ABSTRACT

Perceptions of Gender Norm Stereotypes and the Decision to Report Military Sexual Trauma: A Multiple Case Study of Enlisted Army National Guard Service Members

Sarah R. Waterman, Ed.D.
Mentor: Ryann N. Shelton, Ph.D.

Gender norm stereotypes in the Army National Guard continue to perpetuate a masculine narrative, often deterring enlisted service members from reporting incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment. This qualitative case study explored Army National Guard enlisted service members’ experiences with gender norm stereotypes and explored enlisted service members’ perceptions of how gender norm stereotypes influence an enlisted service members decision to or to not report incidents of military sexual trauma (MST).

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions of gender norm stereotypes and how these perceptions could potentially affect an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of MST through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). I purposefully selected the four participants in this study using specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. I recruited participants first through a recruiting email and a questionnaire. From the questionnaire, I selected 4 participants who met inclusion
criteria. Following, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants and collected related artifacts.

There were five key findings in this study. First, male service members were identified to serve in roles that were more physical, while females were identified to serve in more technical roles. Second, service members had differing experiences with discrimination while serving in the Army National Guard, based on gender and differing displays of emotion. Third, participants believe that a non-supportive environment in the Army National Guard potentially creates space for incidents of MST. Fourth, there is a fear of retribution amongst service members for reporting MST. Fifth and finally, there is an inherent gender role status, as there are more males in positions of power than there are females. This study emphasizes the need for Army National Guard program reform and a culture shift within the Army National Guard to encourage reporting incidents of MST.
Perceptions of Gender Norm Stereotypes and the Decision to Report Military Sexual Trauma: A Multiple Case Study of Enlisted Army National Guard Service Members

by

Sarah R. Waterman, B.A., M.S.W.

A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

__________________________
Trena L. Wilkerson, Ph.D., Chairperson

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Approved by the Dissertation Committee

__________________________
Ryann N. Shelton, Ph.D., Chairperson

__________________________
Brenda K. Davis, Ph.D.

__________________________
Nicholas R. Werse, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School
May, 2023

__________________________
J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Page bearing signatures is kept on file in the Graduate School.
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DEDICATION

To the enlisted members of the Army National Guard, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to you. Although a large organization, we are all a family. There are trials and tribulations. There are sacrifices made that many will never understand. To you, I dedicate this dissertation in hopes that you know someone is in your corner. The welfare and mental health of all service members was at the forefront of this research. There is not a single day that I will not fight for advocacy for victims of military sexual trauma.

Keep fighting the good fight; your country thanks you endlessly.
CHAPTER ONE
Background and Needs Assessment

Introduction

The United States Army lists their core values as loyalty, duty, respect self-less service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. However, a widespread issue in the military is sexual assault (Eliezer et al., 2020; Mengeling et al., 2014; Mondragon et al., 2015). In the United States Army, the case of Vanessa Guillen gained national attention and placed the sexual assault and sexual harassment policies of the Army under a microscope. Guillen was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas and disappeared on April 22, 2020. Officials later discovered that a peer murdered Specialist Guillen after allegations of sexual harassment (Diaz et al., 2021). Guillen’s death gained the attention of the President of the United States. This attention led to the discipline of a dozen Army officials and leadership for the mishandling of the reports from Guillen about the experiences she had endured. Guillen reported sexual harassment to leadership, but those in leadership never looked into her report (Diaz et al., 2021). Per Guillen’s parents, Guillen experienced other situations of sexual harassment but chose not to report them in fear of negative consequences personally and for her career.

The United States Army must provide equitable services to service members experiencing sexual assault and sexual harassment and equitable opportunities to service members regardless of gender. Service members who choose not to report sexual assault and sexual harassment have many reasons, such as fear of negative career implications, personal perceived consequences, and fear of retaliation from perpetrators (Mengeling et
Male service members further report feeling less masculine in a culture that promotes hyper masculinity, and females report perceived weakness of females in the military as an additional reason for not reporting incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment (Cichowski et al., 2017; Peters et al., 2015; Voller et al., 2015). To address this issue, this multiple case study examines the experiences that enlisted service members have had with gender norm stereotypes and reporting military sexual trauma (MST) through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). In the following section, I provide information about the sexual assault and sexual harassment problem enlisted service members face.

Statement of the Problem

MST is prevalent and increasing amongst service members (Mengeling et al., 2014). In a 2016 study survey administered to 60 service members, 18% of male participants and 81% of female participants reported experiencing MST at some point during their military service (Burgess et al., 2016). Further, 73% of male participants and 14% of female participants indicated they used this survey to report their MST for the first time. In a larger study, Rosellini et al. (2017) collected data through the Army’s Historical Administrative Data System (HADS) with a sample size of 821,807 service members. This study revealed that there were on average, 93 new cases of MST per month, not including cases that were currently under investigation. Street (2008) identified that in a sample of 4,022 reserve component service members, 60% of females and 27% of males reported experiencing some type of MST. Street’s (2008) findings demonstrated that MST continues to increase, and males are not exempt. Further, individuals in the military who experience MST reported 84% of the time that their
perpetrator was another military service member (Eliezer et al., 2020). Although these numbers are high, Eliezer et al. (2020) speculated that reporting rates underestimate reporting numbers, due to the high rates of MST that occur unreported in the military. Service members identify many reasons service members choose not to report MST, some of which relate to the nature of working in a predominantly masculine field.

The military is a male-dominated field that demonstrates endorsement of male gender norm stereotypes (Boyce & Herd, 2003; Inesi & Cable, 2015; Smith et al., 2019). Inesi and Cable (2015) found in a study of the military and gender stereotypes that women in the military receive lower evaluations than their male counterparts and receive lower evaluations when the males endorse socially dominant, masculine beliefs (Inesi & Cable, 2015). Smith et al.’s (2019) study found that the vocabulary used in these evaluations endorsed gender stereotypes that further demonstrated a masculine gender norm culture in the military. The endorsement of these masculine gender norms, in turn, leads to lower self-efficacy for service members (Voller et al., 2015). Gender role stereotype endorsement paired with MST pushes females out of the military (Millegan et al., 2016). Gender stereotypes influence how peers view one another (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Issues such as sexual assault and reporting, gender stereotypes, and socially accepted endorsement of masculine norms, can lead to changes in when and how individuals seek help for sexual assault and sexual harassment (Bates et al., 2019). Another form of gender norm stereotyping in the military is found in leadership roles and the individuals who hold those positions. Schaefer et al.’s (2021) study demonstrated that sexism in the military generated gender bias. Schaefer et al. (2021) linked hostile sexism in males with males rating their female counterparts lower in physical fitness and military
demeanor, presenting as taking charge and having an authoritative presence. Further, sexist belief systems led to the automatic activation of stereotype endorsement and connected hostile sexism to lower evaluation scores of women’s abilities, appropriateness, and ability to serve in the military (Schaefer et al., 2021).

Along with females leaving the military, female service members are often hesitant to seek help or report incidents of sexual assault due to distrust or lack of knowledge of the reporting systems (Turchik et al., 2013). DeCou et al. (2017) found that services members often do not know if or when they should seek help. DeCou et al. (2017) also found that female undergraduate students also reported behavior from their peers such as victim-blaming following disclosure, being treated differently, minimizing the situation, and others attempting to take control of the victim’s situation, all similar experiences to those reported by female service members in Turchik et al.’s (2013) study. Endorsement of these behaviors such as victim-blaming and peer endorsement of rape myths is directly associated with lower self-efficacy in victims (Voller et al., 2015). The military has seen increased rates of MST and a problem with service members not reporting MST incidents. Rosellini et al. (2017) collected data using historical records from the Department of Defense. The data revealed that MST cases were increasing at approximately 93 new cases per month. This number could also potentially be higher due to the nature of non-reporting. Wolff and Mills (2016) interviewed 52 women about their experiences in the military. Of those 52 participants, 91% reported MST and 44% reported MST in the descriptions of the discrimination they faced as females in the military (Wolff & Mills, 2016).
Gender role stereotype endorsement leads to a culture of MST and discrimination against women in areas such as the 2016 integration of women into combat arms military occupational specialties (MOSs; Schaefer et al., 2021). MOSs are the chosen career field of service members. There are differing categories of MOSs, including combat and non-combat. Previously, combat MOSs had been closed to women; however, combat MOSs are currently open for women to select, though this integration did not lead to complete acceptance of female service members in combat positions or positions of leadership (Schaefer et al., 2021).

The perpetuation of masculine gender norms and non-reporting of sexual assault instances in the Army National Guard continue to occur. Despite prevention services being in place as a means of education on the subject and individuals being in positions to take reports, service members often do not report due to lack of confidence in the confidentiality of reporting; they fear retaliation and negative career impacts. Further service members reported victim-blaming, barriers in the knowledge of how to report, and stigma related to reporting as reasons they have not reported incidents of MST (Turchik et al., 2013). The stigma of reporting MST leading to fear negative career impacts has negatively impacted the Army National Guard because it has affected team morale, training, and readiness of Army National Guard enlisted soldiers (Boyce & Herd, 2003; Inesi & Cable, 2015; Smith et al., 2019). To address this issue, I explored Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions of gender norm stereotypes and how these perceptions affect an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of MST to inform changes in the reporting systems of the Army National Guard.
Literature Review

The military continues to have known issues with MST and in endorsement of masculine gender stereotypes and norms. Researchers have historically reported on the quantitative data surrounding the rate at which MST occurs (Eliezer et al., 2020; Mengeling et al., 2014; Mondragon et al., 2015). Additionally, scholars provide qualitative data that focus on reasons on why or why not enlisted service members choose to report MST (Dardis et al., 2018; Mengeling et al., 2014; Street, 2008; Turchik et al., 2013). The following literature review provides an overview of these data and further information related to gender stereotypes, rape myths, and rape myth acceptance. Additionally, the literature argues the role that gender stereotypes play in the military is also present in studies in related fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The literature review begins broadly with statistics and prevalence of MST and then includes literature related to male-dominated fields, gender norms and stereotypes, and rape myth and rape acceptance. The literature then narrows to gender stereotypes in the military, consequences of MST on individual and unit readiness, and concludes with service members’ perceived barriers to reporting MST.

Gender Inequalities in Male-Dominated Fields

The military is one of many career fields where the number of men in the workforce outweighs the number of women. Females represent 16% of enlisted service members and 19% of officers in the military (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). This imbalance presents a unique set of challenges for female service members, similar to the challenges women in the civilian realm are experiencing in fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).
Women in male-dominated fields face challenges such as protecting their identity as women in a place where men’s performance advantage is highlighted due to a more naturally occurring masculine domain (Koenig et al., 2011). When women face a threat to their self-identity and self-integrity, it presents a state of cognitive imbalance which can distort a women’s view of herself and her expectations of success, creating distorted cognitive views (Schmader et al., 2008; Richman et al., 2011). Schmader et al. (2008) indicated distorted cognitive views stem from prolonged exposure to social gender stereotypes. Women in male-dominated fields report unique barriers that activate gender stereotypes (Richman et al., 2011), further leading to social identity threats, increased barriers to success, and increased discrimination and harassment toward women. Miner et al. (2018) analyzed the general public’s view on women in STEM and noted that women tend to be viewed as emotional and a detriment to men’s careers due to relationship pursuits with coworkers. Additionally, Miner et al. (2018) attributed low rates of women in male-dominated fields to the choices of women rather than on discrimination and gender stereotypes and norms.

Men in traditionally hyper-masculine, male-dominated fields also experience the repercussions of workplace stereotypes. Peters et al. (2015) suggested that men are more likely to seek career fields labeled as masculine or conform to gender norm stereotypes. Further, Peters et al. (2015) proposed that men experience unrest when they feel they are not as masculine as their peers. Regarding career choices, social role theory contributes to the careers individuals take, based on their ideologies about gender and their self-perceived fitness for a field (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Men are expected to act with a certain toughness, grit, and aggression when men choose a career field based on the
perceived masculinity of the job, such as the military (Peters et al., 2015). Internal and external conflict exist when men challenge these masculine gender norm stereotypes. Peters et al. (2015) found in a study of United States Marines that men often compare themselves and their level of masculinity to that of their peers, and they rate themselves as less masculine than their peers. These self-perceptions correlated to the perception of occupational fit (Peters et al., 2015). Scholarship shows that male-dominated fields present challenges for men and women alike, where both genders are held to unrealistic, masculine gender norms while in the workplace.

*Gender Norms and Gender Stereotypes and Impacts of Sexism*

Gender norms and gender stereotypes drive expectations for men and women (Zemach & Cohen, 1986). Current scholars define gender norms and how they influence everyday life (Wenhold & Harrison, 2021). Gender norm experiences develop as individuals observe traits and recurrent patterns related to one gender (Zemach & Cohen, 1986). For example, a career in nursing may be categorized or stereotyped as a feminine career path, as many nurses tend to be female. A career in the military may be categorized or stereotyped as a masculine career path, as most military members tend to be male. This way, gender norms are presented as how a person should act, think, and respond to different situations (Schein, 1973; Wenhold & Harrison, 2021).

Gender norms influence how individuals view the world, including division of labor (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Wenhold and Harrison (2020) conducted a study in which the researchers questioned university students about their perceptions of gender roles and gender norm stereotypes. Female participants reported the need to go above and beyond or overcompensate for traditional gender roles due to the societal pressure to stay home
and raise families, as this is the stereotypical role of women in society (Wenhold & Harrison, 2021). Additionally, one participant reported that although there seemed to be a small culture shift in society, hiring women into roles where men have stereotypically dominated would decrease reputation and revenue, again leading to not hiring women (Wenhold & Harrison, 2020). Wenhold and Harrison (2020) highlighted the difficulties related to a cultural shift in thinking about gender norms and stereotypes. As this shift is occurring in the United States, the subpopulation of the military continues to face increasing challenges and extreme gender norm practices and endorsements in the workplace, including instances of sexism.

Sexism drives a wedge between genders and impacts the perception of a gender’s ability to competently complete a task (Schaefer et al., 2021). Masculine characteristics typically endorsed include emotional control, independence, and physical strength (Eagly & Wood, 2012). In the military, these attributes tend to be emphasized and celebrated and can be necessary for success. However, emphasis on these attributes leads to under or devaluing feminine characteristics such as displays of emotion, compassion, and empathy (Bell et al., 2014; Hoyt et al., 2012). Continued or extreme endorsement of these stereotypical masculine gender norms leads to sexism or hostile sexism (Bell et al., 2014; Hoyt et al., 2012).

*Physical Fitness as a Gender Stereotype*

The military is a male-dominated field that continues to display prominent endorsement of masculine gender norms (Schmader et al., 2008; Richman et al., 2011). Scholars have identified women to be viewed to as less equipped to lead soldiers due to the perceived lack of physical capabilities, femininity, and other gender norm factors
(Schaefer et al., 2021). Extreme gender stereotype endorsement, such as sexism, leads to oppressive standards of beauty and athleticism that limit and decrease acceptance of females in physically strenuous roles, such as the military (Kray et al., 2017; Schaefer et al., 2021).

Schafer et al. (2021) provided students at the United States Military Academy (USMA) a rating scale to score three peers, and then faculty rated the students using the 23 character and leadership qualities provided by the Army Field Manual 6-22. The researchers focused on three gender-related qualities: military demeanor, physical fitness, and social skills. Participants rated their three peers on a scale of one to five based on these three gender-related qualities, and faculty raters did the same (Schaefer et al., 2021). Participants completed a questionnaire so that researchers could assess the correlation between gender stereotypes and sexism. The researchers found that when females could not complete more than the minimum requirement of pushups, their peers and faculty rated them lower in their evaluations; however, if males could not complete more than the minimum, this had no effect on their rating (Schaefer et al., 2021). Female ratings for military demeanor were also affected by 2-mile run times, whereas for men they were not (Schaefer et al., 2021). Overall, the results of this study showed that peers and faculty scrutinized the ratings based on a perceived level of physical fitness for females as it relates to their ability to complete their duties in the military. These ratings also provided a basis for stereotype confirmation for those looking to discredit female contributions to the military (Schaefer et al., 2021). It is evident that physical fitness plays a role in the perceived capabilities of female service members, especially regarding one’s ability to lead.
How Gender Role Status Affects Perceptions of Service Member Leadership Ability

An individual represents status of any capacity in a position of power and individuals who are subordinates (Boyce & Herd, 2003; Carli & Eagly, 2002). The same is true of the military. Status comes with rank, responsibility, and leadership attributes. Gender roles fit a similar status hierarchy with the idea that identifying as male comes with higher social standing and that identifying as female is associated with lower social standing (Boyce & Herd, 2003; Carli & Eagly, 2002). Gender hierarchies are typically founded on long-standing acceptance of beliefs on gender norms and stereotypes (Smith et al., 2019). These hierarchies and held beliefs, in turn, implicitly affect performance evaluations and reviews (Smith et al., 2019). Smith et al. (2019) examined the relationship between gender role status and performance evaluation ratings though looking at stereotype confirm content such as gendered language. Smith et al. (2019) reported that men are typically regarded as independent, strong, and tough, among other character traits, while women are regarded as communal, social, or dependent. In the military, characteristics associated with male gender roles are said to be more desirable, and female service members who go against the status quo often receive higher marks in terms of evaluation than women who exhibit more classically feminine gender roles (Rudman et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2019). Smith et al. (2019) found that overall female service members received more negative leadership attribute scores than men based on gender. These findings seem to confirm bias and inequality in the military that can lead to negative consequences for male and female service members.

Leaders in the military complete strenuous and extensive training to be prepared to make decisions for individuals who fall under their command (Baker, 2015). Regardless of gender or age, military leaders are held to the same standard of training and
Regarding workplace leadership, researchers have studied gender role stereotypes in the context of middle management in the civilian workforce. Schein (1973) conducted a study in which 300 males in middle management positions in different insurance companies across the United States were provided a descriptive index in which participants described their beliefs about men in general, women in general, and managers. The researcher used these indexes to uncover perceived gender differences and to identify gender stereotypes the participants held about character traits of successful leaders. Schein (1973) found a large resemblance between the index responses of men in general and managers, but there was near zero resemblance between women in general and managers. Further, Schein (1973) revealed that participants held male gender norm traits in higher regard for successful supervisors.

Despite women’s increased presence in the military over time, Boyce and Herd (2003) found that men and women both hold masculine traits to indicate effective leadership. However, Boyce and Herd (2003) also found that male service members attributed masculine characteristics only to good leaders, while women attributed mostly masculine and some feminine characteristics to indicate a good leader. Karazi-Presler et al. (2018) found in a study of women in the Israeli military that women who have held positions of power in the military found it empowering to be in a leadership position. However, Karazi-Presler et al. (2018) also found that women felt a great deal of shame due to crossing gender barriers and the belief that the positions they were holding were reserved exclusively for men. The women who participated in this study also disclosed that as women, they felt unwelcomed to act in a way that demonstrated masculine gender norms and that “the way in which they exercised power in the military violated an ethical,
cultural, and normative code expected of them as women” (Karazi-Presler et al., 2018, p. 583). In addition to the shame that women in leadership felt, it is also important to consider the impact that MST has on unit readiness.

**Consequences of Military Sexual Trauma on Individual and Unit Readiness**

Impaired functioning due to the effects of MST include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and chronic pain (Cichowski et al., 2017; Mondragon et al., 2015). These symptoms affect readiness of the unit and occupational readiness, and the ability for an individual to complete the tasks required for the job. MST is also associated with higher comorbidity in psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and suicidal ideations and behaviors (Sareen et al., 2010). In addition, service members can experience physical health symptoms related to MST resulting from diminished mental health (Golding et al., 1997).

The military has a long-standing tradition of teamwork, bonding between military members, and functioning as a family. These traditions have been the promoted culture of the military for so long due to the abnormal stressors that service members face such as deployments, separation from biological families, violence, and combat exposure (Katz et al., 2012). The Army National Guard is a large organization comprised of multiple suborganizations known as units. Each unit plays a specific role in the mission of the Army. Some of the roles a unit include air support in aviation units, ground support in infantry units, moving supplies to troops, transportation, and medical services. When a stressor such as MST impacts a unit, there are severe and detrimental consequences to individual readiness and health. Additionally, the unit’s health and occupational readiness
also suffer consequences (Millegan et al., 2016). The Army National Guard is unique in that it contributes dual function as it serves not only the continental United States but also as international and overseas defense in times of war. Although men and women both experience the consequences of MST, the way men and women experience the consequences of MST differ slightly (Cichowski et al., 2017; Murdoch et al., 2007). Both male and female service members are subject to experiencing mental health distress, however, their experiences differ based on gender.

Male and female mental and physical health consequences. Trauma impacts individuals’ mental and physical health, and one in four active-duty female service members have experienced MST in their careers (Kelly et al., 2011). Of those female service members who sought Veteran’s Administration (VA) services after their end of time in service (ETS) date, 71% of them reported PTSD related to MST occurrences while serving on active duty (Kelly et al., 2011). Female service members who experience MST-related PTSD also experience major depressive disorder (MDD) at a rates that are higher than male service members and the general, civilian population (Kelly et al., 2011). Zimmerman et al. (2011) categorized MDD by symptoms that include, low mood, loss of interest in hobbies, feelings of worthlessness, inability to concentrate, and suicidal thoughts. Women who reported increased PTSD and MDD symptoms also reported higher rates of chronic pain. The severity of the pain is also strongly correlated to reported mental health symptom severity (Kelly et al., 2011).

Cichowski et al. (2017) examined the relationship between MST and physical and mental health conditions. In this study, the researchers found that in a sample of 596,815 females, 469,306 reported at least one type of chronic pain. The female service members
who experienced MST also reported increased anxiety, MDD, and PTSD rates. Impairments caused by MST lead to incidents of sexual assault going unreported due to, in part, perceived weakness in being a victim of MST, especially for female military members.

Male veterans face an especially challenging task when it comes to addressing PTSD from MST because male veterans face higher self-reported PTSD symptoms when MST occurs due to the perceived violation of gender role norms (Morrison, 2012). Specifically, in a study of male Gulf War veterans, Voller et al. (2015) found that MST was “associated with lower self-efficacy whereas self-efficacy was, in turn, associated with greater psychiatric symptoms” (p. 424). Further, along with increased PTSD symptoms, male service members experience increased depression, anxiety, and physical symptoms related to MST at increased rates compared to their peers who have not experienced MST (Murdoch et al., 2007). Mondragon et al. (2015) surveyed male veterans to examine the effects of MST on the male population of post-deployment service members. The total number of male veterans sampled was 961. The number of veterans who reported experiencing MST was 173, or 18% of the sample (Mondragon et al., 2015).

Further, men who experienced MST reported higher levels of PTSD, anxiety, depression, substance use disorders, and other mood disorders (Mondragon et al., 2015). MST was also an indicator of decreased social support and increased mistreatment by peers. Increased psychiatric symptoms and lack of support for males who experience MST demonstrates that MST is not affecting only female service members. Further, males experiencing decreased social support and increased mistreatment demonstrated
gender inequality in the military based on the endorsement of typical gender roles (Mondragon et al., 2015). Not only do these consequences of MST reveal issues in individual functioning, MST and gender role endorsement also present challenges on the unit and occupational readiness.

**Implications on occupational readiness.** Service members must always perform their best, sometimes at a moment’s notice, thus psychiatric symptoms affect the service members and readiness of the unit and occupational readiness. Millegan et al. (2016) conducted a study regarding female service members’ experiences with MST and the occupational outcomes of those experiences. Occupational outcomes included loss of rank, pay and separation from the military (Dahl et al., 2021). Participants who reported experiences with MST also reported higher difficulties in functioning in the workplace (Millegan et al., 2016). When service members experience difficulties in the workplace, these experiences translated to decreased unit readiness, as not all individuals could perform their collective assignments.

Male service members who experienced MST continued to have higher rates of individual impairments and had increased rates of separation or retirement from the military as well as difficulty finding employment after separation from the military (Millegan et al., 2016). Further, female service members also reported being removed from their units during investigations, further separating them and creating disdain amongst the individual and their peers (Millegan et al., 2016). Additionally, women who had experienced MST from a perpetrator who was a coworker saw increased individual and physical health symptoms and decreased unit readiness due to the distrust this relationship caused in the unit (Millegan et al., 2016). Many factors of MST affect
occupational readiness. These factors apply to the day-to-day functioning of a unit and impact retention rates in the military.

*Retention Rates After Military Sexual Trauma Experiences*

MST creates conflict in the workplace while service members continue their commitment to the military (Morral et al., 2021). Further, MST creates issues such as separation from the military, meaning when an individual’s contract ends, they choose not to continue service in the military. Morral et al. (2021) estimated that based on the RAND Military Workplace Study, there were an estimated 21,000 sexual assaults in the military workplace in fiscal year 2018 and a subsequent 5,600 separations that followed. This number is 2,000 cases higher than estimated based on individuals who did not experience MST (Morral et al., 2021). Additionally, 112,000 service members experienced sexual harassment, and 28,200 of those service members terminated their time in service due to their experiences as observed in 28 months during the study (Morral et al., 2021).

Retention in the military continues to be an issue each year for both male and female service members (Lancaster et al., 2013; Morral et al., 2021). Lancaster et al. (2013) reported that The Military Leadership Diversity Commission found that with Army National Guard service members, female and male service members report similar likelihoods of staying in the military. However, when the time comes to re-enlist or terminate service, female service members are more likely to separate from the military due to many different factors (Lancaster et al., 2013). These reasons included lower overall support and preparedness in their unit, higher rates of MST, and increased likelihood of PTSD than their male counterparts. In examining gender-specific decisions
to re-enlist following a deployment for Army National Guard service members, males and females have several differences. Lancaster et al. (2013) conducted a longitudinal study in which the researchers examined retention rates and reasoning for re-enlistment post-deployment for male and female service members. In male participants, reasons to re-enlist included depression prior to deployment, perceived lower support while deployed, and perception of life-threatening situations due to combat on deployment. Female participants reported similarities in comparison in male reports of symptoms. However, female participants experienced the same stressors as males at higher levels and received less support from their unit and civilian support systems, likely due to gender norm stereotypes related to the perception of female emotional display, or lack thereof, following deployment (Lancaster et al., 2013). Although men and women differ in some categories, women share some experiences similar to men, but there are differences due to perception of gender role and stereotypes. The integration of women into combat MOSs provides one example of the lack of acceptance that women face in the military.

Integration of Gender in Combat Military Occupational Specialties

Integration of female service members into traditionally closed jobs created a great deal of resistance. Arnhart et al. (2015) conducted a study in which more than 32,000 Army service members provided survey responses about their thoughts and feelings about women being integrated into traditionally closed combat arms MOSs. Arnhart et al. (2015) conducted 130 focus groups on the topic finding that male service members expressed concerns about MST making gender integration difficult. Participants reported that due to their lack of time spent working with female service members
previously, they feared that female service members would be quick to report false allegations of sexual harassment due to the nature of male service members’ jokes or conversations. In contrast, female service members reported that due to the perceived increased potential for MST in combat arms, they were deterred from transferring to a combat occupation (Arnhart et al., 2015). Both male and female service members in this study reported that they expected incidents of MST to increase with females integrating into traditionally all-male units (Arnhart et al., 2015). From this study, unit leadership identified concerns as it comes from their standpoint. Nearly 50% of unit command teams expected to see a decrease in morale, leading to a decrease in teamwork and decreased unit readiness. A reported 45% of unit command teams expected a decrease in unit cohesion, again leading to decreased teamwork and decreased unit readiness (Arnhart et al., 2015). Unit leaders were also concerned that women may need increased protection, further leading to isolation and endorsement of gender stereotypes that female service members require special privileges and accommodations (Arnhart et al., 2015). Military-specific experiences such as deployments, field training, combat, and additional integration have been shown to increase MST incidents against service members (LeardMann et al., 2013). Despite the Army’s choice to move forward with the integration of genders in the branches, there have been opponents who argued that women have no place in the military (Van Creveld, 2000).

One argument is that the integration of women in the military at any rank or MOS led to the decline of the military and readiness rather than providing unique attributes (Van Creveld, 2000). Van Creveld (2000) argued that in the United States military, female service members are increasingly detrimental to standards of the military because
women report sexual harassment and sexual assault, therefore forcing involuntary separation for some of the military’s top performers. Although Van Crevel (2000) argued that the presence of women in the military is detrimental to readiness and performance overall, there is evidence that co-ed teams perform just as well, if not better, than male-only teams. A study of Marine Corps squads that were male-only and gender-integrated, found that men in the gender-integrated squads were 14% more likely to report that their squad performed just as well or outperformed the male-only squads (Dahl et al., 2021). Further, the males on the gender-integrated teams were less likely to endorse gender norm stereotypes at work and were less likely to conform to stereotypical gender roles at home (Dahl et al., 2021). The feelings that male service members have about female service members falsely accusing of MST (Arnhart et al., 2015) is just one example of rape myths and rape myth acceptance, which are reviewed in the following section.

Rape Myths and Rape Myth Acceptance

To better understand gender norms and their influence on MST and reporting, it is important to understand rape myths and rape myth acceptance, which can influence behavior and thinking (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015). Rape myths as defined by Burt (1980) are “prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists” (p. 217). Burt (1980) presented tangible examples of these false beliefs in providing common mistruths such as if a woman is raped or sexually assaulted, she must be the cause of the event, a woman’s physical appearance is the cause of rape, and that perpetrators of rape are mentally ill and impulsive. Lastly, Burt (1980) indicated that rape myths are further demonstrated and accepted through phenomena such as accepting
gender role stereotypes, a lack of trust of the person of the opposite sex, and acceptance of violence. Defining and understand rape myths is crucial in transitioning to a discussion of rape myth acceptance.

Burt (1980) first explained rape myth acceptance as the number of rape myth stereotypes that an individual holds as they relate to disrespect of women who are victims of rape, the idea that rape is not harmful, that if a woman is raped it was deserved, and that the behavior of rapists is in some way acceptable. Additionally, rape myths include that a specific type of woman is victimized more often based on their clothing, behavior, and appearance (Boeschen et al., 1998). To provide more clarity from a research-based perspective, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) defined rape myth acceptance as “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women” (p. 134). Rape myth acceptance relates to the amount of acceptance that society holds in sexually aggressive behavior of men towards women (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015). Higher rates of rape myth acceptance have also been linked to more traditional views of gender roles, especially in masculinity and in males (Aronowitz et al., 2012). In a sample population of service members in a study that measured rape myth acceptance rates of males and females, there was no statistical significance between the rate of acceptance between male and female responses (DeLisle et al., 2019). Further, the researchers discussed that although there was no reported difference in the rates at which male and female service members endorsed rape myth acceptance, there was significance in reporting that the rate at which female service members endorsed rape myth acceptance had been higher than initially
anticipated. Scholars have also explored the phenomenon of victim-blaming in an instance of sexual assault.

As rape myth acceptance may perpetuate a culture of masculine gender norm endorsement, victim-blaming adds to the same narrative (Burt, 1980; Klement et al., 2019; Quackenbush, Robert, 1989; Schwartz & Leggett, 1999). Schwartz and Leggett (1999) defined victim-blaming as seeking instances and identifying flaws in a victim’s behavior that can be used to hold a victim accountable for their sexual assault. An example of victim-blaming is the belief that sexual harassment and sexual assault could occur as a result of drinking alcohol, the clothing that a woman was wearing, or a job that a woman chooses to have.

As it relates to rape myth acceptance and the military, Klement et al. (2019) found that when higher rates of rape myth of acceptance are endorsed, victim-blaming rates are also increased. Klement et al. (2019) examined incidents of both male perpetrators and female victims and female perpetrators in situations of sexual assault and found that regardless of the gender of the perpetrator, men and women endorsed rape myths and victim-blaming at the same rate, regardless of the gender of the victim (Klement et al., 2019). Thus, both men and women endorse masculine gender norms and stereotypes solely by accepting rape myths and victim-blaming, as being a victim of MST is often seen as emasculating or feminine. The more these rape myths and victim-blaming are accepted and the more traditional gender roles are endorsed, the higher the rate of traditional gender role stereotype acceptance tends to be (Burt, 1980). Quackenbush (1989) utilized the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) to measure how participants categorized themselves in terms of gender stereotypes and the participants’ level of rape
myth acceptance. Quackenbush (1989) found that when participants measure as masculine or undifferentiated, they accepted rape myths and victim-blaming ideologies more. In relationship to the military, masculine gender norms are the standard, which based on prior research, could potentially lead to higher rates of rape myth acceptance and higher rates of victim-blaming (Quackenbush, 1989). These phenomena are foundational in setting the scene for what service members report to be barriers to reporting MST.

Gender stereotypes influence the way that peers view one another when it comes to issues such as sexual assault and reporting. Gender stereotypes and socially accepted endorsement of those norms, can lead to an service member’s decision about if, when, and how individuals seek help for sexual assault and sexual harassment (Aronowitz et al., 2012). DeCou et al. (2017) found that participants reported behavior from peers such as victim-blaming following disclosure, being treated differently, minimizing the situation, and other attempting to control the situation for the victim. Endorsement of these behaviors such as victim-blaming and peer endorsement of rape myths is directly associated with lower self-efficacy in victims (Voller et al., 2015). Victim-blaming and rape myth acceptance are foundational for what service members are reporting to be barriers to speaking up and reporting incidents of MST.

Perceived Barriers to Reporting Military Sexual Trauma

When it comes to the Army National Guard, the unique dynamic of military and civilian life merge, and boundaries blur. Boundaries blur because the same leadership that service members see during their military obligation weekend could be a personal acquaintance or friend in settings outside of the military. These relationships may make
understanding professional and personal boundaries unclear and often leads to reporting MST difficult. Mengling et al. (2014) found those serving on active duty were 10% more likely to report incidences of MST than service members in the Army National Guard. Additionally, while 60% of female service members were found to have reported their MST experience, only 27% of males reported their experiences (Street, 2008). More recently, Dardis et al. (2018) found that in a sample of females who had all experienced MST, only 69% reported their experience to military leadership, and 91% of the time, participants reported facing some type of barrier that led to their case being ignored or mishandled.

Endorsement of gender norm stereotypes is a major cause for the non-reporting of sexual harassment in the Army. Although the rate at which male soldiers experience MST is much lower than that of females, the rate at which men report their MST is also much lower than females. Burgess et al. (2016) found that in a sample size of 60 participants, 18% of males reported experiencing MST, while 81% of females reported experiencing MST. However, 14% of the females sampled reported their incidents to the appropriate authorities while no males reported their incidents. Male service members report similar themes when discussing reasons for not reporting MST including: lack of awareness of overall MST risk, dual identity in citizen/soldier status, lack of confidence in leadership, risk during deployment, and warrior ethos and conforming to leadership models (Sadler et al., 2021). Concerning military culture, 44% of participants in a study conducted by Weitz (2015) reported fear of rape in the military and concerns about prevention strategies. Further, each participant reported that leadership reinforced cultural norms such as frequent harassment and lack of support in reporting.
Synthesis of Literature

The military continues to have known issues with MST and in perpetuation of masculine gender stereotypes and norms (Schaefer et al., 2021; Schein, 1973). This literature review provided evidence that multiple sources for formulating gender role stereotypes potentially lead to MST (Boyce & Herd, 2003; Inesi & Cable, 2015; Smith et al., 2019). Qualitative data focused on why or why not enlisted service members choose to report MST and highlights perceived barriers to reporting MST (Cichowski et al., 2017; Peters et al., 2015; Voller et al., 2015). Further, the literature review argues the role that gender stereotypes play in male-dominated fields such as the military, as presented by studies in related fields. The literature showed examples of male-dominated fields and their impact on gender norm stereotypes, the impact of physical fitness, rape myth and rape myth acceptance, and concluded with barriers that service members report that keep them from reporting MST. Literature also suggested that gender norm stereotypes do not only affect females, but also indicated that males often feel emasculated when they do not fit traditional gender norm stereotypes (Koenig et al., 2011; Peters et al., 2015; Richman et al., 2011; Schmader et al., 2008). These concepts are closely related to the theoretical framework I selected for this study, which was social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

The theory utilized to better understand the context of this problem is social role theory. Eagly first (1987) presented social role theory based on research on traditional social role theories, perspectives of traditional gender standards, behavioral differences between men and women, and ideas of stereotype confirmation in both males and females (Eagly & Wood, 2012). More recently, Eagly and Wood (2012) expanded the premise of
social role theory to include biological differences in men and women that further represent the common perceptions of role differences of men and women. In this updated version of social role theory, biosocial mechanisms provide an alternate foundational theory that recognize that male and female behavior are in fact different and stem from interactions in a person’s environment and innate biological causes (Eagly & Wood, 2012). For example, women seek out nurturing careers such as nurses because they are biologically more caring and have been socialized to understand that nursing is an acceptable career choice for women.

Social role theory emphasizes the perceived differences between men and women based on biological and societal differences, particularly in the division of labor and gender role beliefs (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Eagly and Wood (2012) elaborated that men and women learn gender roles through socialization and through the behaviors of others around them. Figure 1 shows the way in which Eagly and Wood (2012) conceptualized social role theory to explain the learned behavior that is gender norm stereotypes. Figure 1 shows that through physical and biological differences in addition to the environment, a division of labor is created based on what is constructed to be suitable labor for men and women. This division of labor leads to the construction of gender role beliefs, which again, repeats to influence the division of labor. Further, these gender role beliefs lead to social and self-regulation based on how women and men are expected to act. Lastly, these gender role beliefs and regulations lead to differences in affect, cognition, and behavior in social situations, such as the workplace.
Social role theory focuses on five concepts that provide explanation for the differing perceptions of men and women. The five concepts of social role theory are division of labor, physical and behavioral differences, gender stereotyping, differing abilities of the gendersri, and perceived gender status or hierarchy (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly & Wood, 2012). The first concept, division of labor, suggests that when it comes to household chores and careers, men and women have separate roles. For example, men are seen as the primary source of income, the head of the household, and handle the majority of laborious tasks. Women are seen as the nurturer of the family and are said to be the caretaker of the household, taking responsibility for cooking, housework, and childcare (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly & Wood, 2012). The second concept, physical and behavioral differences between men and women, suggests that men are physically stronger and more capable of completing tasks that require more strenuous
labor, while women are frailer and are more capable of intellectual tasks. Behavioral differences suggests that women tend to be more emotional, whereas men tend to mask emotions and be more reserved rather than expressive (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly & Wood, 2012). The third concept identified is gender stereotyping, which suggests that men and women have been generalized into groups based on their gender and the perceived abilities that are said to be masculine or feminine in nature (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly & Wood, 2012). Fourth, due to perceived physical and behavioral attributes, men and women are viewed as having differing levels of ability for specific tasks such as physical labor, caring for others, cooking, cleaning, and communicating. Fifth, gender stereotyping is based on socially constructed gender stereotypes, leading to the concept of perceived gender status or hierarchy, that men and women then perceive one gender as being innately better than another (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly & Wood, 2012).

I selected social role theory for this study to examine the differences in perceived gender role norms in the military. Through examining social role theory, insight can be provided into expectations for women in the military (Bell et al., 2014) as well as endorsed gender norm stereotypes. Bell et al. (2014) explained that gender is a construct by which men and women formulate their idea of worth. In the military, men and women are expected to perform at certain levels. In general, men are expected to perform better physically, whereas women are expected to be nurturing and thoughtful (Eagly & Wood, 2012). When an individual acts outside of those established norms, discrimination is likely to occur (Bell et al., 2014). Both endorsement of and defiance of gender norm stereotypes may be contributing factors that lead to non-reporting of MST. As such, it
seems important to further explore gender norm stereotypes through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

**Conclusion: Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions of gender norm stereotypes and how these perceptions an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of MST through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Research on gender roles and reporting MST largely focuses on female service members’ experiences with MST and often fails to include male perspectives (Boyce & Herd, 2003; Inesi & Cable, 2015; Smith et al., 2019). Previous research has also primarily centered around active-duty enlisted service members and quantitative data on how many occurrences of MST have happened (Eliezer et al., 2020; Mengeling et al., 2014; Mondragon et al., 2015). This study is significant because of the historically high number of MST cases in the military (Burgess et al., 2016; Mengeling et al., 2014; Rosellini et al., 2017). The following research questions were the focus for this study:

1. What experiences have currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers had with gender norm stereotypes in the military?

2. What perceptions do currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers’ have about how gender norm stereotypes affect decisions to report or not report military sexual trauma?

This study provides supporting, qualitative data for Army National Guard members to better understand perceptions of reporting MST due to gender stereotypes. This study’s findings could inform policy and training regarding MST. Additionally, Army National Guard leadership may benefit from the findings of this study as it would allow leaders to adapt reporting structures to what enlisted service members are reporting is important.
Chapter One included an overview of the problem, introduction to the research questions, a synthesis of related literature, and an overview of social role theory. Chapter Two details this study’s research design and methodology. I collected qualitative data to gain understanding of how enlisted service members have experienced gender stereotypes in the military and examine how those gender stereotypes influence an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of MST.
CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

Introduction: Research Questions

The literature in Chapter One demonstrated a need to explore the influence that gender norm stereotypes have on enlisted service members’ decisions to or to not report incidents of military sexual trauma (MST; Boyce & Herd, 2003; Karazi-Presler et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2019). This multiple case study adds to the research related to sexual assault and sexual harassment in the Army National Guard, as I explored the experiences of male and female Army National Guard service members’ perspectives of incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Further, this study allowed enlisted service members to share their perceptions of how gender norm stereotypes influence an enlisted service member’s decision to or to not report sexual assault.

Based on the identified need and purpose of this study, I selected a qualitative multiple case study approach. In Chapter Two, I include the details of participant sampling, data collection procedures, and data analysis. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions of gender norm stereotypes and how these perceptions affect an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of MST through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). The following research questions guided this study:

1. What experiences have currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers had with gender norm stereotypes in the military?
2. What perceptions do currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers’ have about how gender norm stereotypes affect decisions to report or not report military sexual trauma?

**Researcher Perspective and Positionality**

I have been an enlisted member of the United States Army in the Army National Guard for eight years, serving in multiple Army National Guard units in different states. After enlisting and having high aspirations and expectations of myself, I arrived eager to learn and be available to help my peers and my leadership be successful. However, this eagerness to succeed was met by an overwhelming amount of gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and an incident of sexual assault.

It is unfortunate when a person is a victim of sexual assault or sexual harassment. It is even more so devastating when that person is a member of a team that is supposed to protect soldiers. Being a survivor of MST, I feel it is important to gather information from the individuals who are affected most, the soldiers. I chose a qualitative study so that solider accounts of MST and gender stereotyping are being heard. Reporting numbers historically have been low in the military and, in my personal experience, are even lower in the Army National Guard. My aim is to change the narrative about what it means to be a survivor of MST and what it means to be brave enough to report those incidents.

I am currently a member of the Army National Guard. Although I continue to face discrimination related to my gender, I am no longer silent about the occurrences for myself or for my peers. These incidents highlighted and many other small incidents have shaped my view and passions for improving of the treatment of all individuals in the military, specifically enlisted soldiers and women. The discrimination I have endured has
motivated me to prompt change in the way the Army addresses cases of discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual assault.

In my civilian career, I work as a psychiatric social worker on an inpatient mental health unit at a hospital. My positionality as a social worker gives me empathy, strength, and broadens my perspective of listening and believing someone’s story when they say they have been a victim of something as serious as MST. My positionality informs my approach to this study in that I can understand the culture of the military and the bond that enlisted service members share with one another; it also informs my approach to this study because I have experience in the way that the military provides information to soldiers in teaching MST prevention, understanding that quantitative data has historically been the priority of the military, and understanding the importance of elevating enlisted soldier’s perspectives and voices to spark change. Additionally, as the researcher, a member of the Army National Guard, and a survivor of MST, I understand the importance and the need for conducting a qualitative study that gives voice to the enlisted service members who may have previously felt silenced in their experiences.

I viewed this study through a constructivist world view (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained that a constructivist view allows people to assign meaning to stimuli and experiences within their setting. I align with the constructivist view because social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) indicates that assumption that people create divisions of labor and assign tasks to gender based on biology and interactions in society. Thus, a constructivist view best fit this study. Additionally, this study provides information that military leadership can use to change existing MST education and reporting procedures.
Theoretical Framework Application

Social role theory served as the theoretical framework for this study and is made up of five concepts: division of labor, physical and behavioral differences, gender stereotyping, differing abilities of the genders, and perceived gender status or hierarchy (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly & Wood, 2012). I chose social role theory because it highlights the way that society constructs and categorizes gender norms, which leads to gender stereotyping (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Koenig & Eagly, 2014). Women in a male-dominated field such as the military continue to face challenges related to gender discrimination based on stereotyping (Schmader et al., 2008) and perceptions on division of labor or ideas about careers that are suitable for women (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). Men also face challenges with gender roles when they feel that they are not masculine enough in their roles in the military, as the military tends to hold masculine gender traits in high regard (Peters et al., 2015).

Social role theory helped in construction of the research questions for this study by defining stereotypical gender roles and the influence they have on an individual’s behavior and decision-making processes. There are instances in which social role theory and construction of gender norms influence how individuals view leadership qualities (Boyce & Herd, 2003), how individuals view gender in the integration of women into combat military occupational specialties (MOSs; Arnhart et al., 2015), and how men feel when they feel they do not hold the same level of masculinity as their peers (Peters et al., 2015). In alignment with social role theory, I developed the research questions to closely examine gender norm stereotypes and how they are related to MST.

Social role theory informed my data collection through the key concepts that Eagly and Steffen (1984) identified. The use of social role theory provided foundational
information on concepts such as division of labor, gender norm stereotypes, differences in perceived ability, and perceived gender status. Further, social role theory informed development of the questionnaire, as I implemented key ideas of social role theory into the questionnaire items. Social role theory also informed the interview questions because I chose to embed the key ideas of the theory into each question asked, as they pertained to gender stereotypes in the Army National Guard.

Social role theory also informed the data analysis for this study. Division of labor, physical and behavioral differences, gender stereotyping, differing abilities, and perceived gender status or hierarchy (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly & Wood, 2012) served as the a priori codes for data analysis. It is important to note that rather than focusing on differing abilities of the genders, I focused on perceived behavioral and physical differences of the genders. Data analysis consisted of coding data, categorizing data, and looking for themes congruent with the core concepts of social role theory.

*Research Design and Rationale*

A multiple case study was the best approach to learn more about enlisted service members’ experiences with gender norm stereotyping and perceptions of MST through a constructivist world view (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). There are three primary reasons that I chose a qualitative study. First, Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated that qualitative research conducted in the natural environment of the participants, that the researcher is sensitive to the participants, and that the researcher seeks to identify themes and patterns in participant responses. In this study, I achieved these aspects through interviewing participants in their unit and understanding the sensitive nature of MST. Second, qualitative research seeks to contribute to scholarship in inciting change in a particular
field (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, the change comes in the form of amended MST education and reporting procedures. Third, the process flow for qualitative research includes identifying a problem or assumption, identifying a theoretical framework or interpretive lens, and leads to conducting a study in the area of interest (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, I selected social role theory as the theoretical framework to analyze responses from current Army National Guard service members. Qualitative research also involves taking a holistic approach. Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated that analyzing the topic holistically provides for a better understanding of the issue. In this study, the issue was that of perception of gender norms leading to non-reporting of MST. Analyzing this issue holistically allowed me to understand enlisted service members’ perspectives and provide recommendations for change. Given this objective, a case study was the best qualitative approach for this study.

I chose a case study approach because the aim was to gain understanding of enlisted service members and their experiences with gender norm stereotypes as they pertain to the Army National Guard. A case study is an empirical method that observes and investigates participants within their natural environment (Yin, 2018). Researchers conduct case studies to seek understanding of real-world cases, particularly as it applies to the context of the problem. I designed the research questions to explore gender norm stereotypes in the Army National Guard and the affect that they have on an enlisted service member’s decision to report or not report MST. A case study is the best fit for this research because it allowed for data collection about gender stereotypes and reporting MST within the context of the Army National Guard. With a case study approach, I
analyzed data using social role theory as a guide and provided useful service member insight to the problem of gender norm stereotypes and MST in the Army National Guard.

Creswell and Poth (2018) and Yin (2018) identified that prior to data collection, the researcher needs to determine if the case study is a single or multiple case study design. Researchers employ multiple case study designs to understand how and why a phenomenon is happening by analyzing multiple different cases within a context (Yin, 2018). I chose a multiple case study design, which allowed for a cross-case analysis to share a variety of service members’ experiences. I used a cross-case analysis to look for patterns and themes across each case and to compare and contrast case participants’ responses (Yin, 2018). Figure 2 shows an overview of the research design.

Figure 2. Research design.
Site Selection and Participant Sampling

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions of gender norm stereotypes and how these perceptions affect an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of MST through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Selecting appropriate participants and a site to conduct research is an integral part to collecting accurate data in a research study. In the following sections, I review the site and participants for this study.

Site

The site for this study was an Army National Guard unit in the midwestern United States. I selected this site because a case study requires data collection within the context of the problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Additionally, I selected this site because I work within this unit and had access to the site and potential participants. The Army National Guard provided a unique site for data collection because enlisted service members made a commitment to the military and to their chosen civilian career path. Finding balance between those the military and civilian life is what makes this organization unlike active-duty branches of the military.

Another aspect that makes the Army National Guard unique is that it contributes dual functions, as the Army National Guard serves the continental United States and functions as international and overseas defense in times of war. I chose this unit because of its diversity in gender, rank, and MOSs. This unit includes MOSs such as cooks, petroleum supply specialists, helicopter maintainers and crew chiefs, supply specialists,
combat medics, and wheeled vehicle mechanics. The range of MOSs made this site ideal because it provided for a wide range of participants.

Participants

In this study, I selected four participants using purposive sampling of current Army National Guard enlisted service members. Yin (2018) defined purposive sampling as choosing participants deliberately and choosing participants that can provide the most relevant and helpful data as it is crucial to find participants who can provide data that is relevant to the field of study. Further, it is important to understand the insight that contradictory perspectives may also provide in data analysis (Yin, 2018).

Inclusion criteria for this study indicated that participants must be a current member of the Army National Guard, have at least one year in service in the Army National Guard, and be enlisted service members of the Army National Guard with a rank of E1 to E6. Exclusion criteria for this study included former enlisted service members who are not actively serving in the Army National Guard, those who had less than one year of service, and those who were senior non-commissioned officers with a rank of E7 or above, or service members who are officers.

I applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria to those who completed the questionnaire to consider who might be able to serve as a case in the study. Then, I selected four cases using maximum variation. Maximum variation is a sampling strategy that allows diverse case representation to provide the widest range of perspectives related to the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, that meant selecting participants from differing military occupational specialties, different ranks, and with varying years of service. I sent the questionnaire to participants through their chain of
command who forwarded the questionnaire to an Army National Guard battalion in the Midwestern United States. Fifteen service members responded to the questionnaire. Participant ages ranged from 21–60 and participant years of service ranged from 2–15 years. Of the 15 questionnaire respondents, six were female and 11 were male. I excluded two respondents for participation due to rank being above E6. I also excluded two additional respondents who qualified but did not consent to participate in an interview. From the remaining 11 respondents, I selected four service members to serve as cases in this study. It is important to note that although there were four females who completed the questionnaire, one did not meet inclusion criteria, two declined to participate in an interview, and only one, Nina, agreed to continue participation. Table 1 provides demographic information for the participants I selected.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Rank/Grade</th>
<th>Years in Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>26–30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>E5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>31–35</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>E6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>21–25</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>E4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalen</td>
<td>21–25</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection Procedures and Protocols

Creswell and Poth (2018) encouraged researchers to view data collection as gathering information for analysis and to consider data collection as it pertains to ethics, gaining permissions to conduct research, identifying multiple sources of data, adaptability as issues arise in the field, and how to store data while maintaining confidentiality of the participants. As such, I submitted to the Baylor University Office of Research
Compliance for review and received a non-human subjects research determination. The
data collection in this study consisted of two phases: a questionnaire and a semi-
structured interview. As an artifact, I also collected AR 600-20, the Army directive that
provides the policy for Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program
(SHARP). The information collected from this policy provided contextual information
regarding the Army’s SHARP program. Information gathered from AR 600-20 included
the structure for reporting MST and the Army’s Zero-Tolerance outlook on MST. This
context was vital in collecting and analyzing data related to the research questions.
Before the first phase of data collection, I selected a peer who met inclusion criteria to
participate in a pilot. The pilot allowed me to revise the semi-structured interview
questions for clarity. The pilot also helped me to ensure that there were no complications
with data collection.

The first phase of data collection was to identify potential study participants. I
recruited participants via email (see Appendix A) and a questionnaire which included an
electronic informed consent document (see Appendix B). The informed consent
document included the purpose of the study, procedures for collecting data, ethical
considerations, participant rights and responsibilities, and confidentiality standards of the
researcher and participant. The questionnaire collected demographic information and two
open-ended questions, one related to each research question (see Appendix C). I sent the
questionnaire to the Battalion Commander via email at the selected site, who then
distributed to the Company Commanders to disseminate to their enlisted service
members. I sent a follow-up email to participants via email. In addition to collecting
demographic information, I used a questionnaire to recruit participants and to identified
four service members who served as the four cases in this study based on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

I conducted the second phase of data collection for this study by holding semi-structured interviews via Zoom (see Appendix D). I developed a 17-question interview protocol to interview the four participants. Table 2 shows the alignment between the theoretical framework and the interview questions. Interview questions gathered information related to how participants, who were current enlisted service members in the Army National Guard, viewed gender stereotypes in the military. In the interview, I also asked participants questions related to their perceptions on how gender stereotypes influence an enlisted service member’s decision to report or not report incidents of MST.

Table 2

*Theoretical Framework and Interview Protocol Alignment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Division of Labor</th>
<th>Gender Stereotypes</th>
<th>Norms and MST</th>
<th>Behavioral/Physical Differences</th>
<th>Gender Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What gender norm stereotypes do you see present in the Army National Guard?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever experienced discrimination based on your gender while serving in the military?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways do you think men and women’s abilities differ physically?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways do you think men and women differ in their behavior?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think there are perceived physical differences in male and female enlisted service members?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think there are perceived behavioral differences in male and female enlisted service members?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What attributes make a good military leader?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of those, which attributes do you associate with being masculine/feminine?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Division of Labor</td>
<td>Gender Stereotypes</td>
<td>Norms and MST</td>
<td>Behavioral/Physical Differences</td>
<td>Gender Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe the differences in daily duties between men and women?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there differences in roles of men and women in Army National Guard?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What occupational choices do you see in men versus women?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there one gender that you associate with leadership or positions of power in the Army National Guard?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you think gender norm stereotypes influence the rate of sexual assault and sexual harassment?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways, if any, do you think that gender norm stereotypes would influence your decision to report an incident of sexual assault or sexual harassment?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think service members in the Army National Guard choose to or not to report incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis Procedures**

I utilized Creswell and Poth’s (2018) data analysis spiral to analyze the data I collected. Data analysis is the process by which the researcher interprets and chooses to represent the data through description and data visualization (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The process of analyzing qualitative data includes organization of collected data, initial readings of data, coding data to look for themes in the information, creating visuals such as tables and charts to represent the data, and formulating an interpretation of what the data means (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Table 3 shows the data collection and data analysis timeline.
Qualitative research follows a general process for data analysis; however, case study approaches require specific strategies. To analyze the data for this study, I engaged in five steps. The first step in analyzing the data is organizing the data. Data organization consisted of gathering documents such as interview transcripts, questionnaires, and artifacts to prepare to analyze. For this study, I conducted interviews via Zoom and transcribed the audio using Otter.ai. I also collected additional information from an artifact, AR 600-20.

Second, I read the data and inspected to develop codes, or categorization of the broader topics within the interview data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) recommended the researcher rely heavily on the selected theoretical framework, building research from the broadest topic up to the most specific topic, develop case descriptions with in-depth accounts from participant interviews, and recognize plausible arguments against the findings. In this study, I used the theoretical framework to construct the a priori codes, which included division of labor, physical and behavioral differences, gender stereotyping, differing abilities, and gender status or hierarchy. During this phase of data analysis, I reviewed the transcripts from the semi-structured interviews and
produced initial groupings of main ideas as they pertained to the theoretical framework of social role theory (Yin, 2018). I reviewed the data a second time and reviewed codes to create categories. Throughout the process of identifying codes, I took margin notes on the transcripts and used a graphic organizer to present codes and categorization (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Third, I identified specific themes from the collected data based off repetition in accounts found in the codes and categories. I used these themes to report my study findings in alignment with social role theory as the theoretical framework. I generated the themes based on the analysis of the data and through the utilization of Otter.ai.

Fourth, I utilized cross-case analysis to identify common themes across the cases (Yin, 2018). I compared each of the four cases against one another to provide greater detail when answering the research questions. Fifth, I used tables, charts, and other data visualization tools to present the findings of the data, as interpreted by the researcher.

Table 4 shows the process in which I analyzed the data for this study using Creswell and Poth’s (2018) data analysis spiral.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step One</td>
<td>Review interview transcripts, after participant approval for use, to identify major ideas in response to service member perceptions on gender norm stereotypes and reporting military sexual trauma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Two</td>
<td>Re-read and examine data to identify codes. Code data and annotate in appropriate categories identified in Step One.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Three</td>
<td>Identify themes and confirm through triangulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Four</td>
<td>Compare cases and identify themes through cross-case analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Five</td>
<td>Report and relate findings to theoretical framework and research questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Trustworthiness and Authenticity**

Generating trustworthiness and authenticity is a multi-faceted process that aims to justify the findings. Qualitative research focuses on understanding the knowledge of participants and the connections that comes from building a trusting, authentic relationship with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Trustworthiness and authenticity involve validating the findings from participant interviews and providing transparency in reporting the findings. Trustworthiness and authenticity demonstrate that the application and utilization of the study provides information that is useful to stakeholders. The main components of trustworthiness and authenticity are confirmability, dependability, transferability, and credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I used four strategies to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity. First, I addressed confirmability through explicitly stating the methodology used for this study. Confirmability lies in the understanding that inevitable researcher biases exist (Miles et al., 2020). The researcher creates confirmability and objectivity by unbiased data collection and interpretation of results. I linked my findings and conclusions to the data, kept complete records of the study, and kept the data for reanalysis by outside entities.

Second, I considered credibility and authenticity in conducting this study. Credibility is the extent to which data accurately represents the truth of the participants record (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To address credibility, I engaged the participants in review of the interview transcripts (Miles et al., 2020). I also addressed credibility by using thick, rich description, identifying limitations and areas that need further evaluation, and through linking the findings to the theoretical framework, which was social role theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles et al., 2020).
Third, is the consideration of transferability. Transferability is the fittingness of results related to the ability to replicate or conduct the study with a different sample population and generate similar results (Miles et al., 2020). Although generalizability is a limitation of this study, questionnaire and interview questions utilized language that was open-ended and specific to the Army National Guard so that the materials could be used with a wide range of enlisted service members in the future. The data collected for this study can be used by Army National Guard leadership as they consider possible changes to sexual assault and sexual harassment policies and procedures. Additionally, participants of this study had the opportunity to share their experiences.

Fourth, dependability examines if the process of a study was consistent and stable overtime and across different methods and researchers (Miles et al., 2020). Dependability criteria includes ensuring that results can be repeated given different researchers, ensuring that research questions are clear, researchers are transparent in their role in the setting, and that forms of peer review are set in place (Miles et al., 2020). To address dependability, I ensured to present data collection steps in detail, provided detail on the theoretical framework, Eagly and Wood’s (2012) social role theory, which informed the study, and explained the ethical considerations related to bias that I may hold as the researcher (Miles et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). These aspects of trustworthiness and authenticity are what made this study plausible. Further, there were ethical considerations for the study, which I describe in the following section.

*Ethical Considerations*

The goal of research is to gain information in a way that is ethical and provides substantial evidence in the field of study (Yin, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth
(2018), the researcher should begin thinking about ethics of a study from the initial phases of planning a study. Further, the researcher should plan for how to address ethical issues that may arise during the study. Ethical considerations are not an issue that arise in a single phase of researching. Rather, ethical issues can present themselves in all aspects, including research questions, data collection, data analysis, and reporting results (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

One of the first ethical considerations comes with obtaining approval from the university to conduct a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, I obtained approval from the site where the study is taking place. I received a non-human subjects research determination from Baylor University Office of Research Compliance. Due to the participants being current enlisted service members, there was a level of authorization that I needed to interview participants. I gained approval from the unit’s battalion commander first and then gained approval through the appropriate legal avenue in the state’s Judge Advocate General’s corps (JAG). JAG was essential in gaining approval for this study because JAG oversees ethics and legality of the functions of the Army National Guard. I sent a memorandum of understanding to JAG and approved for use of the site and the enlisted service members at the site.

On all levels, participants have the right to be respected by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Further, with respect comes concern for the welfare of participants. Concern for participants encompasses protection of participants through confidentiality eliminating risk whenever possible, highlighting benefits of the study, and offering follow-up services if needed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The next ethical consideration for this study came in the consideration of questionnaire and semi-
structured interview questions. When formulating the questionnaire, I placed special attention on the wording of the questions as to not coerce information about MST that participants were not comfortable sharing. A third ethical consideration was in the confidentiality of both the site and the participants. I blinded the specific site, and participants’ identities remained confidential, as I used pseudonyms throughout the study. A final ethical consideration of this study was the potential for researcher bias. I am a survivor of MST and therefore hold strong feelings about the subject. I addressed my personal experiences by reflecting on the potential researcher bias and feelings that I hold and worked to remain unbiased in analyzing case data. These ethical considerations shaped the data collection and data analysis procedures discussed in Chapter Two. In additional to the ethical considerations, it is also important to note the limitations and delimitations for this study.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

This study had three limitations including difficulty recruiting participants, generalizing participant experiences, and hesitation in expressing some aspects of participant experiences. First, there was difficulty in recruiting participants for this study because of the sensitivity surrounding the subject of MST. Trauma is difficult to talk about in any capacity and is especially difficult given the context of the military, thus potential participants may have been unwilling or hesitant to discuss, making recruitment difficult. Second, generalizability was a limitation of this study because it is a qualitative study (Yin, 2018). There are many different units within the Army National Guard with enlisted service members of different backgrounds serving in different types of MOSs. For these reasons, generalizing participant experiences was difficult, as MST and trauma
is largely influenced by victim perspective on the event. The third limitation of this study was that participants may have been hesitant to report their experiences in fear of consequences of sharing such as confidentiality breach and their information reported to leadership, fear of negative career impacts related to their previous experiences, which they might have disclosed as part of the study. In addition to the limitations of the study, there were also delimitations.

Delimitations are boundaries that are purposely set by the researcher. Both inclusion and exclusion criteria were boundaries set by the researcher in this study. Inclusion criteria indicated that participants must be a current member of the Army National Guard, have at least one year in service in the Army National Guard, and be enlisted service members of the Army National Guard. Exclusion criteria for this study included former enlisted service members who were not actively serving in the Army National Guard, those who had less than one year of service, and those who were senior non-commissioned officers with a rank of E7 or above, or service members who were officers. The researcher focused on participants who could benefit the most from this study, which were junior enlisted service members with at least one year of service. Next, the researcher did not directly ask about participants experiences with MST to avoid re-traumatization of the researcher and the participants. Further, the researcher did not ask questions directly about MST experiences to avoid conflict of interest if the incident was unreported.

Conclusion

In Chapter Two, I described the methodology, site selection, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis for this multiple case study. This qualitative, multiple
case study examined United States Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions on how gender stereotypes influence the decision to or to not report military sexual trauma. By using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, participants detailed their experiences with MST in their military careers. Additionally, I used AR 600-20 as an artifact to provide context for participant responses and compare the experiences participants had in reporting MST to the Army’s policy on MST. In Chapter Three, I detail the case profiles, cross-case analysis, discussion, and implications and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER THREE

Results and Implications

Introduction

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions of gender norm stereotypes and how these perceptions affect an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of military sexual trauma (MST) through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). I chose a qualitative, multiple case study approach to this research to best understand the perspectives of enlisted service members through exploring their own experiences. I conducted questionnaires to recruit participants and scheduled four semi-structured interviews based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What experiences have currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers had with gender norm stereotypes in the military?

2. How do gender norm stereotypes affect currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers’ decisions to report or not report military sexual trauma?

Chapter three unfolds in four steps. First, I provide case profiles that illustrate the context in which each participant is aligned with the Army National Guard and includes the findings organized by research question. Second, I analyzed the data utilizing the chosen theoretical framework, social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012), and by identifying individual participant data through the lens of the research questions. Third, I present the study’s significant themes, which I uncovered using cross-case analysis. Fourth, this chapter concludes by offering discussion and recommendations based on the
lived experiences and reported perceptions of the participants related to the research questions.

Case Profiles

I conducted this multiple case study within an Army National Guard Battalion in the midwestern United States. I selected four participants to serve as cases in the study using purposive sampling (Yin, 2018). I sent the questionnaire to participants through their chain of command who forwarded the questionnaire to an Army National Guard battalion in the Midwestern United States. Fifteen service members responded to the questionnaire. I selected four service members to serve as cases in this study. In the following case profiles, I detail the responses from the questionnaire, interviews, and connections to the artifact, AR 600-20. In each case profile, I use a pseudonym to protect the participant’s identity and retain confidentiality.

Nina’s Case Profile

Nina has been in the Army National Guard for eight years and holds the rank of Sergeant. Nina reported in her questionnaire that she was in the age category of 26–30 years old and identified as a White female. Nina reported in the interview that although she has served strictly on active-duty, she has deployed as a member of the Army National Guard and has worked fulltime on active-duty orders for the Army National Guard. Nina works in a mechanical field in the Army and reported difficulty with this, as there are so few females in her job field. Being the only female case in this study, Nina reported significant differences than her male counterparts. Nina reported that in her current unit, she serves in a mechanical field and has been held to different standards than her male peers. Nina further reported that because of these standards, it has made it hard
for her to be successful in her career path. Regarding discrimination, Nina shared that she has experienced discrimination based on her gender. Nina reported:

I’ve been around long enough that people don’t really have a filter around me. So I’ve heard quite a bit of stereotyping and discrimination I had a staff sergeant, as my rater, called me a “cunt” behind my back to the males in my organization. So, I truly believe discrimination is still based on gender and is still a very prevalent thing in the National Guard. So, when I was a specialist, I was in was in for about two years at the time. I had a male soldier who was following me around, he messaged me at 3am professing his love to me, and I had never had a conversation with this person. And I brought it up to my leadership. After like, I tried to tell him to leave me alone. They try to talk to him that didn’t fix it. So they brought it up to [my] higher leadership, who then talked to his leadership and then my leadership looked at me and goes, [Nina], this is why we don’t drink and blamed me for the report. And they were like, yeah, hey, you’re at fault here and I’m like, I never spoke to this gentleman. I’ve also had [others] who like to tell me that I don’t belong in my MOS because I am a female.

Nina continued to explain that victim blaming, and different expectations of gender were issues she has observed while serving in the Army National Guard. Nina’s questionnaire responses also indicated that she has observed female service members being held to different standards than males, and continued discrimination of females based on gender stereotypes.

Nina’s experiences with gender norm stereotypes in the military. The first research question in this study was: What experiences have currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers had with gender norm stereotypes in the military? To learn more about Nina’s experiences with gender norm stereotypes in the military, I examined her responses to the questionnaire and the interview.

Evidence of gender norm stereotyping was present throughout Nina’s questionnaire responses and interview. In Nina’s questionnaire response, she reported that one of the most prevalent stereotypes she has personally experienced is the idea that
because she is a female, she should not be able to do her job because it is in the mechanical field. In the interview, I asked Nina about job field stereotyping and her experiences with typical job fields that she sees women recruited into in the Army National Guard. Nina responded “I’ve met a lot of women in the military police, as cooks. And see [mostly] in paperwork roles.” Nina further explained that women are typically recruited into supply roles, or as cooks and other paperwork heavy roles. Potential causes for the abundance of women in support roles could be gender stereotyping and the norms associated with what each gender is implicitly geared towards. I asked Nina about the specific gender stereotypes she observed in the Army National Guard, to which she responded,

I see a lot of gender norm stereotypes in the Army National Guard. I would say most of them have to do with you know, men are supposed to be strong. They’re not allowed to talk about any emotional problems, then that women cause problems. I’ve heard those two standards far too many times.

Nina’s account provided evidence of gender norm stereotypes in several examples throughout the interview. Nina specifically stated that men are supposed to be strong and often spoke about her treatment as a female in a mechanical field. As Nina reported in the interview, not only are these stereotypes held by service members, but these stereotypes are a standard of sorts.

I also asked Nina in the interview about how she perceives the difference in physical and behavioral differences of males and females in the Army National Guard. Regarding perceived physical differences, Nina responded:

I think the perception is that women are weaker, in general, they’re not able to do as much. They’re lower, they’re incapable of meeting the criteria for the job, regardless of how they’re actually performing in the position, or how they’re performing for their fitness tests. I mean, physiologically, and scientifically, men and women have different physical attributes, women have much stronger
abdominal muscles and men are far more muscular and like their upper body. And I think because you’re able to see one of those muscles more than the other, per se, I think that plays a role into what people believe, as far as physical differences between the two.

Nina’s report indicated that biologically, there are accepted differences between the stature of male and female service members, however, Nina also added that there should not be discrimination or assumption that a female cannot complete a job based on physical size or perceived strength.

I then asked Nina what perceived behavioral differences she has experienced between male and female service members, and she responded:

I would say that the perceived behavioral differences are women are perceived as more ditzy or more free going or more, like don’t know a good word for airheaded, but not but they’re not thought of as like fully there. They’re not thought of as really a part of the team typically, due to behavior. They’re seen, as, you know, pushover and then when they aren’t, they’re perceived as “bitchy,” or they’re perceived in these negative connotations that men don’t have the same perception when they have the same, the same behavioral attributes.

Based on Nina’s report, females are perceived to be less intelligent or less structured than male service members; therefore, they are typically treated differently than males. Additionally, Nina explained that when females do not conform to the stereotype of being passive, others view them in a negative light.

Regarding the perception of these abilities and leadership attributes, Nina identified characteristics of a good leader to be, driven and motivation, being confident, understanding, and having empathy for their soldiers. Nina did not assign any of these characteristics with being masculine or feminine. However, I asked Nina about her experiences with leadership and if she associates one gender with leadership over the other. To this question, Nina reported that in the Army National Guard specifically, she does associate men with positions of power as she has not experienced many female
leaders. Further, I asked Nina if she has had more male leadership throughout her career, and she responded,

    I have. It isn’t even close, I think I’ve had maybe, well, I’ve never had a female first line leader. I’ve only once have had a female commander for a company and only once a battalion commander. So, it’s a significant difference between the two in my eight years.

Nina’s testimony revealed her experience with gender norm stereotypes in the Army National Guard. Nina also detailed her perceptions related to why enlisted service members to report or not to report MST.

    Nina’s experiences with reporting vs. non-reporting of military sexual trauma.

The second research question was: How do gender norm stereotypes affect currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers’ decisions to report or not report military sexual trauma? To learn more about Nina’s experiences with reporting versus non-reporting of MST, I examined her responses to the questionnaire and the interview. I also examined Nina’s responses as they aligned with AR 600-20.

    Regarding the second research question, Nina’s questionnaire indicated that she believed service members are, more often, choosing not to report MST because of leadership. Nina stated, “If [service members] don’t have the support of their leadership, they aren’t going to report.” Further, Nina reported that the way the Army National Guard handles incidents of MST is a deterrent for service members to report MST.

    Nina’s questionnaire report indicated that she understood AR 600-20 and the policy that the Army holds for the appropriate action to take when a report is filed. Nina’s questionnaire and interview responses indicate that Nina suggests AR 600-20 is not followed as it should be, based on her report of policy being neglected.
During the interview, I asked Nina if she felt gender norm stereotypes allow for a culture that creates unintended space for sexual assault and sexual harassment. Nina responded:

I would say absolutely. And I say that because when you look around at the people who are in leadership roles because of age, gender norms, they’re all men. So if you do report, you know, you’re gonna be talking to a man, you know, that a man is going to be dealing with it. And very often times you see, like, things get swept under the rug or victim blaming, or what have you, just because that’s what we’ve become accustomed to. As well as I think the fact that men in the organization see women as you know weaker more what’s the word I want to use? Less aggressive, it becomes much easier as well as I think because of the gender stereotype that men are supposed to be strong, and they won’t talk about it. I think that allows for the ability of assault of somebody taking advantage of that knowing that it will be rewarded.

Nina continued to say that, given her experiences, although gender norm stereotypes would likely not hinder her from reporting MST, she shared that she understood why many enlisted service members may not. She explained it in this way,

I have seen and witnessed so many different things that I understand why the answer is not no for many females. And why we’ve got issues when I was on when I was on deployment, our SHARP representative for our battalion or brigade [who] came down to visit each location. And he went, ‘Don’t make any SHARP complaints.’ Like don’t report the [incident] basically, it was the gist of what he came to tell us. And it was like, well, that’s not what you’re supposed to be saying. There’s an inherent problem and what you were saying to people, and I think these, these, absolutely the fact that people victim blame the fact that people keep people from moving up in their career and talk a talk behind people’s backs, and all of these things definitely influence soldiers’ decision to report it.

AR 600-20 policy indicates that there are set avenues for reporting MST, and that the Army provides individuals to be representatives for reporting incidents. Further, AR 600-20 explicitly states that there shall be no repercussions for victims, or anyone, who reports an incident of MST. Nina indicated that she has observed a service member in the Army National Guard discourage others from reporting incidents, which does not follow
Moreover, Nina suggests through her experiences that the lack of interest by representatives is a deterrent to enlisted service members reporting MST.

Nina elaborated that she has the same perception of males reporting MST. Nina reported that given the stereotype that men are strong and emotionless, when they do come forward, they are ostracized, criticized, and compared to females in a negative context. Nina also stated that regardless of gender, enlisted service members may avoid reporting because, historically, leaders have not held the perpetrators accountable:

I think there are a significant amount of fewer formal reports or informal reports made by Army National Guard soldiers [than incidents of MST]. I think that that’s because of the stereotypes, and the fact that if you do report, you’re seen as the problem more often than not, whether it’s men or women that report. I think it also is that if you’re if you're reporting something, you’re giving up that power in the eyes of like the stereotype, and you’re giving up, the ability to have control over the situation, and control and power are seen as such important things in the National Guard.

Nina discussed in the interview perceptions of gender stereotypes and how they may influence a service member’s decision to report or to not report MST. Nina demonstrated that in the Army National Guard, there is an inherent lack of support or lack of trust; therefore, service members are fearful of giving up power and trusting another person to investigate appropriately, without dismissing a case based on the gender of the victim or perpetrator.

_Nina’s case summary._ Related to the first research question, Nina shared her experiences with discrimination that she has faced in the Army National Guard as a female. Nina also provided her perception of gender norm stereotypes she has experienced in the Army National Guard for her personally, for women in general, and for men in general. The stereotypes Nina reported related largely to the perception of
physical ability and in the behavioral differences of men and women. Regarding reasons
to or to not report MST, which was the second research question in this study, Nina
provided that often, female service members do not report MST because of intimidation,
or feeling unsafe, reporting due to the large number of males in leadership who they
would have to report to. Nina elaborated that male enlisted service members are
potentially not reporting MST due to fear of consequences or breaking gender norms by
appearing weak or fearing the loss of control of the situation. Nina was the only female
case interviewed for this study, as she was the only female participant to consent to an
interview. As such, Nina’s reports and experiences provide vital insight into both male
and female experiences with gender norm stereotypes and the choice to or to not report
MST.

*Jack’s Case Profile*

Jack is a full-time Staff Sergeant in the Army National Guard and has been
serving for nearly 15 years. In Jack’s questionnaire, he reported that he was in the age
category of 31–35 years old and identified as a White male. Jack has served several
deployments in the Army National Guard. Interestingly, Jack has served the most time in
the Army National Guard of all the participants and holds the highest rank. Throughout
the interview, I observed Jack to be hesitant in reporting some aspects of MST; however,
he reluctantly provided, what I perceived as, transparent answers. Regarding
discrimination based on gender, Jack reported that although he may have been treated
differently based on his own decisions and actions, he could not recall a time where he
was discriminated against solely based on his gender. Throughout the interview, Jack did
identify evidence of gender stereotyping in the Army National Guard and expressed his experience with those stereotypes as they pertain to MST.

*Jack’s experiences with gender norm stereotypes in the military.* The first research question in this study was: What experiences have currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers had with gender norm stereotypes in the military? To learn more about Jack’s experiences with gender norm stereotypes in the military, I examined his responses to the questionnaire and the interview. I also examined Jack’s responses as they aligned with AR 600-20.

Jack has served in the Army National Guard for nearly 15 years. Given this experience, Jack was reflective on all facets of his time in service, and throughout the interview, he aimed to take a nonjudgmental stance on the issue at hand. Jack demonstrated a nonjudgmental stance when he addressed the positive and negative experiences related to the Army National Guard’s policy on MST. Jack demonstrated an understanding of AR 600-20 and referenced this throughout the interview to provide his perspective. Jack understood that AR 600-20 is the governing policy for MST. Additionally, Jack shared multiple times throughout the interview that he believes that the Army National Guard is “doing the best they can,” but there are often shortcomings in following AR 600-20 incidents. Regarding Jack’s perception of gender norm stereotypes, he reported:

I think of males or a male soldier is more readily capable, as a broad spectrum statement there, a male soldier is physically stronger, able to carry more weight on their back and able to drag someone able to pick things up and put things down, like ammo crates, which are 70 pounds apiece. Maybe all soldiers can do that, but I think male soldiers are generally a little bit stronger.
In the questionnaire, Jack shared his experience with gender norm stereotypes. Jack reported that men are viewed as “big and dumb and lift heavy things,” and that females who are attractive are often objectified. Jack further explained in the interview that his main experiences with gender norm stereotypes are rooted in terms of physical ability. I asked Jack to elaborate on how leaders view these differences, and he expanded on his personal experience as a leader, stating,

I can speak from personal experience in a leadership position that, yes, I have picked male soldiers to do job over females because of their physical abilities. But it’s not that I don’t think the female could do it. It’s just I know the male soldier would have an easier time moving that 100-pound crate off that truck. So, if I tried to look at it as understanding my, my soldiers physical limit, and not so much gender stereotyping, although it can be it seen as stereotyping.

Throughout the interview, made it known that he did not endorse stereotypes.

Regarding behavioral differences of male and female enlisted service members, Jack reported that in general, he felt men and women differ in their emotional control. Specifically, Jack stated:

I think men are quicker to get angry. Where women are, when they get angry, just like men do, but they don’t jump to violence or anger is as bad as a male. But also, when something upsetting happens, that I’ve noticed that females will maybe not like back down, but they’ll be emotional, and they’ll remove themselves from the situation in order to avoid a conflict.

Jack reported that in his experience, males tend to have a short temper, whereas females tend to have a bit of a higher frustration tolerance in response to negative stimuli.

Jack stated that his experience has been that females tend to avoid conflict and act out emotionally rather than physically. Further, I asked Jack to describe the perception leaders may hold given this behavioral difference, Jack reported the following:

Let’s say a male soldier gets punched in the face, whether it’s by another male soldier, he reacts with violence, that’s almost the norm, a normal reaction, right? That’s an expected reaction. If a female soldier got punched in the
face by another female soldier, I would expect them to have that same reaction. However, I think if something like that happened and violence broke out, there would be more of a response to stop it faster, if it’s one of those like boys will be boys kinds of things. But when a female gets violent, well, suddenly the situation needs to be corrected.

Jack’s statement indicated that his experiences in the Army National Guard have been that there are differing expectations of male and female service members when it comes to their behaviors. Jack shared that when males act aggressively, his experience has been that this is viewed as normal, whereas if a female reacts aggressively, Jack’s experience has been that this is viewed as abnormal.

Jack reported in the interview that in his experience, male and female leaders have demonstrated different attributes. However, Jack did not associate these differences as being inherently positive or negative. Regarding leadership attributes, Jack stated that he believed a good military leader should put the needs of others before their own, should know their soldier’s strengths and weaknesses and be aware of what is going on in the lives of those who they lead. When it comes to these attributes, Jack did not associate these with one gender over the other. I asked Jack in the interview if he felt gender norm stereotypes were present in the expectations of male leaders versus female leaders. To that Jack responded,

I know a lot of a lot of intelligent like, male leadership, but like when it comes to being like, technical and detail-oriented, I found myself going to female leadership to get advice for that. So, I would say like, knowledge and technical skills, I might go to a female before I go to a male. But for oh, I don’t know, maybe, like, advice on sternness or like, hey, this just happened. The soldier just fought this soldier, like, what do I do about it? I might go to a male leadership role model for that.

By Jack’s account, he explained that the expectations of gender are not only evident in the behavioral and physical abilities of enlisted service members but also in their
leadership skills. Per this gender norm stereotype of leadership attributes, women are expected to handle more detail oriented, administrative tasks, whereas men are expected to handle the discipline and heavy lifting. This consistency of heavy lifting was also present in the discussion surrounding the daily duties of male and female enlisted service members.

Regarding the split of daily duties, Jack recognized that there are women who are capable of doing physical labor and there are men capable of doing paperwork. However, when choosing who completes which task, Jack implied that implicit bias may take over, therefore he chooses females to complete paperwork and males to complete the tasks that require more physical lifting. To that point, when I asked him about recruiting enlisted service members in the interview, Jack noted that he does notice a trend when it comes to the jobs that males and females select.

There’s definitely a lot of female soldiers that I know who are geared towards less physically demanding jobs. Like they were pushed towards less physically demanding jobs or like being medics being [supply specialists], things like that. There’s more [women] in technical jobs. And obviously, a lot of males are pushed towards the infantry or artillery. And I think that still happens. I think it happens quite often. And it’s mostly due to just physical limitation. In the future female soldiers might be pushed one way and male soldiers might be pushed to another. You’re given the option. But yeah, you’re also given recommendations, too.

Given this statement, Jack provided further evidence to the presence gender norm stereotypes in the Army National Guard and acknowledged the expectations of gender and the expectations of division of labor, relating this to the idea the men do the physical labor while women work best in nurturing or administrative positions.

During the interview, I asked Jack about his experiences with leadership he has had in the Army National Guard, questioning if he experiences more male or female leaders. Jack was hesitant in his response to this interview question, but he reported that
he has had more males as leaders, therefore, associating males with position of power in
the Army National Guard. Jack further elaborated:

Because the military as a whole is, I think, last I knew 75 or 80% male. So, for
every 10 leaders, two might be female, maybe three. Yeah. And there’s that.
That’s not to say that I think that’s right. I just think that’s the reality of it.

Jack’s account of military leadership speaks to the gender status and that statistically,
there are more male leaders in the Army National Guard. However, Jack did make a point
to note that it is not only males in leadership, but leadership is male-dominated. I
observed Jack’s hesitancy to answering this interview question and utilized this to spark a
conversation transitioning to discussion of hesitancy to report MST.

_Jack’s experiences with reporting vs. non-reporting of military sexual trauma._

The second research question was: How do gender norm stereotypes affect currently-
serving Army National Guard soldiers’ decisions to report or not report military sexual
trauma? To learn more about Jack’s experiences with reporting versus non-reporting of
MST, I examined his responses to the questionnaire and the interview. I also examined
Jack’s experiences with reporting MST as it aligned with AR 600-20.

In the interview, I engaged Jack in a discussion about AR 600-20. Jack reported
that although he feels the Army National Guard is doing the best that it can to prevent
MST, there are still some shortcomings. Jack stated,

I do think the Army does its best to prevent any forms of sexual assault. Some
people are just terrible people. And it doesn’t matter how much training you have,
it’s going to happen. When you mix people of different backgrounds, classes,
etnicities, genders, it’s going to happen there. Something bad will happen
eventually, and it’s not entirely preventable. I think the Army tries to mitigate it.
However, I do know of situations where the Army has put female soldiers in
locations that they probably shouldn’t have been in, and it resulted in sexual
assault.
Jack shared an interesting perspective to AR 600-20 in providing pros and cons to the policy. He explained that he believes the Army National Guard does the best that they can to mitigate the situation, there are still instances where leaders exercise poor judgment and it results in catastrophic events, such as MST.

In the questionnaire, Jack was asked to provide his perception on why MST is reported or why it is not reported. Jack’s response on the questionnaire was that service members have a fear of reprisal and feelings of shame or guilt as reasons for not reporting MST. However, Jack also added that in some instances, service members do report MST because they know that reporting is the right thing to do. Relating the interview question back to Jack’s report of gender norm stereotypes for male service members, I asked Jack in the interview how he felt the perceptions of gender norm stereotypes affected a male enlisted service member’s decision to or to not report instances of MST. Jack replied,

If something happened to myself, I would report it, or if I saw it happen to someone, I would report it. But that being said, with stereotypes and different things, if a male soldier was raped by another male soldier, the likelihood of them reporting that is almost zero. I can say if I was raped by another male soldier, even though I know the system [AR 600-20], even though I know it works, if you report it, I don’t know that I would [report it]. For fear of everyone looking at me differently or thinking of me differently, there’s, it’s not that I wouldn’t want to get the individual in trouble. It’s the, the stigma or the stereotype that might come with, oh, he’s a rape victim. And that’s, that’s one of those things that like it’s a garbage thought process, but it exists, you know?

Jack reported that he felt he would not report if he experienced MST if he was raped by another male, but he would encourage others to report. Jack further shared that he would not report due to fear of being ostracized or fear of how peers may view him.

I also asked Jack if he felt gender norm stereotypes hinder female enlisted service members from reporting MST in the same way Jack felt it may hinder male enlisted service members. Jack explained that it was situational:
I think it depends on the individual soldier. And I’ll explain that. So like, if a soldier has the reputation of being promiscuous, and then comes out and says at some point she was sexually assaulted, I think that soldier would be taken less seriously because of her past behavior than say, a female soldier who was very by the book, like, didn’t mess around with anyone and it’s well known, and she comes forward and say that something happened. Sexual assault or harassment happened, I think she’d be taken more seriously than previous soldier. So, I think depending on the on the female’s behaviors in the past that would not so much affect credibility but affect the seriousness of the response.

An interesting note in Jack’s response to this interview question is that he did not associate a previously identified gender norm stereotype to this, however, he reported the perceived behavior of female soldier would be a deciding factor for others deciding the action taken to resolve or investigate a report.

The final question I asked Jack during the interview was, overall, why Jack felt enlisted service members choose to or to not report MST. Jack reported he feels more reports go unreported. Jack attributed non-reporting to multiple factors including leadership and stereotypes. Specifically, Jack stated,

I think male soldiers what would make it difficult is being looked at as weak and you maybe fearing like for not reprisal but like getting made fun of down the line right. Maybe being called a “homo,” told they liked it, that things like that, that that’s a real thing that could happen. I think with females it could, It could make it affect them by, by, say, male soldiers, after the incident, a female reports it, if she reports it, male soldiers are then maybe going to stay away from her push her to the side, not have her around after duty hours, things like that. I think. I think the social stigma of dealing with a sexual assault case is a primary reason for soldiers not reporting.

I asked Jack if he had anything further, he would like to elaborate on or any notes he would like to add to the conversation. Jack elected to add with an anecdote regarding prevention and accountability. Jack stated

If soldiers don’t report, sexual assault or sexual harassment, then leadership can never change anything or fix it. Right? If a soldier, if a single female soldier, and I’m using this story as an example, if a single female soldier is placed on a COP, a combat outpost in the middle of Afghanistan, with 25 infantry men for six
months, that’s a bad idea. Right? And that’s something that the Army should have seen and been like, let’s not put one single female medic out there. Let’s have a male medic go. And that doesn’t make it right. It shouldn’t have to be that way. A female soldier should be able to be with male soldiers, male soldiers should be able to be around female soldiers. But I think in certain situations, and knowing different races, ethnicities, backgrounds, all these other things, and knowing that there are shitty people in the world, the military should look at certain situations to be like, we should probably not do this. So, I think though, with without, without soldiers, reporting things without soldiers, letting their leadership know that something happened, it, it won't get fixed, they can’t get fixed. And it’s not going to make the fact that it happened go away. But it could help prevent it for future soldiers.

Although Jack provided points of praise for the use of AR 600-20, Jack’s interview indicated that he believed there is also room for growth within the Army National Guard to provide better prevention efforts in accordance with AR 600-20.

*Jack’s case summary.* Throughout Jack’s interview, he discussed typical gender norm stereotypes that are present in the Army National Guard, which relates to the first research question. Jack identified that males are perceived as macho and strong and perceived women to be administratively oriented and more technical. Another prominent note from Jack’s interview is that he identified males with positions of power and identified that he experienced more male leadership throughout his career. Jack noted that although it does not make it right, the reality is that the Army National Guard is a male-dominated field. Regarding the second research question and reporting or non-reporting of MST, Jack reported that he perceived less reports being made, largely based on fear of social stigma, and fear of being ostracized by peers. Interestingly though, Jack reported that male enlisted service members do not report MST based on fear of defying gender norm stereotypes, while female non-reporting may largely be attributed to the perception of their behavior.
Tom’s Case Profile

Tom is a Specialist in the Army National Guard. Tom has served in the Army National Guard for nine years and has held multiple titles in that time. In his questionnaire, Tom reported that he was in the 21–25 age category and that he identified as a White male. Tom brought an interesting perspective to the interview questions due to the uniqueness of his unit, in that Tom is in a mechanical unit with few females. Tom reported that he has deployed while serving in the Army National Guard but has not served on active duty. Throughout Tom’s interview, he was hesitant, and I observed him to be guarded when providing answers. I often used follow-up questions to gather more information from Tom based on his experiences and perspectives. Regarding discrimination, Tom did not recall a time when he had been discriminated against solely based on his gender. Tom indicated that he had not experienced discrimination in his questionnaire responses and in his responses to interview questions. As it relates to the Army National Guard, Tom identified evidence of gender norm stereotypes in his interview responses.

Tom’s experiences with gender norm stereotypes in the military. The first research question in this study was: What experiences have currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers had with gender norm stereotypes in the military? To learn more about Tom’s experiences with gender norm stereotypes in the military, I examined his responses to the questionnaire and the interview.

Tom initially responded to the questionnaire stating that in the Army National Guard, he has witnessed gender norm stereotypes in the military. Tom stated in his questionnaire that one stereotype he has seen present in the Army National Guard is the
dividing of tasks based on the perceived physical ability of each gender. However, during Tom’s interview he provided a seemingly conflicting statement, reporting, “I have seen both sides of where the females do less of the physical labor, but I’ve also seen where they do more of the physical labor.” When I prompted further and asked about the perception that leaders may hold over which gender is expected to do more physical labor, Tom seemed hesitant to provide more information, but he reported, “based on my experience, I would say it is more expected from some leaders of the men to do more physical work.” Tom reported that his experiences in physical differences he has observed in males in females is primarily biological. Tom reported that it is easily recognizable that males have a larger stature than females. Tom reported no other perceived physical differences.

Regarding behavioral differences, Tom reported more significant behavioral differences than he did physical differences. Tom explained that specifically with behavioral differences, he believed that younger male service members demonstrate engaging in more risky behaviors than female service members. Tom shared,

I would say, yes, I have seen, and this is more so, I’d say, with younger soldiers. I’m almost 26 years old, and I did this personally when I was a lot younger, is [to be] more accepting of certain risks. And I see it sometimes in younger male soldiers. Sometimes I see younger female soldiers that don’t take the same approach, or they don't accept some of those same risks. They, I’d say, it’s more thought out.

Tom’s observation revealed his observation that male service members may act more impulsively as compared to their female counterparts. Further, Tom observed that female service members make calculated and cautious decisions.

In the interview, Tom discussed division of labor in his current unit, explaining that when it comes to completing tasks, there is no separation between males and females
completing the task. However, Tom reported that was not the case in previous units he had been a member of. Tom stated, “I have seen it before, mainly in gunnery situations where the male soldier carried a piece of equipment that was of significant more weight than their counterpart.” I then posed the question to Tom if he felt the male carrying the larger, heavier weapon was instinctual, or based on gender norm stereotypes, to which Tom responded, “Knowing his personality already, I think he just automatically did it. But those that may have not known him may have seen [this situation from] a different perspective.” Tom further explained that he did not feel that men had an intrinsic need to be viewed as strong or that male service members have an automatic drive to perform physical tasks more than their female counterparts.

Continuing the discussion regarding gender norm stereotypes, Tom offered that in some instances, he has witnessed civilians who mistake a service member based on their gender. Tom reported,

I would say that people that are outside of the military would see that and I’ve seen some instances where female soldiers are often mistaken as being a dependent of a male soldier, instead of them being the actual soldier.

Tom’s report indicated that he observed gender norm stereotypes related to others making career path assumptions about female service members. Tom’s response seemed to indicate that when a female chooses a career path such as the military, some see this choice as an anomaly. In keeping with the occupational theme, I asked Tom about the MOSs he typically sees female service members in, and MOSs he sees male service members in. Tom responded that although he has seen female service members in combat type units, he has typically only seen them in administrative type roles within those units.

I would say, having quite a few friends that were in such in units such as infantry,
where they did not have a lot of female soldiers that were [infantrymen]. Most of the time, the women in their units were part of the headquarters, so administrative supply roles.

Tom’s experience has been that, even when females are members of combat units, they are not taking on the physical role. Tom reported that typically, females are fulfilling administrative roles, such as being responsible for ordering unit supplies.

Considering the outlook of leadership qualities, I asked Tom what qualities he felt a good military leader has. Tom identified traits such as trustworthiness and empathy to be at the forefront of being an effective military leader

I would say, as a leader, it’s very important that your soldiers come to you with problems and that if they don’t come to you with those problems, that is a day that you are not doing your job, because not only as a leader, are you in charge of yourself, you are also in charge of those that are under you. I would say, [good leaders are] dedicated, supportive. To be a good leader...don’t worry so much about yourself, but make sure that you are humble would be a good way. Don’t be afraid to learn.

In Tom’s report of good leadership characteristics, he did not identify any characteristics related to being feminine or masculine. When discussing leadership qualities in the interview, Tom reported that he has had an “even split” of male and female leadership. Tom reported that so long as a leader is capable of completing the job, gender should not matter. I posed the question to Tom to ask if he felt this gender equity thought process was common throughout the Army National Guard. Tom shared that he felt that gender equity regarding leadership was not common through the Army National Guard and again made the example of combat units. Tom reported that if a female commander took charge of an infantry unit, it could negatively perceived. I asked Tom if he felt that a female commander would be looked at as less capable than a male commander solely based on gender. To that Tom responded, “It could be, yes.” Given Tom’s statement regarding
leadership, it seems Tom believes gender norm stereotypes are present in the Army and the Army National Guard, but they have not been prevalent in his career.

*Tom’s experiences with reporting vs. non-reporting of military sexual trauma.*

The second research question was: How do gender norm stereotypes affect currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers’ decisions to report or not report military sexual trauma? To learn more about Tom’s experiences with reporting versus non-reporting of MST, I examined his responses to the questionnaire and the interview. I also examined Tom’s responses as they aligned with AR 600-20.

During the interview, Tom demonstrated understanding of AR 600-20, evidenced by his report of understanding the Army National Guard’s zero-tolerance policy for sexual assault and sexual harassment. Tom also demonstrated understanding of the reporting structures and restricted versus unrestricted reporting types. I asked Tom, given the culture of gender stereotyping in the Army National Guard, if he felt there is a culture that allows space for incidents of MST to occur. Tom responded,

> It’s hard to say because I’ve been in units where like the representative that you would go to, to report sexual harassment or assault, they would be of the opposite gender, so that could create an environment where it would be more intimidating to come forward about it.

By Tom’s account, there is not necessarily a culture that perpetuates MST, but a culture that creates reporting MST difficult due to intimidation, fear of reporting to someone of the opposite gender, or overall discomfort in reporting the incident.

In keeping with the topic of reporting MST, I asked Tom if he felt, personally, that gender norm stereotypes would hinder him from reporting an incident of MST. Tom stated,
No, because I understand that as if I have the thinking that, yes, it’s very hard thing to talk about or report. But if I don’t come forward, then it may happen again to another soldier, and they may be very distraught by it and not able to function properly and perform their job correctly.

Tom’s account revealed that he felt a sense of responsibility to report an incident of MST not only for himself and trusting AR 600-20 policy and reporting system, but also Tom felt that if he did not report an incident of MST, other service members would continue to feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to report as well.

I asked Tom overall, why he felt that male service members are not reporting incidents of MST. Tom attributed low reporting numbers by male service members mainly to their reports not being taken seriously. He explained,

Since it is such a much lower statistic of men reporting that this, [it] could tie into maybe their unit has turned into or has created a culture where it’s not taken a serious. Going through the basic leader course for the army at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania there, we had to write a SHARP essay about sexual harassment and assault. And in my research, reading articles about it, there was a unit, I cannot remember what it was off the top of my head, but this went up to their brigade or division level, that they didn’t take their, their SHARP program serious enough, and they ended up having incidents of SHARP that did not go reported.

Although AR 600-20 specifically states the Army’s policy on MST and specific reporting measures, Tom indicated that perhaps many units might not follow the AR 600-20 policy.

Therefore, by Tom’s account, reports are not being handled appropriately, and in turn, service members are choosing not to report. Given this idea, I asked Tom if he felt there was a stigma attached to reporting MST. Tom reported,

I would say that there, it wouldn’t just be always National Guard, it may be in other components of the Army, that maybe if you reported it, and you want it to stay restricted, where you don’t want as many people to know about the report, that if you did do something such as under unrestricted, where they could more people could know and take more action on it. Somehow that it may get to lower unit members and you can be treated differently because of it.
Regarding stigma, Tom reported that there is fear of reprisal or of individuals being ostracized for reporting. Tom indicated that reports are not always confidential, thus members of the unit often are unintentionally involved in the situation. Having peers involved, in Tom’s experience, leads to the reported being treated differently.

Finally, I asked Tom why he felt that service members were not reporting MST. Tom, again, attributed non-reporting to a non-supportive environment and to units and leadership not adhering to AR 600-20 policy.

I would say their options to reporting it if they are, if they have like the opposite sex of as their representative could create a lot more tension to report it. And I would say a solution for that could be to have a SHARP representative, one female, one male and not saying that females can only go to the female representative or males can only go to the male, but it may inclined more people to if they feel less intimidated reporting it to the opposite sex.

Tom further elaborated stating that a reason for not reporting would be tension reporting to a representative of another gender. Additionally, Tom’s questionnaire response indicated that he believed service members were not reporting incidents of MST due to humiliation and the perception that there is a lack of understanding from senior leaders. Tom provided a solution by offering that if units allowed for more representatives to report to, service members may feel more comfortable reporting, as they would have more freedom to choose those to whom they would report this sensitive subject.

*Tom’s case summary.* Throughout Tom’s interview, he alluded to typical gender norm stereotypes that are present in the Army National Guard, which relates to the first research question. However, Tom provided some contradictory statements, perhaps due to fear of being insensitive to the topic, or perhaps he did not want his responses to be unfavorable. A prominent note from Tom’s interview is that he identified that he does not
associate one gender with leadership over the other; however, he did report that in combat units, a female commander could be viewed negatively, specifically based on gender. Regarding the second research question, reporting or non-reporting of MST, Tom reported that he perceived less reports being made, largely based on fear of stigma, and being ostracized by peers. Interestingly though, Tom reported that male enlisted service members do not report MST based on social stigma, while female non-reporting may be due to female enlisted service members feeling uncomfortable reporting to a male representative. However, Tom offered that perhaps there would be more reports being made if there were broader diversity in representatives for enlisted service members to whom service members could make the reports, tying in AR 600-20.

*Jalen’s Case Profile*

Jalen is a Private First Class in the Army National Guard. He has been serving in the Army National Guard for just over two years. Jalen reported in his questionnaire that he was in the age category of 21–25 years old and identified as a White male. Additionally, Jalen serves in the same unit as Tom. Jalen did not report that he has served on any deployments. Jalen currently works in a mechanical unit and has not held any other job title in the Army National Guard. Additionally, Jalen has not served on active duty. Jalen reported in his interview responses that he identifies as male and denied ever experiencing discrimination based on his gender. Jalen offered a unique perspective in this study as he has ever only experienced being in one unit in the Army National Guard. Additionally, Jalen was the youngest participant in this study, therefore offering a unique perspective.
Jalen’s experiences with gender norm stereotypes in the military. The first research question in this study was: What experiences have currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers had with gender norm stereotypes in the military? To learn more about Jalen’s experiences with gender norm stereotypes in the military, I examined his responses to the questionnaire and the interview.

Based on his questionnaire response, Jalen acknowledged the presence of gender norm stereotypes by reporting that he has experienced leadership intervene in situations where they perceived discrimination was happening even though it was not. “In a way, I have seen NCOs (non-commissioned officers) assume male soldiers were taking over tasks of female soldiers because the male soldiers believed them incapable. Not the truth of the situation, however, I could understand the reaction.” Jalen’s response was interesting because it demonstrated potentially two conflicting perspectives. Jalen’s questionnaire response revealed that leaders perceive that male soldiers were discriminating against female soldiers based on gender. However, Jalen’s experience was that he believed leaders were engaging in gender norm stereotyping due to a misperception of the situation.

I asked Jalen during the interview to elaborate on the gender norm stereotypes he has witnessed as a member of the Army National Guard. Jalen related gender norm stereotypes to physical aspects of male and female service members, reporting,

Some of the more common ones that I’ve seen are typically centered around the physical aspect of in particular, our jobs, where they tend to, at least some of the lower enlisted, will kind of put themselves forward. Males anyway, in a position of, I won’t say dominance, but they put themselves over the female soldiers in the sense that they are, they know more [and] can do more because they are males and they’re larger, I suppose.
In way, Jalen’s response to this interview question seemed to contradict his questionnaire response. In his questionnaire, Jalen responded that he perceived that male service members were not discriminatory towards female service members. However, his interview response indicated that male service members use their size and stature to assert themselves in positions of power or dominance over female service members. To elaborate more on this point, I asked Jalen if he has witnessed, in his job in a mechanical field, discrimination from either male or female service members because others saw them as less capable as mechanics. Jalen reported he had witnessed this discrimination in some instances, but he shared that he felt that was a nonissue:

I have only seen it a couple of times, and for the most part, I don’t believe that it’s true. Our job in particular, I feel we aren’t handling anything that’s absurdly heavy, and when we are we’re all working with equipment that can maintain that weight rather than us ourselves. So, I don’t particularly see a lot of it happen. Like I said, there’s only been like, maybe two instances since I’ve been at the unit that I’ve actually seen something like that happen.

Although uncommon by Jalen’s account, his response indicated that gender stereotypes of perceiving males to be able to do more heavy lifting than females occurs in some instances. This particular gender norm stereotype then leads to discrimination in some cases.

In the interview, I asked Jalen to identify which ways, if any, he felt leaders perceived men and women’s physical abilities to be different. Jalen provided that typically, males are going to be strong, based on biology, and will excel in physical competitions. He shared,

There are definitely physical differences between men and women. And as far as like, like, like physical competition, I tend to assume that men are going to pull out as the more dominant counterpart in that situation, depending on what it is that you’re doing. I feel like we all kind of excel at our own activities, but physically speaking, especially from what I’ve experienced anyway, up to this
point, I feel like men will typically come out on top as far as actual physical labor and competition goes.

Jalen’s assumption that male service members will excel in physical competition inherently sets the gender norm stereotype that men are stronger and more physically capable than females. Jalen’s interview continued as we discussed behavioral differences of between male and female service members. Jalen acknowledged that, when it comes to comparing the genders, male service members tend to be more brash, whereas female service members tend to be more reserved.

I guess men are more obtuse. We’re more prone to being crude in the way that we speak especially where we’re at it I find that we’re relatively open with the way that we talk, we don’t really, there really no holds barred, we just kind of say things. Whereas a lot of the females will be a little more reserved with the things that they say they think about the things that they’re going to say and do for the most part, whereas we do not we kind of just let it rip.

Jalen’s report identifies a component of MST that is critical, in that when males are being so open and crude in their conversations, there is room for misinterpretation of conversations and potential for sexual harassment. Jalen’s report also identified that females’ actions and behaviors are more thought out and calculated.

Regarding the way leadership perceives physical differences, Jalen offered a unique perspective. Jalen has only been in one unit during his time in the Army National Guard, therefore, he spoke to his experience with his current leadership. I asked Jalen if he thought leaders perceived male and female service members differently based on their physical ability, to which Jalen responded,

I don’t personally think that any of my leaders, personally, I don’t think that any of them really see that. I think that a lot of them do their best to actually prevent something like that from happening before it’s even happened or even like, may perceive one of us as coming off like we’re asserting our masculinity and come along to definitely put the kibosh on that. I definitely think that what they see is merit and not necessarily like your physical ability, it’s more or less your ability
to comprehend and utilize the information that we’ve been given more on the intellectual level and less on the physical level.

When leadership is involved that is supportive of a service member’s skills rather than focused on the ability of gender, leaders then set an example for how service members should be treated, regardless of gender or gender norm stereotypes. I continued the conversation with Jalen, questioning if leadership had demonstrated that they believed there were behavioral differences between male and female service members. Regarding behavior, Jalen provided more substantial differences in perceived behavioral differences from leaders, citing that female service members are often more open to learning than their male counterparts.

Yeah, I think the leaders definitely see a difference in how a lot of us conduct ourselves. I personally think that what they see is that a more openness and reception to learning and doing from the females, whereas a lot of the males will probably push off and be very casual with the things that they’re doing. Rather than take, take all the information they’re given in stride and utilize and use it and retain it.

In Jalen’s experience, he has witnessed female’s having a more open mind to learning in comparison to the males. Additionally, Jalen reported that potentially females in his unit have demonstrated more motivation to learn whereas male’s may maintain a more casual demeanor.

In alignment with his discussion of leadership, I asked Jalen what attributes he felt a good military leader has. Jalen reported several characteristics of effective leaders including trustworthiness, understanding, and being unbiased.

Patience, trustworthiness, the ability to be confident with your, with your subordinates, and let them know that you’re there for them in an unbiased manner. You’re not here to play favorites or choose one group over another for any real particular reason.
Based on this statement from Jalen, he believes that the job of a leader is to develop soldiers, regardless of gender, age, or experience level. Further, the job of a leader is to treat service members accordingly based on their actions, not based on their gender. Thus, the job of a leader is to treat service members equitably, not based on gender norm stereotypes. Of these attributes that Jalen identified, I asked him he characterized any of them as more feminine or masculine traits. Jalen did not identify either of them as feminine or masculine.

In a follow-up question, I asked Jalen if he believed enlisted service members perceived leaders the same based on the gender of the leader and if the confidence in male and female leaders was the same. Jalen attributed the treatment and perception of leaders based on the confidence that they carry and the way that they treat enlisted service members. He shared,

I also think a lot of that has to do with how one portrays that confidence. I think that it’s all and it ultimately all does come down to perception of the individual and the general like how you would carry yourself. No, I don’t think that it’s received the same way. But I also think a lot of that has to do with how one portrays that confidence. I think that it’s all, and it ultimately all does come down to perception of the individual and the general like how you would carry yourself.

Again, Jalen’s interview responses indicated that his experience in the Army National Guard has been less saturated with gender norm stereotypes and more focused on the ability of the individual. However, Jalen did allude to the idea that others may treat male and female leaders differently based on their actions and how each gender is expected to act, as it pertains to gender norm stereotypes.

Regarding division of labor, I asked Jalen during the interview if he felt there was a difference between the split in daily duties between men and women. Specially speaking to his current unit, Jalen did not feel there was a significant difference. Jalen
reported that due to the sheer number of males in the unit, there was no room for either gender to take specific roles in daily tasks. He explained,

That’s kind of hard to say, because as far as women and women in my unit go, we men outnumber them 20 to one, I think. There’s more of us than there are females actually present. So typically, most of the daily duties do fall to men. But that’s only due to the sheer number of us in comparison. As far as the actual duties go, I mean, it’s pretty unbiased. For the most part, if you’re in, if you’re in the squad that’s doing the trash for the day, you’re gonna do it.

Jalen indicated that he is in a male-dominated unit, however, also the workload was fairly even divided. However, when asked about occupational differences that male and females are typically recruited into, Jalen reported that he has typically seen female service members in administrative and support roles. He did not make comment as to what occupations male service members typically choose or are recruited into. Based on previous comments from Jalen’s interview, he has seen males in mechanical fields specifically.

In keeping with the topic of typical roles for males and females, I asked Jalen in the interview about his experiences with leaders and if there is one gender that he associates with positions of power over the other. Regarding gender, there is not one gender that Jalen automatically relates to being in a position of power, however, he stated that he associated leadership with experience and time in the military:

Whenever I think of leadership, I mean, I tend to kind of assume that they’re going to be old, but I don’t really jump to that’s a dude or that’s a chick. It’s usually just, this is our leader. They’re probably going to be somebody who’s well experienced in what they’re doing. And they’re probably going to be pretty strong. You’ll be able to be able to go to them and ask them questions. And there’s no real gender assignment to that.

Again, Jalen spoke specifically to his experiences with leadership in his unit. It is evident that in Jalen’s experiences, he has not associated gender to leadership, despite reporting
in the interview that he has experienced more males as leaders. Jalen did not provide evidence of gender norm stereotypes when it comes to ability or positions of power but indicated that gender norm stereotypes are present in the Army National Guard.

*Jalen’s experiences with reporting vs. non-reporting of military sexual trauma.*

The second research question was: How do gender norm stereotypes affect currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers’ decisions to report or not report military sexual trauma? To learn more about Jalen’s experiences with reporting versus non-reporting of MST, I examined his responses to the questionnaire and the interview. I also examined Jalen’s responses in how they related to AR 600-20.

In the interview, I engaged Jalen in a discussion regarding AR 600-20. Although Jalen has served two years in the Army National Guard, he was unfamiliar with the policy. Despite the requirement per AR 600-20 policy that there will be annual training about MST prevention, Jalen was unfamiliar with the specifics, and reported only knowing what the PowerPoint-driven, annual trainings had taught him. I asked Jalen his thoughts surrounding the culture of the Army National Guard and if he felt the endorsement of gender norm stereotypes created a cultured that unintentionally created space for incidents of MST to occur. Jalen reported that the culture of the Army National Guard could create an environment where incidents of MST are more likely to occur.

Jalen shared,

I can definitely see that they would, they would promote more of a more of a conscious opportunity for some of the more brazen males to abuse, the general mass of men and male counterparts to maybe harass or sexually assault their female counterparts. Due to the fact that there are more, there are more of them. And the environment that they’re in, is relatively loose, for the most part. When it comes to the individual in their free time. And the especially when it comes to like the support system and the squad system, a lot of the people come together,
and they may believe that they’re closer than they actually are. Or they were they might use it to manipulate people and bring them in to a situation they’re uncomfortable with.

Due to the nature of the Army National Guard where service members only make a commitment to serve one weekend a month and attend a two-week training event annually, many service members’ identities are still largely tied to their civilian career and personal life.

Additionally, I asked Jalen if the presence of gender norm stereotypes in the Army National Guard would affect his personal decision to report or not report an incident of MST. Jalen reported that it would not, as he does not believe that a person should be perceived differently for reporting MST.

It wouldn’t, I would definitely just do it. As far as anything like that goes I just see it as people doing stupid things. And not necessarily like any sort of real assignment to a stereotype. I wouldn’t, me personally, anyway, I wouldn’t take on, especially if it was somebody I know, the bro culture. I wouldn’t be like, ‘Oh, that’s my friend, I can’t go on, I can’t go snitch on my friend.’ It would be like, ‘Now this guy’s doing something that’s obviously not right and should be reported.’

I don’t believe that you’re weak for reporting something like that. I believe it’s more of a matter of having integrity and knowing that something that you just witnessed was indeed wrong. And it’s really just your duty to do it. Because you’re not there to abuse each other, you’re there to work together and to do your job and complete your mission.

When it comes to reporting MST, Jalen does not believe that gender norm stereotyping would affect his decision to report MST. Jalen instead endorses a strong sense of duty in protecting not only himself, but those around him as well. However, given Jalen’s previous statement regarding the blurred lines in of friendship and duty, Jalen expressed that perhaps others feel uncomfortable reporting MST because it is against someone who is their friend outside of the Army National Guard.
In the finally question of Jalen’s interview, I asked him why he felt that Army National Guard service members choose to or to not report incidents of MST. Jalen reported,

I think it’s fear of some sort of reproach or punishment coming from their command team or their peers, if they were to do something like that. Because I mean, ultimately, they are reporting somebody that that they are at least acquainted with in some way. So they’re probably looking at it from the perspective of man, I’m going to screw this person over, I’m gonna probably destroy their career if I do this, and everyone else is going to look at me as some sort of snitch I guess, just because you went and did something that you thought was right, because you saw something that was clearly wrong or experienced something that was clearly wrong

In Jalen’s experience, the choice to or to not report MST is not necessarily tied to gender norm stereotyping, but it is tied more to a person’s fear of consequences of what may happen to them or the person they are making the report about. However, Jalen’s experience does speak to the social stigma and fear of reporting because of the potential for the reporter to be ostracized by peers. To have Jalen elaborate more on this point, I asked him why he felt female service members specifically might choose not to report MST. Jalen responded,

This is actually something that I’ve thought about a little bit because I know a few people who have had something similar like this to them or happened to them. And I think a lot, it comes down to a fear of their chain of command, because it is somebody that they know, somebody that maybe their chain of command was on the friendlier side with. I also think that it is a fear of general perception. Somebody might think that they’re, or a lot of somebodies might think that they are a liar, and that they’re going to take the side of the person who committed the act, and not the person recording the act.

Interestingly, an idea that had not been raised by other participants emerged in this statement. Jalen indicated that victim blaming may be a contributing factor as to why females choose not to report. Additionally, Jalen provided, again, the dynamic of friendship in the Army National Guard. However, Jalen further explained that there may
be an unwanted dynamic between enlisted service members and their leadership. Jalen reported that due to the non-supportive culture of the Army National Guard, service members have learned what they can get away with, thus evading consequences when they are a perpetrator of MST. Per AR 600-20, the reporter’s chain of command is to investigate the incident of MST, however, if the leadership is committing the act, animosity could be created and lead to a non-report.

*Jalen’s case summary.* Related to the first research question, Jalen’s questionnaire and interview acknowledged that gender norm stereotypes are present in the Army National Guard, which relates to the first research question. However, in Jalen elaborating on his responses, he reported that the presence of gender norm stereotypes in a unit are largely based on the equitable treatment of enlisted service members by leadership. Jalen often discussed that the leadership sets the tone for the rest of the unit. Additionally, Jalen did not report that gender norm stereotypes are solely responsible for non-reporting of MST. Regarding the second research question about the decision to report or not report MST, Jalen reported that fear of retribution or fear of victim blaming are far more evident than fear of defying or confirming gender norm stereotypes.

*Cross-Case Analysis*

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions of gender norm stereotypes and how these perceptions affect an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of MST through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). To explore the perceptions that currently-serving enlisted service members have regarding MST, I crafted two research questions that guided this study:
1. What experiences have currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers had with gender norm stereotypes in the military?

2. How do gender norm stereotypes affect currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers’ decisions to report or not report military sexual trauma?

There were themes identified for each research question. Table 5 highlights how theme was evident in each case.

Table 5

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<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Males do the heavy lifting/women serve in administrative roles</th>
<th>Differing emotional responses from males and females</th>
<th>Culture of the Army National Guard allowing space for MST</th>
<th>Fear of retribution as a deterrent to reporting MST</th>
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<td>Nina</td>
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**Themes Related to the First Research Question**

In this section, I describe the study themes related to the first research question, which I crafted to explore participants’ experiences with gender normal stereotypes in the Army National Guard. In some form, each service member who served as a case in study acknowledged the presence of gender norm stereotypes in the Army National Guard. The cross-case analysis revealed two themes related to the first research question. First, the stereotype exists that male service members were identified to serve in roles that were more physical, while females were identified to serve in more technical roles. Second, the service members in this study indicated that there are differing emotional responses based on gender.
Males do the heavy lifting: females serve in administrative roles. The first theme is that the stereotype exists that male service members were identified to serve in roles that were more physical, while females were identified to serve in more technical roles. Nina, Jack, and Jalen reported that they had experienced or witnessed this specific stereotype in the Army National Guard. Tom acknowledged this stereotype by explaining that because males have a biological, larger build than females, they are often left to do the heavy lifting. In the same context, Nina and Jack shared a commonality that due to this gender norm stereotype, when it comes to the split of daily duties, although evenly split in the number of tasks to accomplish, females are often asked to complete detail oriented, administrative tasks whereas men are asked to do more heavy lifting. Although a female may be just as capable of completing the physical tasks, there is an endorsement of the gender norm stereotype that automatically the male is stronger and is more capable than the female of completing that task. However, in comparing responses from Tom and Jalen, they reported the opposite. Tom and Jalen reported that they felt, others may assign tasks based on a service member’s ability to complete the task, rather than on the gender of the individual. Additionally, Nina, Jack, Tom, and Jalen all reported that traditionally, they have witnessed females serve primarily in administrative roles, even when assigned to a combat unit, females are in supply, administration, and support roles.

Differing experiencing with discrimination based on gender and differing displays of emotion. The second theme is that service members had differing experiences with discrimination while serving in the Army National Guard, based on gender and differing displays of emotion. On the questionnaire, I asked Nina, Jack, Tom, and Jalen about their identified gender and their experience with discrimination based on their gender. Jack,
Tom, and Jalen reported that they are biologically males and identify as male, and all reported that they have never experienced discrimination based on their gender while serving in the Army National Guard. However, Nina identified that she is biologically female and identified as female. Nina, the only female participant in this study, reported that she indeed has experienced discrimination based on her gender while serving in the Army National Guard.

Nina reported that working in a mechanical field, she has often been told she is incapable of doing her job because she is a female or has been explicitly excluded from tasks due to her gender. Jack reported that although unintentional, he has selected male service members over female service members based on gender stereotypes, potentially leading to perceived discrimination. In comparison, Tom and Jalen, who served in the same unit in the Army National Guard and a unit similar to Nina’s, reported that they have never perceived female service members being discriminated against in their unit. Interestingly, all four participants revealed that they attribute discrimination largely to their leadership and the equitable or non-equitable treatment of service members. Additionally, all four participants indicated that when their leadership acts in a non-discriminatory manner, the rest of the unit tends to follow suit.

In discussing the perceived behavioral differences in male and female service members, Jack, Tom, and Jalen reported that in comparing the genders, the stereotypes that they have witnessed regarding behavior is that males are risk takers, more impulsive decision makers, and more open to accepting a high-risk high reward type of consequence. Additionally, Jack and Jalen described that when males act brashly or even when a male’s impulsive behavior leads to a physical altercation, it is viewed as a “boys
will be boys” situation and often acceptable. Conversely, Jack, Tom, and Jalen described females as more intentional in their behavior and more cautious in their decision-making process. Nina described males in a similar fashion of being more impulsive. However, with regard to female service members, Nina reported that their behaviors are seen as more “air-headed” or “ditzy.” Nina reported that some often see females as a pushover, but when they stick up for themselves, they are seen as “bitchy” or “mean.” Additionally, Nina reported that when males act in similar ways, their behavior is considered to be normal. Jack also identified that when a females act in a way that is perceived to be out of the norm, there is often a higher reaction rate by others to intervene. Jack provided the example of physical altercations, and that when males engage in a fight, there is little to no reaction by bystanders. However, if a female is engaged in a fight, this situation is abnormal or defies gender norm stereotypes, there for there is an elevated level of intervention from bystanders.

Themes Related to the Second Research Question

In this section, I describe the study themes related to the second research question, which I crafted to explore decisions on reporting and non-reporting of MST in the Army National Guard. I identified two themes related to the second research question. The first theme is that the participants believe there is a non-supportive environment in the Army National Guard that potentially creates space for incidents of MST. The second theme was that there is a fear of retribution as a deterrent to reporting MST.

Non-supportive environment in the Army National Guard. The first theme is that the participants believe there is a non-supportive environment in the Army National Guard that potentially creates space for incidents of MST. Each participant presented a
unique perspective regarding the culture of the Army National Guard. Nina and Jalen offered that due to gender norm stereotypes, the Army National Guard has unintentionally created a culture that creates space for incidents of MST. Nina, Jack, and Jalen attributed this culture to the Army National Guard being a male-dominated field and the endorsement of masculine gender norm stereotypes. Jack and Jalen both attributed this culture to the “boys will be boys” mentality and reported that regardless of the adherence to AR 600-20, MST is not entirely preventable. Additionally, Jack reported that in a deployment situation, female service members are placed in situations where they have no other female support, therefore, MST is happening as a result. Similarly, Jalen reported that due to the brazen nature of males in the Army National Guard, MST is not entirely preventable, again reporting the “boys will be boys” mentality. However, Tom reported that rather than the culture creating space for incidents of MST, the Army National Guard presents as a culture that makes reporting MST difficult. Tom evidenced this claim by providing an example of victims of MST potentially being intimidated by the reporting structure or by who they need to report to.

Fear of retribution. The second theme is that there is a fear of retribution amongst service members for reporting MST. Nina, Jack, Tom and Jalen indicated that when it comes to enlisted service members choosing to or to not report MST, most enlisted service members choose not to report. Nina, Jack, and Jalen attributed non-reporting to be either fear of retribution and negative career implications, or fear of retribution from peers, such as social stigma and being ostracized from peers. Additionally, Tom reported that he did not feel retribution or ostracization led enlisted service members to not report MST. Tom felt that there is a lack of representation for
enlisted service members to report incidents of MST to, therefore, enlisted service
members may feel intimidated, and fear making a report. Regardless of the differences in
reason for not reporting, the four service members in this study agreed that, by far, more
enlisted service members are choosing not to report, than enlisted service members are
choosing to report incidents of MST.

Themes Related to Theoretical Framework: Social Role Theory

Social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) served as the theoretical framework for
this study. Social role theory emphasizes the perceived differences between men and
women based on biological and societal differences, particularly in the division of labor
and gender role status. Social role theory further emphasizes the influence that
socialization has on learning and behavior (Eagly & Wood, 2012). I identified two
themes related to social role theory in this study. The first theme is that the stereotype
exists that male service members were identified to serve in roles that were more
physical, while females were identified to serve in more technical roles. The second
theme is that there is an inherent gender role status, as there are more males in positions
of power than there are females. I addressed the perceived physical and behavioral
differences between male and females in a previous section of the cross-case analysis. As
such, I detail the second theme in the following section.

Gender role status. The second theme related to the second research question is
that there is an inherent gender role status, as there are more males in positions of power
than there are females. Each participant discussed their experience with leadership and
their perceptions of gender and positions of power. Nina, Jack, and Jalen indicated that
they had experienced more males in position of power. Additionally, Nina and Jack both
indicated that when they think of leadership, they tend to automatically associate males with a higher status of leadership, or as holding those positions of power. Conversely, Tom explained that he has experienced a similar split of male and female leadership and that he did not associate one gender over the other with holding a higher status or more positions of power. However, Tom reported that when it comes to leadership and gender, female leadership is not perceived as positively as male leadership. For example, a male leader could be perceived the same in a support company or a combat company, solely based on gender. However, a female leader could be perceived negatively in a combat company, but positively in a support company, again, solely based on gender. Nina offered perspective to the idea of gender status hierarchy, being the only female participant and the only participant to report that she had been discriminated against based on gender. Further, Jack offered that perhaps there is a lesser number of females in leadership solely because the Army is a male-dominated field. However, there was consensus that, to some degree, males generally appear to hold a higher status in the Army National Guard than females.

Summary of Cross-Case Analysis

I identified five themes related to the research questions and the theoretical framework in this study. First, male service members were identified to serve in roles that were more physical, while females were identified to serve in more technical roles. Second, service members had differing experiences with discrimination while serving in the Army National Guard, based on gender and differing displays of emotion. Third, participants believe that a non-supportive environment in the Army National Guard potentially creates space for incidents of MST. Fourth, there is a fear of retribution
amongst service members for reporting MST. Fifth and finally, there is an inherent
gender role status, as there are more males in positions of power than there are females.
The themes that emerged connected gender norm stereotypes to the behaviors and the
potential consequences of the presence of gender norm stereotypes and also highlighted
that enlisted service members are not reporting MST along with participants’ perceptions
about why enlisted service members are not reporting MST.

**Discussion**

There were five key findings that emerged from cross-case analysis. I describe
each finding in the following sections. I also connect each theme to related literature.

*Finding 1: Male Service Members Tend to Serve in Roles that are more Physical, While Females Serve in more Technical Roles*

All participants in this study expressed how, in their experiences, they identify
that males tend to serve in positions such as infantry, field artillery, or other combat
MOSs that require a high level of physical ability. Additionally, all participants in this
study identified that they have observed that females tend to serve in technical roles such
as supply, cooks, or another type of administrative role. Social role theory (Eagly &
Wood, 2012) suggests that division of labor is based upon present gender norm
stereotypes that have been constructed through years of learning and interacting in
society. Eagly and Wood (2012) explained that physical and behavioral differences
between men and women, suggest that men are physically stronger and more capable of
completing tasks that require more strenuous labor, while women are frailer and are more
capable of intellectual tasks. Traditionally, women have been seen in secretarial roles or
nurturing roles, while males have been traditionally associated with physical roles such as
factory work or mechanical fields (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Miner et al., 2018; Riegle-Crumb & Morton, 2017). In this study, Nina reported that, as a female in a mechanical field, she has often been told that she should not be able to do her job because she is a female. Additionally, Nina, Jack, and Jalen all reported that males are expected to do the physical roles, such as mechanical work. Schmader et al. (2008) reported that stereotype threat can impair an individual’s perception of being able to complete a task and the longer that a person is exposed to a stereotype, the more they believe that they are incapable of completing that task. Thus, stereotyping could be the reason that women are more intrigued by administrative roles and shy away from roles that are more physically demanding.

All participants identified that physically, biologically, men are stronger than women. Eagly and Wood (2012) reported that this biological difference is a key in the perception of gender norm stereotype endorsement and acceptance. Jack reported in his interview that as a leader, he often chooses males to complete physical tasks and females to complete administrative tasks. Although Jack reported this decision-making process to be unconscious, it aligned with the stereotype that males are strong and more physical, and females are meant to serve in administrative roles.

**Finding 2: Service Members had Differing Experiences with Discrimination While Serving in the Army National Guard, Based on Gender and Differing Displays of Emotion**

While none of the male participants shared that they had experienced discrimination based on gender, Nina, the only female participant in the study, reported that in most every aspect of her career, she has been rejected from projects, excluded from teams, and discriminated against based purely on her gender. Nina attributed much
of this discrimination to the Army National Guard being male-dominated, much like the field of STEM, and that being in a mechanical job, there are not many females overall. Schaefer et al. (2021) reported that in the workplace, men and women are still often viewed as fundamentally different, thus leading to animosity. Schaefer et al. (2021) also reported that internalized gender norm stereotypes, although potentially unconscious, cause peers and leaders to view the abilities of men and women differently, based on gender expectations and standards that are held.

Nina reported in depth, that in her current unit, she serves in a mechanical field and has been held to different standards than her male peers. Specifically, Nina reported being reprimanded for engaging in the same activities as her male counterparts, and even reported being reprimanded when another male soldier harassed her. Nina reported that when she has been rated by male leadership, she often scores lower than her male peers, regardless that the quality of work she is producing is higher than that of the males. Nina attributed this perception to males in her organization hold a stereotype that females are weaker than males and that they are not able to do as much. Interestingly, Tom and Jalen both serve in the same unit, in a similar mechanical field, but did not report that they experienced discrimination based on gender. Additionally, Jack serves in a leadership role, as a male, and did not report discrimination based on gender.

In alignment with Schaefer et al. (2021), Nina has experienced workplace discrimination due to preexisting gender norm stereotypes. Additionally, when women serve in counterstereotypes roles, women’s roles and statuses can become threatening to males, therefore creating competition and unconscious discrimination against females in roles where they are not typically considered (Kray et al., 2017; Schaefer et al., 2021). In
this case, Nina shared that she serves in a role that is counterstereotypes, thus creating competition between herself and her male peers. Nina identified that being in a male-dominated field has increased barriers for her to be successful and that it has led to increased discrimination of her and other women who she works with. Nina’s experiences are similar to women who have worked in male-dominated fields who also reported that barriers to success are evident and that, often, they are treated differently based on gender in the workplace (Richman et al., 2011). Further, females typically are stereotyped as being emotional, which increases likelihood of discrimination based on ability to complete a task due to emotion (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly & Wood, 2012; Richman et al., 2011).

Regarding differing displays of emotion, Jack, Tom, and Jalen reported that they viewed men to be risk takers and to be willing to accept a higher level of risk as compared to their female counterparts. Per Jack, Tom, and Jalen’s interviews, they identified women as being more calculated and detail-oriented. Jack reported that men are quicker to anger, but women tend to display their emotions more openly. Nina reported that men are expected to be strong and not discuss their emotions. Nina related her experience with perceptions of female emotion, stating that women are typically seen as air-headed or “ditzy,” which is seen as a detriment to the mission. Regarding the effect that these differing displays of emotion have, women in male-dominated fields are reported to be too emotional, thus creating animosity in the workplace (Miner et al., 2018). This belief was also present in Nina’s interview and questionnaire responses.
Finding 3: A Non-supportive Environment in the Army National Guard Potentially Creates Space for Incidents of MST

Each participant reported that they believed the Army National Guard has a culture that is not supportive of service members, which has, in turn, potentially creates space for increased rates of MST. Having a non-supportive environment creates distrust and deters service members from reporting MST (Dardis et al., 2018; Mengeling et al., 2014; Sadler et al., 2021; Street, 2008). Jalen reported that due to the non-supportive culture of the Army National Guard, service members have learned what they can get away with, thus evading consequences when they are a perpetrator of MST. Additionally, Nina reported that due to gender norm stereotype of women being perceived as weaker, they are easily taken advantage. Jack and Tom both reported that there is not necessarily a culture that allows for more MST, but a culture in which potentially AR 600-20 is not being followed, therefore there is no support in reporting, creating concerns about the effectiveness of the reporting structures. Similarly, Weitz (2015) explained that a main barrier that service members face in reporting MST lies heavily in the belief that cases are handled inappropriately and due to the lack of trust that service members have in the reporting structures. In this study, Tom and Nina reported that they have experienced a disproportionate number of male representatives that male and female service members are expected to report to. Both Tom and Nina identified the disproportion of representatives may add to the culture of the Army National Guard being unsupportive and reports not being made. Thus, as Jalen reported, perpetrators know what they can or cannot get away with in terms of MST and are able to exploit the system, given that the culture of the Army National Guard has traditionally been unsupportive.
Finding 4: There is a Fear of Retribution Amongst Service Members for Reporting MST

Many service members have reported barriers to reporting MST, such as fear of the case being mishandled and lack of awareness of reporting structures (Dardis et al., 2018; Mengeling et al., 2014; Sadler et al., 2021; Street, 2008). The service members in this study also reported barriers to reporting MST. Nina, Jack, and Jalen reported fear of retribution as a main barrier to reporting MST. Jack reported that he did not feel that he would report an incident of MST if he were the victim because of fear of retribution in the form of social ostracization and fear of differing treatment from his leadership. Jalen reported that although he would report MST if he were the victim, he understands that many may not report for fear of not being believed, or for fear of mishandling the case. Although service members report that they are aware of the importance of reporting, as found in similar studies, participants reported barriers to be that of fear of reprisal and fear that the reporting service member will not be taken seriously (Dardis et al., 2018; Mengeling et al., 2014; Sadler et al., 2021; Street, 2008). Nina identified a barrier to reporting being fear of mishandling the case and fear of retaliation from leadership. Additionally, Nina explained that she fears “good ol’ boys club” where leadership is potentially part of the problem of MST rather than providing solution. Service members who were participants in a study conducted by Weitz (2015) also explained their lack of trust in leadership, reporting that there is often bias in handling situations based on the relationship leadership has with the perpetrator. Conversely, Tom reported that he felt enlisted service members are not reporting MST because there is a lack of diversity amongst representative whom service members are supposed to report to. Interestingly, Tom provided a potential solution in opening the avenues for reporting, so that service
members can report to someone who they feel comfortable with, and who they know will not mishandle their case or retaliate in any way.

**Finding 5: There is an Inherent Gender Role Status Tied to Males in the Army National Guard**

Gender status is based on socially constructed gender stereotypes. Gender status in the military is associated with who holds leadership, and specifically which gender is associated with leadership or status. Nina, Jack, and Jalen identified that they have experienced more male leadership than female leadership. Nina specifically stated that she has had three female leaders in her eight years in the Army National Guard.

Additionally, Nina and Jack reported that they both automatically assume that their leadership is going to be male. Jack attributed this assumption to the Army being a male-dominated field, while Nina did not have an explanation for the lack of female leadership. According to social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012), males would have a higher gender status, given the sheer number of leadership positions that they hold. Based on the discrimination against female service members that Nina reported previously, it is possible that females are not selected for leadership based on discrimination and endorsement of sexist gender norm stereotypes. Schaefer et al. (2021) linked hostile sexism in males with males rating their female counterparts lower in physical fitness and military demeanor, presenting as taking charge and having an authoritative presence.

Further, sexist belief systems led to the automatic activation of stereotype endorsement and connected hostile sexism to lower evaluation scores of women’s abilities, appropriateness, and ability to serve in the military (Schaefer et al., 2021). Based on Schaefer et al.’s (2021) study findings and the endorsement of gender norm stereotypes throughout cross-case analysis, it is possible that gender norm stereotypes and implicit
bias are responsible for lack of female representation in leadership, thus leading to a higher gender status for males.

Implications and Recommendations

This study’s findings lead to two implications for stakeholders’ consideration in addressing incidents of MST in the Army National Guard. The implications are:

1. Army National Guard leaders need to create an environment that is more supportive of enlisted service members who need to report MST.

2. Army National Guard enlisted service members need to be aware of the endorsement of masculine gender norm stereotypes and how female service members may be implicitly viewed to have lower gender status.

In following section, I provide additional details about the implications and recommendations for each stakeholder group.

Army National Guard Leaders: Supporting Enlisted Service Members Reporting MST

Army National Guard leaders have a duty to create an environment that is more supportive of enlisted service members who need to report MST. Further, leaders have a responsibility to be reflective of prevention efforts and take into consideration the effectiveness of these prevention efforts. In each case in this study, it was evident that the service members believed the Army National Guard lacks a supportive reporting structure. The participants provided examples of fear of repercussion through ostracization from peer groups and stigma surrounding reporting. Additionally, the participants provided examples of a non-supportive culture by discussion of victim blaming and fear that a case will not be handled appropriately or not addressed at all. The examples provided align with aspects from current literature, indicating that service members are not reporting MST due to perceived barriers. The barriers included from the
literature included lack of support from leadership, endorsement of gender norm stereotypes, fear of repercussions for reporting, shame or guilt, and fear that a report would not be handled appropriately or taken seriously (Dardis et al., 2018; Sadler et al., 2021; Weitz, 2015). Given the barriers that enlisted service members experience, there is a lack of reporting, thus, a more supportive environment is pivotal in encouraging service members to report when an incident of MST occurs.

I recommend that Army National Guard leadership makes culture change a priority, specifically regarding reporting MST. As demonstrated by the participants in this study, distrust in the reporting structure and fear of adverse consequences from leadership and peers largely influence an enlisted service member’s decision to report or not report MST. Per AR 600-20, a service member can report an incident of MST to a designated representative, who then involves the service member’s leadership. However, the consensus from the participants and the literature is that service members are uncomfortable with their leadership being involved due to fear of mishandling of the case or negative career impacts (Dardis et al., 2018; Sadler et al., 2021; Weitz, 2015). In light of these reports, I recommend the Army National Guard develop a reporting system that does not directly include the service member’s chain of command. Further, I suggest that there is a more diverse pool of representatives to report to, including males and females. This would allow service members to select a reporting representative who they feel comfortable with. Perhaps reporting through a system or structure that was not affiliated with the Army National Guard would be more appropriate to handle cases, carry out investigation, and recommend consequences. By providing a non-affiliated reporting resource, more enlisted service members may be inclined to report incidents of MST as a
service members chain of command would not be directly involved. Additionally, by outsourcing the reporting entity, an investigation could be performed more confidentially, leading to an increased sense of trust that cases are appropriately handled. Outsourcing the reporting entity could provide clearer direction on who to report to, providing direct contact information for the reporting entity, rather than someone who is in the unit and is familiar with individuals on a personal level. By creating these changes, potentially enlisted service members may be more inclined to report incidents of MST. This change of reporting is critical because increased reporting could lead to changes in policy related to sexual assault and sexual harassment, thus better serving enlisted service members.

Army National Guard Enlisted Service Members: Creating an Inclusive Culture for Female Service Members

The Army National Guard is a male-dominated field, and Army National Guard enlisted service members need to be aware of the endorsement of masculine gender norm stereotypes and how female service members may be implicitly viewed to have lower gender status. Each participant in this study discussed that the Army National Guard is a male-dominated field. Each participant also reported having more experience with males in positions of power than females and the report that women tend to be excluded from fields that are considered masculine in the Army National Guard. Each participant reported that, in terms of MOSs, females are almost always recruited into administrative roles based on gender and the gender norm stereotype that women are not physically as capable to serve in combat MOSs as males. Interestingly, the only participant to report victim blaming as a substantial issue in the culture of the Army National Guard was Nina, the only female participant. Each of these reports demonstrates the endorsement of masculine gender norm stereotypes in the Army National Guard, leading to a non-
inclusive environment for female service members. When the environment is non-inclusive, females are potentially seen as less than their male counterparts, thus, potentially leading to increased incidents of MST and non-reporting. Regardless, victim blaming behavior demonstrates lack of inclusivity in the Army National Guard. Victim blaming not only provides evidence towards discrimination towards female service members, but towards males who defy gender norm stereotypes and present with more feminine qualities as well (DeCou et al., 2017).

In the Army National Guard being a male-dominated field, there are certain gender norm stereotypes that are endorsed. The participants in this study reported that women are viewed to be less physically capable than men, regardless of if the female upholds their physical fitness test standards or not (Schaefer et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2019). Perceived level of fitness, not actually fitness ability, is correlated by many, to fitness for duty and leadership ability (Schaefer et al., 2021). As evidenced by the participants in this study, this perception may hold true in the lack of female leadership across the board. However, this perception could also be attributed to the Army National Guard being a male-dominated field, thus female leadership is rare due to the lack of number of females currently serving. Thus, the endorsement of victim blaming and gender norm stereotypes leads to discriminatory behavior in the Army National Guard.

I recommend further research of female perceptions of discrimination and training regarding implicit bias for all Army National Guard Members. Although Nina was able to provide insight into the female experiences in the Army National Guard, her response is just one piece of the puzzle. Through further experiencing gender norm stereotypes, specifically gender status, female service members can provide information regarding the
discrimination that females in the military continue to face. Many female service members feel vulnerable in male-dominated fields, thus feel that they are taken advantage of in the workplace, to include being taken advantage of in the form of MST (DeCou et al., 2017; Schaefer et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2019). Per Nina, she reported MST and experienced differing treatment. As such, Nina felt blamed for the situation that occurred. Many women in male-dominated fields feel that they are treated differently following reporting an incident of sexual assault or sexual harassment and that others minimized the situation and blamed the victim for the situation (Decou et al., 2017; Voller et al., 2015). Further research of how female service members experience discrimination and how female service members perceive a lack of inclusivity could help the Army National Guard create an environment that is more inviting for female service members. Implicit bias training for Amy National Guard members could bring awareness of unconscious bias that service members hold. Through raising awareness of bias, service members can make individual changes that would create a more inclusive environment. A more inclusive environment means increased comfortability in reporting MST by enlisted service members.

**Summary and Conclusion**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions of gender norm stereotypes and how these perceptions affect an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of MST through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Previous research on gender roles and reporting MST focused on female service member’s perspective only, while failing to include male perspectives (Boyce & Herd, 2003; Inesi & Cable, 2015;
Smith et al., 2019). The literature review provided background and need, reporting that service members are not reporting MST due to multiple factors including lack of trust in leadership, fear of reprisal and stigma, and lack of trust in the reporting system (Dardis et al., 2018; Mengeling et al., 2014; Street, 2008). Additionally, previous research found that both male and female service members are experiencing gender norm stereotyping in the military leading to non-reporting of MST (Bell et al., 2014; Hoyt et al., 2012; Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Schaefer et al., 2021). This study is significant because of the historically high number of MST cases in the military (Burgess et al., 2016; Mengeling et al., 2014; Rosellini et al., 2017).

I selected a multiple case study approach for the methodology for this study. I explored the experiences of male and female Army National Guard service members’ perspectives of incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Further, this study allowed enlisted service members to share their perceptions of how gender norm stereotypes influence an enlisted service member’s decision to or to not report sexual assault. The key findings of this study included, first, male service members were identified to serve in roles that were more physical, while females were identified to serve in more technical roles, and second, service members had differing experiences with discrimination while serving in the Army National Guard, based on gender and differing displays of emotion, (3) participants believe that a non-supportive environment in the Army National Guard potentially creates space for incidents of MST, (4) there is a fear of retribution amongst service members for reporting MST, and (5) there is an inherent gender role status, as there are
more males in positions of power than there are females. These findings led to
implications for two groups of stakeholders.

I identified two groups of stakeholders for this study, Army National Guard
leaders and Army National Guard enlisted service members. I also identified implications
for each stakeholder group. First, Army National Guard leaders need to create an
environment that is more supportive of service members reporting MST. Second, Army
National Guard enlisted service members need to become aware of bias and how
endorsement of gender norm stereotypes creates a gender status hierarchy in the Army
National Guard. If each stakeholder group addresses these implications, service members
may feel more comfortable in reporting MST.
CHAPTER FOUR

Executive Summary and Distribution of Findings

Executive Summary

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions of gender norm stereotypes and how these perceptions affect an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of military sexual trauma (MST) through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). To explore enlisted service member experiences, I utilized two research questions:

1. What experiences have currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers had with gender norm stereotypes in the military?

2. What perceptions do currently-serving Army National Guard soldiers’ have about how gender norm stereotypes affect decisions to report or not report military sexual trauma?

The United States Army continues to see rates of MST that are higher than sexual trauma rates among the general public, and these rates continue to climb (Eliezer et al., 2020; Mengeling et al., 2014; Mondragon et al., 2015).

In a 2016 study of 60 service members, 18% of males reported experiencing MST in their career and 81% of female participants reported experiencing MST at some point in their career (Burgess et al., 2016). Additionally, Rosellini et al. (2017) found an average of 93 new cases of MST occurring per month. Street (2008) reported that, specifically for reserve component service members, 60% of females and 27% of males reported experiencing MST. Although reported rates are already high, Eliezer et al.
(2020) speculated that rates of MST are underestimated as service members reported fear of reporting and multiple barriers to reporting.

Although rates of MST continue to be an issue, many service members report barriers to reporting that incidents occurred. Reasons that service members choose not to report include as fear of negative career implications, personal perceived consequences, and fear of retaliation from perpetrators (Mengeling et al., 2014). Additionally, gender norm stereotypes hinder reporting as males feel emasculated by a hyper masculine culture and females report being perceived as weak as a gender norm stereotype, thus deterring female service members from reporting MST (Burgess et al., 2016; Dardis et al., 2018; Sadler et al., 2021). Regardless of the reason for male or female service members choosing not to report MST, gender norm stereotypes appear to be at the forefront.

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The research design for this study was a multiple case study. I selected a multiple case approach to learn more about enlisted service members’ experiences with gender norm stereotyping and perceptions of MST. I chose this design to understand perceptions of MST from currently-serving, enlisted service members in the Army National Guard using a questionnaire, a semi-structured interviews, and AR 600-20 as an artifact. I chose a qualitative approach to contribute to existing scholarship in this field and incite change to the way allegations of MST are handed in the Army National Guard. As qualitative research aims to analyze issues as whole pictures (Creswell & Poth, 2018), a qualitative approach was the best fit for this study.

Data collection started with a pilot study, in which a peer who met inclusion criteria participated in the questionnaire and interview to ensure no complications arose
with the data collection process. Next, I sent a questionnaire via email to an Army National Guard battalion in the mid-western United States. The battalion then sent the questionnaire to the Company Commanders for distribution to their enlisted service members. Following response to the questionnaire, I selected four participants to serve as cases using inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria for this study was that participants had to be currently serving in the Army National Guard, participants had to be an enlisted service member, not to exceed the rank of Staff Sergeant, and participants must have had at least one year in service. Exclusion criteria included former enlisted service members who were not actively serving in the Army National Guard, those who had less than one year of service, and those who were senior non-commissioned officers with a rank of E7 or above, or service members who were officers. The four selected service members participated in semi-structured interviews to collect first-hand account of enlisted service members’ experiences with MST in the Army National Guard. I also used AR 600-20 to explore understand of current are policy and to explore how the handling of current situations align with that policy.

Social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) served as the theoretical framework for this study. Social role theory emphasizes the perceived differences in males and females as constructed by society (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Additionally, social role theory relates to the influence that gender norm stereotypes and socialization have on learning and behavior (Eagly & Wood, 2012). To analyze the data in this study, I developed a priori codes based on social role theory. The a priori codes were division of labor, gender stereotypes, differences in perceived ability, gender status, and gender norms. Lastly, social role theory influenced the construction of the interview protocol. AR 600-2
influenced data analysis but comparing the formal Army policy to the reports from the participants and the concepts outlined in social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). In the follow section, I share a summary of my study findings.

Summary of Key Findings

There were five key findings that emerged following cross-case analysis:

1. Male service members were identified to serve in roles that were more physical, while females were identified to serve in more technical roles.

2. Service members had differing experiences with discrimination while serving in the Army National Guard, based on gender and differing displays of emotion.

3. Participants believe that a non-supportive environment in the Army National Guard potentially creates space for incidents of MST.

4. There is a fear of retribution amongst service members for reporting MST.

5. There is an inherent gender role status, as there are more males in positions of power than there are females.

Regarding the first finding, my analysis of each case revealed that participants had primarily experienced the stereotype male service members in roles that required more physical strength and females in roles that were more administrative, such as supply.

Within this finding, participants explained that their experiences with gender norm stereotypes have shown that because men are seen as strong and tough and that they perceived as more fit for roles in mechanical fields and combat. However, women are seen as detailed and intellectual, thus a perceived better fit for administrative roles.

Related to the second finding, I identified that males and females have differing experiences with discrimination based on gender in the Army National Guard, Nina, the only female participant, reported that she had multiple experiences with discrimination based on gender, while Jack, Tom, and Jalen all denied that they had not experienced
discrimination based on gender. Being that the Army National Guard is a male-dominated field, there are expectations from leaders for female service members, which may be constructed unconsciously and from gender norm stereotypes. These expectations potentially lead to unintended or unconscious discrimination of female service members.

Related to the third finding, each service member in this study reported that they believed the Army National Guard unintentionally creates a culture that potentially creates space for incidents of MST. Participants provided examples of the presence of gender norm stereotypes deterring service members from reporting MST. Additionally, the reporting structures lack gender diversity and when an incident of MST occurs, service members are expected to report to mostly male representatives. Lastly, participants reported that because of the citizen-soldier status of the Army National Guard and the friendships that are developed, perpetrators are often aware of the acts they can get away with. These experiences all provide examples of barriers to reporting MST.

The fourth finding revealed that a main barrier to reporting MST is that there is a fear of retribution. All participants reported that there is a fear of ostracization from peer groups. Additionally, Nina reported fear of negative career consequences and retaliation from leadership as a barrier to reporting MST. Nina and Jack further explained that reporting MST directly to leadership creates a potential barrier as in their experiences, leadership as contributed to the problem rather than to the solution.

Finally, the fifth finding revealed that participants reported that they had experienced more males as leaders than females as leaders in their time in the Army National Guard. Status in the Army National Guard is perceived through rank. The higher
the rank, the higher status they hold. Due to more males than females holding positions of power, there is an inherent gender status hierarchy (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly & Wood, 2012) that arises, placing males at a high status than females.

**Implications and Recommendations**

Based on this study’s findings, there were two implications, each with their own recommendation.

1. Army National Guard leaders need to create an environment that is more supportive of enlisted service members who need to report MST.

2. Army National Guard enlisted service members need to be aware of the endorsement of masculine gender norm stereotypes and how female service members may be implicitly viewed to have lower gender status.

Regarding the first implication, each participant provided examples of their experiences in which the Army National Guard leadership had lacked support for service members reporting MST. The participants provided the examples of lack of diversity in the representatives who service members are expected to report to, fear of ostracization from peer groups, fear of negative career impacts, and victim blaming behaviors. Additionally, each participant reported distrust in the reporting structures and leadership. I recommend that all members of the Army National Guard make culture change a priority. Further, I recommend that, to encourage reporting incidents of MST, a non-affiliated agency manages reports that are made.

Second, the Army National Guard service members need to be aware of the lack of inclusivity of female service members, and the inherent gender hierarchy that follows. Given the second implication, the first recommendation is to conduct further research that encompasses the perceptions that female service members have regarding discrimination in the Army National Guard. Second, I recommend that Army National Guard service
members participate in implicit bias training to bring awareness to unconscious bias they may hold as it pertains to gender norm stereotypes and gender status in the Army National Guard.

Findings Distribution Proposal

The findings distribution proposal section defines the target audience, proposed method of distribution and venue, and the distribution materials. The proposed distribution method and venue identifies how and where I intend to present the findings of this study. Additionally, the proposed distribution method identifies the goals of the presentation. Lastly, the distribution of materials identifies and describes the materials I intend to use to present the study’s findings.

Target Audience

The intended target audience for this study is company, battalion, and state level leadership in the Army National Guard as well as Army National Guard enlisted service members. These levels of leadership are the intended target audience for three reasons. First, training and unit cohesion are manageable at the company level. Company commanders are responsible for ensuring that, at the lowest level, issues are resolved and required trainings are completed. Company level leadership is also the first line of defense when it comes to preventing and investigating incidents of MST. Second, battalion level leadership is responsible for implementing larger policy changes for multiple companies in the Army National Guard. Battalion can make larger level changes that impact more service members. Third, state level leadership can make changes for every battalion in the Army National Guard in that specific state, leading to positive change for all service members. Each state has a sexual assault/harassment response and
prevention (SHARP) office that dictates the training for MST. If change is created first at the company level based on experiences of enlisted service members shared in this study, change can then also be made at the battalion level, then state level, hopefully leading to change in the SHARP programming.

Proposed Distribution Method and Venue

I aim to present this study’s key findings and recommendations, first, to key stakeholders, such as enlisted service members and unit leadership at the company level. The presentation will occur at the beginning of the fiscal year when all mandatory annual training requirements are reset, and training plans are being created. The stakeholders at the company level include the company commander, the company executive officer, the platoon leaders, the readiness non-commissioned officer (NCO) and sexual harassment/assault response and prevention (SHARP) representatives. I will inform key stakeholders of gender norm stereotypes that were reported by each participant in this study and highlight the differences in the male and female responses. I will also present the key findings to the stakeholders as well as implications and recommendations. The company SHARP representatives will be presented with the key findings, implications, and recommendations at the beginning of the fiscal year to allow for accurate time to make any adjustments to the MST trainings that they may deem appropriate.

I will deliver a presentation to the key stakeholders at the leaders meeting during the first drill weekend of the fiscal year. The goals of the presentations will be to provide a concise description of the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the key findings, and provide recommendations for the key stakeholders and target audience.
Following approval from company leadership, I intend to present this research at the Joint Junior Leadership Conference that is held by the Army National Guard in my state. This conference will allow me to reach enlisted service members, who are the second group of stakeholders. I will present the key findings and implications, as well as recommendations on addressing implicit bias and gender norm stereotypes in the Army National Guard.

Conclusion

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions of gender norm stereotypes and how these perceptions affect an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of MST through the lens of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). This study began by highlighting the case of SPC Guillen, who was murdered as a result of her intent to report MST. Further, this study highlighted the rate at which MST is occurring in the Army and the Army National Guard and provided barriers to reporting perceived by service members. Each barrier presenting with gender norm stereotypes at the forefront. The participants who served as cases in this study further explained their experiences with gender norm stereotypes, highlighting that men are perceived as strong and tough whereas women are perceived as physically weaker, but with higher intellect.

Additionally, each participant presented perceptions of barriers to reporting MST that included elements of gender norm stereotypes such as fear of ostracization from peer groups, being perceived as weak, or victim blaming behaviors. Nina, Jack, and Tom indicated that they understood AR 600-20 policy, but they also indicated there was need for reform to how incidents of MST are reported and investigated.
For enlisted service members to feel comfortable reporting MST, there needs to be a more supportive environment where those reporting MST are taken seriously and know that their report is being handled appropriately. Further, the endorsement of gender norm stereotypes, leading to a gender hierarchy, should be addressed through further research and implicit bias training, to create an inclusive environment for all service members. Through these actions, gender norm stereotypes could have less of a presence, thus creating an environment that encourages service members to report MST rather than fearing MST reporting.
APPENDICES
Greetings,

My name is Sarah Waterman, and I am a member of the Army National Guard as well as a doctoral student at Baylor University. I am conducting a study to explore the relationship between gender norm stereotypes in the military and the affect that they have on an enlisted service member’s decision to report or not report military sexual trauma. You are receiving this email because you are an enlisted service member whose experiences and voice are vital to this study.

By participating in the study, you would be participating in a questionnaire and if selected, an interview with me in order to provide information about your experiences with gender norm stereotypes and perceptions on how those stereotypes affect the decision to report sexual assault and sexual harassment. Findings from this study could be used in the future for improvement of training and policy as it pertains to sexual assault and sexual harassment in the Army National Guard. Participation in this study would require you to attend an interview that would not last more than one hour. Additionally, you are agreeing to follow-up communication for validation of interview transcripts and any questions that may arise. Criteria for participation is as follows:

1. Must be a current service member in the Army National Guard
2. Must have been in the Army National Guard for at least one year
3. Must be between the rank of E1 to E6

If you are interested in participating in this questionnaire, please complete the questionnaire via the link included.

Thank you,
Sarah R. Waterman BA, MSW
APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Baylor University
Department of Education
Consent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: Perceptions of Gender Norm Stereotypes and the Decision to Report Military Sexual Trauma: A Qualitative Case Study of Enlisted Army National Guard Service Members

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Sarah Waterman

FACULTY ADVISOR: Dr. Ryann Shelton, PhD.

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**Invitation to participate**

You are invited to be part of a research study. This consent form will help you choose whether or not to participate in the study. Feel free to ask if anything is not clear in this consent form.

**Important Information about this Research Study**

Things you should know:

- The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions of gender norm stereotypes and how these perceptions affect an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of military sexual trauma (MST) through the lens of social role theory. To participate, you must be a current member of the Army National Guard, rank E-1 to E-6, and have at least 1 year in service.
- If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in a questionnaire and a semi-structured interviews with the researcher.
- This will take place in August 2022.
- Risks or discomforts from this research include re-traumatization in discussing military sexual trauma.
- The possible benefits of this study include providing insight to Army National Guard leadership about enlisted service member experiences and influence on changes to policy.
- Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time.
More detailed information may be described later in this form. Please read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research study.

### Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore Army National Guard enlisted service members’ perceptions of gender norm stereotypes and how these perceptions affect an enlisted service member’s decision to or not to report incidents of military sexual trauma (MST) through the lens of social role theory.

### What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a semi-structured one-on-one interview with the researcher. You will be asked to answer questions about your experiences in the military.

Due to COVID-19 precautions, you may opt to participate in the interview via zoom. Both in person and zoom interviews will be video/audio recorded to format the interview transcripts.

Following the interview, you will be asked to verify the transcript of your interview for accuracy and approve the use of your testimony in this research study.

### How long will I be in this study and how many people will be in the study?

Participation in this study will last two months. Five subjects will take part in this research study.

### What are the risks of taking part in this research study?

There are some risks you might experience from being in this study. There is potential for re-experiencing negative feelings associated with past experiences of military sexual trauma.

### Are there any benefits from being in this research study?

Although you will not directly benefit from being in this study, others might benefit because information will be gathered that provides suggestions for changes in military sexual assault programming and education.

### How Will You Protect my Information?

A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality.

We will keep the records of this study confidential by storing information on password protected flash drives. Additionally, your name will not be included in the write up of the
data and findings. We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

The following people or groups may review your study records for purposes such as quality control or safety:

- Representatives of Baylor University and the BU Institutional Review Board
- Federal and state agencies that oversee or review research (such as the HHS Office of Human Research Protection or the Food and Drug Administration)

The results of this study may also be used for teaching, publications, or presentations at professional meetings. If your individual results are discussed, your identity will be protected by using a code number or pseudonym rather than your name or other identifying information.

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<th>Will I be compensated for being part of the study?</th>
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<td>You will not be paid for taking part in this study.</td>
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<th>What happens if I am hurt by participating in this research study?</th>
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<td>If you become ill or injured as a result of your participation in the study, you should seek medical treatment from your doctor or treatment center of choice. You should promptly tell the researcher about any illness or injury.</td>
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There are no plans for Baylor University to pay you or give you other compensation for your injury or illness. You do not give up any of your legal rights to seek compensation by signing this form.

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<th>Is it possible that I will be asked to leave the study?</th>
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<td>The researcher may take you out of this study without your permission. This may happen because:</td>
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<td>- The researcher thinks it is in your best interest</td>
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<td>- You can’t make the required study visits</td>
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<td>- Other administrative reasons</td>
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<th>Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary</th>
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<td>Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to withdraw at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. You cannot withdraw information collected prior to your withdrawal.</td>
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<th>Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research</th>
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<td>If you have any questions about this research, you may contact:</td>
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Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Baylor University Institutional Review Board
Office of the Vice Provost for Research
Phone: 254-710-3708
Email: irb@baylor.edu

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. We will give you a copy of this document for your records. We will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.
APPENDIX C

Questionnaire

1. Name: ______________________
   a. Email: ________________________________

2. Please select your gender
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Non-binary

3. Please select your age group
   a. 18–20
   b. 21–25
   c. 26–30
   d. 31–35
   e. 36–40
   f. 41–50
   g. 51–60
   h. 60+

4. How many years have you been in the Army National Guard?
   a. Less than 1 year
   b. 1–5 years
   c. 6–10 years
   d. 11–15 years
   e. 15+ years

5. What is your military occupational specialty (MOS)?
   a. ______________________

6. In what ways have you witnessed gender norm stereotyping in the Army National Guard?

7. Why do you think service members in the Army National Guard choose to or not to report incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment?
APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol

Stereotyping/Discrimination
1. What gender norm stereotypes do you see present in the Army National Guard?
2. Have you ever experienced discrimination based on your gender while serving in the military? If so, please explain.

Physical Difference/Behavioral Differences
1. In what ways do you think men and women’s abilities differ physically?
2. In what ways do you think men and women differ in their behavior?
3. Do you think there are perceived physical differences in male and female enlisted service members? Please explain.
4. Do you think there are perceived behavioral differences in male and female enlisted service members? Please explain.

Attributes/Abilities
1. What attributes make a good military leader?
2. Of those, which attributes do you associate with being masculine?
3. Of those, which attributes do you associate with being feminine?

Division of Labor
1. How would you describe the differences in daily duties between men and women?
2. Are there differences in roles of men and women in Army National Guard?
3. What occupational choices do you see in men versus women?

Gender Status Roles
1. Is there one gender that you associate with leadership or positions of power in the Army National Guard?

Gender Norm Stereotypes and MST
1. How do you think gender norm stereotypes influence the rate of sexual assault and sexual harassment?
2. In what ways, if any, do you think that gender norm stereotypes would influence your decision to report an incident of sexual assault or sexual harassment?

Reporting MST
1. Why do you think service members in the Army National Guard choose to or not to report incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment, keeping the idea of gender norm stereotypes in mind?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


