Relying on input from the speed-mentoring survey data, we constructed a plan to develop learning module for career development to assist mentors in advising protégés, thereby alleviating the time individual mentors would need to prepare for mentoring sessions on these subjects. We also want to use a software program to capture the mentoring activities of the mentoring dyads. We also planned to use data from the flag officer interviews to improve the pilot.

The team implemented Cycle 2 in four phases, each related to a specific outcome: (1) leaning modules, (2) a website for delivering the mentoring tools, (3) software to assist in the mentoring process, and (4) the mentoring pairs. The next section describes the planning and the action taken during each phase. Table 18 summarizes the action steps for Cycle 2.

Table 18

Cycle 2: Mentoring Program Pilot

AR Stage	ART Action Taken	Dates
Constructing	Data from the needs assessment was used to construct web presence	July 2014
Planning Action *Phase 1: Module Development* *Phase 2: Website Development* *Phase 3: Software for Mentoring* *Phase 4: Mentoring Pairs*	Strategized how to deliver mentoring on the web by reviewing service websites Researched web designers Strategized learning module approach How will we capture mentoring efforts? Who should be a part of the pilot?	May - August 2014
Taking Action *Phase 1: Module Development* *Phase 2: Website Development* *Phase 3: Software for Mentoring* *Phase 4: Mentoring Pairs*	Hired a web designer Developed mentoring training and certification for web delivery Evaluated and selected software for capturing mentoring Launched mentoring program pilot Team members determined best ways to connect junior officers: • Professional FAQs—event mentoring • Blogs on website • Senior officers provide career development information via video Surveyed mentoring program pilot participants by email	July 2014 - Nov 2015
Evaluating Action **Phase 1: Module Development** **Phase 2: Website Development** **Phase 3: Software for Mentoring** **Phase 4: Mentoring Pairs**	Module development was on point with no major concerns Software for mentoring was not user-friendly—reevaluate Connectivity to military sites was a problem—solutions are mostly too expensive Websites for career information may be best "pushed" to smartphones from the website using the Flip Board application Some mentoring pairs were not active as determined by an email survey from the service representatives	October 2014- December 2015

Planning and Taking Action: Phase 1: Learning module development

The Coast Guard representative to the ART took the lead in creating the learning

modules for leadership and development. His experience with the One Hundred Black

Men initiative and its mentoring program for youth played a key role in the development

of the modules, as did the Marine Corps representative, who had liaised in the

development of a mentoring program at the chapter level. Based on the collaborative

efforts of the team, a template for the learning modules was developed using a lesson

plan format. Each team member took responsibility for developing a few of the modules.

The Coast Guard representative reviewed each module and provided feedback for making

improvements. During the course of module development, we agreed to include a

separate mentor's lesson plan with each module, similar to a teacher's handbook. The

mentor's lesson plan addressed in more detail the objectives, purpose, and possible

reactions and answers to specific action items in each module. As one team member

reflected:

> Everyone was very engaged and appeared fully vested in getting modules
>
> completed. It was also nice that members volunteered to take on modules. Folks
>
> stepped up readily and seemed quite enthusiastic about the modules assigned. I
>
> liked that we picked modules based on our expertise and enthusiasm for the
>
> module. That should result in some great input.

Table 19 lists the learning modules for career development.

Table 19

Learning Modules for Career Development

Module #	Topic	Description
1	Introduction	Mentor and protégé develop a rapport. Establish expectations, exchange bios and contact information.
2	Career Planning and management	Provide protégé service specific career planning and management guidance.
3	Goal Setting	Provide protégé tools for establishing short and long-term personal and professional goals
4	Professional Development and Growth	Provide information on technical specialty training, professional organizations, Senior Service Schools.
5	Effective Communication	Provide guidance and references on effective writing, speaking, and listening.
6	Overcoming Challenges	Provide advice on avoiding setbacks from substance abuse, violence, fraternization and ethics
7	Work-life Balance	Assist protégé with maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life.
8	Public Speaking	Provide protégé tools on how to be a successful public speaker, the 6-Ps, staying professional when challenged.
9	Critical Thinking	Add to the protégé's knowledge of critical thinking and how to apply it to military scenarios facing a junior officer
10	Understanding Generational Differences	Provide the protégé with tools to assist in understanding how to maneuver in workplace generational differences that impact leaders and subordinates perceptions and affect mission attainment
11	Leadership Development	Protégé will be provided tools for leading in a "VUCA" environment. Coined in the late 1990's, the military-derived acronym stands for the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Also, provides tool for understanding leadership styles and how it affects others
12	Financial Management	Provide member basic financial management skills and emphasize the importance of being financially responsible.

Phase 2: Website development. A website was an appropriate intervention for this study because the officers targeted for the mentoring program will oftentimes be separated from their mentors or have limited face-to-face access to each other. The Marine Corps representative spearheaded this intervention. The ART wanted an avenue for highlighting the program, providing just-in-time information on mentoring, and connecting minority sea service officers. As the format of the website materialized on paper, it became necessary to bring onboard a web designer. We opted to hire the NNOA's web designer to ensure integration with the association's website. The designer incorporated our ideas, and the website—http://emilitary-mentoring.com—was rolled out at a board quarterly face-to-face meeting. The reaction from the board was positive. We were also mindful of expense, as the association would become responsible for the cost of maintaining the website once the program was transitioned to NNOA. We chose a web design that would integrate multiple third-party tools such as e-learning tools for chat, and blogging. The website also allows users to post information to group forums. Additionally, the design integrates with the Zoho People or Coach Simple software which is described in Table 19.

Phase 3: Software for mentoring. The team also wanted to deliver the learning modules interactively. After much deliberation and extensive review of software packages (see Table 20), we chose Coach Simple software. The software, which offered a one-year introductory price for the study, allowed each learning module to be divided into steps, making it easy for the mentoring pair to accomplish the requirements in a systematic process. Each mentoring pair was encouraged to allow one month to complete

each module, though the ART anticipated that a module could be completed in one to two weeks.

Phase 4: Mentoring dyads. The ART initially planned for our contact with the mentoring dyads to be at the chapter level; however, the final design for the action research study offered the pilot to all members. The change allowed us to test our preference of offering mentoring to those who were not able to associate with a chapter and to improve our chances of representative participation from all three sea services.

In late December 2014, the team launched the pilot via a system-wide email from the NNOA's website to all members, with the certification and matching processes lasting until early March 2015. A pre-announcement of the mentoring pilot program was made in early December 2014 by the association's president. The team received a few positive responses from retired officers who were association members regarding the pilot. For instance, one individual, who had retired at the flag rank and had advised the head of one of the sea services on diversity issues, commented: "I read with great interest the missive on the project honchoed by you. Well done! The program is needed and long overdue."

Table 20

Mentoring Software Reviewed

Software Program	Monthly Cost	Criteria Match	Features
Wild Apricot (www.wildapricot.com)	$25 - $50	70%	• Membership database • Fully integrated web site as long as domain name is purchased separately • Group setup, multiple levels • Set page views by user type • No user reports (only financial tracking)
Zoho People (www.zoho.com/people/)	$99	90%	• HR program • Time tracker, document storage, group setup, customizable forms , checklist setup • Customizable reports
Coach Simple (www.coachsimple.net)	$280	100%	• Coach/Mentor program- • Requires domain name purchase • Fully customizable mentoring program setup • Sales tracking-- Example brokers use to track real estate agent achieve of calls, appointments, showing and sales
Mentor Core	Price Negoitable	50%	• Was designed for mentoring youth • Support is adequate

Fifty commissioned offices were certified for the pilot through the online training and certification process. We matched six Coast Guard pairs, nine Navy pairs, and five Marine Corps pairs for a total of 20 pairs. The service representatives on the ART completed the matching. The ART wanted a protégé or mentor to stay in the program eight to twelve months, mentors will be pay grade 04 and above and junior officers will be pay grade 01-04. The dyads were expected to meet once a month via email,

telephone, or in person and to provide updates about their meetings on the mentoring website. Dyads were encouraged to interact as much as possible, since such interaction was important for the bonding and learning process

Evaluating Action: Phase 1: Module development

The action research team developed the modules on time even after adjusting the lesson plan template to include the career advisement decision-making template (based on the CIP model). Most mentoring pairs, however, only used the first module. Two reasons for this were a lack of web access from military installations and a steep learning curve for using the modules on the Coach Simple website. Also, according to a short survey administered at the end of the certification process, 40% of the participants reported feeling neutral about using the learning modules as a starting point for mentoring. In considering future options for offering tools to mentoring pairs, one team member suggested using videos to provide career development information. She stated, "Another suggestion I have: We talk about a FAQ page at the mentoring site, how about videos? We tape senior officers answering questions and upload to the site. They can even tape themselves, [then] upload."

Phase 2: Website development. The website received approximately 6,000 visits and 52,000 hits between July 2014 and June 2015. Connectivity from military installations was not available because most installations blocked the website's UR as well as other non DoD websites. In addition, cellphone access to the website was restricted while at work since, for security reasons, cellphone use is not authorized during work hours. Participants who used the site for certification-training purposes reported that the process was "excellent" (94%) but were disappointed by not being able to access

it from work. They also reported that navigating the eMilitary mentoring website was

"easy" (75%), but because 25% were either neutral or reported difficulty using the site,

we planned changes to the site to include, fewer 'clicks' to access information and to

reduce the amount of information on some of the web pages.

Our next steps will be to explore meeting security requirements in order to allow

access to the URL from military installations and to buy the ".org" domain name for

eMilitary mentoring since fewer .org sites are blocked. Meeting the security

requirements is a long, complex process and possibly a cost-prohibitive solution. As the

ART will transition to NNOA's mentoring committee at the end of this case study, we are

recommending exploring different ways to push career development information from the

website to smartphones using a free magazine application called Flipboard.

Phase 3: Software for mentoring. The team chose Coach Simple software to

capture the efforts of the mentoring dyads. The ART held two tutorials about the

software using "join.me" screen-sharing technology with our web designer. During the

sessions, we encountered difficulties with the software but were able to use the basic

features. This should have raised a red flag prompting us not to use this software, but

since it met most of our criteria, including affordability, the ART contracted to use a

promotional version of the software for a 12-month trial period.

Most of the dyads used the software to complete the first mentoring module,

which we designed to assist pairs in developing a rapport, establishing expectations, and

exchanging bios and contact information. This module required the most extensive use

of the various features of the software, such as the upload function for pictures and bios.

As the earlier tutorials had demonstrated, the software was not user-friendly, requiring

too many clicks to accomplish individual functions and no feature, such as an hourglass, to show that the software was performing a particular task. Other concerns included the software's inaccessibility from military installations and the steep learning curve required to master its basic functions. Mentoring participants reported having to start from "ground zero" if they were not on the site consistently—which, of course, was not the intent of the program. Rather, we sought a user-friendly method that assisted in communicating and capturing mentoring activities on a monthly basis, while providing metrics for the study's use. The web designer and I held four one-on-one sessions to help proactive mentors learn the software. This was in addition to the Coach Simple online tutorials and the web designer's hardcopy tutorial, which incorporated systematic screenshots illustrating how to use different features of the software. In addition, the team was unable to customize the software's metrics to accommodate our needs. The software representative reported that this was because we were using a promotional version of the software, which had less customizable features. Consequently, we terminated the software contract after the one-year trial period and are now designing the main eMilitary mentoring website for the mentoring pairs' use.

Phase 4: Mentoring pairs. At the time of this writing, seven out of the 20 mentoring pairs remain active. We determined this through an email inquiry and those pairs not replying were considered not active. At the end of the certification process—conducted online via the eMilitary mentoring website—we received feedback that the certification process was "easy to follow" (94%). However, some members of the mentoring dyads experienced operational commitments or retired during this evolution process and therefore did not appear to meet online, by phone, or in person after

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becoming certified. This could not be confirmed. The team was only able to verify that the participants did reply to the email inquiry or responded with an apology, indicating that they would begin the mentoring process soon. Even though my advisor had warned me that this could be the case, the ART members were disappointed nevertheless that we could not be more certain regarding our knowledge of interactions taking place within the mentoring dyads. I did, however, receive the following communication from a mentor after one year in the program. It was a positive affirmation of the program's utility:

> I will be going to Atsugi to be the Officer in Charge. My protégé is doing
> well. We see each other almost daily and set aside time to talk about once a week
> (it has been a little crazy around the holidays) but we are still tracking. We have
> had an influx of African American officers to the command recently, including
> the CO, the incoming XO, and several nurses. This is probably what spurred the
> interest in an association chapter here.

This mentor had been proactive in learning to use Coach Simple. She, the web designer, and I bonded during a training session we provide just for her, so I believe that earlier interaction encouraged her to respond to my emails. Yet, there was no information provided by this mentoring pair on the Coach Simple website, which monitored online use of the modules. In addition, the other service representatives shared similar stories about a lack of response by email from mentoring pairs. For instance, few mentoring participants responded to a short email survey sent by their service representative. Those who did respond gave positive feedback. One protégé offered the following comments:

I would also like to thank you a lot for setting up the e-mentorship program

earlier this year. I was not able to go through the modules online, but my mentor

has been solid in helping me out along the way. I wish I had come across more

people like him in this journey. There are a few on the ship in Department Head

positions but they are scarce on the staff over here and at SWOS. A new crop of

us are coming up the ranks and hope to make that better as we go along.

As the ART transitions to NNOA's mentoring committee, it will use the data gathered

during the evaluation stage of the mentoring pilot to explore how to incorporate more of

the study findings into useable career development tools for mentoring pairs and

association members. One important data point uncovered during the pilot's senior

officer interviews was the need for event mentoring. As a result, the team will

incorporate one-on-one mentoring sessions at the next conference. In addition, we are

planning to post a professional FAQ page (organized by military service) on the website.

At the July 2015 conference, ART members solicited questions for inclusion on these

pages and received a few. We will also use the data from the senior officer interviews to

build these FAQs. Data from the interviews also demonstrated a need to address issues

such as isolation, working with difficult bosses (since one unfavorable officer evaluation

can be difficult to recover from), and encouraging junior officers to seek out mentors and

maintain these relationship so they can receive consistent advisement regarding career

choices.

Cycle 3: Senior Officers' Critical Incident Interviews

In a meeting with my advisor to determine how I should proceed with my

research after my original client could no longer work with me due to DoD regulations,

she recommended that I examine the factors that contributed to the marginalization of the career advancement of those officers who were members of my new client organization. We determined that identifying the measures that successful officers took to ensure career proficiency was a viable avenue to pursue. Throughout the period of the interviews with senior officers, I contacted my dissertation committee members for guidance about interview strategies and data analysis. Table 21 summarizes the action steps for Cycle 3.

Table 21

Cycle 3: Senior Officers' CIT Interviews

AR Step	ART Action Taken	Dates
Constructing	Met with major adviser Met with ART	April - May 2013
Planning Action *Phase 1: Pilot CIT Interviews* *Phase 2: CIT Interviews*	Strategized on criteria for senior officer participants Who should be in the pilot interviews/remaining interviews? Researched CIT interviews and prepared team for interviews Service representatives planned for CIT training	May 2013 - August 2014
Taking Action *Phase 1: Pilot CIT Interviews* *Phase 2 : CIT Interviews*	Completed CIT training Conducted pilot interviews Conducted remaining interviews	August 2014 August – October 2014 May 2015 - February 2016
Evaluating Action *Phase 1: Pilot CIT Interviews* *Phase 2: CIT Interviews*	Revised website to capture data from pilot interviews Revised modules as appropriate to capture data from interviews Used data to determine what career development tools are needed	October 2014 - February 2016

Planning Action

Phase 1: Pilot CIT interviews. I presented the idea of interviewing senior officers to the ART, and there was immediate agreement among the members. We discussed who would constitute the senior officers within the interview group and decided upon an approximate number of interviews to conduct. We devised criteria for the selection of senior officers, and each team member matched those criteria with available officers when compiling a list of those to interview. We also agreed that the service representatives should conduct the interviews of their senior officers; therefore, they prepared to take the CIT training. This was necessary to allow for the efficient use of service-specific acronyms and culture.

The IRB had approved the interview protocol. The team members were anxious to test the protocol and their interview skills. We had conducted interviews before, but interviewing senior officers in one's service required more care and attention. Moreover, we also were conducting CIT interviews, a technique with which we were not familiar.

Phase 2: CIT interviews. As the action research team began the next round of interviews, one service representative changed jobs, and another was preparing to retire. These changes impacted our timeline since I conducted more interviews than originally planned. This change, coupled with the high profile of the senior officers interviewed and the operation tempo of their commands, further extended the timeline. I stayed in contact with the appropriate team representatives to revise our strategy and discuss our options for interviewing different senior officers.

Taking Action: Phase 1: Pilot interviews. By the middle of August 2014, all

designated team members had completed the CIT online training and certification. The

team members conducted the interviews with senior officers from August to October of

2014. The interviews were professionally transcribed, and I made a hardcopy available

to all team members and interviewees for member checking. In addition, I coded the

interviews manually and then again using HyperRESEARCH. Between interviews, I

constantly compared the data in order to identify themes.

Phase 2: CIT interviews. The ART conducted 10 more interviews for the study.

We had agreed originally that re-interviewing two of the pilot senior officers using the

new interview protocol would benefit the study; however, this was not accomplished due

to scheduling conflicts and the high operation tempo of the interviewed officers. The 10

additional interviews were conducted between May 2015 and February 2016. I followed

the same process of providing the transcripts to the senior officers interviewed and the

service representative for member checking. The critical incidents and senior officer

profiles were made available to all team members for discussion, a decision necessitated

by competing priorities of the team members.

Evaluating Action: Phase 1: Pilot interviews. The team learned several lessons about

interview techniques from the pilot interviews, including the importance of minimizing

interviewer comments and ensuring a quality audio connection. These initial findings

from the interviews were important in determining the direction the study should take.

The interview protocol was revised based on the pilot interviews and as a result of

discussions with my dissertation committee. My advisor and I changed the interview

protocol to focus more closely on the study's research questions and purpose. I

submitted the new protocol to the IRB, and it was approved in May 2015.

Phase 2: CIT interviews. As these interviews were conducted, I began the

analysis process. The process was of manual coding and then entering each interview

transcript into HyperRESEARCH to provide me with a better picture of the data. I was

also able to analyze the manual comments from each service representative in this

process. The critical incidents from the senior officer participant interviews are listed in

Table 15.

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Summary

</div>

This chapter outlined the action research case study. The ART members

accomplished the traditional action research cycles of constructing, planning action,

taking action, and evaluating action in three cycles. The needs assessment (cycle 1)

provided the necessary data to plan the interventions for the mentoring program pilot

(cycle 2) and the CIT interviews (cycle 3). The team worked well together and engaged

in critical discussions as data emerged throughout the cycles. The team members

represented their respective service and their process of career development. They

provided subject-matter expertise, which was invaluable to the credibility of the study

outcomes. The team is currently making many adjustments to the program interventions

so we can provide solutions the NNOA membership can use. Although the ART has

officially dissolved, the former participants are committed to the purpose of privileging

association members and plan to continue working as the NNOA's mentoring team.

Team members remain committed as shown in recent emails from two different team

members:

- "Sorry so early on a Saturday but the house was quiet and I figured this was a good time to fulfill my obligations to the mentoring program."

- "Any idea when you will want to meet with the committee again? I hope that my schedule is able to open up a little more this year. I'll probably be moving to [command] this summer, too, so hopefully that will change the pace."

The action research team worked for 21 months and held 36 meetings to keep the mentoring mission of the association from running aground. The activities and processes we engaged in were not linear and, on occasion, the water became murky with actions taken and actions needing to be taken. Through the efforts of the team, however, we were able to be efficient, frugal, and effective in our work and provide tools that will be perennial.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of this action research case study was to explore how a professional association, whose members function in predominately-white institutions, can privilege its members, who are primarily racial minority sea service commissioned officers in their career development. Three research questions guided the study: (1) What are the factors (technological, military, and political) that marginalize the career development of minority sea service commissioned officers? (2) How can a professional association privilege its members in career development using mentoring interventions? (3) How can professional association members, participating in a collaborative action inquiry process, create interventions to help privilege racial minority sea service commissioned officers?

This chapter examines the data for each research question, which were gathered from critical incident interviews of senior officers and action research team (ART) members, ART meeting records, the mentoring program pilot, participant observations, and client and sea service documents. For the senior officers, as well as the ART members interviewed for this study, the privileges of the dominant culture were evident. This prompted one senior officer to share the following when reflecting on the racial minority officers' challenges of learning and perfecting skills, surviving in a new culture, which can be hostile, while keeping themselves emotional motivated, "Diverse officers are competing against non-diverse officers or white officers who have all of that in one nice, neat type package."

I organized the findings around major themes and subthemes that emerged during the data analysis. The eight major themes are largely representative of events that occurred and views that developed during the military careers of the senior officers, ART members, and the mentoring dyads. They include the following: experiencing ineffective leadership by the dominant culture can invoke a deep history of discrimination, encountering personnel practices that are not applied equally, providing professional development, encouraging personal development, assisting in improving interpersonal and intrapersonal communication skill, learning to use technology and learning in individual and group level collaborative action inquiry. Table 22 provides an overview of each research question, along with its corresponding themes and subthemes.

Table 22

Overview of Findings

Research Questions	Themes	Subthemes
1. What are the factors (technological, military, and political) that marginalize the career development of minority sea service commissioned officers?	Experiencing ineffective leadership by the dominant culture can invoke a deep history of discrimination	• Hostile command climate: "A barrier to career development and advancement for a minority officer, absolutely!" • Bigotry by supervisors: "Risking a 'torpedoed' career" • Isolation: "Feeling like an outsider looking in", "unfortunately because you are that one, you've got nine sets of eyes on you in every group of 10"
	Encountering personnel practices that are not applied equally across the board to Sea Service Commissioned Officers	• Negotiating job assignments: "Truth in advertising", "What is the right one?" • Understanding Performance reports: "Okay, can get you left behind" • Using Nebulous Statistics in Talent Management: "We just don't have any" • Advocating for Accountability in EO Policy: " Leaders who have an EO complaint should have to have a 360 Degree evaluation completed on them", "We lose our will if there is a legal concern"

Research Questions	Themes	Subthemes

2. How can a professional association privilege its members in career development using mentoring interventions?	Providing Professional Development	• Understanding the process that comes before the promotion and screening boards: If you don't get the following two correct 'It can be a hard row to hoe'
		  • Understanding Performance Report language
		  • Negotiating for Job Assignments
		• Understanding the need for a mentor early in your career: "We don't want to do an autopsy.", "We need a 411 not a 911"

	Encouraging Personal Development	• Developing leader qualities and political skills • Perfecting your technical and subspecialty skills

	Assisting in Improving Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Communication Skills	• Interpersonal
		  • Network: "Push across the aisle; the dominant culture does not have to"
		• Practice restraint when using smart phones and social media: "We are our own worst enemy", " It is difficult to extricate the millennials from their smart phones to have a focused conversation"
		• Intrapersonal
		  • Reflect to analyze and clarify ideas: "My community [way of doing business] helped reinforce in me preparedness and self-assessment."

	Learning and Using Technology	• Evidence of the Generational divide • Acquiring professional technology skills
3. How can professional association members, participating in a collaborative action inquiry process, create interventions to help privilege minority sea service commissioned officers?	Individual Collaboration	• Relying on the strengths of ART members • Maintaining flexibility based on primary job commitments • Learning from each other
	Group Collaboration	• Yielding to the data • Learning and conducting insider action research • Learning to work virtually

All senior officers were on active duty when interviewed except three who had retired within three months prior to their respective interview. Sixty-nine percent of the senior

officers interviewed for research questions one and two had attained flag rank. The data

represent the training and culture inherent in the three sea services. I have included many

of the narrative stories of the senior officers in their own words. This was done to

reinforce the marginalization the senior officers experienced. One of the themes of

Critical Race Theory (CRT), is relating the stories of the marginalized in their voice can

begin a process of correction by calling attention to incidences of marginalization that

have been kept silent by the victim. Their stories give them voice and reveal that others

may have had similar experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). One senior officer felt

that the interview itself—that is, the opportunity to discuss these tribulations with a

fellow officer—was somewhat therapeutic:

> I think I talked longer than I wanted to and probably gave you more examples
>
> than I expected to, but I just want to thank you for the opportunity. This was, I do
>
> not know, sometimes these little things just help me vent a little bit, too, and so I
>
> can get back on track.

In the next sections, I discuss in detail the findings related to each research question.

Factors that Marginalize Career Development

The section discusses the findings related to research question one. The data

revealed two themes and seven subthemes of marginalization. The themes of

marginalization were experiencing ineffective leadership by the dominant culture can

invoke a deep history of discrimination and encountering personnel practices that are not

applied equally across the board to sea service commissioned officers. The subthemes

were hostile command climate, supervisory bigotry, isolation, negotiating job

assignments, understanding performance reports, talent management, and advocating for military equality opportunity. Each of the seven subthemes is discussed in this section.

Experiencing Ineffective Leadership by the Dominant Culture

Organizational policies routinely tout that "our people are our greatest strength," and, likewise, military leaders often claim this as a fundamental principal of their command. The senior leaders shared critical incidents that exhibited tumultuous leadership by the dominant culture in the work environment during their careers. These unwarranted situations made the officers feel their career was in jeopardy, feel they were unwelcomed in their command, or feel marginalized by supervisors' unresponsiveness to their career development. They recounted incidences of hostile command climates, which were a barrier to career development and advancement, bigotry by supervisors in which they risked having their career ended by being given a low performance report, and unpleasant comments by supervisors and peers, and/or by exclusion from social events—leading to a feeling of isolation.

Table 23

Themes and Subthemes: Factors Marginalizing Career Development

Research Questions	Themes	Subthemes
1. What are the factors (technological, military, and political) that marginalize the career development of minority sea service commissioned officers?	Experiencing Ineffective Leadership by the Dominant Culture can invoke a deep history of discrimination	•Hostile command climate: "A barrier to career development and advancement for a minority officer, absolutely!" • Bigotry by supervisors: "Risking a 'torpedoed' career" • Isolation: "Feeling like an outsider looking in", "unfortunately because you are that one, you've got nine sets of eyes on you in every group of 10"
	Encountering Personnel Practices that are not applied equally to Sea Service Commissioned Officers	• Negotiating Job assignments: "Truth in advertising", "What is the right one?" • Understanding Performance reports: "Okay, can get you left behind" • Using Nebulous Statistics in Talent Management: "We just don't have any" • Advocating for Accountability in EO Policy: '"Leaders who have an EO complaint should have to have a 360 Degree evaluation completed on them", "We lose our will if there is legal concern"

Hostile command climate: "A barrier to career development and advancement for a minority officer, absolutely!" Discussions about the command climate surfaced in the interviews with the senior officers. One senior officer, who was the second in command, spoke of being ignored by the commanding officer (the first in command) when conferring with him about the command climate:

I was his Executive Officer. [The command climate] was just horrible, the unprofessional behavior with the way [he] disrespected people; talking to them any old kind of way. So, when I tried to talk to him about that, I mean, he just totally ignored me.

This intimidating climate was conveyed many times in the senior officer interviews. Another senior officer indicated that "I was concerned about the environment that I was in in a particular unit and he [my mentor] pulled me out of that unit early, which I think was good." These officers worked in hostile environments that affected their well-being as well as their career. When clarifying the impact on an officer's career, the executive officer stated:

> And, because he was such a tyrant, his superiors learned of the command climate concerns and asked to speak to me when they saw my [performance] report. The fact that my performance did not warrant the marks … the report was changed…. And so, my marks were raised, which probably led to me being picked up [i.e., promoted] as opposed to not being picked up.

A hostile command climate affects all who must endure its negativity on a daily basis, but for the racial minority officer, it can evoke a deep history of discrimination. As one senior officer stated, "They are writing my performance report. It is a barrier to career development and advancement for a minority officer, absolutely. Do they have the same concerns about me moving up?" This environment is also counter-productive to mission attainment; therefore, there is a high price tag for the command and the service when the situation is not alleviated in a timely manner.

Bigotry by supervisors: "Risking a 'torpedoed' career." While the previous section highlighted bigotry by supervisors which can lead to a hostile command climate, other examples also emerged in different ways. The bigotry by some officers can lead a racial minority officer to have concerns regarding their career: Is it in danger—because he or she is forced to endure the stress and discomfort of the environment and because his

or her performance report may reflect these majority officers' hostility toward the advancement of racial minority officers? This concern caused one senior officer to lament:

> I do not go to the wardroom [executive cafeteria]—I do not know how to handle the ugliness senior white officers display about President Obama. It makes me not feel safe, what are they saying about me, my performance. They are writing my performance report.

Performance reports represent a key tool for tracking an officer's professional performance. In most cases, a performance report is required annually, more often if the officer or his or her reporting senior transfers out of the command. It is used by every type of board, promotion, and screening for key leadership assignments, and to evaluate the performance of the officer. A senior officer reflected on the issue of fairness (or unfairness) as it relates to the relationships one has with the person(s) reporting on one's performance:

> The part that is unfair, again if that is the right word, is the time between the report getting to the board and your relationship with your reporting senior and your reviewing officer…. If you do not get that right, then things did not work out for you because, again, that is one-on-one between you and the guy that's reviewing you or writing on you. And so, if you don't have that relationship right, or at least that understanding in why he's doing certain things, the board doesn't know that. The board does not know there is something there. And so, it is left up to interpretation, and you … don't want that. So, I think what we have down now is to create an environment that will allow the guys who are being evaluated

to talk more openly with their bosses, to not be surprised. Information flows both ways.

A senior officer who was in a group of officers recruited into his service in 1989 when that service was actively recruiting racial minorities reflected on his feelings of marginalization during his first year of service. He conveyed that his boss said, "He sounded black when he spoke. The comment that [the supervisor] made was, 'You need to know how to speak the King's English'." He went on to explain how his service had actively engaged with him during the recruiting process making him feel valued:

I came through the … program, where there was so much hype and so much desire to get us into the organization, and within my first few months as an officer, this is my introduction. And of course, I am thinking, "What have I gotten myself into?"

Consequently, the behavior of this supervisor (whether intentional or unintentional) marginalized an aspiring young officer by making him feel as if he didn't belong, since his roots were not of European decent.

Two of the senior officers, speaking on the important role of the supervisor and the power they possess to assist or harm a career, cautioned, "There are no personality conflicts between seniors and juniors, meaning the senior gets his or her way unless it's a clear violation of integrity standards or the UCMJ." Most military members understand this unofficial protocol, either because they have said it or had it said to them in counseling sessions when giving or seeking advice for dealing with a difficult supervisor. One senior officer advocated the following:

And then, what's so unique about that dynamic is that person has the ability to

either help you or be neutral or to hurt you on your way to your goal. So, if that

person is not your mentor, if that person is not on board with understanding where

you need to go, what you'd like to do, and how you need to get there and whether

you're being successful in getting there or not … Well, then any other mentor that

you want to have or will have really will not mean a whole lot because that person

can basically disrupt your whole plan.

A contrasting view of the supervisor's mentoring role came from a senior officer from a

different service highlighting the cultural differences of the sea services: "

If you have a supervisor—and also that supervisor serves as your mentor—there

is a possibility of [others perceiving it as] favoritism…. You really create an

environment that's probably not conducive to good order and discipline, as I see

it.

A succinct summary for dealing with difficult supervisors was provided by another senior

officer:

And so, somewhere along the way—you know in the military it only takes one

performance report to really torpedo your future prospects…. And the good news

is that no matter how difficult the boss may be, you only have to serve him or her

for a couple of years and then you move on to the next job and boss and you carry

forward the lessons you learned from the previous boss.

Isolation: Feeling like you are an outsider looking in. Delgado and Stefancic

(2012) discuss the small but consequential encounters with racism experienced by people

of color, which usually go unnoticed by members of the majority race. These events are

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labeled "microaggression" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 167). Senior officers

participating in this study recounted such events that had taken place over the course of

their careers, and some felt that these acts are unconsciously committed today. Some

examples offered included: "I felt like an outsider in my command; like I did not

belong"; "What was a difficult situation? *Constantly* [emphasis added] being 'one of'";

and "The challenge that minorities have is that you're typically 'one of 'or 'two of'."

Illustrating the effects of being the only (or one of the only) racial minority officers in an

organization, a senior officer offered this reflection:

> Unfortunately because you are that one, you've got nine sets of eyes on you in
>
> every group of 10, and everything you do will be pretty damn heavily scrutinized
>
> and sometimes it makes it a little hard for you to sometimes think you can be
>
> yourself. I think you can still be yourself and I think if you respect what the
>
> service usually brings to the table and you stay within that, then you are okay.

Another challenge of being junior and the only racial minority officer in a career

field or command is the difficulty of finding same race mentors who possess your needed

skills. A senior officer noted, "The next senior African American person [in my career

field] when I got out of [training] school was already probably eight years ahead of me."

Given the military protocol with respect to seniors and subordinates, it was unlikely that

this junior officer would have the opportunity or ability to seek out this senior officer as a

mentor on his own. Another interviewee presented a similar pattern in his chosen career

field. Interestingly, both senior officers are in combat career fields that consistently

promote to the flag rank but have few racial minority officers:

So, I started on the enlisted side and I stayed an enlisted man seven and a half
years. And then once I was commissioned as an officer, probably the most
difficult thing was, I went from an environment where there was several people
that kind of looked like me around me and then I went to an environment where
there was hardly anyone that looked like me around me. And that remained. It
started out because I was in a combat career field, and it has kind of been that way
throughout my career as an officer.

A professional association such as NNOA can be the bridge that allows these junior
officers to connect to a same-race mentor in their chosen career field. It can also be a
forum for understanding how to approach episodes of microaggression, allowing the
officer to get his "second wind" as noted by one senior officer. A senior officer
discussed his experiences at his training command in the early 1980s. He reported that
upon reporting to training, the KKK was marching near the front entrance to the base.
The climate in the command and in the city during the time he was stationed there made
it clear that he was not welcome in either:

But, when you're in an environment where you're not really felt that you're
welcome, you know it. You can feel it. You can sense it in the tone of people
that are talking to you. You can watch it. You can see, again, it's very simple.
You go to a grocery store. You are in a line of five people. About four people
ahead of you, you are the fifth person, and there are people behind you. So, the
first person goes, 'Thank you very much, have a good day." Next person goes,
"Thank you very much, have a good day." It gets down to you. *Silence*
[emphasis added]. They hand you your money and you go on, you leave, you are

walking out. Next person behind you, "Thank you very much, have a good day."

Okay? So, it's a combination of those senses that you developed that give you the

sense that *you're not welcome because you watch people that are welcome and*

you see the laughter. You see the relaxation. You see the after-event activities.

And, it is very clear that you are not the same, that you are different. Not

different from the standpoint of your capability; but you are different in terms of

how you are treated and the expectations therein. [Emphasis added]

Senior officers also spoke of the desire to know they brought value to their

service. One senior officer stated:

One of my mentors, actually a couple of my mentors, they just displayed some

caring aspects so I knew that they cared about my career, which made me feel that

maybe they felt I was a value to the service and they were sort of an

encouragement to keep me in the service, I guess.

Yet, another senior officer discussed the frustration of experiencing hostile command

climates for 20 years before a senior officer finally acknowledged his worth to the

service:

A previous leader wanted to know what I would focus my time on in trying to

address. I told him, "You got to fix the climate, because you act like you want

diversity when the representative from the Hill is listening, but behind closed

doors it seems like there's a totally different conversation that's happening,

and it's not." I said, "Here I am, almost 20 years and ready to retire now and I do

not know that I feel like I am a part of the team." *I always feel like I am on the*

outside looking in [emphasis added]. And it could be that I am not a graduate of

the academy because I do not have that experience to compare it to. I said, "But you need to fix the climate because I do not feel like I belong in this organization."

And, he said to me that day, he says, "You know, you are one of the sharpest officers I've ever had the pleasure of working with in my career. I can guarantee you that you'll make O6 and you are a brand new commander." He said, "Because you are comfortable speaking truth to power, you are passionate about anything you're given to do, and your reputation says that." And, he says, "I just need you to stick around because what happens is you end up walking away before we can really make a difference." Why are you the only person that would say that?

Why do I have to be here on your staff to hear that? The problem is I should have received that from a supervisor at some point in my career.

In this section, I have presented the experiences of senior officers who participated in this study. The importance of a positive command climate was significant. A hostile command climate permeates all aspects of the command, from its mission attainment to the achievements of its people. All suffer, but for the racial minority personnel it evokes a deep history of discrimination by the dominant culture in America, giving rise to issues of trust and the need to separate oneself from the dominant culture and the command. A positive command climate is fundamental to individuals feeling supported and valued. The experiences of these racial minority commissioned officers have shown when this does not happen; the officer is concerned about his or her ability to be successful. One senior officer speaking about the command climate and the

racial discrimination by the dominant culture embraced the reality of the present

conditions in his service:

The sad thing is, back then when things were very blatant, there was no question

you knew where you stood, and you knew your place. People communicated it

very clearly. *You accepted it* [emphasis added]. Nowadays, you deal with the

micro biases where it is so subtle that you almost cannot even hold people

accountable for their actions, and that is the part that makes it, I think, maybe in

some ways worse now than it was back then**.**

In the next section, I present the findings on how the application of personnel

practices affected the career development and advancement of the senior officer

participants. The areas covered include negotiating job assignments, performance reports,

talent management, and accountability in equal opportunity policy.

Encountering Personnel Practices that are not Applied Equally

The military pledges not to discriminate and believes it has aligned policies

addressing race and racism in a way that creates equitable opportunities for all officers.

Despite this stance, it is worth questioning if some personnel practices actually favored

the racial minority commissioned officer or not. The military pledges not to discriminate

and believes it has aligned policies addressing race and racism in a way that creates

equitable opportunities for all officers. A significant area of critical awareness for the

senior officer participants included ensuring they received key job assignments and that

their performance report reflected accurately their accomplishments. They expressed that

getting these two parts of your career advancement process correct was imperative. One

senior officer noted as a junior officer, he was consistently assigned to a job other than

the more promising one on his assignment order. He decided he had to take advantage of what was before him; as he put it, "I really figured out you got to bloom where you are planted." In this circumstance, the officer had to recognize the connection between the job assignment process at the service level and at the unit level, the performance report, and being promoted and make the appropriate adjustments. In this officer's case, it was necessary to perform well where his unit had assigned him, while he learned how to negotiate better his placement in that unit. It was crucial for his promotion, since a misstep in performance by him meant a poor performance report, which in turn meant he would not be considered in the future for key assignments leading to promotion.

Performance affects job assignment, and job assignment affects performance. While this is a simplistic depiction of a complex process, it drives home the point that an officer has to take appropriate action early to prepare for promotion to the next paygrade and to be selected for key assignments. Talent management was also discussed as a way of tracking commissioned officers whom the service wants to retain. Its use is to develop and retain leaders for an organization; it is particularly important for junior commissioned officers to understand how this method works, also. At the junior paygrades, a commissioned officer is aspiring to be noticed and counted among those officers with talent valued by their community and service. Again, this is just one-step in a complex process leading to promotion. In the sections that follow, I present the findings form the study related to these areas. Lastly, I present the concerns reported in the areas of equal opportunity.

Negotiating job assignments: "Truth in advertising", "What is the right one?" In their interview discussions, the senior officers emphasized the importance of

the job-assignment process to staying on track for success. As discussed earlier the

process of getting a job assignment, especially those key assignments, for example

department head or executive officer, is a complex one. In the previous example about

the officer who learned to "bloom where planted," he also shared that he does not think

he got the process correct until he was a senior lieutenant, about six years into his career

as a commissioned officer. Another senior officer outlined what happened to him when

he was a senior officer negotiating for an assignment after completing the

prestigious Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF). He was offered an "okay

assignment" as opposed to a "key assignment in the joint community":

> And so, as I got the call from the assignment officer, saying this is where you are
>
> going, I was like, "Man, I am not so sure that is the right thing," but you do not
>
> tell him that. And so, that's when I got on the phone and shared discussions with
>
> a couple of mentors. And their play was that anybody can do the job that my
>
> assignment officer was telling me to do. But the opportunity for me to go into a
>
> joint job where we do not typically send a whole lot of people and that the
>
> opportunities following that joint job would be much wider than having gone to
>
> the previous one that had been selected for me.

This senior officer recognized the circumstances of his situation, negotiated properly, and

was offered the joint job he had earned but, as noted, not without discussing it with his

mentors, who may have accomplished what was needed to obtain the "key assignment"

behind the scenes.

Having a career plan and learning the process of negotiating orders is important;

however, such skills are not inherent in one's training to be an officer. The Military

Leadership Diversity Commission recommended that the services improve transparency so that service members understand performance expectations, promotion criteria, and processes. One senior officer questioned the wisdom of commands to move an officer into a job other than the one designated in his or her orders:

> My orders said "marine inspector," but I went to port operations and spent four [about] four years out of a four-year tour in port operations. Again, the service needs, where the unit's needs were, and my personal desires did not really all match up, at least not according to my perspective.

This example demonstrates a command's authority and power to reassign an officer in support of the command mission, but it also suggests that racial minority officers may be given less desirable assignments at the command level, hindering their ability to meet the criteria for key job assignments as they progress in their career. Moreover, these reassignments may not initially be recorded in the overall service database of assignments leading to erroneous or misleading reporting of the actual assignments held by racial minority commissioned officers.

In another instance, a senior officer indicated that seeking advice is warranted, especially when an individual wants to select the right job, but the senior officer cautioned that one must understand the answers one is given. This process requires some political skill. In other words, one has to understand the informal rules of the game as recommended by Blass and Ferris (2007). The assignment officer is working first to fill positions needed by the service and secondly to satisfy commissioned officers' promotion requirements; if the two do not match, one is wise to seek the advice of a mentor in handling the situation. It could be crucial to maintaining the viability of one's career:

There were lots of job offers for me, but my flag officer during that time didn't

think those were the right job for me, but not that it was explained what the right

job was. It is just that when I would talk with him and say, "Well, so and so said

[they] thought that this would be a good place to go," and they are like, "No, that

is not for you." *Did not know what was for me, but apparently it was not for me*

[emphasis added].

Understanding performance reports: "Okay can get you left behind." As I

have stated previously in addressing the findings for research question one, the

relationship between the performance report and obtaining key job assignments is

important. The performance report, written by one's boss, is used in the board process,

promotion, or selection board for key assignments. As one participant stated, "If you do

not get that right, then things did not work out for you because, again, that is one-on-one

between you and the guy that is reviewing you or writing on you." Another senior

officer, speaking about the connection between the three—the supervisor, the

performance report, and the promotion board—gave this engaging account:

And so that relationship has to be built, and if you are not doing what you need to

be doing for that particular person and that person derails your career or gives you

some paper [performance report] on your way out the door, it is not going to help

you stay on track to meet your goals. That is the way the system works; there are

not a whole lot of people that you can talk to after that. You can call them a

mentor, you can call them whatever, unless you call them a savior, there is not

much help that we are going to be able to do for you if significant damage has

been done.

In the following excerpt, a senior officer reflects on how to understand the subtle language in a performance report which could keep an individual from being promoted or selected for key assignments. This officer stressed the importance of interpreting feedback received from leaders in reference to one's performance report. Such understanding requires political skill in deciphering the language of a senior officer:

> Initially, I had lots of people that were interested in my career, but in the initial phase of my career no one was really honest with me about where I really stood with my evals in comparison to being really competitive for the career option I was looking towards in [my service]. Specifically, I was trying to go to flight school. All the jobs I had were good, but my evals were just okay and I did not realize it then, you could not be picked up with okay evals for flight school. So, the honesty factor was a little difficult and my expectations were not managed very well in terms of what I thought was important and what other folks thought were important. With regards to evals, again midgrade lieutenant, I started paying attention to really what they were writing versus what I thought was important.

In the next section, I discuss the senior officers' experiences with talent management, how they viewed that process, and its alignment with the assignment process.

Using nebulous statistics in talent management: "We just don't have any."
Some of the flag officer participants reported having a talent management process in their service. One participant shared that his service's process was patterned after another sea service's process. The military operates as a closed system: The services do not bring senior leaders in from the outside; rather, they train and promote from the lower ranks.

Building on that rule, one senior officer offered the following explanation for why racial minority officers are rarely found in the communities that consistently promote to flag rank:

> I will tell you again, we have done a lot of outreach to take advantage of those that want to be in our service, we tried talking to them earlier … the level where they're deciding what they want to be in my service and talking to them about certain military occupational specialties (MOSs) and certain jobs and job skills. We have not been as successful as I know we want to be, than I think we could be. We are simply not there yet. And you and I, we both know, you had a 30-year career. You did not wake up one morning; you did not join the United States Navy as an O6 captain. You had to grow in to that rank.

The services do believe talent management can be one answer to assist in growing racial minority officers into job skills, MOSs, or community designators that are in combat arms or combat support arena, which consistently promote to flag rank. Many of the senior officers agreed that talent management has assisted the services in identifying male and female racial minority officers and keeping them on track. A senior officer summarized the effort as follows:

> When I was in my last job, and the last three [service leaders] that I know of, I do not know before then, it is at a minimum once a year but they try to do a twice a year drumbeat on this. Each community leader comes in and briefs the [service leader] on whom their prospective up-and-coming personnel are that will rise to senior leadership and who those minority officers are, male or female. It is leadership development. There is not a company out there that doesn't spend time

looking down in the ranks and trying to identify early who the future leaders are going to be, because if you do not do that then you do not know what track to put the person on.

An officer who supported the MLDC, which is credited as the impetus for the services adopting talent management, stated that he believed not all of the appropriate leaders in his service are being held accountable for diversity and should be conducting briefs by name to the leader:

But no one's holding anyone accountable for the bottom line, and that is what I told my service chief. I said, "You are not asking these three stars who are in charge of these …. Come to me with your list of top guys and gals and the jobs they are in, and then explain to me why the diversity numbers are the way they are." They are not, because I guarantee if they did that, the pool of candidates and the interviews that you would have would be more diverse, and because the interviews are more diverse you would have more have more selects. Period. And if you have more selects at the senior O6 level command, you would certainly have more general and flag selects.

Still another senior officer provided a somewhat different account of the discussions trending in his service regarding talent management:

And so we had a commission … on diversity, later called talent management, to ensure that everyone's opinion, at least put it on the table to see what the service is thinking as it relates to diversity. And is it fair? I mean, are we doing enough as … to create diversity that is needed? Does it reflect society? And then another

train of thought is that, why does it need to reflect society? We are not society; we are the ….

The following is another account from a senior officer who supported briefs by name and provided an example of how they can make a difference. He advised that the process of identifying talent has to include names and faces, not just nebulous statistics. He stated that he was seeking qualified candidates for prestigious jobs, and when his staff could only produce a list of candidates without diversity, he did the following:

So, I had my admin staff go back and look at every single worthy person, and I want a picture, their grades, their professional performance, and everything, and so we'll see if there really are none. Well, as it turned out, a lot of the minority kids who had very little background in the military got off to a slightly slower start. So their professional grades were a little bit lower than the rest of the guys. And then of course, once you sort of have a niche, then you are stuck in there. And lo and behold, we then had a follow-up meeting where I said, "So tell me about … here and why didn't you consider him, or tell me about … and why didn't you consider nominating him or her"—and down the list. And as it turned out, there are always "those" whose records are just as credible, but until you go to a formal review of names and records and faces and not these nebulous statistics.

Each sea service has a talent management process that they are executing according to their needs. The marginalization in the process occurs when well-meaning programs like talent management produce results that the system is expecting, not the ones it was designed to accomplish. The dominant culture does not always see the problem until it is presented from a different perspective, maybe by a racial minority or

someone in the dominant culture alert to the inaccuracies that systems thinking can generate. As one senior officer pointed out, the talent management process grew out of a commission in his service, and leaders were not sure it should apply to them since "they were not just society they were the …." Moreover, another senior officer said, "That it just started within the last couple of years. They really start honing in on managing people and their talent." As talent management may not have been the result of action initiated by the service but because of the MLDC recommendations, the service's efforts will require monitoring to ensure desired results, lest the program fade from the spotlight when there is no longer proper interest in its mission.

      Advocating for accountability in equal opportunity policy. "We will foster a culture of respect that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness where people of diverse backgrounds are included, valued, and respected" (U.S. Coast Guard, 2015, p. 10). This excerpt is from an overarching and comprehensive document that addresses the Coast Guard's all-inclusive diversity and inclusion strategy. The Coast Guard addresses its workforce diversity, workforce inclusion, and sustainability goals and outcomes in the document. Sea service documents of this type are available online for military and civilian members, and leaders are expected to read, understand, and assist in achieving the stated outcomes, such as collaborating with affinity groups. All sea service policies are similar in that they espouse the need for diversity and inclusion, making the reader aware that the services value diversity.

      Senior officers in this study noted optimistically the increased opportunities for women and racial minority commissioned officers. When discussing outreach to women and racial minorities, one senior officer noted that "it takes time to grow an officer," and

another, when discussing managing talent, asserted that "no one's holding anyone accountable for the bottom line." In addition, participants commented on how successful their service initiatives have been in recruiting and retaining racial minorities and women. One senior officer offered the following:

> We are making progress when it comes to our effort for more diversity with women, and I applaud that, but it strikes me that that is one of the very few areas that we are actually making real progress, because there is a concerted effort, but in many of the other areas, I just do not see it.

Senior officers are aware of the efforts of their services to recruit officers that are more diverse. Most senior officers take the initiative to assist in these outreach efforts by making visits to universities to assist with outreach and recruiting initiatives. One senior officer stated, "I know that there's been lots of outreach to keep minority cadets in the Academy by Academy grads, and that is where we get a number of minority officers."

The senior officers also addressed the diversity offices of their respective service. A senior officer weighing in on the evolution of the equal opportunity office in his service felt that the head of that office should be a White male officer:

> I also think that the office itself has evolved; the equal opportunity office in the … has evolved. Not to the way I would like to see it evolve, but it has evolved. And we have gotten away from the thought that only a minority officer or a woman should be in that office. As a matter of fact, I have always said—and I stand behind it—that if you really wanted people to want to do that job then you need to give it to, let's say a post command O6 as the leader, that happens to be a White

male and let him tell you—tell people about diversity. It might be a little bit easier sell to some people.

Another senior officer stated, "I think it's important that we still work to try to get the right person as the equal opportunity advisor to our service chief. Because I think that position has been watered down to the point where—and I do not even know who's in it now." This was the sentiment of many of the senior officer participants, including some on the ART members—that inclusion has moved to the forefront of diversity initiatives. There was a sense of work being accomplished in equal opportunity that essentially watered down what it means to be a racial minority. One senior officer offered a solution to hold leaders accountable to diversity initiatives and to those who have civil rights complaints in his service:

> I think that the inability to visibly hold senior leaders accountable for diversity initiatives, equal opportunity initiatives, publicly holding people accountable in their performance reports if there was [a civil rights] case filed against them, what happens to the person? … I think that when someone is subject to a civil rights complaint or something like that, I think he or she should be subject to a 360-degree evaluation from the whole crew.

Senior officers also voiced concerns about equal opportunity and legal practices. First, they expressed concern with the military judicial system as it made them feel isolated during legal proceedings and therefore unable to communicate effectively with one's chain of command regarding the case. A senior officer revealed the following critical incident that occurred during his first assignment as commanding officer. He felt that there were racial overtones attached to the incident; moreover, he lamented that he

did not have a mentor to walk him through the process. He indicated that his career was on the fast track, and during the timeframe of the incident, White officers called him to suggest he end his career by getting out of the service:

> I was in command the first time in … and that would have been in the mid-1990s, I was the most junior field commander and the furthest from the district office. And there was a case that involved a … matter where four people lost their lives, probably the toughest professional challenge of my career. It was the first time in my career where I felt alone and isolated because it was "us versus them." I had a number of professional colleagues. I had a number of people that offered assistance, but I did not have a strict mentor. And I think had I had a mentor, somebody that I could have talked through all of the legal and judicial issues involved with the case and just talk to me on a human level, I think that would have made all the difference in the world. Ironically, after the case was resolved and I continued with my career, I had a number of folks come to me and offer me that relationship.

The second concern centered on court rulings that address reverse discrimination and the ability of the services to institutionalize programs to recruit and retain racial minorities and women. Court rulings on reverse discrimination and their applicability to the recruitment and retention efforts of service members is not always understood; the perception of what is legal and the actions that one's service engages in are not always fully explained. One senior officer noted that when recruiting at a historically black university or college (HBCU) or a Hispanic serving institution (HSI), "if you are looking

for a certain group of people, again quality, standards, grades, GPA, your well-rounded person … all that being equal, I do not know if you can target that to be successful."

Another senior officer, who supported the MLDC, provided his experience with his service and litigation concerns with regard to policies that assist in recruiting and retention:

> The feedback from my [MLDC support group] was structured mentoring. The challenge, though, was folks were afraid of litigation. And they were deathly afraid of that, and that's why it all died…. So litigation, litigation, litigation has been the biggest fear and biggest obstacle to a service sanctioned mentoring program that focused on minority retention and success.

This senior officer also commented on the lessons learned from the corporate sector. He was a participant in briefs to the MLDC provided by big corporations that have made formal mentoring programs work for them:

> We have had speakers from IBM and all these folks coming, great folks, and their companies have shown tremendous success. They have institutionalized [mentoring]. And so because they've institutionalized it, now they have leaders that have come up through those programs, and it's a self-fulfilling type of prophecy or self-licking ice cream cone. So the problem with the … is we get all fired up, but then when we got to execute, we get fearful of the backlash/the litigation/the conservative slant of the service…. *We lose our will* [emphasis added].

Another senior officer voiced a similar concern with his service, saying, "But it is what you do about it that makes a difference."

Privileging Members of a Professional Organization

Research question two investigated how a professional association could privilege its members in career development using mentoring interventions. One basic premise of critical race theory is privilege. Privilege is "a right or advantage, often unwritten, conferred on some but not others, usually without examination or good reason" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 170). The following section outlines findings from the data related to how the association could privilege its members—thereby compensating for the marginalization outlined in the previous section—by providing professional development, encouraging personal development, and assisting in building interpersonal communications skills among its members. Additionally, senior officers maintained that the association should advocate for equal opportunity in the sea services. Table 24 lists the themes and subthemes that grew out of an analysis of data associated with research question two.

Table 24

Themes and Subthemes: Privileging Association Members

Research Question	Themes	Subthemes

2. How can a professional association privilege its members in career development using mentoring interventions?	Providing Professional Development	• Understanding the process of promotion and screening boards: Getting the following two correct "can be a hard row to how"
		  • Understanding Performance Report language
		  • Negotiating for Job Assignments
		• Understanding the need for a mentor early in your career: "We don't want to do an autopsy.", "We need a 411 not a 911"

	Encouraging Personal Development	• Developing political skills • Developing leader qualities • Perfecting your technical and subspecialty skills • Understanding how civilians integrate into the military process

	Assisting in Improving Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Communication Skills	• Interpersonal
		  • Network: 'Push across the aisle; the dominant culture does not have to'
		  • Practice restraint when using smart phones and social media: 'We are our own worst enemy'
		• Intrapersonal
		  • Reflect to analyze and clarify ideas

	Learning Technology	• Evidence of the Generational divide • Acquiring professional technology skills

Providing Professional Development

Throughout this action research case study, the goal was for NNOA to understand

how it could improve the career development of its members, who are predominantly

minority commissioned officers, by helping them bridge (or at least narrow) the gap

separating them from certain privileges already enjoyed by others in the sea services

where they work. This is necessary for the association in the mentoring area of career

development because while many of the senior officer participants talked about their informal mentors, most of these relationships began around the time they had been in the military from six to 10 years, when they were junior midgrade-level commissioned officers. One senior officer participant shared that, even by midgrade, he never experienced any informal mentoring:

So, I refuse to be shocked anymore, but I've always been shocked about my career. When I'm sitting down talking to my contemporary X and he comments in a very relaxed way about how senior officer Y has given him a call and checked on him and blah blah blah, or they went out to dinner last night, blah blah blah. I look at that as somebody that has landed on the moon or landed from Mars or something because that is totally something that I cannot relate with. It never happened in my career, never been offered to happen in my career. It is just something that a lot of diverse officers do not have any exposure to.

Senior officers attached great significance to the role of the association in empowering and transforming its membership by improving its culture of mentoring—a culture that provides a safe environment in which officers receive advice and experience camaraderie as they advance in their careers. In their discussions of how they gained proficiency and ascended the professional ladder, the senior officers addressed several areas, included securing key flag-making assignments and ensuring that supervisors completed their performance reports accurately and honestly. They felt that the mentorship process was important for helping individuals achieve positive outcomes in these crucial areas of their career development. For them, mentoring had been significant either in one-on-one relationships or from others advancing their career from behind the

scenes without their knowledge. The need to understand civilians was also addressed by two senior officers; because civilians are interwoven in the career advancement of officers, I include a section about their integration with the military.

Understanding the process of promotion boards: Getting the following two correct "can be a hard row to hoe": Understanding performance report language and negotiating for job assignments. Mapping one's career strategy is encouraged by the services, and involving others in that planning is imperative. The senior officers discussed the role that NNOA played in their career development, seeing the association as a still-viable avenue for junior officers to seek advice and learn in a nurturing environment. The senior officers affiliated with a Greek fraternity or sorority also talked about the comradery they enjoyed from their continued association with these groups as alumni.

The association provides information about career planning at its annual training and development conference and at chapter events. Typically, agenda items at these events include the job assignment process, the individual service promotion system, and the need for postgraduate education. One senior officer noted, "Back in the day, the association was 'the network,' but now with the Internet and social media you connect differently, you network differently." Another senior officer expressed concern about how (or whether) NNOA follows up with its members after training events: "But are they following up with them, how they are doing, are they reaching out, and are they asking questions, are they checking on them? What system do NNOA have for that?" Certainly, these are practical concerns the association should weigh when addressing how to remain viable for its members' career development, especially junior officers.

Support for NNOA's training and development conference. The association's

board works proactively with each sea service around the promulgation of the service's

official announcement of the training and development conference. The official message

not only signifies the support of the service but also specifies the level of support a

command can provide officers who desire to attend the conference. In addition, the

message indicates the overall service funding available to the association. Because the

services contribute funds to other professional associations for their training conferences,

the official message raises political issues of fairness regarding how these funds are

divided. The concern about equal distribution of funds between majority and minority

professional associations can cause the message to stall as various officials review and

approve it. One senior officer interviewed for this study believed NNOA needs to start

early to ensure the services' official messages announcing the conference is released in a

timely manner in order for officers to gain command permission and funding for

attendance. The officer stated:

> Be that person to be the spokesperson [within the association] that will say,
>
> "Okay, we know it's coming out." You know it is going to be every June or July.
>
> But, it just seems like it takes so long, and I don't know if enough information
>
> gets out to encourage junior officers to go.

Elaborating on how the system-constructed board process works and the need for officers

to understand how their performance reports and promotion and screening boards

intersect, another senior officer provided the following explanation:

> Yeah, I think the assignment process, the grad school selection process are, by
>
> themselves, are very fair, but I think that the way the performance reports are

written, which are the keys to success, the way the performance reports are reviewed and the opportunity that's given to each person, it's not equitable. I know fair is a bad word to mention but I would say that the way that it currently operates now with the lowercase "p" of policy and practice [i.e., not written instruction], it's not very fair to minority officers. But again, we got to get in the right jobs and take advantage of the right jobs to be successful. You got to get the right performance report. *But, if you can't get those pieces right, it's going to be a hard row to hoe* [emphasis added].

Understanding the need for a mentor early in your career: "We don't want to do an autopsy"; "We need a 411 not a 911." In discussions about how the association could provide a culture of mentoring to its members, the senior officers centered their advice less on career functions and more on the psychosocial, job-coaching, and political skills of mentoring. Senior officers had received career functions through mentoring but expressed reservations about how a mentor within the Association, and not in the officer's command, could provide sponsorship, challenging assignments, and exposure given that many mentors would not have the necessary influence in the protégé's chain of command.

Senior officers' model. Many senior officers offered their own personal mentoring experiences as models for successful mentoring relationships. One senior officer, for instance, stated that he believed there should be no more than two rank levels of separation between the mentor and protégé: "The older one becomes it is difficult to connect to the junior person on their level, maybe they have a sports interest, but that is not enough for a meaningful mentoring relationship."

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Many interviewees indicated that their best mentoring relationships had developed naturally with someone they knew and trusted. Several had senior officers, who had worked behind the scenes on their behalf, but they did not know directly who these individuals were or if they were mentors since their identity was never revealed. One senior officer referred to such anonymous mentors as "sea daddies." The officer went on to explain:

> And these were just people that I didn't know was watching and just seeing. And not that anybody took me aside and said, "You should do this, that and the other in your career and this is how you'll get ahead." That was not it. But as I look back then, and as I look back even years, less than that, is that I think that you always have to do your best regardless of where you go.

About staying in touch with former subordinates, another senior officer advised:

> I personally have more than a few of my officers that I am still in touch with, all the officers that worked for me when I was an 06. Now, some of them I am a little less in touch than others are, and some I am in touch with them and I still have phone calls.

The same officer explained this mentoring model:

> There should be eight or 10 officers that you should be calling up and asking about and seeing how they are doing and checking on their career from afar. And they should feel very comfortable coming to you with a situation before it gets so big that they can't handle it…. I think that is where we got to go and if we do not do it that way, again that whole senior-subordinate relationship. There's so much

going on, so many dynamics that are mixed into there, I think you need to have

someone else that you go to and you can pull yourself back a little bit from it.

As one senior officer stated, "I don't want to do the autopsy after—we should not be

doing that. We need to do it before." Still another recalled, "I think at NNOA, someone

said when you're reaching out to someone, make it a 411, not a 911." In other words, one

should establish relationships and maintain contact not just when there is a problem.

Concerning the career function of mentoring, one interviewee stated:

One, you are focusing on a formal mentorship program when, in fact, certain

communities kind of have mentorship built into the way they train and fight. So, I

would say aviation is one of those from the standpoint of a multi-seat aviation.

Another maintained that "you have to have mentors who are majority folks and also

within the chain of command because they can add a greater influence on your upward

mobility than sitting around and talking about the good and the bad with people who are

not necessarily in a position to influence."

Another officer pointed to the coaching/role-model scenario in his career:

Now … never said, "I'm your mentor." … just served as an example. And, I was

a very shy person so I never would have gone up and asked anybody to be my

mentor or anything like that. But, and the term was not really even coined at that

point in time. But here was someone who served as a great example, of someone

that was successful, someone that was positive, someone that obviously if you

needed something, you could ask him. So he comes to mind. He was the very

first mentor.

Lastly, one interviewee offered the following model as a possible option for an association mentoring program:

> I think when we start talking about the institution, we should not limit our self to just that one person. I think we should rotate our senior leaders or have some sort of rotation-type mechanism built in where you get to see different people. It also gives you an opportunity to mentor everybody in the organization. So everybody in the organization is exposed to the leadership in the organization instead of just this one person with this one individual. And that will naturally develop. That will naturally develop when we start matching up expertise or what we call "military occupational specialties" with each other. That will naturally happen, but I think if you had some sort of mechanism where inside the local chapter we rotated the mentorship, it would make a more effective program.

As the previous comments strongly suggest, the senior officers were very much concerned with and involved in mentoring their subordinates, and were progressive in their proposed solutions for the association to continue creating a mentoring culture.

Managing expectations in a mentoring program. Most of the interviewees echoed the sentiment of one senior officer: "Mentoring is absolutely essential. I wouldn't—I wouldn't be where I am without it today." They felt that NNOA could play a substantial role in the mentoring of its membership but warned that the association would have to manage the expectations of any program. As one officer cautioned, "You can mentor all you want. Not everybody is going to be a flag officer"—emphasizing the proactive role of the protégé in the mentoring relationship. Regarding mentoring relationships, one senior officer said:

You know, it really comes down to expectation management. You know, mentoring relationships have to be formed based on trust. And that trust is normally formed through shared experiences. So, I'm usually not one to go look for a mentor that I have not gotten to know as an individual. And most importantly, in a mentorship relationship, the program should try to develop the young officer mentally from the standpoint of questions and information to prepare them for the mentorship experience which would better prepare them to be helped.

Similarly, another senior officer warned:

Because the thing about the association that you are pursuing is the problem that you have, that we have to safeguard ourselves is if that young people would view this as the one and only savior. And it's not because the association will address a lot of the cultural and emotional issues I talked about, but in a lot of cases it can not touch the technical issues. And so you will need someone technically in your career field that is going to be able to help you, and most likely for most African Americans, it is not going to be another African American, ever.

Another senior officer asserted:

But hopefully everybody can be successful and effective in what they are doing, and to that extent, this is very important. But some of the stuff, people are not going to listen to you. Some people do not even want to be mentored. And that's fine; they can be on their own. But the people who really can benefit, these are the people who, if a mentor would have intervened, could have put them on the

right track, could have saved them, so were not losing someone who should be a general or flag one day.

Proactive protégés. The senior officers expected protégés to be prepared for mentoring sessions. Specifically, because the association mentor does not have access to performance reports or other personnel information regarding the protégé, the protégé should bring those items to sessions. One senior officer stated:

And so, after having been burned a few times with why this person didn't screen for a key assignment when he told me he was doing fine, I always ask for performance reports. And sure enough, there was a case where a senior officer had been the reporting senior for this person for a grand total of two or three months, and he gave this guy a lousy performance report. And clearly he could not have drawn those conclusions based on the short amount of time that they had served together. So something else was going on.

The following narrative recounts a mentoring session for which the protégé was properly prepared and the mentor was able provide significant insight for the protégé:

I am looking at his stuff, and I said, "Hey, wait a minute…. It says here in your record and I see the performance report that you went to the postgraduate school." And he goes, "Yes, sir." "But," I said, "here on your officer service record there's no mention of a master's degree." And he says, "Well, sir, I didn't get it. I am still working on that." And I go, "what? ... You mean to tell me that you left the postgraduate school four years ago and you still haven't finished your master's degree?" And he goes, "Yes, sir." I said, "Let me tell you. I don't need to look at anything else. This is what prevented you from being selected. The board will

see this as we took you out of the …. we sent you to go do a job. Your mission

was to go get your master's degree because you are going to need that degree to

go do some other things for us and make yourself competitive and stay on track,

and you did not do that. And everybody else that you are going up against on the

board, they have done that."

Promotions, key assignment screening boards, and the performance report.

The previous narrative also reinforces the need for a trusted mentor throughout one's

career, as recommended by the MLDC. In the mentoring session narrative, the senior

officer identified why the individual was not promoted, but an earlier mentoring session

could possibly have explored how to prevent the failed promotion in the first place. As

the senior officer stated:

 If you leave the postgraduate school and you have not finished, that is fine, too,

but as soon as you possibly can, wrap that thing up, get that paperwork in, and let

them know that you completed your thesis, you got your paper signed off, and

you got the degree before the next board happens.

The senior officers also strongly encouraged officers to forge a relationship with

the person writing their respective performance reports. They recommended making an

appointment with the person who will sign their performance report for a formal debrief

on their performance between performance reports. One senior stated, "If you don't

know where you stand with your boss, it's just as much your fault as it is his, his or hers,

and so you put in this effort, performance, performance, performance, but its performance

with feedback." However, the senior officers offered differing viewpoints on a

supervisor serving as one's mentor as discussed previously.

One senior officer spoke on the role of the supervisor—who is a mentor, leader, and boss—and the need for the supervisor to assist in charting the subordinate officer's career roadmap:

A supervisor should devote a certain percentage of their time on the development of their personnel. And, in that development, they should help you chart out whether you're on track, where you're headed as toward—towards your goals, and whether you're doing the right things to get there or not. Then what is so unique about that dynamic is that person has the ability to either help you or be neutral or to hurt you on your way to your goal. So if that person is not your mentor and if that person is not on board with understanding where you need to go, what you'd like to do, and how you need to get there and whether you're being successful in getting there or not. *Well, then any other mentor that you want to have or will have really will not mean a whole lot because that person can basically disrupt your whole plan* [emphasis added].

Indeed, it is important for junior officers to be proactive in building a good rapport with their supervisors. Likewise, a senior officer from a different sea service offered, "If you have a supervisor—and also that supervisor serves as your mentor—there is a possibility of [others perceiving it as] favoritism…. You really create an environment that's probably not conducive to good order and discipline, as I see it." Junior officers really must learn to how to deal with difficult supervisors since their career will depend on that relationship. That person will evaluate their performance in a performance report that goes before the promotion and key assignment screen boards.

While the service makes provisions to ensure the board process is fair. There are directives given to the board in the form of a precept that delineates the skills needed by the service, and diversity is important. It can be stressful for senior racial minorities serving on the board since they often have the added indirect responsibility to ensure equality. A senior officer reflected on his experience with the promotion and screening board process and the pressure of being a racial minority—sometimes the only racial minority—on these boards:

> We put those nice words in the precept for the board members, but it doesn't make any difference, but we put the politically correct words in there, and your role as that minority, it is a very subtle thing because you're not…. I learned this after a while. We would go straight to his office. "Sir or ma'am, we need to talk," and you have to because even if I was going to blow a gasket, which I might have, I could not do it publicly in front of everybody.

Job assignments, talent management, and mentoring. Senior officers spoke in detail about their respective service's process regarding talent management. They were optimistic about talent management identifying up-and-coming talent and keeping that talent on track. One officer, by way of example, warned that the process could yield less than desirable results:

> We had these sessions where the community leaders would come in and talk to the service chief about this diversity and what they were doing, but the conversations were always so vague. And you can use numbers and statistics to make any case you want, but when you talk about specific names of people,

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commanders, lieutenant commanders, lieutenants, who are the people who are

doing X, Y, and Z and what is it that we are laying out for their careers.

Talent management begins early in an officer's career. A 2014 RAND study on

improving the demographic diversity in the U.S. Air Force Officer Corps reported that

minority groups in the Air Force are less likely to have early markers of career success,

such as high officer-of-merit scores earned at the Air Force Academy (USAFA), than

their White counterparts. In the report, the authors noted that:

Individuals who are more competitive at the USAFA tend to also do better later.

This may be because they have characteristics that lay a foundation for strong

performance later, because they were denied a "definitely promote" and are able

to compete strongly for promotions, or because of some other reason. Whatever

the mechanism, recruiting minorities that rank higher in USAFA order of merit

could be a policy tool for mitigating promotion gaps later. (Lim, Mariano, Cox,

Schulker, & Hanser, 2014, p. 47)

One senior officer participant in this research explained why racial minority officers are

less likely to have early markers of career success: "Then it becomes a self-fulfilling

prophecy, he or she never performed in that job or he or she never got the job in the first

place. So of course, they don't stack up to some of the majority folks."

Encourage Personal Development

In analyzing the data from the senior officers' interviews, there emerged areas of

career development that the interviewees felt were the protégé's responsibility. These

areas are discussed in the following section.

Develop political and leader qualities. Political skill and servant leadership were two qualities that resonated with the senior officers, who believed that both were contributors to their military success. In the interviews, the senior officers often sought politically correct phrases and viewpoints to convey their answers to questions regarding sensitive subjects. Moreover, they took great effort to convey informal knowledge regarding service cultures for the association to use in establishing its career development program. Speaking about developing political skills as a flag officer, one senior officer noted:

> There is no written things that said now that you are a flag officer, you have to do this way or act this way or be this way. I just had to look, listen, and see what is next. No one tells you really what to do, and I do not know if that is in every case.

Another officer discussed making a favorable impression, being qualified, and being prepared (by researching a proposed new assignment) so he could put forth ideas on how the assignment could work:

> I would say probably the majority of those jobs either no one thought I would get those jobs. But the problem with those jobs is you get the interview, and they get to see you. And so though there were many of those jobs that I didn't think I stood a chance and most people did not think I stood a chance for, I got them because I was ready for them and I was prepared for them and I had thoughts about them and there were no issues with my qualifications.

Similarly, on the benefits of making a favorable impression, another senior officer pointed out: "The mentor, the coach needs to understand that 24/7, he is being watched.

And so every person that comes up to you, do not underestimate your impact on them."

On adapting and fitting in, another senior officer stressed, "Be there, or be talked about. It is just how it is. People notice when you're not there, especially when you're the only [racial minority]."

Senior leaders also identified certain non-negotiable qualities essential for good leadership: humility, confidence, serving as a good role model, and assuming responsibility for one's actions. About humility, one interviewee noted:

As the leader, you set that environment for them to do what they need to and for them to be successful. Therefore, I think as the more senior you get, the more humble you have to understand and be, because you are blessed, we are blessed, to be general officers and flag officers.

Regarding leader confidence, one senior noted that leaders should get more than one opinion on major decisions affecting their career:

You need all of it to paint an accurate picture. And if everybody's saying the same thing, then you can feel confident that, Okay, all these marks are lining up and now I've got a good fix on what I should be doing and that could be comforting in and of itself.

Another senior officer reinforced the importance of self-confidence:

Yeah, that becomes a little tricky because with the mentor and mentee relationship, you have to be very open. You have to be honest. And sometimes that honesty can rub someone the wrong way, and if you're not confident in yourself you can be impacted or the person can impact you.

Finally, a senior officer noted the need for setting good examples:

Being a good leader is being a good role model, there are many negative aspects when I think about the mentor because I will not say from my mentoring experience or my mentors, but I would say from observation. There are leaders who were placed in roles of leadership that I felt did not set a good role model example.

An ART member recounted an experience from his time working with a well-known corporation. At a training session, the speaker posed the question, "What will usher high achievers onto the last corporate rung of the success ladder?":

He reminded each leader that they had already distinguished themselves among their peers and that they were already identified as top-tier talent. However, he admonished them that what they did to get where they are would not be what separates them from the next group. He offered a very simple but starkly candid perspective on success of the "elite." *The partner suggested that being selected for corporate executive leadership positions would require that a persona be "well liked"* [emphasis added].

Develop technical and subspecialty skills. At multiple times during the interviews, the senior officers recounted that, while mentoring is important, performance is really everything. I offered for discussion the episode in which an officer had not completed his postgraduate education and therefore did not earn a subspecialty skill, leading to a failed promote. One senior officer asserted, "That's the big piece of this mentorship program, making these young people ready for when they get that call, there's no side story. They're qualified." By "no side story," the senior officer meant that the junior officers must invest time in learning skills so that there is no question

about qualifications. One officer provided the following when discussing his preparation strategy:

> There were some times where I cannot count the number of times where someone might ask, "Hey, where's … when there was a party or whatever it was going on I wasn't there. And it was because I was working, studying, and working on my craft.… Sometimes the simple strategy is the best and the simple strategy was always "just do the work." Be the best you can be at that area…. Do not look for someone to cover for you. Be the best.

Senior officers highlighted the advice and assistance they were given by their bosses and mentors with regard to understanding the importance of their performance. As discussed earlier, they emphasized building a positive relationship with the person writing one's performance report because that person has to know what one is doing in order to reflect properly one's performance. A senior officer shared an experience in which one of his bosses helped him to understand performance:

> It is true performance; it is the relentless pursuit of excellence. So he was the one that helped me to understand what this thing called excellence is all about. He was the one that helped me realize that if you're going to put your effort into it, make sure when you are done with it you're ready for the world to see it because you put that much effort into making it right.

Another senior officer advised that a junior officer should:

> have due diligence at any task that he's assigned, and to do the best within his capability, always look for advice of those that may have done it before if he has any questions. Be honest with himself and always do an honest and trustworthy

job … So in a nutshell, yeah, that's what I would do for them to impart to them to do their very best within their capabilities. That is all we ask for them.

Other senior officers echoed these same sentiments.

Communication Skills

The process of building relationships was also a relevant topic for the interview participants in this study. When asked, "What resources did you seek out or saw others use to develop their career?", the senior officers reinforced the need for protégés to begin building relationships early and to be wise in the use of social media

Network: Reach across the aisle to build relationships. Consistently, the senior officers emphasized networking as a way to "reach across the aisle" to build relationships with the dominant culture. They acknowledged that majority officers typically did not need to—and with few exceptions probably would not—reach out to minority officers. Therefore, the senior officers stressed the need to influence others for the overall good of the command. One senior officer, communicating the challenges one faces in figuring out who one's supporters are, stated that it is important to remember to engage with all people because you do not know who your supporters are, "And being alert to these backstabbing kinds of people, and it gets more sophisticated the more senior you get". He concluded, "You have to be around those folks because what they say behind your back and what they say to your face, you have to get a sense of who is saying what."

Use social media wisely. As stated earlier, senior officers acknowledged the advantage junior officers have in the use of technology and saw that proficiency as a positive factor in their career development. However, one senior officer cautioned not to

use government computers when communicating personal business via email or instant message. What one regards as innocent conversation can lead to embarrassing situations and even formal investigations. A senior officer shared a story about one officer who used social media inappropriately, prompting an investigation. "You don't have to comment on everything you see on Facebook," he said. Another senior officer stated that a good motto is "connected but disciplined."

An ART member who had the privilege of doing an internship with a large corporation shared that, in the corporate world, employees can receive special guidance directly in the corporate "press announcement" to the employees labeled "Social Media Guidance," which may state among other directives, "Do not engage in two-way dialogue on social media with anyone about this event."

Learn technology. The use of technology is ubiquitous in the military, from the battlefield to the office; therefore, it was appropriate to solicit the senior officers' perspectives on how technology has affected the career development of minority commissioned officers. With the use of the Internet, for instance, personnel can access instructions and training manuals, and even see how a piece of equipment works from the comfort of their home, office, or ship. As one officer to stated, "Now everything is on the Internet. Everything is out there. If the person doesn't have a desire or a will to be successful, to learn, or to grow professionally, then that is his or her own fault."

The availability of so much information has necessitated its protection. The Coast Guard's Human Capital Strategy states that "the implications of cyber security includes developing new competencies, qualifications, and performance support; fulfilling personnel staffing requirements and analyzing the relationships between career fields;

and ensuring viable career progression required to sustain proficiency" (U.S. Coast Guard, 2016, p. 11). Therefore, it was necessary to learn senior officers' perspectives on the current state of technology and understand how they envision technology influencing the career development of racial minority commissioned officers. Three technology-related themes emerged during the interviews: technology leads to a widening of the generational divide; professional technology skills; and career development websites.

Technology leads to a widening of the generational divide. On multiple occasions during the interviews, senior officers acknowledged the advantage junior officers have in the use of technology, viewing such proficiency as a positive influence in their career development. There appeared to be less concern about race and technology than there was regarding the generational divide that technology brings. Technology helps to keep junior officers more informed than in the past about what is happening in their service; they can now access service Internet sites, receive podcasts from their leaders, and access their respective service's Facebook page. One officer stated enthusiastically that technology is definitely playing a part in advancing minority officers' careers:

> Technology, sharing information is so much easier and you can reach so many people. Texting, via email, and instant messaging. I mean, I just think it brings us all—it connects us all better. And not only that, we can reach out to other services as well, especially through—through organizations like NNOA and ANSO.

"We have improved but we can do much more and better to help people, commissioned officers, or [service] officers, regardless of who they are", stated one senior officer. With

regard to "doing more" for personnel, a senior officer discussed the need to focus on the individual, and not entirely on delivering a message via the Internet. The senior officer points to a concern about the inability of some millennials to extricate themselves from their technological devices long enough for face-to-face communication, so you have to greet them with a firm handshake and speak with them in person. They will remember that:

> The millennials have just—they are just different these days as far as your communication techniques. Whereas everything was open and—and face-to-face communication, as you can tell a greater part of our population in that age sector feel more secure with their head in—on their iPhone, walking. You know, just avoid—just avoid the communication or even the face-to-face glance…. Which is a firm handshake and carrying on a conversation. They would rather resort to a text and not even see the person. Or those in their immediate presence, they would rather be texting someone else. So that is just how they are shaped.

Another senior officer shared a similar thought about the millennial officer:

> Now, unfortunately today, I do not see many people coming to speak senior officers as we used to do when I was growing up in the military. It was one where we saw a senior officer and we would "beat feet" to try to get to him and just have a discussion with him. I see less of that. I am not sure what the real reason for it is. I think we are trying to get back to where it used to be.

Unlike the previous narrative, this senior officer shares the difficulty of connecting with one of his mentors early in his career as compared to how many junior officers today have access to almost instant connection:

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He was no longer on active duty but he got to go to every … base and he was just

leaving active duty. And so I would see him probably twice a year, simply

because of his job. And any other time, it was just fortuitous … that we would

see each other over a Christmas break or a break in the summertime or whatever.

I would probably see him two to three—on average, three times a year. But it

wasn't the instant communication. It didn't happen overnight, and if he wasn't in

the immediate grid square I'd have to call him up and perhaps play phone tag, and

everything of course was long-distance then. So it was a little bit more difficult to

do.

Professional technology skills. One senior officer, speaking about his current

job, saw cybersecurity as the up-and-coming military occupational specialty or one that

will require the military to bring in civilians—namely young civilians—to accomplish

specific tasks. Another spoke of the value of technology on the battlefield and the need

for junior officers to be catalysts for adding value to their service using technology:

It's a good thing and our senior leader has embraced innovation, has embraced

technology and how we can bring that to the battlefield, how we can better

support our—conduct our maintenance efforts and what have you…. So we're

going to use them to—to really springboard us to where we need to go.

Career development websites. A senior officer accustomed to using websites to

distribute professional information stated:

We are going to have to have a better medium, and I do not know what the better

medium is. They are very passive and you got too many keystrokes, and after

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about three, people are about done and they are ready to move on to something

else…. I do not know that we have done … that is a hard question for me.

Similarly, another senior officer commented:

Now everything is on the Internet. Everything is out there. I think it put everyone

on an equal playing field. I think that it all goes back to the—the will to survive,

the will to be successful, and the desire to be successful as an individual. Before,

it would be you looking for a certain book or publication, file, or something that

somebody else could control that you may or may not have been given access to.

Creating Interventions that Privilege Members through Collaboration

Research question three investigated how a professional association's members, learning

through a collaborative action inquiry process, could privilege its members by creating

interventions for career development. Table 25 summarizes the themes and subthemes of

research question three.

Table 25

Themes and Subthemes: Collaborative Interventions Privileging Association Members

Research Question	Themes	Subthemes
3. How can professional association members, participating in a collaborative action inquiry process, create interventions to help privilege minority sea service commissioned officers?	Individual Collaboration	• Relying on the strengths of ART members • Maintaining flexibility based on primary job commitments • Learning from each other
	Group Collaboration	• Yielding to the data • Learning and conducting insider action research • Learning to work virtually

Relying on Strengths of the Action Research Team Members

Initially, this action research study focused exclusively on mentoring interventions; the focus then shifted to the career development of junior officers in NNOA. This transition occurred because the team members were active in the career advisement and career development of association members and agreed to center the study on issues of vital importance to the membership. A team member, a baby boomer who was in the Navy during the 1970s race riots, pointed out that:

> [the junior officer's] visual of maybe what they need was probably a little
>
> different from what I would think. As so, therefore, I now had to open my eyes
>
> up, maybe get out of the 70s, 80s maybe, and kind of listen to what was going on
>
> in 2015, 2016 and try to find balance in terms of what I am thinking was needed
>
> by a junior officer for a successful career.

She felt that current junior officers now see more racial diversity in the senior ranks of their services than she did as a junior officer. The AR team continually searched for balance with these issues as we developed interventions to focus on the career development of junior officers.

Herr and Anderson (2005) held that "not all research data that a researcher uses have to be newly generated when the inquiry is formally initiated" (p. 79). This was apparent for this research as members of the team were chosen because of their interest in mentoring. The association had recognized two team members for their contributions in this area at the chapter level. Recounting why he was invited to participate on the ART, a member commented:

I was nominated to be on the ART because I've worked with NNOA and a

chapter in developing a mentorship program that actually we did really well. It

was effective, and actually, our chapter won the national mentoring award.

He presented this work to the team, and we were able to refer to it and the work of the

other team member as models for developing our learning modules for use by the

mentoring dyads in the pilot. The team members were keen to provide a starting point

for mentors in the mentoring sessions since we knew their time would be limited in

preparing for each session. A team member noted the ART's ability to work well

together:

We all had some ideas about how to do it and because of that, we fed off each

other's ideas and the passion came through and it helped us to generate better

ideas. I think as a group, having a team or a group work together, not only do you

get the individual ideas, but also together, they come up with better ideas.

Maintain flexibility based on jobs commitments. The AR team began its

journey together thinking we would conduct the research for a year. As the study

evolved and consumed over two years of our time, it tested our abilities to balance quality

work with our respective job and family commitments. The team comprised three active-

duty members and two retired members, of whom I was one. I was also a care provider

for my elderly mother who lived with me, and the other retired officer was juggling

family obligations, an elderly parent who was ill, previous commitments to NNOA, and

other social action endeavors.

Our active-duty members experienced ebbs and flow in the operational

requirements of their jobs. One team member worked at the Pentagon, and another was

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starting a new assignment at the Pentagon. Their jobs left little time during the workday to address ART responsibilities. In addition, the Pentagon did not allow smartphone usage in its workspaces, nor was the cellular reception of these devices very strong or reliable. The job assignments of these two officers eventually led us to change our standard meeting time from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM (Eastern Standard Time).

Since we met virtually, a team member from the West Coast accommodated the schedule change by occasionally meeting with us from her car as she shuttled one of her children to afterschool activities. Moreover, one of the member's workload was too demanding for synchronous conference calls, so he and I talked offline, and he also provided his input by email. I regularly worked with team members one-on-one and thus had an understanding of what they needed and how they felt about progress of the study. The passion for the subject matter and the commitment to the association was evidenced by the resourcefulness of the team in meeting their obligations to provide useable products and in carving out time for our meetings.

Learning from each other. The team members were engaged in the research and were open to new approaches and new ideas. They agreed that in working together as a team, we developed a better product than either one of us would have by ourselves. This prompted the anchor of our team to reflect after one team meeting:

> This was helpful to learn about each member's background. Because members
> are from different services, the introductions not only gave an idea of who
> everyone is but skillsets they bring to the team. It was particularly significant to
> hear the "why" of each person who was on the team as it relates to mentoring.

As the AR team explored various ways to provide mentoring initially and then transfer that knowledge to career development, we were always mindful of the "why" of mentoring. Discussing what he learned from the study, our navigator stated that:

> [mentoring] is absolutely a necessity for minorities and women, and the primary reason is that there's not—there's not enough role models specifically for each of the gender or ethnic or race sects that we—that are represented in the services. But with that, I think it goes into the culture because coming into the organization, my experience is—is that when you come into an organization and you don't have a culture in your community of people that have been in the … or been in the— the service, then you have no idea of how the organization really works.

I checked in regularly with the team members to ensure we were formulating ideas correctly or that we had accurately described information about their service. One member commented on the learning afforded the team by working with officers in the three sea services:

> I enjoyed hearing about the other services and hearing about how they would approach it. In fact, I really liked when you did that. I am not sure if it was by design, but one of our meetings was strictly us talking about how our service would handle a particular challenge or issue where we would even teach or mentor a particular issue. In addition, for me, that was just really rich to hear about the different service cultures.

Group Collaboration

Three subthemes emerged from the group's efforts as the ART members collaborated in creating interventions to help privilege minority sea service

commissioned officers. They were yielding to the data, conducting insider action

research, and working as a virtual team.

Yielding to the data. It was important to me that the team understood what the

data were telling us. On occasion, we lost our way and had to regroup. For example,

during our research of the software for assisting in the mentoring process, our objective

was to test the usefulness of tools for e-mentoring and to offer the mentoring dyads a

repository of mentoring files, such as their biography or performance report input. What

we eventually learned, however, was that ".com" and sometimes ".org" sites were not

accessible form military bases. Because of this connectivity problem, we got "lost in the

weeds" because we became absorbed with learning the software, which was not user-

friendly and did not attend to the officers in the pilot or to the website statistics, which

revealed minimal usage of the software. The pilot testing of e-mentoring tools

represented a vision of the team to distribute mentoring tools to all members. In his exit

interview, one team member revealed, "And then the angle you were taking, and for it to

be an e-mentoring was really intriguing to me and it made me think differently. It really

challenged the way that I thought."

As a second example of "losing our way," the team revisited often the topic of

what makes a good mentoring match—cross-race, same-race, or cross-gender. Our

discussion focused more on the topic of cross-race than on cross-gender and same-race

mentoring. It was ironic that this subject absorbed so much of our time since some team

members had been in or were in all three types of mentoring relationships and spoke

positively about all of them. The discussions would also circle back to observations that

the association comprised mostly minority officers needing a relationship that would

allow them to be mentored by someone who understood what it was like to be a racial minority in the sea services. The team felt that the majority officer would not "get it." We were also skeptical of how the board would react to matching officers in cross-race mentoring pairs. As one team member pointed out:

> Just an example for—of what mentoring could do if we were to apply it on a consistent basis. But it's my thought in general … that not all minority officers buy into the concept of mentoring. And as indicated by the fact of how difficult it was for us to get the initial consent to proceed with this program under NNOA.

Once the pilot data were analyzed and the results showed that these senior officers championed all three forms of mentoring relationships and had benefited from cross-race mentoring, our concerns were quieted.

Learning and conducting insider action research. The ART members were all active members of the association. I was the least active when we started the research; I had retired six years earlier to a geographical area without an active local chapter, and after a failed attempt to revive it, I focused all of my efforts on actively recruiting high school students to the Navy and Marine Corps through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship. I was concerned about retention of these officers once they were on active duty, so this research with NNOA was a natural outgrowth of that concern. As one team member stated:

> One of the things that we have had problems doing in the past is retaining minority officers in the sea service. We have done a great job attracting them and getting them in at the entry level, but retention has been a problem over the years. And mentoring has proven a means of improving those numbers. So myself along

with the rest of our team, I think, we were all aware of that, and our passion for mentoring and using mentoring as a tool to increase those numbers was something that we were all interested in.

The team felt a sense of ownership of the research, as well as a certain pressure to produce a tangible product that the membership could use and the association could approve. We all had some level of anxiety about the association's laissez-faire attitude regarding mentoring. As an example, we were all disappointed when we discovered that no time was allotted on the 2014 conference agenda for the topic of mentoring. The answer we received from the board was, "All of what we do at the conference is mentoring and career development." Although we agreed with this statement, we felt it illuminated a larger problem, one that we had discussed among ourselves during meetings—that the association might have trouble adopting and supporting (financially) the mentoring website (e-military-mentoring.com) after the research was completed. A team member who was a longtime active member of the association stated:

> Any particular effect on me, probably I feel like we actually accomplished something, so that would be the effect. We actually set out to do a pilot and set it up and execute it and we have a pilot that we set up and it's now in the execution phase and I look forward to what was my main motivation is to get the organization to adopt it, solidly, and actually use it going forward.

The goal of providing a tangible product to the association propelled us to action, though it caused stress in the beginning (at least for me). Being insiders ourselves, the ART members wanted to show the NNOA board that we were working and that we had applicable ideas. The team agreed to hire a web designer to create a website on which

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mentoring information could be made available, and we were elated that this website ultimately moved the board to revamp the NNOA's website. The team's initial momentum around mentoring made it harder to change our course in order to think more in terms of career development. In the meetings that ensued, we determined that the learning modules were related more to career development, and our new task became centered on how to get more officers, specifically junior officers, to use them for that purpose. The mentoring program pilot members had exhibited little support for using these modules as a springboard into mentoring sessions. The modules currently operate similar to a self-paced online course. This means that an officer must understand that he or she needs this additional training for his or her career development and find time to complete the one-hour lesson in conjunction with other obligations.

Learned to work virtually. Today many meeting occur virtually—but not necessarily for the military officer. The AR team experimented twice with two different Video Teleconferencing (VTC) platforms and because of connectivity issues on military bases settled on telephone conference calls for our virtual meetings. We used online file-sharing software (i.e., Dropbox) to share our files (e.g., audio file of meetings). Our team members were located in Washington, DC, Atlanta, GA, Norfolk, VA, and San Jose, CA. The following comment from a team member summarizes how members of the team experienced their virtual meetings:

> I will tell you, I was a huge skeptic with virtual meetings and virtual education or
> distance education, and therefore virtual mentorship. Not because I do not believe
> it will work, because it just is not my leadership style. And you were able to be so
> effective with our team. So I could say my experience was really positive. You

challenged me and made me think differently and I liked the fact that I think what

we're developing as a product is anything better than one of us could have come

up with. And so you taking the combined experiences of everyone [through the

different] services also and you were able to put it into an area that now I'm a

huge fan of, and now I'm trying to convince other people to go through meetings

virtual—this virtual classroom or this virtual meeting place.

At the beginning of this study, synchronous virtual meetings to plan and accomplish

action did not match the leadership style of any of the team members, except for the last

team member, who was integrated into the team a year before the study concluded. We

made it work, however, because of our collective experience working in groups, our

passion for the subject, and our desire to give the junior officers in the association an

additional tool for achieving career development.

This chapter examined the findings of the study—culled largely from participant

interviews—to answer the three research questions. NNOA has to enable an environment

and culture that will encourage the ability to move across all three services to privilege its

members. This is an opportunity for the association to be counted among the leaders

among affinity groups supporting the military. Likewise, the team has to ensure that the

board understands this opportunity by endorsing and championing the career

developments tools from this research. I provide a full summary of the study in the next

chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of the study was to explore how a professional association whose membership functions in predominately White institutions can privilege its members, who are primarily minority sea service commissioned officers, in their career development. The research has significant implications for individuals involved in the planning of career development programs for professional associations. Three research questions guided the study: (1) What are the factors (technological, military, and political) that marginalize the career development of minority sea service commissioned officers? (2) How can a professional association privilege its members in career development using mentoring interventions? (3) How can professional association members, learning through a collaborative action inquiry process, create interventions to help privilege minority sea service commissioned officers? This chapter first offers a summary of the findings related to each research question, draws conclusions from those findings, and then provides suggestions for practice, theory, and future research.

Study Summary

This action research case study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach to collecting the primary data; the action research team conducted it over a two-year period. The National Naval Officers Association, a professional association supporting the sea services, sponsored the study.

Qualitative research was appropriate for this study since I was interested in uncovering the meaning that senior racial minority commissioned officers had attached to critical career development and mentoring experiences as they advanced in their careers. Data were gathered through critical incident interviews with 13 senior commissioned officers (three of whom were part of a pilot study); all of the senior racial minority commissioned officers selected for participation satisfied the criteria established by the ART (see Chapter 3, Tables 13 and 14). In addition to these interviews, I extracted data from ART member interviews and reflections, team meeting minutes, the mentoring program pilot, researcher journals, and client and sea service documents.

My review of the literature revealed that academic and military scholars have not fully explored the effects of military practices on racial minority commissioned officers. It also allowed for an understanding of how senior racial minority commissioned officers in the sea services collectively understand and overcome critical factors affecting their career development and promotions. I employed the critical incident technique as my method for interviewing the 13 senior officer participants. Each senior officer was interviewed by an ART member from his or her respective military service, which ensured that specific service terms and cultural practices were interpreted properly. When it was impractical for an ART member of the same service to conduct the interview, I conducted the interview after meeting with the designated ART member to gain information about the service culture and background information on the senior officer. On average, each interview lasted approximately one hour. Each completed interview was transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and made available to the senior officer and the interviewer for review and changes.

Through the study, I used the constant comparative method to analyze the transcripts and the critical incidents of the senior officers, the transcripts of the research team members' exit interviews, and other study data. This method of analysis yielded themes and subthemes related to the research questions. In the following sections, I summarize the findings around each of the three research questions.

Summary of Findings

In this section, I discuss factors that often marginalize the career development of racial minority sea service commissioned officers. I then summarize how, according to the findings, a professional association can privilege it members. Lastly, I discuss how the ART, which comprised members of the professional association sponsoring the research, collaborated to develop interventions to privilege its members.

Factors that marginalize career development. The AR team found that the senior officer participants had been marginalized during their career by experiencing ineffective leadership by the dominant culture, which evoked a deep history of discrimination. This marginalization was characterized by working in a hostile command climate, bigotry by supervisors, and feeling isolated in their own military service. In addition, the team found that personnel practices could contribute to the marginalization of racial minority officers when policies were not applied equally to all commissioned officers. This phenomenon occurred, for example, in relation to the language used in performance reports and in job assignments received by racial minority commissioned officers. Promotions and future key job assignments are dependent on receiving very favorable performance reports and a propitious job assignment. Yes, as one senior officer participant lamented, "But if you can't get those pieces right, it's going to be a

hard row to hoe." Participants also expressed concerns about how the services executed talent management and military equal opportunity.

Privileging members in career development using mentoring interventions. The senior officers expounded on many methods NNOA and individual officers should employ to help racial minority commissioned officers survive and thrive in the sea services. These methods fell into major categories: professional and personal development, and improving interpersonal and intrapersonal communication skills. In the area of professional development, the senior officers outlined concerns with the process that precedes the promotion and screening boards, which requires the individual to understand performance report language and to negotiate for job assignments. Related to personal development, the senior officers recommended developing political skills and leadership qualities, and perfecting one's technical and subspecialty skills so that one is qualified for key assignments and receives favorable performance reports for earning promotions. Other areas of importance for privileging association members related to forming relationships, especially with the dominant culture. Additionally, in the area of technology, participants recommended practicing restraint when using smartphones and social media.

Collaborative interventions privileging association members. The study also resulted in learning at the individual and group levels for the ART. As a team, we relied on our respective leadership, team, and project management skills acquired during our military careers, each member having over 20 years of experience in these areas. We learned from each other about how to appreciate the differences among the sea services and to use those differences in planning interventions. As a group, we were fortunate to

have the opportunity to learn how to work virtually (only one of our team members had ever worked in a virtual team). Our learning was facilitated by our team charter and rules of engagement.

Study Conclusions

The aim of the research was to enable the National Naval Officers Association to better understand the critical factors affecting the career development and promotions of senior racial minority commissioned officers in the sea services and to use this information to privilege its members in their career development. This study provided insight into and a greater awareness of the marginalizing environment that can persist in the sea services for minority commissioned officers. Using the data from this research, the AR team created interventions for a career development program that NNOA could utilize to provide advantages to its members.

The research was situated in a military context, and the findings informed mentoring theory, career development theory, critical race theory (CRT), and the practice of action research. The case offered a unique look at career development mentoring taking place in informal settings of the sea services and within a professional association supporting the sea services for racial minority sea service commissioned officers. In this section, I discuss how CRT themes highlighted the participants' marginalization in the sea services, how the senior officers navigated this marginalization using mentoring and their affiliation with a professional association, and the avenues a professional association supporting the sea services can use to address these concerns. Three conclusions emerged from the findings; a discussion of each follows.

Conclusion 1: There Was Evidence of Marginalization in Sea Service Practices and Procedures Affecting Racial Minority Sea Service Commissioned Officers

This conclusion relates to the first research question, which sought to understand the factors that marginalize the career development of racial minority commissioned officers. The findings of this AR case study document the voices of participants who described their career development and mentoring experiences in their journey to becoming senior officers in their respective branch of the military. The findings indicate that marginalization occurred in the ways some in the dominant culture provided leadership and in the application of personnel practices. Senior officers detailed command climates that made them feel like they did not belong and supervisors who were not supportive of their career advancement. The senior officers' experiences aligned with CRT, which emphasizes analyzing traditional opinions imposed by the dominant race in favor of opinions that are grounded in social justice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The senior officers' experiences of racism and marginalization aligned with CRT studies in the social sciences which have demonstrated that race is clearly a relevant and meaningful topic and that the themes of CRT can be used to identify the marginalization of a person or group of people. For example, the desire to be nice and respectful in political discourse can ultimately limit critique and silence experiences (Aleman, 2009), and in adult education the tenets of CRT have revealed areas of racism left untouched by other theories (Closson, 2010). Daniel's (2007) research using CRT showed how the professional development of minority graduate social work students was impacted negatively by marginalization and conflict.

The military and business mentoring literature has articulated well the significance of the organization and the supervisor in a protégé's career advancement (Baranik et al., 2010; Dawley & Andrews, 2010; Ghosh & Reio, 2013; Johnson & Andersen, 2015; Jones, 2012; Kao et al., 2014; McGuire, 2007; Payne & Huffman 2005; Prevosto, 2001; Sun et al., 2014). For example, the military mentoring literature has suggested that senior officers with supervisors as their mentors receive significantly more career-related functions (McGuire, 2007) and that, for a majority officers, commanding officers serve as their mentor (Johnson & Andersen, 2015).

Receiving career development correlates with a commissioned officer's rise in the service through promotions. A promotion is an acknowledgement of leadership and mastery of military skills. The findings of this study, however, highlight that racial minority officers in the sea services, which are predominately White institutions, are not always afforded the support of their organization because of a poor command climate or lack of support from supervisors because of bigotry, thus resulting in less career development in their command.

Furthermore, racial minority commissioned officers need to forge mentoring relationships with the dominant race in marginalizing environments in order to learn the informal rules of the command. Blass and Ferris (2007) suggested that:

> organizations create environments that act as incentives to increase "learning the informal rules of the game" (political skill) and these rules are passed on selectively by the dominant coalition in efforts to perpetuate the status quo (Ferris, Perrewé, Anthony, & Gilmore, 2000), in other words, political skill is

acquired, to some degree, through a social learning process facilitated and

reinforced by mentoring relationships. (p. 9)

Racial minority commissioned officers have to "push across the aisle," as one senior

officer stated, to form these mentoring relationships because majority officers do not

have to and probably will not, and such relationships are helpful for learning the informal

rules of the game.

      Evidence of marginalization. As stated earlier, my review of the literature led

me to conclude that, generally, scholars have not reviewed military practices and

procedures using the tenets of CRT. This AR case study was possibly the first qualitative

research using key CRT tenets to analyze the career development experiences of racial

minority commissioned officer in the sea services. Using a CRT framework, this study

explored ways in which personnel practices and procedures perpetuate inequalities in the

sea services and how using storytelling, or narratives in the voice of the marginalized, can

assist in understanding their experiences. There is scholarship in the field of education

examining the marginalization of racial minority students through the lens of CRT; this

literature has shown that the voices of the marginalized doctoral students illustrating the

dehumanizing experiences in their everyday lives are similar to those of the senior

officers in this study (Aleman, 2009; Cooper et al., 2006; Daniel, 2007; Gildersleeve et

al., 2011; Griffin et al., 2014, Heilig et al., 2012; McDowell, 2004).

      Examples of marginalization described by some of the senior officer participants

included having to perform in hostile command climates, having to endure supervisory

bigotry (or risk a torpedoed career), and feeling isolated in their command because they

were the only racial minority. Lastly, they expressed concern for their career when their

performance was evaluated by a supervisor who had shown displeasure for racial minority personnel.

The senior officer participants identified the supervisor as a key figure in the career advancement of military officers. They spoke about building a positive relationship with one's supervisor because when it comes to evaluating performance, "it is a one-on-one relationship." Senior officers struggled, though, when searching for a word or words to describe the supervisor's role in the evaluation of an officer's performance. The word "unfair" or "fair" was chosen by a couple of the senior officers, and it appeared important for them to qualify their word choice. Indeed, the desire to use agreeable or appropriate words in discussing marginalization is consistent with Aleman's (2009) research of Utah politics and education. Using CRT as a framework, Aleman found that the requirements to be "nice" and to build coalitions suppressed a broader, more critical understanding of politics in Utah education by promoting an understanding of coalition building that only served to further marginalize communities of color.

Another senior officer explained the importance of the supervisor to the career of the officer this way:

> And, if that person [speaking about the supervisor] derails your career or gives you your performance report on your way out the door and it is not going to help you stay on track to meet your goals. There is not a whole lot of people that you can talk to after that. That is the way the system works!

Here, the senior officer participant refers to the promotion system and its construction by the White male-dominated military. Bierema (2009) noted, "It is convenient for those in

power, typically White males, to establish expectations that leave little room for others to question the prevailing standards that elite White males have themselves created" (p. 69).

Daniel's (2007) study of graduate minority students in and out of the social studies classroom highlighted three key findings that result from the lack of attention to race and diversity in the supervisory relationship and that agree with the findings of this study:

> First, it complicates the professionalization process of minority students by encouraging them to stop identifying with their community concerns and to shift loyalties to faculty and peers in their profession. Second, it encourages them to become blind to personal experience of inequality. Third, it helps students to develop a detached stance from racism and other social issues affecting their communities. (as cited in Romero & Margolis, 1999, p. 38).

The stories of oppression in the supervisory relationship voiced by some senior officer participants confirm Daniel's research regarding the complication of the professionalization process. The participants in this study found their professionalization process stymied by isolation, ineffective leadership, and poor command climates centered on the leadership in predominantly White male institutions.

It was important to the AR team's understanding of race and its relevance to sea services practices and procedures to use the real, lived experiences of the senior officer participants. Using colorful metaphors and language, the senior officers recounted in detail their experiences of oppression in predominantly White institutions. Additionally, their stories of isolation and of challenges obtaining key assignments gave voice to their experiences, thus aligning with the CRT tenet of recognizing the voice of the

marginalized (Aleman, 2009; Cooper et al., 2006; Gildersleeve et al. 2011; Griffin et al., 2014; McDowell, 2004). The voices of the senior officers assisted the ART in understanding their plight as they progressed in their careers while simultaneously seeking different avenues to navigate the marginalization. Their dehumanizing experiences were consistent with those of Latina/o and Black doctoral students as they persist in the pursuit of a degree (Gildersleeve et al., 2011). Finally, the officers also shared stories about proactively seeking ways to improve the representation of racial minority officers in their respective service and meeting resistance by staff and fellow senior officers.

Acknowledging the marginalization of racial minority officers and women in the sea services will be essential for making changes in how practices and procedures are applied to these populations in a military context. The professional interests and desires of minorities and women may not always coincide with those of the predominately White males in power, but these desires converge when they also are in the best interests of the dominant race (in what is known as interest convergence). As an example, the DoD had denied women entry into combat MOSs that consistently promote to the flag rank, but in 2015, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter declared:

> Like our outstanding force of today, our force of the future must continue to
> benefit from the best people America has to offer. In the 21st century, that
> requires drawing strength from the broadest possible pool of talent. This includes
> women, because they make up over 50 percent of the American population. To
> succeed in our mission of national defense, we cannot afford to cut ourselves off

from half the country's talents and skills. We have to take full advantage of every

individual who can meet our standards. (Carter, 2015, p. 1)

Interest convergence happens when "white policy makers believe it is in their best

interest to seek change to a policy" (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, as cited in Closson, 2010,

p. 273). That is, the admittance of women into the once male-dominated combat MOSs

occurred only when the White male-dominated DoD decided it needed their talents.

Conclusion 2: There Was Evidence of Privileging Occurring for Racial Minority

Commissioned Officers in their Career Development by the Professional Association

This conclusion relates to research question two, which considered how a

professional association that supports the sea services could privilege its members as they

advanced in their career. It also addressed how participants navigated environments that

were not conducive to their career development and advancement. It was evident from

this AR case study that many senior officers did not experience consistent mentoring

from their commanding officer, their chain of command, or even their service. Some

senior officers disclosed that they never had a mentor or a boss who served informally as

a mentor. In fact, some bosses exhibited bigoted or tyrannical behaviors. Two senior

officers in a service that sponsored a formal mentoring program reported that it did not

work well for them. They felt that the mentor they were matched with did not understand

them or could not remember basic information about their career. This is consistent with

the findings of Johnson and Anderson's (2015) mixed-methods study of senior Navy

commissioned and noncommissioned officers which found that formal matching efforts

tended to be viewed as somewhat unsuccessful in the Navy.

Many senior officers relied on NNOA as a place to network, give and receive professional advice, and get a "second wind" from the stresses of their military career. In most cases, these stresses were related to marginalization experienced in their service. The senior officers expressed appreciation for the opportunity to converse with other same-race officers about their challenges and for the comradery provided by the association. The association offered role modeling and psychosocial mentoring functions for these officers. It also offered a sense of belonging and motivation for racial minority officers. As one senior officer said, "It gave me a sense of being around people that thought I belonged, that I could be successful, which was probably the most important thing."

Previous mentoring research has not adequately addressed the mentoring support a professional association or affinity group can offer in businesses or organizations (in this case the military). One meta-analysis of the mentoring literature (Ghosh & Reio, 2013) did discuss the benefits of mentoring to organizations, but it did not specifically address associations as one of those organizations. The results were positive for organizations, though, showing that psychosocial mentoring correlates with organizational commitment. Moreover, Knouse and Webb (2000), in providing examples of military mentoring models that the business community could apply, particularly in helping minorities and women, stated, "all of the services draw upon numerous military associations as a source of information and interpersonal support" (p. 50), and they named NNOA as one of those professional groups.

Conclusion 3: The Findings Support the Need for NNOA to Develop an Overarching Strategy that Creates Opportunities for Career Development and Advocates for the Understanding of Service Culture for Racial Minority Junior Commissioned Officers

This conclusion relates to how the association can offer additional professional development opportunities to its junior officers so they are privileged in their career advancement. Building a sustained career development program at the national level that educates and mentors junior officers is a strategy of the association. The data gathered during this research indicated clearly that senior officers in NNOA were actively mentoring and providing career development advice to association members. The senior officer participants advocated for a continual career development program that educated junior officers about the culture of the sea services, how to prepare and interpret performance reports, how to understand what a good job assignment is and how to negotiate for it, and how to prepare for a promotion or screening board. The participants felt that these areas of focus were important for newly commissioned sea service officers. By offering a more comprehensive and continual career development program, NNOA would also be investing in the future of the sea services—an investment that aligns with the association's overall mission.

The association's career development program must integrate information offered by a junior officer's service. The service information is comprehensive; therefore, the goal is to learn how to navigate the information to provide a successful solution for a junior officer's career plan. Succinct but relevant career planning based on the skills of the officer and the needs of the service is key for junior officers since a successful career

does not just happen. This study developed learning modules based on the communication, analysis, synthesis, valuing, and execution (CASVE) cycle of decision-making (Peterson, Sampson, & Reardon, 1991) for use in the career advisement process for junior officers and the mentors. CASVE comprises the five information-processing skills in the decision-making domain of the cognitive information processing pyramid. The findings of this research also documented the need for more career advising for junior officers, especially in understanding the process that comes before a promotion and screening board. This process requires a minimum of two years of planning from commissioning to the first board; therefore, NNOA must adopt a proactive strategy that begins at the source of commissioning

Kram (1985) recommended an educational intervention to increase the protégé's self-awareness and to assist in building skills, like listening and managing conflicts, that help to form developmental relationships. The data in this research indicated that it is important for racial minority officers to understand the significance of building and maintaining relationships early in their career. They must integrate themselves into the culture of their service at work and at social functions by developing relationships with the dominate culture. Senior officer participants in this study recommended that racial minority commissioned officers be proactive in building these relationships because the dominate race does not have to and probably will not.

Self-awareness tools, such as the Myers-Briggs personality test or the 360-degree feedback inventory, should be a part of the association's career development program. These types of instruments assist in providing officers with a framework for self-

awareness, and the resulting information can be used to facilitate self-reflection, which can lead to greater self-awareness.

A Strategy that Advocates for Professional Association Members

Organizational efforts by employers aimed at improving equal opportunity and linking merit to employees' careers have gained support, but recent empirical studies have found that workplace disparities persist even with the adoption of certain employer practices such as affirmative action and diversity policies (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006, as cited in Castilla & Benard, 2010). Furthermore, the military services have discussed diversity issues at length in the past without success. These discussions were predisposed toward accessions, with little attention given to retention (Lim, et al., 2008). The findings from this AR case study show the importance of collaboration across the sea services for career development of racial minority sea service officers. A collective group of senior leaders sponsored by NNOA to develop a different way of addressing retention of racial minority officers is needed. This group could mine information from all three services for use by the association in advocating for its members. NNOA senior leaders should begin this dialogue; now is the time to create structures for accomplishing dialogue on race and leadership with the service chiefs. Bierema (2010) notes that through dialogue, the association leadership would surface issues that were previously undiscussable and question structures that may be impinging group or organization operations. For example, leaders could seek a deeper understanding for how to address marginalization across the three services instead of one on one with service chiefs individually. NNOA can also leverage support from other professional associations once its own foundation and internal structure are fortified.

Career Development Using Mentoring by a Professional Association

The senior officer participants saw a role for NNOA in mentoring sea service commissioned officers but not as a replacement for the mentoring provided in the services. The mentoring received most often by the senior officers was informal mentoring that occurred in their workplace, with the supervisor serving as the mentor. As one senior officer maintained, "You have to have mentors who are majority folks and also within the chain of command because they can add a greater influence on your upward mobility." In addition, another senior officer stated, "I would not say 100 percent, but close to 100 percent of every boss that I've ever worked for has been a mentor for me at least during the time that I was in the job with them." These statements support earlier findings in the military mentoring literature (Johnson & Andersen, 2015; McGuire, 2007).

Study participants saw NNOA as the outside organization providing additional mentoring to commissioned officers in the sea services. As one senior officer said, "NNOA can fill that vital role of being part of the outside mentor organization." This vital role relates to assisting junior officers in understanding the subtle manipulations made in performance reports and assignment of jobs. Another senior officer stated more specifically:

> I think when we start talking about the institution, we should not limit our self to just that one person. I think we should rotate our senior leaders or have some sort of rotation-type mechanism built in where you get to see different people. It also gives you an opportunity to mentor everybody in the organization. So everybody

in the organization is exposed to the organization's leadership instead of just this

one person with this one individual.

The desire of NNOA and senior officers to address the needs of junior officers and their

concerns about reaching this group of officers before problems arise is important.

Ghosh's (2014) meta-analysis is significant in this respect as it revealed that those

protégés who took more initiative were more likely to receive career development and

psychosocial support in mentoring relationships. This was mirrored by some study

participants who voiced concern about junior officers who were not proactive in their

efforts to seek assistance before career-related challenges developed.

As previously discussed, scholars agree that organizational mentoring programs

offer many benefits, but it is not known if a professional association would achieve these

same benefits. For instance Allen and O'Brien (2006) found that "190 undergraduates

looking for a job were more attracted to an organization when it was depicted as having a

formal mentoring program than when it was not so depicted" (p. 43). A formal

mentoring program added to its current mentoring offerings could provide NNOA with

another way of privileging its member, specifically junior officers. In addition, Wanberg

et al.'s (2006) research suggested that participation in a 12-month formal mentoring

program improved protégé career clarity.

The association has the support of this study's senior officer participants, all of

whom recommended that NNOA take a more active role in mentoring and career

development for its members. They acknowledged the benefits of an association

mentoring program and the need for a program that manages expectations of the mentors

and the protégés, but also advocated that mentoring and career guidance should be

provided within the officer's chain of command. They also recognized that NNOA's program should function in concert with the services' informal programs, highlighting the role of the supervisor as a key link in the career development and advancement of officers. The data suggested clearly that the association needs to prioritize mentoring as one way of making junior officers aware of how to address issues that can arise in the promotion process.

Implications for Practice

This AR case study has practical implications for racial minority commissioned officers, sea service leaders, and human resource development practitioners. The study offers significance insight into the impact of marginalization on the career development of racial minority commissioned officers in the sea services. Understanding the complex environment of racial minority commissioned officers' career advancement concerns could make practical contributions in several ways.

Sea Service Leadership

From this study, military leaders in the sea services could learn about factors affecting career development of racial minority commissioned officers and could gain valuable insight into areas requiring immediate attention:

1. Leaders and decision makers could foster greater awareness of hostile command climates and in turn develop programs that improve the oppressive environments racial minority men and women endure in their daily service.

2. Decision makers could gain valuable insight into factors that marginalize the career development of minority professionals, thus contributing to how sea service leaders structure leadership development programs. Military leaders

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could use the profiles of critical incidents that shaped the career development of the racial minority senior commissioned officers in this research to create case studies that could be taught in the military leadership continuum of the sea services. This would potentially empower future leaders to privilege personnel in their career development.

3. The findings could serve as a critical review of policies, procedures, and practices affecting all racial minorities and women career advancements.

Human Resources Practitioners

HR professionals could use the results of this study to inform the development of social programs that promote fairness and justice. Bierema (2010) states, "socially responsible OD involves challenging policies and practices that disenfranchise others, such as a promotion policy that makes it difficult for women and people of color to advance in the organization" (p.91). HR professionals should seek to influence employment practices that promote organization well-being for the marginalize employee and validate the need for workplace environments that privilege all employees.

Professional Association Leaders and Third-Party Advocacy

From this study, professional association leaders could learn about factors affecting career development for racial minority commissioned officers, using the information in designing programs to improve professional and personal development of their members. They could offer their programs to military decision makers for valuable insight into ways of privileging the career development of racial minority professionals, thus contributing to how leaders in the military and corporate America structure leadership development programs.

Implications for Theory

This study adds to the body of knowledge around mentoring, critical race theory, career development, and action research. The research also builds on prior studies in mentoring theory. Findings from the study address the effects of mentoring on the racial minority commissioned officer, an area that academic and military scholars have not previously explored.

This study also allows for a deeper understanding of how senior racial minority commissioned officers in the sea services collectively understand and overcome critical factors affecting their career development and promotions. Scholars have not reviewed military practices and policies using critical race theory; thus, this study begins to answer that knowledge gap. This study also demonstrates that using CRT themes to analyze military practices and policies can reveal areas of inequality.

The professional association context is important because it is not the primary source for career development planning. The existing literature contains few studies that address mentoring as a career development tool for the racial minority commissioned officers. The study also addresses the dearth of research around mentoring as a career development tool for minority commissioned officers in predominately White institutions. Understanding the marginalization of minority commissioned officers is important for identifying career advancement concerns, resulting in several practical benefits.

By examining the factors that marginalize minority commissioned officers in their career development and exploring how a professional association can support these officers, this study offers a number of theoretical and practical contributions.

Theoretically, it expands upon the knowledge base for career development programs that use mentoring as an intervention. Moreover, since the study was situated in a military context, specifically the sea services, and in a professional association environment, the research highlights an additional context for understanding career development and mentoring.

<div align="center">**Recommendations for Future Research**</div>

This study raised additional questions and issues for future study, which I discuss in this section.

Varying the Participants

As this research addressed senior officers in the sea services, it will be important for future research to explore the actual experiences of sea service junior officers in their career development. How are they preparing themselves? How is their service preparing them? What are their perceptions of their integration into their service? A longitudinal study of this group from junior officer to midgrade and final senior officers, for instance, would address retention issues specific to racial minority commissioned officers.

Policies and Practices

There is a need to explore in more details the policies and practices that marginalize racial minority personnel in the military, both commissioned and noncommissioned officers. In addition, rich data and insight can be gathered by using a CRT framework to review the military justice system in relation to punishments assigned to racial minority personnel. Also, the medal award system requires study to determine if the level of award and distribution of end-of-tour medals for this group (which is the supervisor's responsibility to recommend) is commensurate with awards to White males.

Performance Reports

Navy fitness reports can be biased in favor of the dominant race, highlighting the need for more research regarding traits ascribed more often to Black officers than their White counterparts. It has been 15 years since Johnson (2001) extended Thomas et al.'s (1998) traits used to described the performance of officers. Therefore, it would be valuable for future studies to accomplish similar research with respect to Coast Guard and Marine Corps performance reports.

Political Skill

Political skill and its importance in the military is also another area that should be studied in greater detail, specifically as it relates to women and racial minority commissioned officers. The opportunity to pass on informal organizational knowledge is important since oftentimes the dominant group selectively passes on such informal information in order to maintain the status quo, leading potentially to "political skill deficiency." Blass et al. (2007) found that political skill deficiency was mediated in mentoring relationships according to gender and ethnicity, such that mediation occurred for men and Caucasians but not women and minorities. In addition, the effects of supervisory mentoring are stronger when supervisors demonstrate a higher level of political skill (Sun, Pan, & Chow, 2014). These findings provide strong justification for creating professional opportunities for minorities and women commissioned sea service officers through the mentoring process.

A Conceptualized Four-Function Mentoring Model

A conceptualized four-function mentoring model combining Steinberg and Foley's (1999) findings around protégés in the military, Kram's (1985) two-function

model, and Blass and Ferris' (2007) notion of political skill is illustrative; however, this four function-mentoring model requires more research.

Final Reflections

"Being critical in our learning, thinking, and acting shifts our focus from the individual learner to the social structures that shape our interactions and experiences in various settings" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 238). Conducting this action research case study as an insider forced me to evaluate critically my positionality and my learning as a researcher. My positionality became evident to me in two contexts as the data confirming marginalization in sea service practices emerged, along with the reality that after 40 years (30 years of active service and 10 years as a retired officer), some areas of marginalization had not lessened for racial minority officers. The social structures that govern the behavior and interactions of service men and women have not been able to protect them fully from marginalization or improve their overall status. The issues that emerged during this study mirrored my own experiences, as well as the experiences of other team members, concerning marginalization in our respective service. I had to confront this realization, while acknowledging that my subordinates most likely also felt marginalized while under my leadership.

What I learned from this journey as a researcher was the following:

Do not let yourself be deterred from a research method because of your self-definition. Inversely, and more important, it would be a serious mistake to choose an approach to research purely on the basis of your current concepts of your personality without exploring what method makes the most sense for the research questions you are asking. (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 95)

For me, it was not a method but a theory. I was not comfortable exploring career development policies and practices for racial minority commissioned officers in the sea services through the lens of critical race theory. I searched for avenues to distance myself from the theory, and when that was not feasible, I searched for avenues to temper the findings and conclusions. This was important to me because I believe that progress is being made in race relations and women's rights in the sea services. I do not want to be a catalyst for backward movement or to encourage denial by those leaders in positions to make even more progress for equal results over equal opportunity. I finally realized that those in true positions of power are most likely aware of the marginalization occurring in their service. The findings and conclusions from this research could serve as justification for them to continue their efforts and to not be deterred because some progress has been made but to seek empowerment for the next generation of racial minority senior commissioned officers in the sea services.

The findings and conclusions from this research also recognize the privilege that a professional association can offer it members who have been marginalized, making it an entity that is supportive of and supported by the sea services. This research honors the divergent loyalties that I felt as a member of NNOA and as a member of one of the sea services, as well as the balance I sought in conducting this insider action research.

<p align="center">**Summary**</p>

This research study addressed how a professional association, NNOA, privileges its members, who are predominantly racial minority sea service commissioned officers functioning in predominantly White institutions (i.e., the sea services) in their career advancement. Results of this action research case study indicated that there is

marginalization occurring in the sea services for this group of officers, specifically in the form of experiencing ineffective leadership by the dominant culture through hostile command climates, bigotry by supervisors, and feelings of individual isolation within one's command—all of which can evoke a deep history of discrimination. Racial minority officers in this study also encountered personnel practices that were not applied equally to all commissioned officers. Data analysis of 13 racial minority senior officers' critical incident interviews also revealed personnel practices in the area of negotiating for job assignments and subtle language in performance reports reduced one's competitiveness when compared to White male officers' performance reports. Moreover, how talent management was applied within the services and across the three services, and the lack of accountability in talent management and equal opportunity practices and policies, were issues of concern among these senior officers.

When using the data to privilege its members in this study, the action research team found that NNOA needed to expend effort in providing professional development to its members, encouraging them to engage in personal development and assisting members in improving interpersonal and intrapersonal communication skills. NNOA will need to develop programs to educate its members based on this study's findings. This was also recommended by the Military Leader Diversity Commission, which underscored the lack of diversity in the senior ranks of the DoD services and the U.S. Coast Guard. Specifically, the MLDC (2012) found that mentoring during an individual's career combined with educating service members about the promotion process early in their careers were important factors in their professional success.

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This research also implemented an online mentoring pilot to determine the feasibility of privileging members using online career advisement modules as part of a mentoring program. The ART developed web-based mentoring tools consisting of training on how to be a mentor and protégé, learning modules for career advisement, individual sea service blogs on mentoring, and frequently asked questions regarding professional development. Twenty mentoring pairs participated in the pilot from all three services. Internet connectivity was an issue for the mentoring pairs, however, since they could not access the non-DoD website from their military command. For this reason, the team was not able to evaluate with accuracy the use of the career advisement modules. Future offerings will provide this information directly to the officers' smartphones and tablets.

The ART, which composed senior racial minority commissioned officers, were able to meet virtually over a two-year period to conduct this research. The passion of the team members for mentoring and for the association helped engender a fully engaged and proactive team. Our reflections on our research lead to many interventions. Though we were not able to implement all of the interventions, the passion of the team has allowed us to transition to NNOA's mentoring committee to continue this important work. This was an important step in the association's commitment to supporting career development and mentoring for its members.

The members of NNOA will benefit from the improved offerings of mentoring and education proposed in this research. The leadership of NNOA's mentoring committee must now take the next step by championing and supporting the implementation of these findings.

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