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LEADER EXPERIENCES OF LIMITED EMPLOYMENT TERMS AT U.S. ARMY GARRISONS OVERSEAS

By

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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

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Abstract

Many U.S. Army civilian employees who work for Installation Management Command Europe fall under a policy which limits their employment to five years overseas unless they have approval from higher headquarters. The policy, implementation of which varies across Army commands and other organizations impacted by the rule, creates challenges for the organization in regard to continuity, staff productivity, customer service, host nation relations, and employee well-being. For an organization that proclaims to put people first and encourages professional development, this policy creates a disconnect for leaders striving to create high-performing teams. Leaders within the Army show characteristics of the Army and Servant Leader Models, which when combined with challenges presented by the five-year rule can create an opportunity to use a leadership model provided in this Dissertation in Practice. Insights from leaders interviewed for this phenomenological study also provide valuable insight into the impacts of the rule on them and their staff.

Keywords: Army, civilian, turnover, five-year rule, overseas, garrison, leadership

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of the Army (DA) is an organization that prioritizes its people. It prioritizes their leadership development and growth as trusted teammates for the good of the organization and all of its soldiers, civilian employees, and their family members. Looking at the Army through the lens of servant leadership theory, one can see many of the same characteristics described in Robert Greenleaf's theory, which centers on putting others first, including trust, a drive to serve, stewardship, and community building (Spears, 2002). According to Greenleaf (2002), the best test to determine if servant leaders are prioritizing others' needs first is if those others are growing as people and becoming "healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants." The Army has numerous doctrinal publications, manuals, and other documents outlining its people-focused and leadership strategies. In its Army Leadership Development Strategy, the Army's top three leaders included a letter highlighting, "Leadership underpins everything the Army does, which is why we will continue to invest in our people" (DA, 2013, p. 1). The Army People Strategy was released with an introductory quote from the 40th Chief of Staff of the Army. "We win through our people, and people will drive success in our Readiness, Modernization and Reform priorities. We must take care of our people" (DA, 2019b, p. 2). One area where the Army may not be meeting its standards regarding putting people first to drive success is when it comes to the mandatory turnover of civilian employees working at U.S. Army installations overseas. The practice may hinder employee growth, community cohesiveness, and readiness within its installations.

Outside of the Army and its parent organization, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), much focus has been given over the years to employee retention and avoiding the costly impacts of turnover within organizations. Employee turnover leads to added expense in rehiring and training new employees, a lack of continuity in services, loss of institutional knowledge, and a decline in productivity. (Lee et al., 2018; Allen et al., 2010). Lee, Fernandez, and Chang (2018) reference multiple studies identifying factors such as managerial practices, pay for performance, family-friendly policies, relational aspects, and employee-organization fit regarding goals and values that may lead to employees' decisions to leave organizations. Companies pay millions of dollars and spend countless hours perfecting onboarding programs and creating cultures within their organizations to make employees stay for the long run. One exception to this prevalent human resource practice of spending money to retain employees is the DoD, which spends millions of dollars to relocate civilian employees after limiting their overseas employment to five years unless the head of the DoD component employing the civilian approves an extension (DoD, 2012). While this study will focus on Department of the Army civilians at garrisons overseas, this policy applies to overseas employees throughout DoD.

This policy, commonly referred to as the "five-year rule," limits civilian employment overseas to five years unless interrupted by at least two years of physical presence back in the United States. "This policy serves to increase employment opportunities for military spouses and family members and developmental opportunities for employees in the United States, periodically renew the knowledge and competencies of the overseas workforce, including familiarity with current strategic goals, enhance the interoperability of employees, and promote a joint perspective in the workforce" (DoD, 2012). Specifically, within U.S. Army garrisons overseas, employees are brought on board initially under a three-year agreement. After the first two years are complete, their supervisor and the garrison commander can approve an extension for the employee from three to five years. Extensions from five to seven years are possible with the approval of the higher command, which, in the case of U.S. Army garrisons in Europe, is the Installation Management Command (IMCOM) commanding general. Anything above seven years goes to the next higher headquarters, Army Materiel Command (AMC), for approval. Based on the policy at the time of the request, the approval chain may be at a lower or higher headquarters, as policies can change as commanders rotate. Within other commands, approval timelines and processes also may vary. For three to five years, even working within a largely American population with access to reminders of home, these limited employment tours may provide garrisons with an even smaller window of productivity from their employees based on the time it takes them to adjust to their new positions and to living overseas. Incentives, such as relocation and living quarter allowance, are provided to most civilian employees while working overseas. Civilian employees also receive privileges not customarily granted within the states, such as tax-free shopping access at the Commissary and Post Exchange. These stores carry brands and types of food items and other products that are available in the United States but may not be available overseas. Even with these privileges offering reminders of home, adapting to life overseas can take longer than many may expect when initially accepting their position. In her study of families who moved overseas, Haour-Knipe (2001) identified language barriers, meeting new people, and even day-to-day tasks, such as shopping, as stressors for those moving overseas. She identified themes throughout the process, including the honeymoon phase, depression, and finally, a leveling out that took up to a year or more in some cases. These factors play a part in leader and employee quality of life, dedication, and focus on their day-to-day jobs and decisions on when to return to the States.

When they decide to return home, employees who came to work for the Army overseas from another DoD entity have statutory rights to return to their previous position of employment in the continental United States. Employees can also find their next position on their own through the normal federal hiring process, or they may be enrolled in a placement program to help them find a new job in the States for their return. As employees near their departure dates to the States, some begin to look for their next position up to a year out or more. Early job acceptance can lead to them leaving much earlier than their “DEROS,” or date of estimated return from overseas. The Priority Placement Program (DoD, 2011), over which employees have limited control, exists for those who do not have return rights or those who do not find a new position in the states on their own. Some people try to avoid this program by applying for jobs early. Moving to a different position in the same country or another country overseas is also not an option, as the five-year rule includes all time spent overseas during that period, regardless of location. The rule may also hinder employees’ chances of being promoted while overseas based on their time left in-country. The inability of employees and families to adjust to their new social situations and added job uncertainty brought on by the five-year rule leads some employees to leave voluntarily before their terms have ended. If an employee chooses to complete only a three-year rotation and spends the first year adjusting to their new life and the third year thinking ahead to their next job, that leaves only one year the organization is hopefully getting the employee's entire focus on maintaining and improving the organization. This problem expands when one considers not just the impact of this process on a single employee but on the entire workforce, which is in various stages of adapting, working, and planning for the future.

Statement of the Problem

Phenomenological studies look at the essence of a phenomenon, which is not necessarily a problem. However, a review of a phenomenon may highlight problems (Peoples, 2021). This study will review the phenomenon of the five-year rule and leaders' experiences living under the policy. Because of the importance of the Army's mission in Europe, it is worthwhile for leaders to understand the lived experiences of those providing services to support this mission.

Based on leaders' experiences in an organization that touts its servant leadership characteristics and dedication to people, this proposed hermeneutic phenomenological study will review what impacts the five-year rule may have on continuity and service delivery at overseas garrisons. U.S. Army garrisons in Europe fall under the purview of IMCOM-Europe. They are found in "Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy and Poland, as well as forward locations in Bulgaria and Romania. With responsibility for eight garrisons, our mission is to provide the best possible training facilities, power projection platforms, family housing and base operations support" (IMCOM-Europe, 2023, para. 2). These services provided to units, soldiers, and their families include building management and maintenance, housing, childcare, emergency services, religious support, public affairs – essentially, the garrison is the city administration that supports the units working on the installation and the families living there. Active-duty colonels, who rotate out roughly every two years, commanded each garrison; however, most of the garrison staff are civilian employees affected by the five-year rule. Depending on the respective country's Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), local national employees also make up a percentage of the workforce. Local national employees are not limited in their length of employment. One Army garrison in Europe, at least for a time, mostly ignored the five-year rule. When the command renewed enforcement of the policy, they returned service directors and other staff to the states and hired new teams to begin their rotations. This situation created a garrison where much of the leaders' institutional knowledge was lost. A new batch of staff entered to adjust to their positions and a new culture and familiarize themselves with their services and staff. These new staff members were also set on roughly the same five-year timer, creating an atmosphere of continual turnover. Of note, outside of IMCOM-Europe, other commands may have different levels of enforcement of the five-year rule based on their internal practices.

Within Europe, as American forces continue to shift, providing optimal garrison services to soldiers and their families will continue to be an essential mission in support of readiness. U.S. Army forces in Europe fall under U.S. Army Europe and Africa (USAREUR-AF), headquartered in Wiesbaden, Germany. The four-star command "provides ready, combat-credible land forces to deter, and, if necessary, defeat aggression from any potential adversary in Europe and Africa" (USAREUR-AF, n.d., What we do). In April 2021, the Army announced the reversal of a plan to reduce thousands of troops in Europe and add 500 in Germany (Erlanger et al., 2021). Understanding policies' impact on leaders and employees who support these forces will be vital in sustaining services at operational and conceptual levels. Greenleaf (2002) highlighted the importance of both operational and conceptual employees in maintaining high-level performance in servant organizations. Respectively, these are the staff who carry out the day-to-day tasks and the staff who plan for the future. These two groups require a sustained balance, understanding, and mutual respect for optimal service and performance. Having continuity within overseas garrisons would ensure servant leaders have the time and trust of their employees to build on and provide exceptional services for troops and their families while being supported under the Army's People Strategy (DA, 2019b).

Based on the importance of the Army mission within Europe and the scope of services provided by IMCOM-Europe to support service members, civilian employees, and family members, leaders must identify any impacts that constant rotations have on employees and services to ensure they are fulfilling their mission. This study will provide leaders' experiences supporting this mission under the five-year rule to determine if this disconnect is indeed causing a problem.

Purpose of the Study

DoD Instructions (DoDI) are a type of DoD issuance, along with directives, manuals, and memos, that establish policy and assign responsibility within the DoD (2016). DoDI 1400.25, Civilian Personnel Management (DoD, 2012), states that the policy enforcing the five-year rule "serves to increase employment opportunities for military spouses and family members, and developmental opportunities for employees in the United States, periodically renew the knowledge and competencies of the overseas workforce, including familiarity with current strategic goals, enhance the interoperability of employees, and promote a joint perspective in the workforce" (p. 3). Irrespective of whether the five-year rule is meeting this stated goal, is it failing to consider other areas where it may be causing more harm than good? Does it meet the intent of the Army People Strategy (DA, 2019b)? For instance, when it comes to the well-being and development of its current operational and conceptual employees and how well they work together to provide essential services in light of constantly rotating staff in their working environments, the policy may be short-sighted.

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study is to discover leaders' lived experiences with the five-year rule, the time needed to assimilate to their new positions and a new culture, and how those experiences impact their effectiveness within their jobs at Army garrisons overseas and the organization's overall effectiveness.

Research Question

To further explore the phenomenon of the five-year rule at U.S. Army garrisons overseas, this study will explore the following research question: What are Army garrison leaders' lived experiences moving overseas under the purview of the five-year rule and taking over an organization that provides services to soldiers, civilians, and families, and employs others also under the five-year rule?

Aim of the Study

This study will aim to advance the knowledge of Army leaders by sharing results in an article submitted to relevant journals on military and government personnel management. Results will include information learned from the civilian personnel on the ground leading garrisons impacted by the five-year rule. After identifying impacts, solutions can be identified to mitigate any issues and enhance any benefits. Further data will be available to support or discourage the continuation of the five-year rule. This study will also expand the small pool of literature relating to civilian leadership within the U.S. Army and seek to create a conceptual leadership model based on servant and Army leader characteristics for those leaders living under, and supporting employees living under, the five-year rule.

Definition of Relevant Terms

Terms used throughout this dissertation that may be unfamiliar to those outside of the Army are defined below:

- Garrison, installation, or post: According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), a garrison is a military installation, especially a permanent installation. The words garrison, installation, and post are used interchangeably throughout this paper in reference to permanent U.S. Army military installations.
- Installation Management Command (IMCOM): This Army command, which employs 50,000 people worldwide (DA, 2019a), “handles the day-to-day operations of U.S. Army installations around the globe – We are the Army’s Home. Army installations are communities that provide many of the same types of services expected from any small city. Fire, police, housing, and childcare are just some of the things IMCOM does in Army communities every day” (IMCOM, 2018, para. 3).
- Directorate: These larger support elements contain multiple departments such as Emergency Services, which includes police and fire departments, and Public Works, which includes Engineering, Master Planning, Maintenance and Operations, and Housing. Installations may have slightly different structures based on their mission and size, but overall, each has the same directorates and special staff offices.
- Special staff: Special staff offices include smaller support elements such as Public Affairs, Religious Support, Safety, and Equal Employment

Opportunity. For this paper, special staff offices may be referred to as directorates to designate offices within the garrison in general.

- Civilian: A staff member directly employed by the federal government, in this case, the U.S. Army, and not serving as an active-duty service member or as a contract employee.
- Soldier, active-duty soldier: A uniformed officer or enlisted member of the U.S. Army.
- Local national of host nation employee: Both terms are used to reference non-U.S. citizens employed at U.S. installations outside of the United States.
- Appropriated and non-appropriated fund (NAF) employees: Congress appropriates funds to pay salaries for appropriated fund employees. The Army also employs non-appropriated fund employees, whose salaries are paid for by money earned from business operations, such as those within the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (FMWR).
- OTEX: Commands initially bring employees on board under a three-year agreement, which can be extended. This extension is referred to as an overseas tour extension, or by its acronym, OTEX.
- DEROS: This is an employee's date of estimated return from overseas based on the date they entered overseas service.
- Five-year rule: After their initial three-year overseas employment term, an employee's command may extend them for an additional two years. Per

DoD policy, civilian employees are limited to five years of service overseas unless granted an exception (DoD, 2012). Civilians serving overseas commonly refer to this as the “five-year rule.”

- Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA): These are North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, 2009) agreements between member nations that lay out how military personnel operate within other countries in accordance with host nation laws. SOFA provides the legal basis for U.S. military and civilians living overseas, and agreements cover topics such as import and export privileges, employment, and other logistical support (DA, 2019c).

Proposed Methodology

To better understand the impacts of the five-year rule, this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study will include interviews with leaders stationed overseas at U.S. Army garrisons in Europe. Interviews will focus on their lived experiences under the five-year rule and how the rule affects their organization’s performance as staff transition into and out of their positions. Because the researcher is an employee of the garrisons’ higher headquarters and was previously employed at a garrison, she will use a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to build on her current understanding of the phenomenon of the five-year rule. Garrison leaders’ experiences will add to the prior understanding using the methodology’s understanding of the hermeneutic circle. The researcher will interview approximately 12 leaders,’ shrinking or expanding the pool based on the saturation of similar responses (Peoples, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Limitations, Delimitations, and Personal Biases

This study includes several delimitations and limitations imposed by the researcher and the research environment, respectively. As an employee of the Army, the researcher will also identify personal biases. A delimitation for this study is that it only includes U.S. Army garrisons in Europe. However, researchers could replicate the study at other U.S. Army installations overseas, where the five-year rule is also used, such as in the Army's Pacific region. Higher headquarters approve extensions with the five-year rule, so enforcement of the rule may vary depending on the commander and the command for which the employee works. The study could be replicated at other commands within the Army and outside of IMCOM-Europe to learn about employee's experiences within those commands. It also is limited to Army employees, but the five-year rule does cover all of DoD. This study will focus on leaders' experiences with the five-year rule and its impacts on them and their employees' abilities to function as members of a high-performing team. Based on this sample population, a limitation may be the time frame of employment for each director interviewed. For instance, some may be at the beginning of their rotation, while others may be toward the end. These varied timelines could provide a wide range of perspectives from each leader's experience, but it might also limit their experiences with the impact of the five-year rule on their office overall. Another limitation of this study may be the diversity within the sample population of garrison leadership. According to the 2018 Army Civilian Human Resources Annual Report, the majority of civilian employees are white males ages 45 and over (DA, 2018). The report attributes this to the 50% veteran demographic of the workforce, which is also predominately white and male. At the time of survey execution, the director population will determine the survey sample demographics, including age, race, sex, and marital and family status.

As an employee impacted by the five-year rule, the researcher understands bias is in place regarding the rule from witnessing a lack of continuity within offices. The researcher contributes this lack of continuity to employees transferring in and out and focusing on assimilating and moving on instead of the work at hand. This experience influenced the chosen study topic, as well as the methodology. However, the researcher's limited experience does not compare to learning through research what the broader picture looks like from within garrisons overall and from the perspective of other leaders. Any concerns based on the researcher's position are discussed further within the methodology.

The Role of Leadership in this Study

The "person-oriented" Servant Leadership Model (van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1230) was used to inform this study due to its similarities with the Army Leadership Requirements Model (DA, 2012b). In his review of servant leadership, Van Dierendonck (2011) cites a lack of a concise definition and a wide range of servant leader characteristics that have been identified in numerous studies – up to 44 in various models. "By differentiating between antecedents, behavior, mediating processes, and outcomes and by combining the conceptual models with the empirical evidence gained from the measures of servant leadership," van Dierendonck (2011, p. 1232) presents six key characteristics of servant leadership, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Servant Leadership Characteristics

Servant Leadership - Six Key Characteristics
Empowering and developing people Showing humility Being authentic Accepting people for who they are Providing direction Being stewards who work for the good of the whole

Similarly, the Army is an institution that proclaims to be person-oriented and has labeled people as its number one priority (DA, 2019b). It places a high value on leadership and begins to grow its military leaders from within its ranks from the day they enlist or commission (DA, 2012b). According to Army Field Manual 22-100, "the fundamental mission of our Army is to deter war and win in combat" (DA, 1999. p. 3). This is the mission that civilian employees support, whether working in tactical units, supporting soldiers in the garrison, or with logistical needs. Everyone supports the fundamental mission, and leaders must support those efforts:

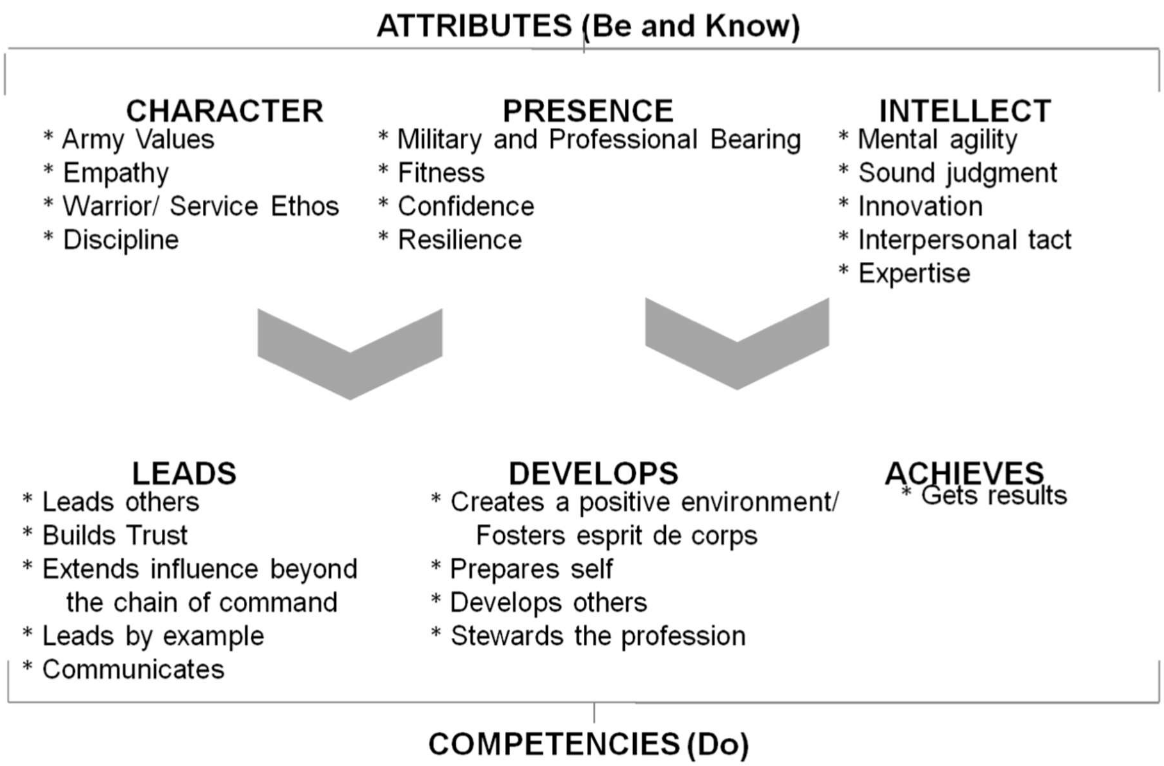
> Leaders in our Army have a challenge. They must take care of soldiers' needs; develop them into cohesive teams; train them under tough, realistic conditions to demanding standards; assess their performance; assist them with their personal and professional growth; and reward them for their successes. To meet that

> challenge, our leaders must be competent and confident in their ability to lead. (DA, 1999, p. 4)

In its Leadership Requirements Model, the Army Leader Development Strategy (DA, 2013) outlines expectations of what all Army leaders should be, know, and do. Figure 2 details the model, but overall, it emphasizes leader attributes, competencies, and a focus on developing others.

Figure 2

The Army Leadership Requirements Model



Note. The Army Leadership Requirements Model is outlined in the Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, Army Leadership (DA, 2012b), and is the model for soldier and civilian education and leadership strategy. The Army model encompasses many characteristics of servant leadership, including a focus on trust and developing others and the organization.

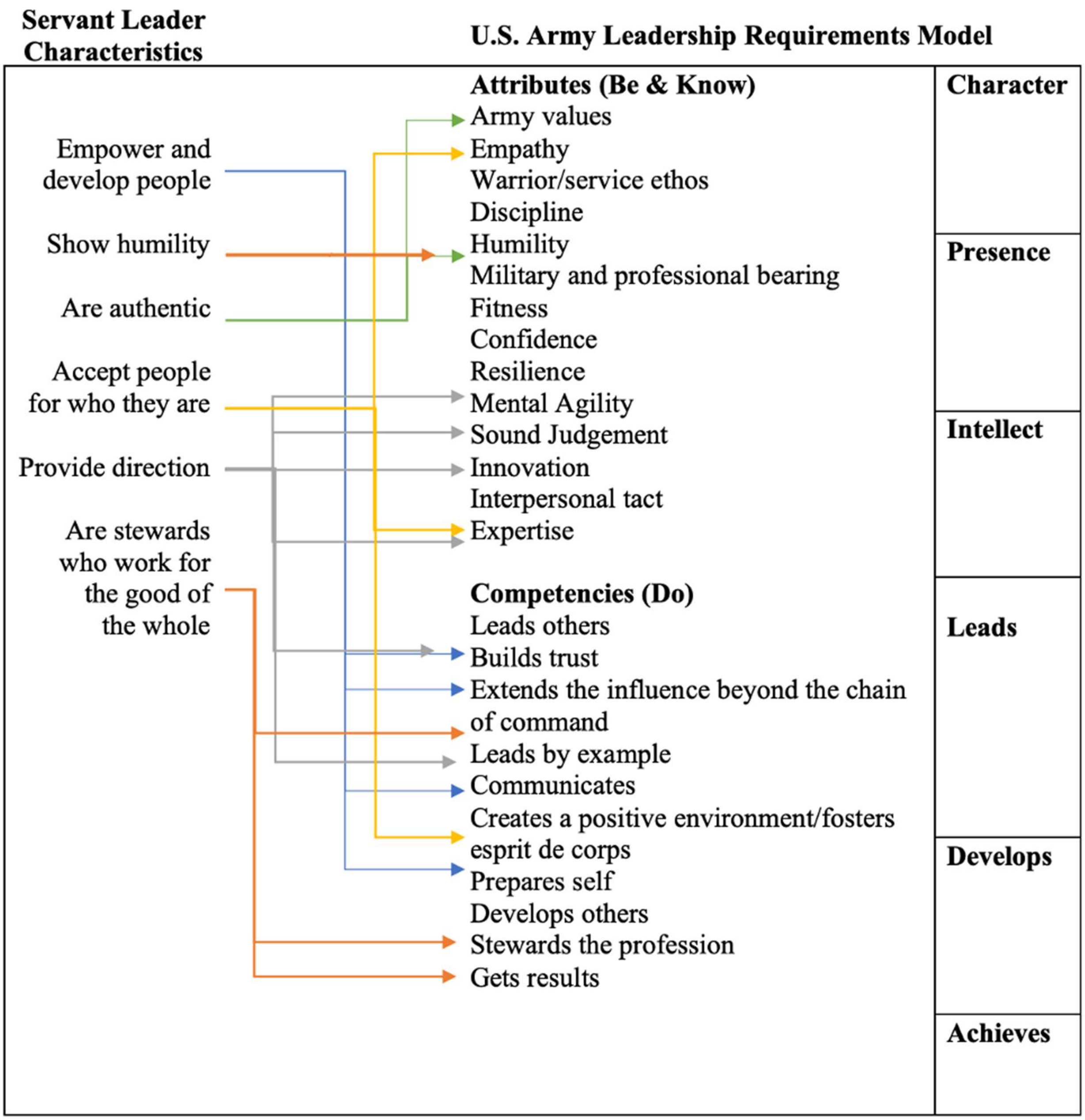
In his initial message to the workforce, then-acting Defense Secretary Christopher C. Miller (2020) said that the U.S. armed forces are "an organization ruthlessly committed to excellence, non-partisanship, and servant leadership" (p. 1). In the Army People Strategy, people are listed as the Army's number one priority (DA, 2019b). To ensure they can meet the Army's mission and take care of employees, Army leaders need to understand the full impact of their policies on their staff and how they impact their ability to support the fundamental mission. Specifically, at the garrison level, soldiers and civilian employees, along with local national employees overseas, maintain the infrastructure from which troops deploy in times of war and provide services where soldiers and their families live and train in times of peace. When referring to the importance of garrison leadership, Allen (2007) wrote:

> These team members play an integral part in meeting daily challenges, solving difficult problems, and are valuable participants in the strategic decision-making process for the installation. It is important that the commander recognizes the necessity of building the team of garrison leaders that adhere to common values, are committed to the organizational mission, and accept personal responsibility to contribute to success. (p. 7)

While not explicitly referencing Servant Leadership, many of the Army's leadership model attributes and competencies line up with Servant Leadership Model characteristics as consolidated by van Dierendonck (2011). A crosswalk of these models is presented in Figure 3. Considering these similarities and using the Servant Leadership Model, this study involving Army leadership will provide insight into how the Army is meeting its people-oriented goals. Servant leadership within the Army is discussed further in the literature review, while questions in the protocol will ask leader participants to reflect on their personal leadership attributes and experiences within the Army. Those responses will be presented in Chapter Four.

Figure 3

Servant Leadership Characteristics and the Army Leadership Requirements Model



Significance of the Dissertation in Practice Study

Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership provides a framework to look at Army civilian leadership overseas and how operational employees and conceptual leaders form trusting teams to create and maintain high-performing organizations. The Army's message on leadership is clear -- people first. Those same leaders who set priorities impacting the workforce must continue to evaluate their policies to ensure they support the people-first strategy and allow employees at all levels and in all locations to meet the Army's leadership goals while also meeting the mission. In the absence of other directly related research, this study will provide a basis for evaluating the impact of the five-year rule. Much research shows the negative impact of employee turnover and how it can affect employee morale and productivity. However, little to no research has been found on the effects of mandatory employee turnover on office productivity, especially when coupled with the challenges of relocating overseas and assimilating to a new culture. This study aims to look at how leaders experience mandatory employment term lengths and the impact on attitudes and productivity within their directorates. The Army People Strategy (DA, 2019b) seeks to achieve its vision along four lines of effort: acquire, develop, employ, and retain talent. When developing plans toward this vision, the Army needs to ensure it reaches across the Army to employees in all areas within the continental United States and overseas.

Summary

The Army places emphasis on people, leadership, and taking care of its own. In the instance of the five-year rule, the policy may be acting counter that end. This hermeneutic phenomenological study aims to take a qualitative look at leaders' experiences with the five-year rule and its impacts on their organization's ability to provide essential services to units, soldiers, and families. In Chapter Two, literature will be presented in regard to the five-year rule, servant and Army leadership, the Army workforce, expatriate adjustment to living overseas, employee turnover, and phenomenological research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

While no scholarly literature exists on the topic of the five-year rule and its impact on organizational effectiveness at overseas Army garrisons, several areas of study can offer literature, academic and otherwise, to guide the study. This literature review first examines the rule itself, the background of the rule's creation, and references to the policy available in the digital public sphere. This section then presents literature from the military realm on the Army's approach to leadership and its ties to the Servant Leadership Model. Next, the Army garrison structure is outlined to provide context for the study's environment and leadership structure. Outside of the military, other literature explores employee turnover and expatriate employment overseas. Finally, the chosen methodology, hermeneutic phenomenology, is explored. Combined, the literature on these topics will guide this study and relevant interview questions.

The Five-Year Rule

U.S. Code, Title 10, outlines laws set forth for the U.S. armed forces, including Section 1586(a), the provision that led to the DoD's creation in 1966 of the five-year rule:

> In order to advance the programs and activities of the Defense Establishment, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to facilitate the interchange of civilian employees of the Defense Establishment between posts of duty in the United States and posts of duty outside the United States through the establishment and operation of programs for the rotation, to the extent consistent with the missions of the Defense Establishment and sound principles of

> administration, of such employees who are assigned to duty outside the United States. (U.S. House of Representatives, 2021)

Since 1966, the DoD has modified the policy implementing the five-year rule within the department several times. The wording modified over the years has not changed the overall time limit of five years. However, it has changed the number of times a command can extend employees. Modifications also removed language specifying the types of employees who should be employed overseas. In DoD Directive 1400.6, DoD Civilian Employees in Overseas Areas (1980), the department encouraged its “more capable employees” to accept overseas assignments (p. 2). The policy directs selecting officials to “ensure that only those persons whose qualifications and adjustability make them suited for overseas employment are selected” (p. 2). Tours are limited to five years to “promote the efficiency of worldwide operations” (p. 2). It also lays out that supervisors are to be trained to maximize, among other things, high morale and the “effective and economical accomplishment of the mission of the overseas activity (p. 3). The DoD Instruction 1400.25 (2012), which canceled the 1980 Directive, removed language referring to the capability and suitability of employees, as well as that referring to supervisors’ responsibilities to mission accomplishment. DoD Instruction 1400.25 (1988) exempted employees from the five-year rule if, per their position description, they were “in positions that require frequent contact with officials of the host nation and a detailed current knowledge of the culture, mores, laws, customs, or government processes of the host nation, which usually cannot be acquired outside the host nation” (p. 3). This iteration of the policy also stipulated that an unlimited number of extensions could be granted “for employees who are rated fully successful or better; are current in the knowledge, skills, and abilities required in their jobs; and have successfully adapted to the overseas work and cultural environment” (p. 4). DoD Instruction 1400.25, 1230 (DoD, 2012) is the most recent policy iteration. It limits civilian employment overseas to five years unless interrupted by at least two years of physical presence in the United States. The initial agreement sets the employment term at three years, with the possibility of extension to five. In some cases, an employee’s higher headquarters may even approve extensions of seven years and beyond. This process may vary on how each command executes the policy. The policy’s stated aim is to create employment opportunities for family members and developmental opportunities for employees in the U.S., refresh staff on organization goals, and create an institutional perspective in the workforce (DoD, 2012).

No scholarly literature was found regarding the five-year rule, and most references to the rule seem to question the application of the rule equitably across the workforce. Employees have challenged the rule several times within its history, both in court and in the realm of online discussion. In a letter to a Senate Subcommittee on Governmental Efficiency and the District of Columbia, the office of the Comptroller General of the United States (1986) writes in response to an inquiry from a civilian employee questioning the Army’s seemingly arbitrary application of the policy and its legality. The response included the requestor’s statement that the “Army’s current administration of DoD’s rotation policy causes unnecessary disruption, resulting in constant turnover and low productivity for overseas employees” (Comptroller, 1986). The letter concluded that the Army is not violating the law and is applying the policy to promote continuity and fulfill mission-related needs. It emphasized that the policy was implemented "for the benefit of the Army and not for the sole benefit of an employee, who has no absolute right to a tour extension" (Comptroller, 1986). In 2000, a group unsuccessfully challenged the five-year rule in court, alleging that leaders were using a draft policy to unfairly limit the amount of time they could work overseas (U.S. District Court, 2000). A general in Japan was quoted in Stars and Stripes saying that the policy was "intended to promote fresh ideas, but its execution causes most of the headaches associated with it" (Chernitzer, 2003, paragraph 11):

> I see the logic in what they are attempting to do," he said. "But I will be quite frank and say that there are flaws in it. It doesn't apply to the entire work force. To me, that's a little bit of a rough spot. You can go to Fort Hood and sit there for 15 years, but you can't come to Camp Zama and sit here for 15 years. But I think it's the right thing to do over the long-term [sic]. New people are agents of change, and they bring in new ideas. (Chernitzer, 2003, paragraph 12)

According to another article in Stars and Stripes (Svan, 2016), after reports of "unfair practices," the U.S. Army Europe Inspector General's Office reviewed the five-year rule to determine if the command was applying the rule equitably. The reporter quotes the then-inspector general as saying that in most cases, the command applied the policy unevenly and sometimes even ignored the rule. At least two surveys have been conducted with overseas employees to assess their thoughts on how the policy is applied. The results of those surveys are not publicly available. In a 2018 discussion post thread, self-reported government employees ask questions and provide experiences to a post asking about waivers for the five-year rule after an employee has served three years. Responses ranged from, “The 5 Year Rule is tough to get around unless you are with USAREUR [U.S. Army Europe]. Some Selecting Officials will exclude your application if you have been OCONUS [outside the continental U.S.] for more than 36 months” (EEngiNerd, 2019, post 2) to “I also knew someone else that applied for a position with only two years left on his/her term and the unit still selected him/her” (USTrans, 2019, post 4). On another discussion board, one participant writes they wish someone would explain the rule to them and “tell me how this rule makes good business sense” (JOFTAA, 2011. Post 3). Others shared posts that the practice makes sense for those trying to get jobs overseas, that it is to prevent people from “homesteading” in Europe, and that people might choose to leave if their housing allowance was cut after five years (Online forum posts, 2011). Around 2018, a Federal Soup member posted a response to a Congressional inquiry they had submitted regarding the five-year rule. The response included a rationale for the five-year rule based on employee allegiance to their country. Employees sometimes mention loyalty to country as a rationale for the policy; however, the DoD does not include that rationale in its DoD Instruction. “Inspector Generals have expressed concern that allegiance may erode when civilians are assigned overseas long-term, especially among those who have familial ties to local nationals” (CivSer67, 2018, post 5). In another post, someone wrote about a long-time overseas employee in the 1970s who was married to a German and had children with her but was sent back to the U.S. despite repeated efforts to stay. According to the post author, “They said that if he no longer considered the US to be home and kept fighting to stay in Germany then there could be 'serious questions' regarding exactly where his loyalties were" (Bill, 2010, post 9).

Evidence exists that there are questions about the effectiveness of the five-year rule within the ranks of employees impacted despite the lack of scholarly literature on the DoD's implementation of U.S. Code, Title 10, Section 1586. This evidence, combined with literature on employee turnover and expatriate employment overseas, informs this study to look at the policy through the lens of servant leadership, which is consistent with the Army Leadership Model.

Servant Leadership from an Army Perspective

While not labeled as servant leadership, many components of the Army leadership model are in line with the characteristics of servant leadership, which emphasizes serving others' interests ahead of one's own. In his initial message to the workforce, then-acting Defense Secretary Christopher C. Miller (2020) goes so far as to emphasize that the U.S. armed forces are "an organization ruthlessly committed to excellence, non-partisanship, and servant leadership" (p. 1). However, the Army may be coming up short in its ruthless dedication to servant leadership and service to others in the implementation of its five-year rule for overseas employees, the rule's impact on civilian employees stationed at garrisons overseas, and their ability to provide consistently high levels of service in support of the Army mission, its soldiers, and families.

Servant leaders put others first. They develop others, and they focus on the growth and well-being of their organizations. Van Dierendonck (2011) presents six key characteristics of servant leadership, including empowering and developing people, showing humility, being authentic, accepting people for who they are, providing direction, and being stewards who work for the good of the whole. Some people consider servant leadership a way of life (Greenleaf, 2008; Timiyo & Yeadon-Lee, 2016). This could be said of government employees who often see their jobs as a calling, a way to give back, or a way to help make the world a better place. Research has shown that civil servants have higher levels of public service motivation than their private-sector counterparts and are more likely to be motivated by factors such as job interest and dedication to a cause versus high pay or other extrinsic workplace characteristics (Taylor & Westover, 2011). Zeffane (1994) also found that government workers respond more favorably to people-oriented leadership styles, such as servant leadership. The Army reflects servant leader characteristics in its expectations for its soldier and civilian leaders. In its doctrinal publication on leadership, the Department of the Army (2012a) highlights the importance of leaders' development of others and their commitment to the organization's greater good. The Army's Human Dimension Strategy (DA, 2015) outlines the requirements for and methods to build future Army professionals. It calls for a renewed emphasis on leader development and professionals who are socially intelligent and culturally competent. It requires cohesive teams built on trust and leaders who build trust through personal example. In its capstone doctrine, the Army also notes that trust is the bedrock on which all its values rely (DA, 2012a). On top of these references to the importance of its people, the Army released The Army People Strategy, which "describes how we will shift from simply 'distributing personnel' to more deliberately managing the talents of our Soldiers and Civilians" (DA, 2019b, p. 2). The strategy encompasses an overarching vision that focuses on the acquisition, development, employment, and retention of soldiers and civilian employees. The plan also includes “critical enablers,” one of which is to “seek changes to DoD regulations or statutes as needed to improve Soldier and Civilian talent management” (DA, 2019b, p. 13).

Active-duty Army leaders are grown from within the Army organization. While civilian employees are hired into their positions fully qualified, the Army still emphasizes their continued development and growth. In fact, 50% of Army civilian employees are retired or prior-service veterans (DA, 2018) who have come up through the ranks. In its Leadership Requirements Model, the Army Leader Development Strategy (DA, 2013) outlines expectations of what all Army leaders should be, know, and do. Figure 2 details the model, but overall, it emphasizes leader attributes, competencies, and a focus on developing others:

> Successful leaders recognize that continually developing their subordinate leaders is the key to the long-term health of the Army. Subordinates guide units and organizations through the challenges of tomorrow. If today’s leaders do not adequately develop their subordinates through personal example, counseling, and mentorship, then today’s leaders have not succeeded in accomplishing tomorrow’s mission. Senior leaders must hold subordinate leaders accountable for leader development and reward those who take this to heart. (DA, 2013, p. 9)

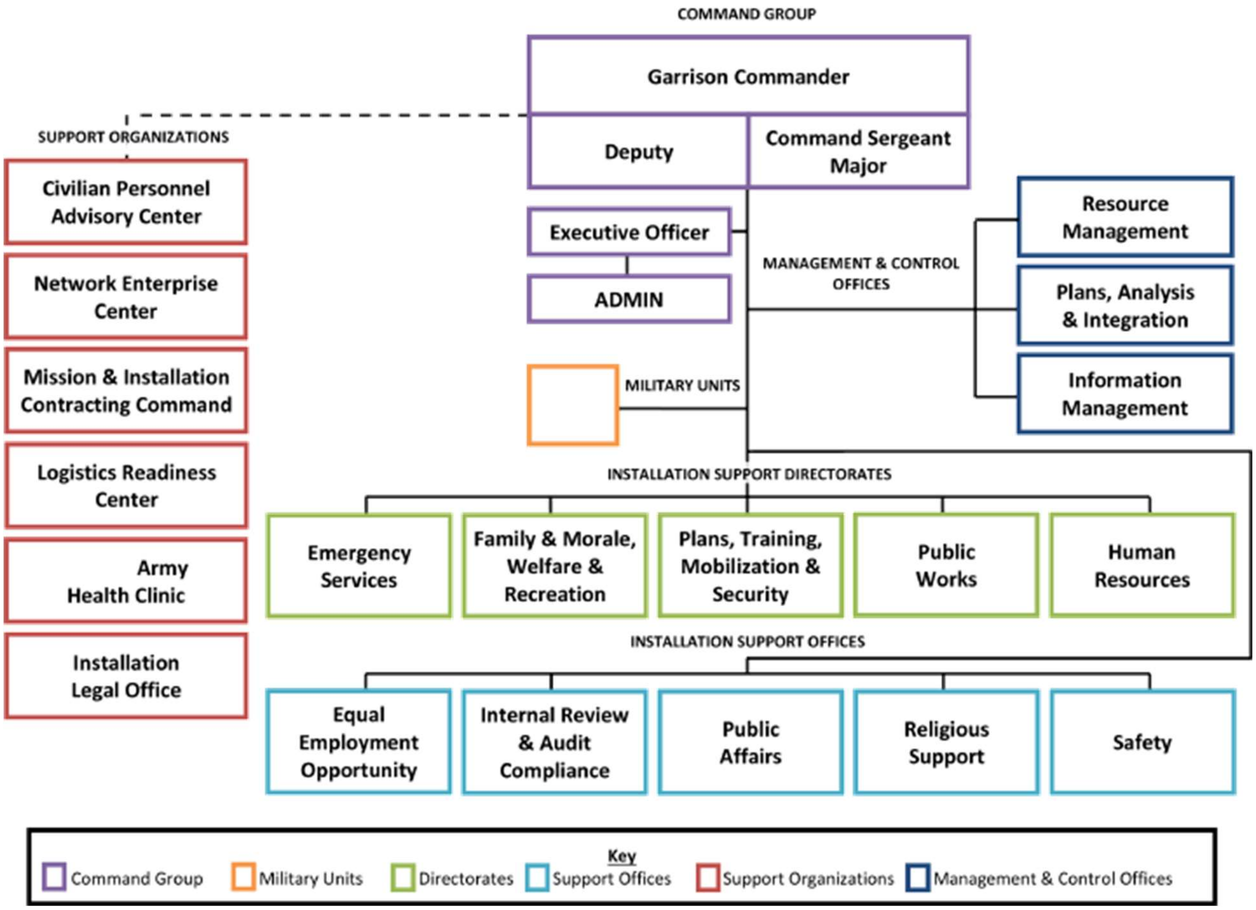
The Army emphasizes leadership training at all levels. However, despite these references and allusions to servant leadership in the Army profession, a university library military and government database search turned up no peer-reviewed articles on servant leadership in the military. However, Army-related periodicals where personnel, notably all soldiers, provided commentary on the importance of leadership and servant leadership within the ranks included several articles. A search of the Army's Combined Arms Center Research Library (https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/), which services many senior Army leader courses, turned up one similar article to the university search. The rest of the results were general leadership and servant leadership texts. Still, nothing specifically focused on servant leadership in relation to the Army. The NCO Journal on the Army University Press website (https://www.armyupress.army.mil/) included several soldier-specific articles. However, a search on this site for "civilian leadership" only turned up articles with references to the military's overall subordination to national civilian leadership. IMCOM published the Journal of Installation Management for several years, highlighting issues of importance to civilian leaders. Although the journal is now defunct, a few issues are available online (Allen, 2007). Outside of Army doctrinal publications, most of the literature on leadership in the Army focuses on military leadership, with little available related directly to Army civilian employees.

The Army Garrison Civilian Workforce Overseas

While this paper focuses on Department of the Army civilian employees living at garrisons in Europe, the five-year rule applies to all DoD civilian employees working overseas. As of December 2020, out of 766,808 total appropriated fund DoD civilian employees in the workforce, 16,960 of those employees were permanently stationed in Europe. Within the Army, those numbers fall to 254,887 and 7,691, respectively (DoD, 2020). The term "permanently stationed" means the employees live in the area, many under the five-year rule, and are not in the country for temporary assignments. Within an Army garrison, the five-year rule applies to appropriated fund garrison employees. Congress appropriates funds to pay salaries for these employees. The Army also employs non-appropriated fund employees, whose salaries are paid for by money earned from business operations, such as those within the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (FMWR). FMWR operates money-generating facilities such as bowling alleys and restaurants on Army installations. Non-appropriated fund employees do not fall under the five-year rule. Figure 4 illustrates the organizational structure of a typical Army garrison. However, the numbers and types of employees at each garrison vary based on the installation's size and the units and missions it supports.

Figure 4

Sample Garrison Organizational Chart



Note. A typical organizational chart for a U.S. Army garrison. Organizational charts may vary slightly based on an installation's size and mission, but this figure represents a standard garrison structure (U.S. Army Garrison Fort Lee, 2019).

Expatriate Motivations and Adjustment

Employees have different motivations for wanting to work overseas regardless of the expected employment-term length. Overseas assignments have varying levels of success based on several factors, including organizational support and family adjustment. No databases provided literature specifically addressing Army or U.S. government employees' motivations for applying to overseas assignments. However, literature does exist on corporate or "company-backed expatriates" and their motivations for working overseas. In a military and government database, the literature on employment in foreign countries was limited to a small number of articles on the overseas move experiences of non-military or government expatriates and their families, how company human resources judge the success of overseas assignments, and discussion of company-offered preparations and training. Business and psychology databases offered more than 1,500 results for overseas employment and employment in foreign countries. Approximately 14 of the 1,500 results had relevance and offered further references on expatriate motivation and employment success overseas. Career experience and impact on career were identified as significant motivators for expatriates to move overseas (Doherty et al., 2011; Pinto et al., 2012). While this motivation could also apply to government workers overseas, it may differ based on the return rights of DoD employees, which allows for little forward growth as the employee may have to return to a previous position. Employees hired from DoD positions in the states maintain statutory return rights to their stateside position after they have fulfilled their overseas rotation (U.S. House of Representatives, 2021). Employees promoted above their previous pay grade while overseas, or for other reasons, may not want to return to the position for which they have return rights. Those who moved overseas from a non-DoD or non-governmental organization do not have return rights to the states. However, they are placed in a priority placement program to facilitate their re-employment in the states. The Priority Placement Program comes with risks that the employee may be downgraded or must return to a geographic location or job not of their choosing. Outside of these two options, employees may, of course, apply for other positions within the states through regular federal employment or other employment systems. However, they would not qualify for positions in other overseas locations without first serving two years stateside, as the five-year rule applies to the entire time overseas regardless of location. Employees may request exceptions to this rule as outlined in their local command policy. As employees near their departure date to the States, some begin to look for their next position up to a year or more in advance to avoid exercising their return rights or placement in the Priority Placement Program. Early job acceptance can lead to them leaving much earlier than their hard return date. The rule may also hinder employees from being promoted overseas based on their time left in-country. So, while many expatriate employees accept overseas assignments based on promises or hopes of career advancement, the structure to support the execution of five-year rule rotations may not support the same types of benefits for civilian government employees working overseas. On top of these work-related considerations, employees also must consider personal and family adjustments when considering work assignments overseas.

Besides applying early for a return position in the States, many other factors can lead to employees returning earlier than their original three- to five-year agreements. Living overseas and away from extended family can cause homesickness and a desire to return to American social and cultural norms. Even if the employee adjusts well to the new culture, family adjustment is a leading factor in the decision to return to the States early (Bussin & Nienaber, 2016; Crowley-Henry & Heaslip, 2014; Cheng, 2002; Haour-Knipe, 2001; Solomon, 1996). In her study of families who moved overseas, Haour-Knipe (2001) identified language barriers, meeting new people, and even day-to-day tasks, such as shopping and accessing health care, as stressors for those moving overseas. She identified themes throughout the process, including the honeymoon phase, depression, and finally, a leveling out that took up to a year or more in some cases. The literature on expatriate moves also suggests the ability of families to adjust to the new culture as one of the main reasons for the failure of overseas moves (Crowley-Henry & Heaslip, 2014). Spouses who join their husband or wife overseas are cited as having difficulties adjusting if they have given up a career of their own to relocate. Often, job opportunities for spouses overseas are hard to come by, and not having a career of their own can leave the non-working spouse more isolated and resentful of being known as the employee's spouse instead of an employee in their own right (Solomon, 1996). De Cieri et al. (1991) described those expected to adjust well to life overseas as having "self-esteem, adequate and rewarding social support, and satisfying family relationships." They added that expatriate partners might have a more challenging time adjusting as they are often more isolated. The inability of employees and families to adjust to their new social situations and added job uncertainty brought on by the five-year rule leads some employees to leave voluntarily before the end of their term. As van Dierendonck et al. (2014) identified, uncertainty reduces employee well-being. If an employee chooses to complete only a three-year rotation and spends the first year adjusting and the third year thinking ahead to the next job, that leaves only one year the organization is hopefully getting the employee's entire focus on maintaining and improving the organization. This entire process goes against the servant leadership model. It leaves employees worrying about themselves and their families instead of focusing on the greater good of the organization, and especially in the case of leaders, focusing on developing others. This possible early and frequent turnover of positions in garrisons overseas impacts employees and their families and leaves its mark on the organization and its ability to provide services for its customers.

Benefits and Detriments to Employee Turnover

Employee turnover is a phenomenon that impacts all businesses and organizations. As such, a digital database search, limited to peer-reviewed articles related to employee turnover, brought up almost 5,000 results. In the last century, researchers have conducted more than 100 studies on employee turnover (Hom et al., 2017). Employee turnover falls into two main categories: voluntary turnover and, on the other side, involuntary turnover. Voluntary turnover is defined as those employees who choose to leave the organization for reasons of their own. Involuntary turnover is thrust upon the employee by the organization (Allen et al., 2010). One distinction is that in the literature reviewed, the references to involuntary turnover mainly focused on turnover brought on by the employee's poor performance or by overall staff reductions, not brought on by policies such as the five-year rule. Over the past 100 years, studies have differentiated between the types and effects of employee turnover in other ways, as well. Some of these differentiations, while not necessarily the same as turnover caused by the five-year rule, may still be able to inform questions within this study. Allen et al. (2010) discussed functional versus dysfunctional as well as avoidable versus unavoidable turnover. Functional turnover is that of easily replaced employees versus dysfunctional, which includes losing highly skilled or top-performing employees. Avoidable turnover could be caused by changing employment policies or other factors over which the organization has direct control. An example of unavoidable turnover could be caused by an employee leaving suddenly to move due to a spouse's job offer.

No matter the cause or the type, all organizations face consequences of employee turnover, which leads to added expense for the agency in rehiring and training new employees, lack of continuity, loss of institutional knowledge, and a decline in productivity (Lee et al., 2018; Allen et al., 2010). Literature on failed corporate expatriate forays overseas discusses impacts on organizations such as disrupted host nation relations, harm to organization reputation, the cost to the organization, a decline in productivity, and decreased morale (Cole and Nesbeth, 2014; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005). Campbell and Im (2016) highlight that top-performing public service employees also may pull more than their share of the weight in an organization and should be retained, a factor overlooked by the often one-size-fits-all, five-year rule. Research also has shown that turnover is negatively related to customer satisfaction and leads to inefficiency (Morrow & McElroy, 2007). When searching for articles specifically related to mandatory turnover, the number of search results shrinks to almost zero. Civil service turnover as a search query results in almost 150 articles focusing on turnover intentions, public service motivation, furloughs, and performance management. Based on the available literature, turnover and negative employee experiences overseas can impact the overall organization.

However, some literature takes a positive look at employee turnover and how companies can manage it to their benefit. Allen et al. (2010) encourage organizations not to believe the common misconceptions that all turnover is the same and that all turnover is bad. Companies should take a strategic look at their turnover and ensure they have effective strategies to deal with the rotation of employees and ensure they are not retaining the wrong ones. Manz et al. (2015) make a case for positive involuntary turnover and examine why employees want to stay with an organization versus why they want to leave. “Involuntary stayers” and those with job “misfits” may only want to stay in a position because of benefits or family reasons and ultimately foster negative situations and attitudes in the workplace (Manz et al., 2015). Hausknecht and Trevor (2011) and Hausknecht and Holwerda (2013) look at the impacts of turnover not at the individual level but within groups, work units, and entire organizations. Within an organization as a whole, the quantity of departures makes a difference in the impact. Five properties also differentiate between the levels of “leavers” (Hausknecht & Holwerda, 2013). The properties as listed by Hausknecht and Holwerda are leaver proficiencies, time dispersion, positional distribution, remaining member proficiencies, and newcomer proficiencies, all of which can have impacts at the collective level. “Planned departures may be less costly but are not cost-free, because even expected turnover implies some disruption, as well as social and human capital loss. Hence, turnover may not always be equally damaging, and organizations may take steps to mitigate its influence on performance” (Hausknecht & Holwerda, 2013, p. 221).

The DoD chooses these outcomes for its garrisons overseas by creating a revolving door of employees with the five-year rule regardless of their performance level. Whether employees choose to leave after their initial three years, leave involuntarily when their five-year limit is complete, or voluntarily before that due to promotion or inability to adjust, it all leads to the same end state: an organization in continuous upheaval. Based on the available literature, however, with proper strategic planning around collective turnover, the situation does not have to be all negative.

Qualitative Perspectives on Research

Qualitative research methods look at research problems from a more interpretive viewpoint than data-driven quantitative methods and seek to incorporate the subject’s voice on a matter. Qualitative methods are helpful in learning more about subjects on which little literature exists. Numerous definitions exist for qualitative research, and in their text on qualitative inquiry, Creswell and Poth (2018) state that qualitative methods address “the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 7). The analysis identifies patterns and themes in subject reports that researchers can use to interpret problems and broaden the knowledge of a topic. A qualitative research method was chosen for this study to understand better the experiences of leaders working in

Army garrisons overseas under the five-year rule. The researcher seeks to gain insight based on first-hand experiences as described by those leaders versus insight from data derived from a quantitative approach. The researcher approaches this qualitative topic, understanding that all study participants will assign their own meanings to their lived experiences with the five-year rule and how it has impacted them where they work and live. These varied descriptions are gathered within the qualitative process to construct a shared worldview of specific topics (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within qualitative research, Creswell and Poth (2018) outline five approaches most frequently seen in social sciences literature – narrative, grounded theory, ethnographic, case study, and phenomenological research. Narrative research examines the biographical experiences of individuals using one subject per study. The need to interview multiple subjects to obtain a broader understanding of the five-year rule precluded using a narrative approach. Grounded theory seeks to identify a theory based on information from interviews with a large number of people who have experienced an identified process or action. This method was passed over for methods that would provide a better initial understanding of the topic. Ethnographic research focuses on a population that shares a specific culture and seeks to learn more about their shared experiences. While many would support that the military is its own culture, this method focuses on the shared, learned ethnic behaviors of a specific group, which did not fit this topic. Case study research identifies specific bounded cases, from small groups to larger communities, to explore a concept or experience within that group. A case study approach may have fit this study, but defining a specific case, whether it be one person, one installation, or one command, proved to be a challenge.

Finally, the method chosen for this study, phenomenological research, seeks to find the shared meaning of a specific phenomenon or concept as described by individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. While each qualitative method has its strengths, phenomenology proved a good fit for exploring the lived experiences of leaders under the five-year rule, as the primary criterion for subject participation is simply having the experience of the phenomenon of interest for the study. The main criterion for participation is a phenomenological study – experiencing the phenomenon – may be straightforward; however, the history of the method has its roots in philosophy and stems from a more complicated background.

A Phenomenological Approach

The roots of phenomenological research reach back to German mathematician and philosopher Edmund Husserl, who is considered the father of phenomenology. He first used the term in his 1901 work "Logical Investigations," which drew the interest of his future student Martin Heidegger. Credited as one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century, Heidegger is known for surpassing his teacher and expanding his ideas (Harman, 2011). Husserl and Heidegger are the driving forces behind the two leading schools of thought for phenomenology. However, neither developed the methodology associated with the study today. Phenomenology as a philosophy and as a methodology can be broken down into two main types – transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology, following the works of Husserl and Heidegger, respectively (Peoples, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2017; Harman, 2011; Dowling, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Husserl's and Heidegger's are the two foundational philosophical frameworks used to structure phenomenological research (Peoples, 2021). In both frameworks, "phenomenology is the essence of something as it is described and how the essence of something is described in terms of how it functions in the lived experience and how it shows itself in consciousness as an object of reflection" (Peoples, 2021, p. 28).

Husserl's transcendental phenomenology takes a fresh look at concepts by setting aside all preconceived notions of the chosen subject and simply presenting the description of experiences without interpretation. Looking at something with intentionality is a central theme in transcendental phenomenology. Setting aside one's judgments is referred to in the literature as the epoché process, reduction, or bracketing of prior assumptions. In his review of transcendental phenomenology, Moustakas (1994) acknowledges his inability to set aside all preconceptions but asserts that the value of the epoché process lies in that "it inspires one to examine biases and enhances one's openness even if a perfect and pure state is not achieved" (p. 60). Peoples (2021) describes using Husserl's framework as an approach as like "being a stranger in a strange land" (p. 30). Because Husserl's framework calls for a fresh, unbiased approach to a phenomenon, it does not allow for the inclusion of other frameworks within the methodology (Peoples, 2021).

Heidegger's view was that people could not remain detached while digging into the essence of an experience or while applying meaning to their interpretations (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Looking at phenomenology and preconception from the hermeneutic approach, van Manen (1997) stated that "if we simply try to forget or ignore what we already 'know,' we might find that the presupposition persistently creeps back into our reflections" (p. 46). A central term in Heidegger's philosophy is "Dasein," a German word that translates as “to be there.” Instead of setting one’s preconceived notions aside, as in bracketing, Heidegger proposed the hermeneutic circle, which revises biases in a process of understanding based on new insight. New information increases understanding (Peoples, 2021). To continue the metaphor of being a “stranger in a strange land,” using hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher becomes a stranger in a strange land, but “one may have some pre-understanding and can incorporate it as appropriate” (Peoples, 2011, p. 33). Because the researcher has more than a passing acquaintance with the five-year rule and lives overseas under the policy’s purview, this study will follow along the lines of Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology. Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology also allows for the inclusion of other frameworks, such as servant leadership theory, which adds to the lenses from which to review experiences (Peoples, 2021).

Phenomenology as a methodology is a retrospective look back to give voice to lived experiences. Research can be gathered by conducting interviews, soliciting written descriptions of experiences, and observing participants in their element. As van Manen (2017) states, “There is nothing unusually ‘rich,’ ‘deep,’ ‘hidden,’ or ‘mysterious’ about the living of lived experience—until we take up a phenomenological questioning—until we ask, ‘What is this (phenomenon) lived experience like?’” (p. 811). Of note, phenomenology focuses only on experience, and questions are limited to those that explore those experiences and not opinions, perceptions, and perspectives (Peoples, 2021). Creswell and Poth (2018) outline the defining features of phenomenology to include identifying a single concept for study. In the case of this study, the phenomenon to be studied is the five-year rule and, more specifically, leaders' experiences while living under this policy while working at Army garrisons overseas. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the researcher will seek to transform leaders' experiences into, as van Manen (1997) describes it, "a textual expression of its essence" (p. 36). Proponents have outlined numerous approaches to phenomenological studies through the years, debating the purity, or lack of, for each approach. Dowling (2007) notes the absence of phenomenological methods in some literature with only a technique such as bracketing hinting that the study has phenomenological ties. Citing a similar lack of analytic methodology, Crist and Tanner (2003) laid out their process to include the flexibility to shift the aim of the study as new perspectives emerge. This characteristic of emergent design, which is common throughout qualitative methods, allows researchers to adapt and engage best practices to obtain information (Peoples, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sample size for a phenomenological study can vary from a few participants up to 25. The sample is deemed adequate when interview responses begin to show similarities and redundant answers (Crist & Tanner, 2003; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

Chapter Two laid out scholarly research on the five-year rule, servant and Army leadership, the Army workforce, expatriate adjustment to living overseas, employee turnover, and phenomenological research. Where scholarly perspectives were lacking in regard to the five-year rule, media from newspapers, blogs, and other public sources was used to supplement. Chapter Three will detail the chosen methodology of phenomenology and how its hermeneutical circle will be used to identify current knowledge and build upon that.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Top leaders within the Army released the Army People Strategy (DA, 2019b), prioritizing people as their greatest strength. The strategy seeks to acquire, develop, employ, and retain talent to create a ready, professional, diverse, and integrated Army team. However, at Army garrisons overseas, the organization's five-year rule may negatively impact organizational effectiveness and impede the talent development and employee retention the strategy seeks to achieve. This research is to conduct a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study to discover leaders' experiences on how the five-year rule and the time needed to assimilate to their new positions and a new culture impacts their effectiveness within their positions at Army garrisons overseas and the organization's overall effectiveness. The qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study will discover leaders' experience with the five-year rule and its impact on organizational effectiveness at overseas U.S. Army garrisons. While no scholarly literature was found on this scenario, research has been conducted on how voluntary and involuntary turnover impacts organizations. Although of note, the involuntary turnover studied focuses primarily on terminated employees, not those employees leaving due to organization-imposed term lengths. Research on expatriate employment overseas gives some insight into employees' motivations to move and how they adjust or fail to adjust to a new culture and work environment. However, none of this research speaks specifically to the Army's five-year rule. The Army has conducted workforce surveys about thoughts on overseas tour extensions and the five-year rule, but the researcher could not access this survey data. This study will include interviews with current directors at U.S. Army garrisons overseas to determine their experiences with the five-year rule and its impact on their organization. Because of the lack of literature on the specific topic and the availability of other data sources, the researcher chose a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to learn more about leaders' lived experiences with the five-year rule and to discover further areas for research based on their responses. This section will address the research questions, the design of the study, the participants, and data collection. It also will provide a timeline and reflections of the researcher on the choice of this topic.

Research Question

To further explore the impacts of the five-year rule at U.S. Army garrisons overseas, this study will explore the following research question: What are Army garrison leaders' lived experiences moving overseas under the purview of the five-year rule and taking over an organization that provides services to soldiers, civilians, and families, and employs others also under the five-year rule? The aim will be to identify, from the perspective of the organization's leaders, what types of impacts the five-year rule has on employees who provide services to units, soldiers, and their families stationed at Army garrisons overseas. It will also aim to identify how well leaders feel their respective offices hold up under the constant rotation of employees. After identifying the impacts, solutions can be identified and implemented to mitigate any issues or enhance any benefits. Further data will support or discourage the continuation of the five-year rule and provide future topics for study.

Proposed Research Design

For this study, the researcher will use a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to explore leaders' lived experiences with the identified phenomenon of the five-year rule. In order to acknowledge that the researcher lives overseas under the five-year rule and may have worked with several of the study participants, the study will take a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, which acknowledges researchers' biases and that they may not remain detached while applying meaning to their interpretations of participants experiences (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). In line with Heidegger's hermeneutic circle, biases will be revised in a process of understanding based on new insight. Understanding of the phenomenon will increase as new information is introduced (Peoples, 2021). Phenomenological research seeks to turn participants' perceptions of their lived experiences into text to identify common experiences. No set method exists for conducting phenomenological studies. However, guidelines exist and allow for the flexibility to shift the aim of the study if new perspectives emerge and to adapt and engage best practices to obtain information (Peoples, 2021; Creswell& Poth, 2018; Crist & Tanner, 2003).

Participants and Data Collection

Data collection activities will be examined using what Creswell and Poth (2018) refer to as the data collection circle, which includes locating the site and individuals, gaining access and developing rapport, sampling purposefully, collecting data, recording information, minimizing field issues, storing data securely, and attending to ethical considerations. Each section will consider ethical issues and ways to minimize field issues.

Locating the Site and Individuals

The population for this study will be leaders from the seven U.S. Army garrisons in Europe. For this study, selecting individuals who have experience with the phenomenon is more important to the study than the sites where the participants are located (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Based on this criterion, the leaders will be from a pool of approximately 12 individuals per garrison. Within these garrisons, the specific leaders interviewed will be the directors of garrison directorates and special staff offices. Those offices include Public Works; Human Resources; Emergency Services; Resource Management; Religious Support; Safety; Public Affairs; Morale, Welfare and Recreation; and Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security; Plans, Analysis, and Integration; Information Management; and Equal Employment Opportunity. While there are administrative differences between directorates and special staff offices, for this study, all subordinate offices within the garrison will be referred to generally as directorates. Except for Emergency Services and Religious Support, which have active-duty officers at the helm, all of these directorates, with few exceptions, are led by U.S. civilian employees who fall under the five-year rule. This study will seek to include interviews with the civilian directors of each of these offices, except Religious Support and the Directorate of Emergency Services. Army lieutenant colonels, who do not fall under the five-year rule, oversee the Religious Support Office and Directorate of Emergency Services. For this reason, these offices will be excluded. Army colonels oversee the garrisons and have civilian deputies who fall under the five-year rule. These deputy garrison commanders will also be included in the sample to provide insight into the organization as a whole.

The total possible sample size is approximately 70 participants, 10 from each garrison. The sample pool may vary based on employee demographics. For instance, a few offices outside of those previously mentioned have local national directors who do not fall under the five-year rule and would not be included. The sample size for phenomenological studies can vary from a few participants up to 25. The sample is adequate when responses show similarities and redundant answers (Crist & Tanner, 2003; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study aims to interview at least 12 participants chosen for this study based on their employment status at Army garrisons overseas. The total sample pool is approximately 84 participants; however, study participation is voluntary, so members of the sample population may choose not to participate, thereby shrinking the sample pool. In line with phenomenological methods, the sample size could be curtailed before reaching 12 participants or expanded beyond 12 participants based on the similarities and redundancies within the participant responses.

The researcher identified two possible ethical concerns based on the site selection: participant identification based on job-specific responses and possible previous interactions with the researcher. Because of the relatively small size of the sample pool and the nature of the interactions between the seven garrisons, the results will not include garrison names to help maintain participant anonymity. Generic descriptors, such as those of services or amenities, may be included in the study based on participant responses to questions. However, every effort will be made to keep descriptors generic unless doing so will change the meaning or intent of the participant's response. This concern will be made clear to participants as a part of the IRB consent process. The second possible concern regards the researcher, who was previously employed in a leadership position at one of the garrisons and now works for the headquarters element, which oversees the garrisons in Europe. While it will be possible that the researcher has previously worked with participants, the work interaction was never a supervisor-subordinate relationship, which could create power concerns, but on a peer-to-peer or supporting staff level.

Gaining Access and Developing Rapport

In addition to seeking IRB approval, the researcher has approval and support from the garrisons' higher headquarters to conduct interviews with deputy garrison commanders and garrison directors. A memo or email of support will be presented to possible study subjects to encourage participation. Because of their work and requirements for approvals within the military to access participants and discuss certain issues, participants may be hesitant to participate in the study. The memo of support is intended to reassure participants that participation was sought and granted to conduct the study. One concern is that the memo will be seen as a directive to participate and not merely a show of support. The memo (see Appendix B) will highlight the voluntary nature of study participation, which will also be reiterated in the IRB consent process to alleviate participant concerns. The researcher also hopes that her position within the Army and her experience in a garrison environment will help build rapport and encourage participants to share their experiences. They may not be as open to sharing with someone outside of the U.S. Army environment.

Sampling Purposefully

This study will research the phenomenon of the five-year rule. Criterion sampling was used to ensure possible participants could speak to their lived experiences of this phenomenon, as "the important point is to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 160). In addition to their experience living under the five-year rule in Europe, the researcher chose garrison directors and deputy garrison commanders as the sample pool for this study based on their experience as leaders within the U.S. Army and on their oversight of directorate services and directorate employees who also may be impacted by the five-year rule. Garrison commanders were not included in the sample as they are active-duty military and do not fall under the five-year rule. Deputy garrison commanders were included instead because of their direct supervisory and day-to-day interactions with garrison directors and overall knowledge of garrison operations. The researcher chose garrisons in Europe for the study based on accessibility and not on any other specific characteristics. Each of the garrisons in Europe supports a varied population, which may impact the nature or scope of the participants' positions. However, all civilian participants to be interviewed fall under the five-year rule and, therefore, meet the study criteria. This study is not specifically looking for differences in experience based on location. Nevertheless, any differences in experience discovered based specifically on the nature of the mission at different garrisons or other garrison-specific characteristics could provide opportunities for further research.

Using her university email account, the researcher will invite identified participants to participate in the study via an email to their military email addresses. These addresses will be used and obtained with permission from the researcher's employer. As an alternate distribution method, email invitations could be sent from the researcher through her chain of command to the deputy garrison commanders and their staff. The email invitation will also include a memo of support from the garrisons' higher headquarters to conduct the study and the Institutional Review Board consent form. See Appendix A for a sample email invitation, Appendix B for the memo of support text, Appendix D for the IRB consent form, and Appendix E for the participant bill of rights. The researcher will follow up via phone if needed and schedule participants for a one-hour block of time to complete an interview. Before the interview, the researcher will request participants digitally sign and email back the IRB consent form. The researcher will also review the form with participants before conducting interviews to answer all participant questions. The researcher also will accept email acknowledgment agreeing to the terms of IRB consent in lieu of a signed form. The researcher will not conduct interviews with participants who fail to sign and return the form or acknowledge acceptance of the terms via email.

Collecting Data, Recording Information, and Storing Data Securely

Collecting data, recording information, and storing data securely will be discussed together as these three elements of the data collection circle are closely related.

Interviews for this study will be conducted via video or teleconference using the Microsoft Teams platform. The researcher will send invitations and conduct the interviews using her university Microsoft Teams account. The researcher chose this platform because government employees can access Microsoft Teams via their personal and work computers, and the platform allows for audio recording. As a backup, in case of network connection or other issues, the researcher will request a telephone number so the interview can be conducted by telephone if need be. Interview audio will be recorded on Teams to ensure participant responses are available verbatim. Interview files will be downloaded to the researcher's password-protected Dropbox folder and deleted from Teams upon completion of each interview. The researcher is the only person with access to this account. Backup recordings of the audio will be recorded on the researcher's phone and deleted upon confirmation the recordings on Teams were successful. In the case a telephone interview is conducted, the interview will be conducted using a speakerphone in a private location and recorded on two separate devices. Recordings will be deleted from the recording devices once digital versions are secured online in the researcher's Dropbox account. One recording of each interview will be uploaded to the researcher's Dropbox account for transcription. The researcher will label interviews by number, with the corresponding participant data stored separately in an encrypted spreadsheet to protect participant identity. Identifying data will include the participant's name and contact information, work position and location, and interview date. Interview recordings and the participant spreadsheet will be stored in separately locked files within the researcher's online Dropbox account. Any written notes taken by the researcher will be identified by respondent number only and stored separately from digital files or shredded if not needed for follow-up analysis. The researcher will inform participants of data collection, recording, and storage procedures before completing the interview via the IRB consent process. At the end of each interview, subjects will be reminded to contact the researcher with any follow-up questions or concerns.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the semi-structured interview questions will be pilot-tested with a non-sample participant for relevance, neutrality, clarity, and detail before being used with the sample participants. Semi-structured questions will allow the researcher to cover relevant topics while leaving the discussion open to other topics that may become relevant to the study (Peoples, 2021). Questions will cover, but the discussion will not be limited to, directors' motivations for seeking overseas employment; their personal experiences with the five-year rule and how they adjusted to moving overseas; how they perceived their directorates were functioning when they took over; how much turnover they have had within their staff; how they feel turnover has affected their teams' forming, storming, norming, and performing; and how they feel their directorate interacts with other directorates based on turnover. Questions were developed to solicit responses about subjects' lived experiences. While follow-up questions may be asked by the researcher to clarify the meaning behind a response or to solicit further details, the researcher will be cognizant not to commiserate with the subject or ask leading questions based on personal experience with the phenomenon. See Appendix F for a complete list of proposed interview questions. The researcher will schedule and conduct follow-up interviews as necessary to clarify any gaps or unclear information in the interview data after transcription is complete.

Data Analysis

Interviews will be transcribed using Otter.ai, an automated transcription service, and reviewed for accuracy before being sent to participants for further verification by member checking (Peoples, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participant identification will not be included with transcripts, and references of the participant's names within the transcripts will be changed to an assigned participant identifier, such as "Director 1." Besides masking participant names, efforts will be made to minimize participant identification by job title or work location, as mentioned in responses. Because of the small size of the sample pool and the nature of the interactions between the seven garrisons, the garrisons will not be identified. Other generic descriptors, such as those of services or amenities, may be included in the study based on participant responses to questions. However, every effort will be made to keep descriptors generic unless doing so will change the meaning or intent of the participant's response. Transcriptions will be processed as interviews are completed and not held until the end to be transcribed at once. Analyzing interviews after they occur will also allow the researcher to adapt future interviews to explore any topics that may arise.

Phenomenological analysis calls for researchers to immerse themselves in the data. For this reason and to have two analyses for comparison, the researcher will use MAXQDA software to analyze interviews as well as conduct an analysis by hand. Analysis requires taking in the whole of participants' descriptions of their experiences to identify the phenomenon's essence. A third party will transcribe the interviews. However, the researcher will listen to each recording, review the transcriptions for accuracy, and refamiliarize herself with the content of each.

Peoples (2021) identifies six steps for analyzing phenomenological data: read transcripts and delete irrelevant information, identify preliminary meaning units, create final meaning units, organize experiences thematically in line with survey questions, create general narratives for each survey question, and create a general description using the major themes. Using the hermeneutic circle requires documentation throughout the six steps of analysis as the researcher continually renews their understanding of the phenomenon (Peoples, 2021). "Each participant's experiences are translated through the researcher by comparison and contrast of accounts with the accounts of other participants discussing their experiences of the same phenomenon" (Peoples, 2021, p. 64). To document this process, the researcher will journal to note reflections on the data and changes to preconceptions.

Besides using both computer-based and hand coding, the researcher will employ two methods for validity and reliability: reflexivity and member checking (Peoples, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reflexivity requires the researcher to disclose biases and understanding of the topic from the outset of the study. To accomplish this, the researcher will provide written answers to the interview questions prior to interviewing subjects. The second method, member checking, will be completed by providing subjects with a copy of their interview transcript for review.

Timeline and Reflections

Upon approval of the proposal for this study in 2021, the researcher sought Institutional Review Board approval and scheduled interviews with directors. The topic for this Dissertation in Practice presented itself as the researcher moved to become a part of a garrison community overseas. While not immediately identifiable to a new employee excited about an overseas position, the lack of continuity and a revolving door of employees becomes more apparent as one settles in. Employee turnover literature overwhelmingly points to the numerous downfalls of turnover. The Army itself promotes growing leaders and a servant-leader style that promotes the well-being of its staff. Within the continental U.S., civilian employees are the continuity within the organization as military members move in and out of positions. However, using the five-year rule overseas, the Army goes against the grain by creating an atmosphere where its own policies create civilian turnover. The researcher had a vested interest in this topic as an overseas employee but included the input of garrison leaders to understand more deeply how this practice impedes or enhances their garrison's mission. While the researcher does not expect to change policies with this study, she does hope to provide a research-based look at the practice for leaders to consider as they continue to implement the Army's People Strategy and other people-focused initiatives.

Summary

The methodology presented in Chapter Three was approved by the Creighton University Institutional Review Board and Army Human Research Protections Office and used to conduct interviews with identified participants in October 2022. Results of these interviews are presented in Chapter Four, with discussion of the findings and implications of this research and possibilities for future study presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

As stated in Chapter One, this study seeks to learn more about the phenomenon of the five-year rule or employment term limits for some U.S. federal civilian employees overseas. In particular, this study uses hermeneutical phenomenology to look at leaders' experiences with the five-year rule and the impacts it may have on the effectiveness of their organization, the U.S. Army Installation Management Command Europe. This chapter will discuss how participants were recruited and interviewed for this study based on the methodology presented in Chapter Three. It will outline participant demographics and how their responses were analyzed using qualitative data analysis software, hand coding, and hermeneutical phenomenology. Literature review topics, including motivations and adjustments for living overseas, leadership and the Army People Strategy, and impacts on organizational effectiveness, informed three sections of questions in the interview protocol. Findings are broken down into these three broad topics, with finer points clarified within each section. Table 2 outlines the breakdown of topics based on the interview protocol.

Setting

The Creighton University Institutional Review Board and Army Human Research Protections Office approved this study. An initial email was sent to possible participants by the chief of staff of IMCOM-Europe to email distribution groups, including leaders at several levels within the organization. The initial email let leaders know they would receive an email from the researcher and that they were allowed to participate, but participation was strictly voluntary. Several respondents volunteered directly to the researcher after this request. The researcher then sent follow-up email invitations to email distribution groups, which narrowed the pool of recipients to candidates within leadership roles at the garrisons. Because the initial email went out to a larger group, several respondents fell outside of the initially identified pool but are still in leadership positions, and this added to the breadth of experience in the study results.

Participant Demographics

The researcher set out to interview at least 12 participants for this study. Out of 21 interviews, the results present responses from 20 participants from seven garrisons and IMCOM-Europe region headquarters, with 18 male and two female leaders. Table 1 provides a breakdown of participant demographics. One participant was excluded from the results analysis because they were not in a leadership position, and their responses deviated significantly from the interview protocol. Because of the relatively small size of the organization, participant titles, directorates, and sites will not be used unless pertinent to the results or discussion of those results. Of note, participants were interviewed from directorates not initially included in the methodology due to their staff makeup. Surprisingly to the researcher, these leaders had interesting insights into the phenomenon of the five-year rule, adding to the understanding of the five-year rule in line with hermeneutical phenomenology. Leaders had varied amounts of federal civilian service ranging from five years to more than 30. Only five of the 20 had not served previously in the U.S. armed forces. Those with previous military service served anywhere from four years up to retirement at more than 30 years.

All but two participants had previously spent time overseas, not necessarily in Europe. Overseas time included deployments, being stationed overseas as a military service member, or living as a civilian employee overseas. One participant had been living overseas for approximately 21 years, and another for 13 years as of the time of the interviews. The other participants' time overseas for their current tours ranged from five years to three months. Most participants moved overseas with family members or a significant other. Two were single, and two had no children. The ages of the participants' children ranged from elementary age to adult. Some participants moved overseas with their children, who are still here. Other children had returned to the States for school or to live with another parent. Some participants have adult children in the States who never moved overseas with them during their current rotation. Demographic data was pulled from questions one through five of the interview protocol, and details were not gathered on spouse and family member status beyond this. However, one family aspect that came to light that was not specifically asked about in the original interview protocol was the nationality of the participants' spouses. Of the 20 participants, nine had foreign-born significant others. Discussion on this point will be included in Chapter Five.

Table 1

Participant Demographics and Organizations (n=20)

Demographic	N	Percentage
Gender		
Male	18	90%
Female	2	10%
Directorate or Office		
Directorate of Emergency Services (DES)	2	10%

Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR)	1	5%
Directorate of Human Resources (DHR)	2	10%
Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security (DPTMS)	2	10%
Directorate of Public Works (DPW)	1	5%
Directorate of Resource Management (DRM)	1	5%
Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)	1	5%
Garrison Command Team Members	4	20%
Headquarters Staff	3	15%
Public Affairs Office (PAO)	2	10%
Safety Office	1	5%
Garrison/Headquarters		
USAG Ansbach	1	5%
USAG Bavaria	5	25%
USAG Benelux	2	10%
USAG Italy	1	5%
USAG Rheinland-Pfalz	4	20%
USAG Stuttgart	3	15%
USAG Wiesbaden	1	5%
IMCOM-Europe	3	15%
Previously lived overseas		
Yes	18	90%
No	2	10%
Previous military experience		
Yes	15	75%
No	5	25%
Foreign-born significant other		
Yes	9	45%
No	11	55%

Data Collection

The researcher conducted interviews over Microsoft Teams and recorded them on Teams and a backup recording device. The recordings were uploaded to Otter, an online automated tool, which transcribed each recording. The researcher listened to each recording to prepare the data for coding, comparing it with the automated transcriptions. The recording review was essential as the service transcribed some of the audio incorrectly, which changed the meaning in several cases, such as transcribing “can’t” as “can.” It also had trouble transcribing military acronyms and other organization-specific language. During the transcription review, duplicate words and filler phrases, such as “like” and “you know,” were removed from the text as long as they did not change the sentence's meaning. Once the transcription review was complete, the researcher sent each transcript back to the participant for member checking, a participant validation process that allowed leaders to review their responses or add comments within a limited time frame. They were given just under two weeks to respond. Six respondents approved their transcripts as provided; six approved with minor editing changes that did not change the meaning of the content; one was able to clarify sections of the transcript that were unclear due to the quality of the recording; one respondent had an email out-of-office response set due to a permanent change of station move; and six participants did not respond.

MAXQDA2022, a qualitative analysis software package, was used to code the interviews. During the initial round of basic coding, questions one through five were added as demographic variables. The researcher then added codes for questions six through 16 from the interview protocol and began to add additional codes for other themes as they emerged, such as “OTEX approvals” and “hiring process.” In line with the process of the hermeneutical circle, the researcher began by coding her own responses to the interview questions, which were recorded prior to conducting interviews with respondents as a record of initial thoughts and assumptions on the phenomenon. For the rest of the basic coding process, interviews were coded chronologically by participant numbers. For the second round of fine coding, interviews were placed in the order in which they were conducted in order to track "aha" moments and to track the knowledge as it was added to the researcher's already established notions on the subject. Fine coding for each question was done by hand.

Findings

In the first section of findings, the researcher reviewed questions six through eight, which asked respondents about their motivations and adjustment time for moving overseas. The second section will focus on questions nine and 10, which asked about leadership styles and the Army People Strategy. The third section includes questions 11 through 14 regarding leaders' experiences with how their offices function and questions 15 and 16 about their career trajectories and that of their employees.

Table 2

Topical Breakdown of Interview Protocol

Demographic questions
1. What is your current position and when did you move overseas for this position? 2. How many family members, of what ages, are living overseas with you? Are any still in the states, for instance, children in college? 3. Have you lived overseas before? If so, when and for how long? 4. Are you prior service? If so, for how long? 5. How long have you been a federal civilian employee? An Army civilian employee?
Motivations and Adjustments for Living Overseas
6. What was your motivation for seeking overseas employment? 7. Talk to me about your experience moving for this rotation? 8. Personally, how have you and your family adjusted to life overseas? Can you give me some examples?

Leadership and the Army People Strategy
9. Talk to me about your leadership style? What are some of the attributes you embody as a leader? Can you provide examples? 10. The Army has a "People First" Strategy – how do you feel your leadership style falls in line with this strategy and does the Army help you meet this strategy as a leader?
Impacts on Organizational Effectiveness
11. How many employees do you oversee and how many fall under the five-year rule? 12. When you came on board in your directorate, what was your experience as far as how your directorate functioned? 13. What has been your experience with staff rotations while you've been in charge of your directorate? 14. Talk to me about how your staff functions internally and with other directorates – what has been your experience with your teams' forming, storming, norming, and performing? 15. As a leader can you talk to me about how the five-year rule impacts your career trajectory and that of your employees? Can you provide examples? 16. What is your plan for your next position?

Motivations and Adjustments for Living Overseas

Questions six through eight were formulated based on the literature on corporate expatriate motivations and experiences working overseas. No literature was found specifically on U.S. government employee motivations and experiences; however, they were found to be similar to those of corporate expatriates. Career experience was noted as a significant motivator for expatriates (Doherty et al., 2011; Pinto et al., 2012), which also rang true with government employees. Adjustment periods were also similar, possibly shorter, with many government employees having previous moving experience during military service. Table 3 provides an overview of participant motivations for moving and their experience with the process.

Table 3

Motivations and Moving Experiences

Motivations to Move

Response	N
Professional development	8
Family	10
Experience overseas culture	14

Moving Experience (N: 20)

Response	N	Percentage
Positive	7 (*4)	35%
Negative	10 (*6)	50%
Neutral	3	15%

** Expressed acceptance of dealing with moving process whether positive or negative*

Motivations to Move

Leaders' motivations for moving overseas came down to three categories – professional development opportunities, such as taking a promotion or broadening assignment; family reasons, such as having a foreign-born spouse or extended family overseas; and wanting to experience overseas culture. When discussing overseas culture, respondents discussed perceived safety issues of living stateside, community aspects and differences between installations stateside and overseas, wanting to experience another culture, and travel. Professional development was stated as a reason eight times. Family reasons were cited 10 times, and overseas culture was mentioned by 14 of the 20 respondents.

Experiences Moving

When asked about their experiences moving overseas, participant responses were coded into three main categories: positive, negative, and neutral. Seven of the 20 participants were recorded as having a positive experience. In positive responses, the participants expressed that the move was good, and they experienced few issues, such as Participant 6, who said, “I was fortunate in my transition over here because I had great sponsorship. I mean, everything rests with the sponsorship … having never been OCONUS was a unique experience for me, but the transition was smooth because of good sponsorship.” Participant 16, who was unique in the fact that they did not ship household goods, expressed a positive experience:

> We packed up two suitcases apiece, and off we came. And that’s what we brought to Europe. The plan was to find a place where we didn’t have to buy a whole lot for the house and buy what we needed as we moved along. So, it’s worked out that way. We got a fully furnished apartment, and then we’ve purchased a few things over the last few months, but for the most part, we just came with what was in our packs.

Three participants provided neutral responses, which included fact-based information about topics such as travel time, time to get orders, and shipping household goods, but did not provide opinions on whether the experience was positive or negative.

Ten of the 20 participants expressed negativity about their moving experiences. Respondents expressed having bad experiences with the hiring process, timeline to complete the move, lack of or bad communication with hiring officials, little or no contact with sponsors, official passport issues, and issues with movers. Participant 19 said:

> I don’t really know where to point blame. I don’t know if it was with the supervisor or with the sponsor. But getting the information I needed to come over was very, very difficult. The only reason I kept going is because I served in the military for a long time, and I knew how to overcome most of these obstacles on my own, bypassing it. But if I had never been, if I had never worked for the military before, I probably would have given up quickly into the process. I even thought about quitting on it. But I was determined to make sure I got here for this opportunity because I really wanted it.

When coding participants’ moving experiences using positive, negative, and neutral sentiments, another aspect was noted in 10 of the 20 responses, which was classified as acceptance. Whether the experience was coded as negative (6) or positive (4), these 10 respondents also expressed experience and a level of acceptance, with the process having completed prior moves while in the service or as a civilian. Some expressed sentiments of acceptance of bureaucratic processes. Participant 20 stated:

> You have to know you’re going to experience a great deal of personal disruption in your life when you move overseas. And you’ll have to go through a period of time where you’re living out of temporary quarters, where you’re living in transition. There’s a lot of hassles with that I don’t think anybody really likes or enjoys, but you kind of accept that as part of the challenge of working overseas.

Another theme that emerged in the discussion of moving overseas and in other areas was the cost to employees moving overseas. Much of this discussion focused on the taxation of civilian overseas moves, which began in 2018 and added thousands of dollars in tax costs for employees due to their PCS moving benefits. After paying out-of-pocket for the moving taxes, civilians can claim the Relocation Income Tax Allowance (RITA), which reimburses employees for “substantially all of the additional Federal, State, and local income taxes incurred as a result of receiving taxable travel income” but is also taxable (Defense Finance and Accounting Service, 2021). Participant 17 reported paying almost $11,000 in taxes out-of-pocket and being reimbursed almost $6,000 using RITA. The cost of the move and resultant taxes vary according to the number of people in the household and the weight of the household goods moved overseas. Other costs mentioned included having to sell items that could not be shipped, such as one participant who had expected to stay in Germany but was moved back to the States under the five-year rule and had to sell a car with German specifications that he had expected to keep, before moving stateside. Another participant mentioned the costs associated with outfitting a new home, including possibly needing new furniture, appliances, and even light fixtures in some homes. Another participant mentioned the financial burdens, in particular, on more junior employees, such as GS-5 or GS-7 staff, who, in 2023, have base salaries of just more than $32,000 and $40,000 per year, respectively. Another piece of the cost is paying housing deposits to landlords, which is two to three months’ rent. Depending on the cost of rent, the deposit can be upwards of $5,000. To help defray these costs, civilians are offered interest-free loans of one year’s advance pay. The loan payments are then deducted from their first-year paychecks while working overseas. The participant who spoke about the financial burdens on his junior staff mentioned he'd also had employees curtail their assignments or decline job offers because of the financial costs associated with the move and living overseas. Participant 6 said:

> I can't tell you how many people I've actually gone through the process; I've even got firm offers, and then they say, 'No, I'm not going to do that. I just found out that if I move over there – I got that it's PCS and relocation – but then if I move 15,000 pounds of household goods, I'm going to pay $5,000 to $6,000 in taxes. And then I found out that, thanks to the sponsor you assigned, they let me know that once I do find a place to rent, we have to put two or three months monthly deposit, three months into a security deposit. So, we find a place for $2,000, and now we're having to put $6,000 in a rental deposit. I'm not going to spend $12,000 to take a job, and even though we tried telling them, 'Hey, you know, we offer salary advance here. So, it's a tax-free loan, basically. You pay back monthly, within one year of your arrival, to help offset those costs.' They're saying, 'I'm still not doing that. I'm not going to risk that.' So, I get those declinations.

When discussing their adjustments to moving overseas, most of the participants expressed some frustrations with processes, but none reported significant adjustment issues. Participant 4 summed it up well:

> I mean, PCS is very hard, no matter what. I had to make to-do lists, and plan things, and coordinate things. We eventually get them all done, but it can be very, very frustrating. But for us, we wanted to be here, so we just dealt with it.

Some examples of frustrations people met when they moved included processes such as vehicle registration and finding housing, shopping on and off post, language barriers, finding medical and veterinary care, or for some moving during COVID-19 lockdowns, which were more restrictive than U.S. pandemic measures.

Adjusting to Overseas Life

Similar to the literature on expatriate moves overseas, participants mentioned adjustment periods for their spouses and children that may have been more difficult than their own since they jumped into work upon arrival. Participant 20 said:

> I think it's always been somewhat of an adjustment and requiring some effort, particularly for my spouse, who typically put her working life on hold and had to reinvent and find meaningful things to do while overseas. I think the burden on her was far greater than the burden on me. But we've managed to navigate those waters effectively every time."

One spouse was able to keep her stateside job but worked a schedule matching the company's stateside hours, which led to having a schedule offset from her husband. Participants with children tried to move between school years to limit disruptions, and several also discussed their high school-age children wanting to finish high school in one place, whether that was overseas or back in the States. This played a factor in the participants' desires to request tour extensions or to plan to move back to the U.S.

For the most part, participants expressed adjusting fairly easily to the overseas environment because they had completed at least one overseas move, had a host nation spouse or family members, or because they had previously spent many years overseas. One participant expressed having a harder time adjusting to life in the States when moving back for a Priority Placement Program assignment. Participants made comments such as, “I think it’s just our family approach; we just confront whatever,” or “I was used to traveling the world. For our family, it’s normal, even when we weren’t living overseas, to be going overseas. For us, it’s a really great experience to really dive into the culture by living here.” For the two participants, who had not previously lived overseas, both expressed a determination to adapt to their host nation's culture when they moved here by exploring the community, making local friends, and learning the language.

Leadership and the Army People Strategy

As discussed in Chapter Two, servant leaders focus on developing others and on working for the good of the whole (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Similarly, the Army places great emphasis on leadership and outlines the importance of development and commitment to the organization (DA, 2012a). In 2019, the Army first released The Army People Strategy, which “describes how we will shift from simply ‘distributing personnel’ to more deliberately managing the talents of our Soldiers and Civilians” (DA, 2019b, p. 2). Questions nine and 10 were based on this literature to learn more about participants’ experiences as leaders and how they felt they were supported by Army policies and strategies.

Self-Identified Leadership Styles

Question nine of the interview protocol asked leaders to describe their own leadership style and the attributes they embodied as a leader. When describing their personal styles, all participants mentioned traits aligned with either the Servant Leadership Model, the Army Leadership Requirements Model, or both. Two participants specifically mentioned the Servant Leadership Model in relation to their own leadership principles. As Participant 10 stated:

> I am here to serve the workforce. That's my only purpose, my only purpose of existence, my raison d'etre is to be here to ensure the success of the civilian workforce so that they can then take care of the rest of the community because nobody else is looking out for them.

Participant 8 specifically mentioned the Army Leadership Requirements Model:

> I fully believe in what we call the Be, Know, and Do. Be a leader of character. Know your job; know your people. And, do perform, and expect your employees to know their jobs and perform, as well. And then, do always try to improve both yourself and the job.

Overall themes found throughout the group included supporting their employees while letting them do their jobs and only being prescriptive or authoritarian if the need arose. These themes are illustrated in comments such as from Participant 2, "I try and give people as much latitude to implement the tasks that they have to do according to their own skills and judgment and provide guidance when they need it." Participant 7 said, "As a leader, I can certainly point out advantages and disadvantages of proposed courses of action but otherwise give employees wide space to work on solutions they can implement," and Participant 3 said he treats others as he would like to be treated and will, "give direction, give the left and right limits, and let people go, and then if they need small course corrections, I'll do it. I'm fairly hands-off unless I need to be hands-on."

Leading Under the Army People Strategy

Question 10 asked, "The Army has a 'People First' Strategy – how do you feel your leadership style falls in line with this strategy, and does the Army help you meet this strategy as a leader?" Across the board, participants felt their leadership styles fell in line with the Army People Strategy. However, thoughts on if and how the strategy supported them as leaders differed. Table 4 provides a breakdown of whether or not leaders felt the Army helps them meet the Army People Strategy.

Table 4

Supported to Meet the Army People Strategy (N: 20)

Response	N	Percentage
Yes	4	20%
No	1	5%
Yes, but	15	75%

Four participants said "yes" they felt the Army gave them the resources they needed to meet the People Strategy, citing examples that the Army helps build effective leaders, offers flexibility in personnel scheduling, has supportive higher headquarters, and offers exceptions to policies to support employees. Participant 17 gave the example of an employee who had to curtail his assignment due to a family situation. The command gave an exception to a policy that requires an employee to reimburse the Army for their move if they leave prior to 12 months at the duty location. As Participant 17 stated:

> He needs to do what he needs to do. And we're going to give him a waiver so that he can curtail his assignment and he does not have to pay out of pocket in order to meet those needs. To me, that again goes back to taking care of people and putting people first.

One participant said, "No," the Army hinders their ability to put people first. As part of the response to question 10, Participant 12 said:

> As far as the Army or the government, whether their systems support or hinder that, I think a lot of times they hinder it. They do make it difficult to take care of people. And I think when it comes to the garrison itself, we're primarily made up of civilians. And people, a lot of times when they hear people first, they think of our military, our soldiers, and our active-duty family members; that is who the people first is. And I think sometimes it gets lost on people that, 'no, that's your people, the people you supervise, you've got to take care of them.' You want them to take care of our customers. I think that message gets lost on some people.

The rest of the 15 respondents answered question 10 with a form of "yes, but," or as one participant said, "jein," using the German expression meaning "yes and no." Several of these participants cited manning levels as the negative part of their response. Participant 19 gave a comparison with his previous federal workplace, where he was part of a staff of three supporting a workforce of 350, compared to his current position with the Army, where he is a staff of one supporting a workforce of approximately 1,300. He said:

> Yes and no. I have not run into anybody here who doesn't understand the concept of people first. And so when I say that, everything is on board with being able to do that. However, to talk about my situation, personally, it's very, very difficult for me to put people first when I have a caseload that doesn't allow me to do that. And so, the Army can say people first, but if they don't put enough people in here to do the job, then we can't act and put people first.

Participant 20 said, "Generally, it does provide me the resources. I think there is a conundrum or a conflict between saying people first but under-resourcing organizations with inadequate numbers of people, which is a major issue in my organization."

According to Participant 13:

> We're staffed at 60 to 65% of our requirements. So that's already showing that in the big scheme of things, the Army is already saying, you're not going to get fully funded at 40%. So that means I've got a 40% decrement in my authorizations. So that already means I've got 40% less resources to be able to do all the things that I'm required to do. And what I find a lot of the time it's the 'tag, not it, you do it.' We're going to delegate; we're going to give you a collateral duty. And every organization operates on collateral duties, and therefore, it's the, 'who is going to soak up your collateral duty?' I've got a job, and now I'm supposed to collateral duty your committee, your function, your requirement. So, if everybody's pressing the 'not it' button, somewhere it just gets stuck.

According to Participant 15 the resources are often there but may not be as expansive as they need to be or prioritized the right way:

> I think sometimes we get lost in what we're doing and forget why we're doing … I'll just use the example of, right now, there's this big thing about barracks, right? Like Smoke Bomb Hill and Fort Bragg being a huge deal. And so we say we want to take care of our soldiers. But if you look at what we invest our money in, that sometimes we're - yeah, barracks are expensive, but so are tanks, and so are aircraft and everything else. But we constantly are trying to get next-generation equipment to make sure we're able to do our mission, which is fight and defeat our enemies. But at the same time, we got soldiers living in barracks that are 80 years old, that are falling apart, and have all kinds of issues that everybody knows about. But we don't have the money to fix it. The money isn't allocated to us to fix it, I should say. We know that it's a problem, and so we try to prioritize it. We know we're not going to get billions and billions of dollars and turn it on and fix all of that right away. But I feel like we sometimes don't put our money where our mouth is when it comes to those things.

Participant 15 also offered the example of military versus civilian development programs within the Army as a disparity in resource allocation, with the military opportunities being more structured and robust. Participant 6 mentioned this theme as well:

> I don't know if they really help you meet that. We get pushed that a lot about leading and taking care of the people. But for me, it seems like that's all it is is just telling us that. What are you doing to empower us? Or what are you doing to

> train us and help us be better leaders? What I find is that a lot of the courses and training they want us to attend to do that is more military-focused on dealing with soldiers, and not your civilian workforce or local national workforce.

Participant 3 said, “I would say the Army probably has a good concept, but sometimes, when it comes to actual implementation of some of these policies, I think mission and personal attitudes just kind of get in the way sometimes.”

Participant 18 said:

> I’ve never not felt supported, and I’ve never not felt a member of the team and all these kinds of things. So, I think the Army has these overarching principles that really give you the freedom and service guidelines to go out and do the right thing. And so it’s kind of on you to just make sure that you’re doing the right thing and support your people. But I think that from a policy perspective, there’s too much rigidity that prevents us from doing really some things that just make sense. I mean, I’m guessing we’ll get to it eventually, but for me, there’s a lot of elements of this five-year rule that, I think that we shoot ourselves in the foot. We talk about recruitment and retention campaigns and how to be better at attracting and retaining people. And I think there’s a whole demographic of folks here that really have no intention of ever returning to the United States, that we are then discarding as GS employees that we have to then replace that skill set.

Two participants mentioned telework policies they felt were too restrictive or not supportive. Participant 7 said the Army does well, but “I think they’re 80% of the way there. I think there’s still some opportunity. Telework as an example … there are opportunities to better understand that people don't always have to be in the office to be productive." According to Participant 4, when asking leadership if his staff could telework, he was told, "we don't telework here."

Participant 2 said he didn't connect with the Army People Strategy:

> There's a lot of words written about people strategy. And sometimes you see concrete programs put in place like they're trying to make time to give a little bit of a break on the PCS expenses and things like that, and the quarters expenses for soldiers. But for the most part, I don't really connect with it. … I couldn't tell you one thing that they're doing other than, 'Let's hire more spouses.' That's a good one. Well, you know what? If you look at our list of employees, probably 30% are spouses – Army goal of 5% spouses. Well, we beat that six times ago. But they'll sit there and talk about it like, 'What are we going to do?' Nothing. We're doing it … But I do think about people. I mean, people are what we're trying to do. They are the main asset. I want everybody to feel comfortable at work. I want everybody to have an environment where they can excel. And nobody should feel uncomfortable.

Impacts on Organizational Effectiveness

The majority of the literature review on employee turnover pointed to voluntary turnover, with employees moving on to new positions of their own accord. Involuntary turnover is thrust upon the employee by the organization (Allen et al., 2010), similar to the time-limited rotations put in place by the five-year rule. References to involuntary turnover focused on turnover brought on by the employee's poor performance or by overall staff reductions, not brought on by policies such as the five-year rule, for which extensions may be granted for mission-based or compassionate reasons. Literature shows that the consequences of turnover include added expense for the agency in rehiring and training new employees, lack of continuity, loss of institutional knowledge, and a decline in productivity (Lee et al., 2018; Allen et al., 2010). Literature on failed corporate expatriate forays overseas discussed impacts on organizations such as disrupted host nation relations, harm to the organization's reputation, the cost to the organization, a decline in productivity, and decreased morale (Cole and Nesbeth, 2014; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005). Questions 11 through 16 were based on this literature to learn more about leaders' experiences with these possible consequences within their own teams and throughout the larger organization. Questions 11 through 14 asked leaders about their specific areas within the organization and how they functioned, while questions 15 and 16 focused on possibilities for the future. Three leaders did not supervise employees who fall under the five-year rule but hold leadership positions within their garrisons, which give them insight into the overall garrison function. All other respondents had direct or indirect responsibility for anywhere from two to approximately 700 employees who fall under the five-year rule.

Table 5

Experience Onboarding as a Leader (N: 20)

Response	N	Percentage
Positive	4	20%
Negative	12	60%
Neutral	3	15%

Initial Experiences as a Leader

Leaders were first asked how their directorates were functioning when they came on board. Responses were grouped into three areas, which are also shown in Table 5: positive, neutral, and negative. Four had positive responses, including: “It was great … We had a great team, and I really enjoyed my job,” said Participant 2, who started in a lower position and moved up to a leadership role while in his current directorate. Participant 7 said, “This is a wonderful team, one of the best I’ve ever led.” According to Participant 5, his team was the best in Europe and one of the best in the Army. “They literally have a plaque on the wall saying it.” And finally, Participant 4 commented that he was very impressed with his team, which had a majority of local national employees who had been in place for a while and functioned as a good team.

Three respondents gave neutral responses. One spoke of having a one-month overlap with their predecessor. One discussed their move from a non-supervisory to a supervisory role, and the final discussed overall thoughts on employees staying in a role too long.

The rest of the 12 respondents had negative leaning answers about how their directorates functioned. These responses ranged from “not ideal” to “horrible.” Participant 20 responded by saying his team function was not ideal at the start. Within six months, he had to replace three direct reports because of overseas rotations. However, he said, “That was a blessing in disguise because the people I recruited came in and immediately outperformed their predecessors by a noticeable margin, and it made the team more stronger functioning.” Other negative-leaning responses focused on turmoil, vacancies, and disconnects among staff. Participant 18 first joined his team in another position and said when he started, it "was kind of chaos because there were a lot of vacancies, and there were a lot of folks wearing two, three hats." He went on to say many of the sections were, at the time of the interview, 100% staffed for the first time since he'd been on board, much of which was accomplished by hiring veterans coming off active duty overseas and spouses who are already overseas with a sponsor. Participant 19 said his position was vacant for a year before he came on board and that three people had previously been selected for the job, but all ended up going elsewhere. Since he's been on board, he said, he has seen improvement in processes and communications. Participant 3 came into an office with a lot of "personal turmoil," including a staff death and another on emergency family leave. Since then, positions have been filled, and the team environment has improved, he said. Participant 9 built a new team after he came into a position where his predecessor had been released, and other staff members had quit due to a toxic environment. Participant 16 came into a lower position and moved up shortly after his arrival. A lot of higher-level responsibilities weren't being completed, and it took months to get back to even. "I've taken a lunch in the last two days because I feel I've actually reached the point where I don't have to stay late and don't have to work through lunch to try and meet the requirements for the position." Participant 15 said processes and procedures were in place, and things were functioning pretty well, but he felt there were some past issues that needed to be smoothed over, that everyone was overworked, and there were climate issues. "I would stay here at night, and I would watch out the window and see how many people were working late hours, and I'm like, why are there so many people?" Participant 1, who oversees law enforcement efforts, said there was a lot of confusion when he came on board. "Arresting somebody, or dealing with somebody on the street, is the same just about everywhere, but there's a lot of rules and regulations because we're in Germany," and he felt they were constantly reinventing the wheel. The disconnect also spilled over into relations with their host nation counterparts who were "fed up" because "every three to five years they're talking to new leaders and they're saying 'well, we talked about this three years ago, and we fixed it, and now we're revisiting it because you think it's a problem again.'" Participant 6 said, "Honestly, I don't know how we were functioning," based on the manning levels when he came on board, which were less than 50%. For one position, where he had seven openings, he lost all but one employee and was able to get an extension for another. After hiring others, he's back in the same position, he said:

> Out of the five that I have here, I am down to three right now. One is already out, and another one's on his way out the door, so I'm going to be down two, and then the other is due for his OTEX coming up, so we'll be hurting again.

Participant 20 had a unique perspective as the supervisor of mainly NAF employees. The negative slant leaned toward the longevity of the staff and the disconnect in best practices and updates the team hadn't had exposure to:

> I was surprised. Sometimes, you assume, with longevity in positions, that things are going to be functioning really well. In fact, I was told I could get here and run the directorate in my sleep … I actually found it to be the opposite because the non-appropriated fund team members are not subject to the five-year rule, and

> what I found is that many of them were former GS employees that were just trying to find a way to stay in Europe and didn't have any other exposure to garrison environments outside of Europe.

Participant 14 thought there were processes that needed to be improved when he came on board and said he recognized he wouldn't support almost half of his staff for extensions when the time came. Since then, all of those employees have been replaced, he said.

Experiences with Turnover

Several participants discussed turnover and staff rotations within their offices in response to question 12 as part of their experience coming on board within their organization. In question 13, they were asked specifically about their experience with staff rotation within the directorate since they've been in charge. Only one participant had not had any sort of transition within his office in the year he had been there. All others experienced some kind of turnover, whether it be civilian or local national employees leaving or new employees and leadership coming on board. Those who had turnover experience with local national employees discussed them as a consistent but aging workforce for continuity, but often not in key leadership positions. Some topics mentioned more than once in regard to U.S. civilian staff turnover included burnout being a reason for staff leaving, reinventing the wheel as new staff come on board, the amount of turnover within offices, and difficulties keeping up with workloads while short-staffed. One participant discussed the difficulty of getting employees to move overseas in the first place, and his comments were echoed in those of others in regard to hiring and OTEX approval processes. At least two discussed the benefits of turnover within their organizations.

In regard to burnout, Participant 2 said staff rotations had been "really bad" since he has been back overseas, adding 24-hour, seven-day-a-week operations led to burnout of some staff in his area. Participant 20 said, "This garrison, and I assume it's true in others, it's pretty fast-paced, and I think we burn people out a little bit. And after three years or five years, I think it's healthy for an individual to start pursuing other opportunities to keep themselves safe from burnout." Participant 1 mentioned "reinventing the wheel" when new leadership came on board who didn't know the history and what had been tried in the past. Participant 6 also mentioned this concept in line with their relations with host nation counterparts who were frustrated with getting processes in place only to have someone new come in who wants to make changes. Participant 10 mentioned the impact of staff and leadership "churn" on the more stable local national employees:

> The friction and the churn that we undergo impacts everybody but impacts that local national population, the 66% of the population, who then not only has to deal with the 'okay, here we go again' mentality with a new commander, but it's a 'here we go again' mentality with a new deputy, a new director, a new fill-in-the-blank. So that lack of stability has impacts, and that lack of continuity at the senior level – I'd say the top two down to the maybe division chief level in many cases – has impacts, and not always positive. There are some positive ones. You

> get new ideas; you get new experiences. There's goodness, don't get me wrong. There is goodness in that, but it's challenging.

Participant 3 brought up "holding down the fort" while bringing new staff on board, and his comments were echoed by Participant 6, who had an organization at around 50% of its manning level when he came on board, as mentioned in the question 12 findings. He added his experience with difficulties bringing staff on board in the first place, giving the example of one position where he had 30 declinations in the past two years. Similarly, several participants noted larger amounts of turnover within their areas. Participant 5, who oversees approximately 125 employees who fall under the five-year rule, had 43 new employees within a year, calling the turnover "fairly heavy." Giving the illustration of the differences in staff group photos hanging in the hall, Participant 11 said:

> It is deceivingly rapid, the turnover, because it doesn't happen all at once. You'll have bits and pieces, but our (operational tempo) is so fast that somebody leaves, and then you get into the hiring process to bring somebody else in on board. Then you kind of forget who's left and who's arriving. You know what I mean? You don't dwell on the fact that somebody's left, but the turnover is, I would say, staggering.

Extension Approvals. The topic of difficulties with the OTEX approval process was one that came up not only during the discussion of staff rotations but also throughout participant interviews. These responses were coded separately to further analyze comments. Frustration was expressed by participants with the level of approval needed for overseas tour extensions. For IMCOM-Europe, three-to-five-year extensions are approved by the IMCOM-Europe director. Five-to-seven-year extensions go to the IMCOM commanding general in San Antonio, Texas, for approval. Extensions above seven years are approved by the next higher headquarters commander at Army Materiel Command (AMC) at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama. Participant 18 gave the example of another separate command in Europe that has approval authority at local levels. At U.S. Army Europe and Africa (USAREUR-AF), Participant 4 said extensions are “given out like Halloween candy,” where some within IMCOM expressed not even putting in the paperwork because they felt the process was too cumbersome and would not be approved. Participants thought local leaders who knew the local mission and needs of the organization were better suited to approve requests than distant leaders. Participant 11 said:

> I just find it fascinating that you can’t manage your own people. And the other thing is having such inconsistent views of how the rule is applied. So, you have a four-star headquarters down the road; they view it one way. AMC views it a completely different way. The fascinating part about it is USAREUR-AF is overseas, and AMC isn’t. That would lead one to believe something is strange there because you would tend to defer to the organization that has to live with the consequences. AMC doesn’t live with the consequences.

They expressed frustrations at timelines for getting paperwork through the process and having it returned to clarify justifications. Participant 1 said leaders expressed they would sign all of the extension requests that came across their desks, but the trick was to get it past staff and in front of leaders to sign. Perceptions of personnel actions by other staff can also be troublesome when it comes to the OTEX process. According to Participant 15:

> By and large, it's applied equitably. It is, from the macro level. The problem is that people know when there are those one-offs and you do something special for somebody. The question is, well, that doesn't seem equitable, that doesn't seem fair. And the answer I give people is it depends. And every situation is different … What I learned is senior leaders make decisions that set precedents, and they're generally very aware of the precedents that they're setting. They're not going to go against the general precedent or the general guidance without a good exception. So, then the challenge becomes how do you articulate that when you can't really share personal, private information on a particular employee with other employees. Because that's not good business, and it could violate HIPAA, it could violate Freedom of Information. There are a lot of different things that it could violate. So, in general, managers and supervisors don't talk to other employees about other employees. It's not good business. And then we have to assume that everybody just will accept the fact that we're doing things for the greater good.

Succession Planning and Hiring Actions. While navigating the OTEX approval process, supervisors are also working on hiring actions, which the DoD Inspector General (IG) (2021) acknowledged in an audit did not fully address overseas civilian workforce needs. The audit focused on personnel data systems and guidance from higher commands. However, it did provide some additional insight into hiring timelines for overseas. The report acknowledged additional considerations required for hiring overseas, including the five-year rule, additional time and effort for completing overseas moves, family transitions, and the desirability of some overseas duty locations. As an example of desirability, IMCOM-Europe's newest garrison, which was activated in Poland in 2023, does not allow for family members to accompany personnel to the assignment. These types of considerations limit the availability of applicants willing to work at some locations. The IG audit reported "significant differences in hiring timelines across Military Departments even within the same geographic location" (DoD, 2021). The average time to hire civilian personnel across DoD in fiscal year 2020 was 83 days. For the 14 overseas duty locations included in the audit, the lowest time to hire was 106 days, and the highest was 489 days.

Within the discussion of OTEX approvals, hiring processes, and employee rotations, another topic that came up in initial interviews and prompted further questions in later interviews was succession planning. The literature discusses the positive benefits of properly managed turnover (Allen et al.,2010; Manz et al., 2015). According to the DoD IG report, stateside employee departures tend to happen without much notice. However, overseas departure dates, DEROS, are known from the day an employee enters duty. However, according to leaders interviewed, knowing this date doesn't necessarily help with planning as many employees end up leaving prior to their DEROS to avoid PPP or their return rights. As Participant 18 said about succession planning, "We sure as heck talk about it." The question then becomes how far out the organization begins recruitment for new employees. Participant 5 said within his garrison, they try to begin the hiring process at least one year out from an employee's DEROS:

> So, that's part of succession planning is getting ahead of known losses when you can. And when you can, building into it enough time to hire people to overlap the position as opposed to gap the position. Well, and one of the things I do is I look at how long it takes us, on average, to hire. I know for a fact I'm not getting anybody from the States in under 180 days. It just isn't happening. It can. But it's the exception, not the rule.

Participant 14 thought about 75% of the garrison was able to keep up with hiring to include an overlap between the incoming and outgoing employees. For the 25% that were not able to overlap incoming and outgoing employees, however, he said it causes problems:

> One of my largest directorates, DPW, is not doing that. And that's causing problems. Same thing with our DES. They're just not able to fill positions; they didn't have that overlap. I think part of that is just not doing a good job of succession planning. I have put out time and time again that at the six-month mark, regardless of where you stand with an extension, you need to start recruitment action. That should give you enough time to recruit … I know we all like to point fingers at [the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center], but a lot of it's self-inflicted.

One leader mentioned his own OTEX approval, which required the inclusion of a succession plan for his position. In between one OTEX and the next, he changed positions, yet on the second OTEX, it was required to include why the succession plan failed. Participant 11 said, “The conditions completely changed; the justification completely changed. We’re going back two years to look at something that now is not even relevant. And we’re asking, ‘Why didn’t you follow this succession plan?’ Well, it doesn’t make any sense anymore.”

Team Development

Framed within the team development model of forming, storming, norming, and performing, question 14 asked participants about how their teams functioned internally and within the larger organization as a whole. Leaders didn’t give straightforward responses describing each phase of the model but discussed their offices in general, with examples ranging from good teamwork to experiences in the storming phase and one specific example of a group within the performing phase. Participant 20 discussed the office’s ability to form ad-hoc teams cross-functionally and highlighted that even with new team members coming on board, there was always someone to help out, and collectively, the group knew who was responsible for what. Participant 8 brought the question back to leadership, commenting, “How good of a leader are you at motivating your team to get through the phases in team-building as quickly as possible?” Participants 3 and 11 discussed positive aspects of their teams, including staff onboarding who already knew co-workers and team-building exercises, making transitions faster and leading to smoother information sharing. Participant 7, who previously mentioned leading a great team, was the newest person on his team and said he’d be interested to see the re-forming of the team when their latest hire arrived. Participant 13’s experience with their internal team was positive, but they had more issues within the larger organization due to their geographic distance from the rest of the garrison. Participant 9 said his team functioned excellently internally and within the larger garrison, citing mutual respect for each team's function as a method of building the larger team. Participant 5 said when he came on board, it was probably the biggest change for his team with them adapting to his leadership style. Participants 2 and 4 found their internal teams worked well together and well within the larger garrison team because their functions included regular interaction with directorates across the garrison. As Participant 4 said, "Everybody's roles kind of support and affect each other. So, hopefully, there's a lot of cross-talk going on. As far as part of the larger garrison, I think we're pretty plugged into everybody. And we support everybody." While he said it was frustrating, Participant 16 relied on his team when he came on board until he had access to the systems he needed:

> That really built a strong relationship right from the get-go. They were smart, they were competent, and they were doing everything they could … You had to jump in with two feet and just row as fast as you can. And so, I think that happened relatively quick. I wouldn't say that we're at the performing part by any means, but I think we've got systems in place and procedures. They were always there, but I understand them now. And I've added my little twist, too, and so I think we're there. I think things are going extremely well.

Seven leaders spoke more in-depth and provided examples of storming within their organizations. Speaking toward the team building model, Participant 1 said:

> It never comes to fruition. Because once we get here, we're working hard to learn the people, learn the job, learn the German police and how they operate. We're already at the three-year mark, and then we start building on that and try to build it up, and then two years, well, we're looking for a job. Now, we're trying to move on to the next one because we know that it's just not going to work; we're probably not going to get extended. And so in law enforcement, as a police officer, there have been several research studies done on this that the longer a person, a police officer, stays in the community, the stronger he is, and the stronger the organization is. And it's just not possible when we can't form that bond … So, there is no chance to form up and make a group and make a coalition to work together, to complete just the simplest task. You know, if I was at Fort Anywhere-in-America, I'd stay there until I die.

Participant 10 spoke about the impacts of staff rotations being felt more overseas because the types of employees rotating are typically key leaders from the deputy garrison commanders and directors down to the division chief level. Organizations aren't able to grow employees internally like they are in the States, and many of those with longevity within the organization are the "worker bees." While all Army garrisons rotate their command teams every two years overseas, this is happening on a larger scale. Participant 10 provided an example within the organization of a Directorate of Public Works division chief position whose division was "in the midst of a very painful last 18 months catching up from five years of neglect because they had senior leadership transitions within that division and then a total gap in leadership," in a division he called, "arguably the critical component to success on an installation because it touches everything else." In describing the impact, he said:

> We're a small community, and so it impacted us. And that rippled out in a negative way. So, we're still working through repairing that. We have new leaders in place now, and they're getting after it. We're trying to heal the team, focus energy and effort on the team. It's taking a lot of work and a lot of effort. But a lot of it has to do with the fact that we, if we had had a model where somebody could just have stayed here and done the work and had continuity, perhaps it wouldn't have. Would it? I can guarantee it wouldn't have been to that level.

Participant 12 felt the storming process was longer with a mass of new employees coming on board:

> When you have all new team members, it's a little more difficult to get everybody through that process. Because everybody works at a different pace, when you're just bringing in a couple, a single person, or a couple positions that you're filling, it's easier to concentrate on getting them where they need to be if you've already got the rest of the team there. But trying to do it all at the same time. With all new team members, I think it kind of extends that storming period. It gets difficult to get to a norming, a normal process. And then, even more so, getting to a performance period. By the time you get through a good couple of years, where you've got everything in place, and now it's time to start just knocking things out and making improvement, when you have turnover there, after that two-year point you just kind of go back to the beginning again.

Participant 12 did credit one division within the organization with entering the performing stage at times, but with a cost to the staff:

> If we are performing well, it's creating a lot of strain and stress on the staff to do it. It's not first nature yet, and we've not gotten into the rhythm yet where it's just really easy. We've had some great stability in that program. And I can say yes, they're performing even despite shortfalls and staff turnovers. We have some key people in there that had been here for a while that really get it, that has led that area to be able to perform really well, even despite all the challenges with COVID. But, it's been a strain on them with turnover, and you can't maintain that long term.

Participant 14 gave the caveat with his answer that he did not think it was "a five-year rule thing" but that his staff was perpetually stuck between the tail end of storming and the beginning of norming due to friction among staff members who "worked in their own little world and didn't coordinate with each other." Since there have been staff turnovers, he said, "Now I'm pulling in people who are more collaborative, more willing to look at others and work together rather than just to storm and grab their piece and say, 'this is mine.'"

Participant 17 said that while not always the case, he is almost convinced they never make it through the storming phase:

> There is not enough time to go through the whole concept in order to be the perfect performers, just because team building takes time … It takes a lot of time to do that, especially when you have to also build a certain trust level that doesn't

> happen overnight. And so it does make it very difficult to go to 'be all good' in a short period of time, and/or you might just make it to the, 'oh, we're awesome. We're like the greatest team ever,' and then just for it to get ripped apart because somebody is leaving again.

For Participant 18, his directorate, of which he wasn't always the head, "was in a storming phase for years, and even the position I'm in now, I'm like the fifth or sixth director in the time that I've been here." Participant 19 provided an example of storming within the context of the larger organization in that he was not sure he had access to the information and systems he needed.

> So, all the different accesses to the different databases I need, I got given a form and was told to fill it all out and then find out who I have to send it to. It took forever to get access; wasn't even sure if I was requesting access to the right stuff. It wasn't until the new region chief came on board and started having regular meetings that I started realizing if I had the right information, or if I knew more than somebody else, and I can share that, or if I need to get correct with something. And so that was very frustrating to just kind of operate blind.

Career Trajectory

Outside of how the teams operated together, questions 15 and 16 asked leaders about plans and possibilities for the future. Question 15 focused on how leaders thought the five-year rule impacted their career trajectory and that of their staff. Some common themes that added insight to this topic included that some employees seek career growth where others are more concerned with job location; stateside organizations may be burdened by the return rights process; overseas assignments are good for promotion but not necessarily for continued professional growth; and that the priority placement program and return rights each present their own issues.

Two leaders started off their responses by stating they would not want to stay longer than five years. Referencing the process of adapting to another culture, Participant 20 said:

> I personally have never wanted to stay overseas beyond five years. I mean, just living outside the country, and I'm sure you've experienced this as well, it's fun, and it's interesting, and you get to do all kinds of cool stuff that you could never do, or never experience without leaving the states. But there's also a certain amount of baggage you drag along with you that comes from living in a culture that is not your own, that just equates to day-to-day friction.

Participant 16 said he was almost certain he wouldn't be overseas for five years and had already had one employee return to the U.S. early because her family was not able to move overseas and join her due to a lack of childcare options for civilian employees. "It's fun to travel, and when I get tired of traveling in a couple of years, there's probably a good chance I'll be looking for a position to go back to the United States." Participant 20 mentioned the five-year rule was an opportunity to talk to employees about career development. "I think the five-year rule is not a handicap at all. I think it's a catalyst to get them to do the things they probably should do anyway. Which is, after doing one thing for five years, it's a good idea to look for a new and exciting challenge." This sentiment was repeated by others but also included discussion about employees who were looking for stability in a location versus career advancement. Participant 3, who had a German spouse, said, “I’m going to obviously try to stay here as long as I can. So, there wouldn’t be a lot of upward mobility unless somebody left because I’m kind of tied to this geographical area,” however, he encouraged his employees who weren’t as tied to a geographic location to apply for promotion overseas if they could. Participant 8 said employees in the states are often exposed to more career opportunities at larger installations but acknowledged:

> Some individuals aren’t too concerned about their careers. They’re more concerned about where they’re at. They want to be in Italy, or they want to be in Germany, or they want to be in Korea or Japan … Whether they get extended or not, they’ll go back to the States, they’ll reset their five-year rule. It used to be one year. A few years ago, it went to two years to reset. And then, they would seek employment right back to where they left whether they were a good, a bad, or an indifferent employee.

According to Participant 18, ambitious employees are going to move on anyway, looking to advance their careers and leave for promotion; however, some only leave because they have to and have the intention to return. After spending time and money training people, when they hit the five-year mark:

> Some folks will then go on PPP, end up somewhere where they don’t want to be, and then just are waiting for the time to come back over here. But then, that doesn’t always work out for them. So, their morale is low because they’ve left the family … It just throws a whole bunch of unnecessary uncertainty into people’s

> lives and too, I think, the operation as a whole … I think there's a whole demographic of folks here that really have no intention of ever returning to the United States, that we are then discarding as GS employees that we have to then replace and that skill set … I just think it's ridiculous that we have all these conversations about, retention and recruiting, and we just shoot ourselves in the foot by letting our existing workforce just walk away because of this five-year rule for no good reason. It's not performance-based or anything like that; just for no good reason other than just the rule is there, right?

For some, promotion potential overseas is greater, while for others, it can be a hindrance. According to Participant 2, after several years working in a position and networking across agencies within the installation, the five-year rule can stop employees in their tracks when applying to higher-graded positions because hiring officials won't look at them as candidates if they need an extension. Participant 14 said some people just want to stay overseas and don't want to advance. However, for those who want to stay and advance, the five-year rule negatively impacts them because they can't get the breadth of experience with a lot of jobs. Participant 14 concluded with,

> You go back to the people first question. Everybody thinks, 'Oh, people first.' Part of that is they want to stay here. Why don't we let them stay here? That's taking care of people. My take is that's true, but if I'm people first, I'm also looking at your career and where you want to go and helping you get there. And staying in one location for a long time, particularly overseas, is not getting there. So, to me, that's taking care of people, too. They just may not see it.

Stateside Opportunities

Outside of these comments, much of the discussion for question 15 focused on the opportunities employees had for promotion overseas and how return rights might hinder, not help, their career trajectory. While overseas, Participant 1 advanced from a GS-9 to a GS-12 position. Participant 6, who also advanced while overseas, gave an example of one employee who had moved from a GS-7 to GS-11 while overseas but wouldn't have the one-year-in-grade required for a promotion to GS-12 before returning stateside. Participant 6 said:

> Don't get me wrong, some people come over here to OCONUS for promotion, but that's due to the rotation of us. So, a lot of people do come over and say, 'Hey, let me come over, I'll get a promotion, I'm going to take me a European vacation. All right, so I get promoted to GS-12, GS-13. Get my high three; get a European vacation, and I don't care about going back.' They don't have that much opportunity for the promotion CONUS because they don't rotate.

Participant 8 previously had moved overseas as a GS-11 and left as a GS-13:

> I actually tell a lot of my civilians here that if you hang out overseas long enough, you will get promoted. And what I mean by that is it's easier to get a job overseas because of the five-year rotation. There are more opportunities than in the United States, where literally somebody has to die for a position to open up.

Participants who moved from other DoD positions have rights to return to their previous jobs, while those who were hired locally or from other federal agencies can use the Priority Placement Program. Discussing employees who would have to return to the

United States with return rights to the position they held before moving overseas, many acknowledged this was not growth. Participant 4 said:

> One thing about the five-year rule is you usually have return rights, and nobody's career path is to try to learn and grow for five years and then go back to point one again. So, you have to start thinking about your exit strategy well in advance … And there's nothing wrong with that, but it does leave the garrison a little bit chaotic because you never know when people are going to leave.

Participant 5 said he has always used the five-year rule as the opportunity to find his next position on his own without relying on return rights or PPP and encourages his employees to do the same:

> Going back to the job that you left is not growth. That is stagnation. And, in general, people that come overseas are looking for different. They're looking for something new. I was looking for growth, or I was looking for something new. I would be looking for growth going back and use the rotation as an impetus for really looking, for really starting to go out and find my own job or speak with people about what jobs are available and what I should be doing … But I think the five-year rule forces you to step back to what you just left. Now, you may get a lot of good experience with it because that's the intent is to give a different experience, a different process. But I don't know if it's growing our leaders. Or, I'll say it this way: I know it's not growing our leaders. To send them back to a job that they left doesn't grow them. It gives them some new experiences, but it doesn't necessarily grow them into the next leadership level.

Participant 11 discussed employees having to execute return rights to a position that they did not want:

> They don't want to go back to that old job, but they're stuck. So, they're stuck in purgatory; it's the worst situation because they're forcing people to go back to something that makes them miserable. And that is sad. It's inherently sad that we do that to people. So, I guess they have the option, and that's what they do is they start looking on USAJobs, but then that makes their stay here really unpredictable … And you're in a race against time with USAJobs to find something that is palatable that you can go to, that gets you out of something that you just don't want to do … You either get stuck on PPP where you're playing a lottery on the job, or you start looking on USAJobs. It's that simple.

Along the lines of playing the job lotto, Participant 7 had an employee who was coming up to the end of his tour, had no return rights, and would need to be looking for jobs. "At what point does he start getting constrained in his options, since he has no protection of a job to go back to?" he asked in relation to the employee's career path. "I think it leaves a lot of uncertainty that may be unnecessary."

Participant 15 gave an example of an employee who had come from a GS-9 position stateside and is now a GS-13. Leadership was working to get her a seven-to-nine-year extension.

> She's got two choices. We can send her back to a GS-9 job in Hawaii, where she's going to be underutilized, and we just spent all this time and effort investing in her. Or she can find her job on her own, and then IMCOM potentially loses her.

> That's one of the frustrating parts is we have good employees that we want, that we end up losing to other agencies because we're going to send them back to a GS-9.

Participant 9 had a similar comment about losing employees to other agencies within the federal government after spending time developing them:

> Good organizations have career paths that you can build a person and develop them over the years and bring them from a lower-level position up to a higher-level position. Overseas positions that's not possible. You're always just plug and play. This position leaves; you pull another person in. You're never developing anyone, which is kind of messed up because they're all the time wanting you to make sure you have these [Civilian Education System] classes done, make sure this, make sure that. Well, maybe from the big picture, you might be developing an Army employee. But I'm here to tell you most government employees aren't loyal to an agency. I don't really care about the Army, to be honest with you. If the Navy offered me a GS-14 job, I'm going to go take it. All I care about is it's a U.S. government job. That's my career field, the entire U.S. government, not the U.S. Army.

Employee talents can also be lost within the agency and not just to other federal agencies. Participant 18 had a "great" employee in a Human Resources leadership position who could not get an extension approved and did not want to leave because of family overseas. He was put into a lower-graded term position that was not impacted by the five-year rule.

> He's working in an easier, lower job. He's able to earn a paycheck and not have to leave his family, but we, as an organization, aren't getting the best work we could out of him. We're not maximizing his talents … You can be the best employee in the organization, but that's not supposed to be a factor. It's mission-based or compassionate-based.

Participant 13 gave the example of a maintenance worker for Child and Youth Services who worked putting together cribs and other similar tasks. The employee returned to the States via PPP at age 80 to Texas, where he was placed in a roofer position and died three months later. "So that's a no kidding flash to bang because the government can't say, 'Well, you're too old to do that job' because that's discrimination. He didn't want to move, but he didn't have a choice because he could not retire." Participant 13 acknowledged he would probably end up on PPP himself but didn't fully understand the program and did not want to be placed at certain installations. "Good luck," he said, "but if you turn it down, you're out." Describing the impact on employees, Participant 13 said:

> I understand why it's there because I think you get fresh blood that comes in. But I also think that we're talking people first, right? That's our priority one. But we're not putting into context, we're not considering what it's doing to households and families, to make them move. So that's where I come back. It briefs well, but in the execution, are we really considering what that individual needs? Because we're not looking at individuals, we're looking at a systemic process.

Efforts to Stay Overseas

In order to avoid using return rights or going on PPP, some employees look for positions that allow them to stay overseas and don't fall under the five-year rule, such as NAF positions, which are funded by revenue from NAF programs, or postal positions, which became exempt in 2020 (Donovan, 2020). A NAF position can present its own challenges. Participant 12, a NAF employee who also supervises employees who fall under the five-year rule, said there is stability in NAF positions, but they don't have return rights and won't be able to use the priority placement program. "I'm here until another opportunity becomes available to me that I can compete for and get selected for. If I never got selected for a position outside of Europe, I'm kind of stuck here." Some NAF employees who don't want to leave have an expectation or entitlement, said Participant 12. "They have no plans for what to do beyond just working for MWR for the purpose of keeping their SOFA status." Since NAF positions are self-funded, they can also be subject to elimination based on business-based actions, leaving an employee who loses their job with as little as 30 days to transition to living on the host nation economy or returning to the states.

> We've got a lot of team members that, if that were to happen to them, they have no plans to leave Europe. They have no plans to transfer their ability to live here over, whatever has to be done with the government system here in Germany. And so there is an expectation that they get to stay working as long as they feel like it.

For those NAF employees who may wish to switch to an appropriated fund position, the five-year rule can often discourage them, said Participant 12. "There's such a different interpretation depending on who's handling the hiring action on when did that five-year rule start?" Participant 10 also discussed employees who want to stay overseas and summed up well the challenges presented by the OTEX process, highlighting the importance of having the "what's next" conversation with employees:

> Since we know we have a shelf life, we have to have that 'what's next' conversation pretty soon. I would say within the first six months of people getting here, and that's something that we're starting to do here too, that necessarily hadn't been done. But hasn't been done well in all cases. So, especially in MWR, because they get complacent because there is the thought that they can stay here forever. And there's a lot of people that do want to do that, and that's cool if that's what they want to do. But there are a lot of people that need to be challenged, perhaps be presented with a stretch opportunity. So that's the advantage to the OTEX process because it allows us to make sure that we're refreshing the gene pool, so to speak, but we're doing it in a deliberate fashion. And we're giving other people the opportunity to grow while they're here. And then hopefully setting them up for success to do something else, somewhere else, so they leave here with a good taste in their mouth because they're going to be emissaries of good if we did it right, or emissaries of not-so-good if we didn't do right by them.

What's Next for Leaders

Many of the leaders discussed their own career situations as a part of question 15 in general but clarified or added to their comments as part of question 16, which asked about their plan for their next position. Of the 20 leaders interviewed, 10 participants came from a previous Army or other DoD position and, therefore, had return rights. Three leaders had mobility agreements because of the level of their positions, and seven participants had no return rights as either local hires or hires from other U.S. federal agencies. Plans included exercising return rights, retirement, extending as long as possible, resigning, seeking promotion, and “I don’t know.” Participant 20 was on his third overseas tour and had always returned to the community to which he has ties. He described his career path as a “yo-yo” and was negotiating with his stateside organization to return to a different position:

> I have ties to that community, that I chose to develop a career path that was more like a yo-yo than a rope or a chain. The typical idea is you’re going to go from one assignment to another assignment to another assignment, both job and geographically speaking. But what I did was I kept looping back to where I started. One of the things that made that feasible is that I was able to do different things at different points in my career, even at the same location. So that kind of saved me from being stuck in one thing forever.

Several leaders were looking for new challenges in their next positions, including Participant 8, who thought his skill set had “atrophied’ in his current position. Participant 17, who had return rights, said:

> I definitely would be looking for another job because it was just a matter of, and I was not dissatisfied with the job that I had prior to this, it is just a matter of the learning experience and the learning curve, and you’ve added on to your skill set.

> I believe I have broadened my horizon a little more so that I would be probably bored in my last job.

Participant 18 said he is going to resign because he did not want to leave his overseas location. For Participant 3, who had return rights but also a German spouse and family overseas, his priority was family stability, “not trying to move up the food chain,” so he was hoping for an OTEX approval to stay overseas as long as possible.

> If not, me and my wife will have to have a conversation. My son will be out of school by then; my daughter will still be in school. So, we would have to have a conversation to say, ‘What are we going to do?’ I’ve actually thought about switching to the NAF side if push came to shove, but like I said, I’ll cross that bridge when I get to it.

Participant 13 did not have return rights and was also interested in finding what he felt would be a suitable place for his family in the U.S. versus career progression:

> If I know my OTEX is not approved, I am executing everything I need to get into a place that is suitable for my kids. If that means that I’ve got to take a downgrade, then that means I will take a downgrade. Livability is more important than career progression for me.

Participant 6 had return rights but planned to retire to Italy in several years:

> I’ve accepted the fact that I’m probably going to have to go back for two years. I’m going to slowly but surely move all my stuff down to our house in Italy and look for a job in like Kwajalein. You know, go to the island, go to Marshall Islands for two years. Do some fishing and scuba diving. Get my two free flights

> to Hawaii each year, and do my two years and figure out how to get back over here. So, am I really going to be working that hard for the organization? I have principles and standards, and yes, I'll do my job. But will I be operating at full capacity? No, because as it gets closer, I'm going to be searching, and I'm going to be networking, trying to get back over here.

Another theme that was unexpected was the impact on stateside employers who lost employees to overseas positions. Those organizations have to hold a position for the employee with return rights, which can create a burden on those agencies. Some agencies fill the positions with temporary employees, which can limit the applicant pool. When the original employee returns, the temporary employees may be let go or reassigned. Participant 7 said he thought some agencies were "taking the risk" and hiring permanent employees to fill those vacancies with the expectation the person who went overseas would find something else and move on instead of returning to their old job. Participant 4 had return rights but planned to retire shortly after his return stateside and felt that would be unfair to the stateside agency that had someone working in his previous job:

> I'll use my return rights and go back, but letting them know, don't put me in any key position because my retirement date is set for eight, nine months from now. But that's really the only way for me to get back to the States without negatively impacting or being dishonest and applying for jobs and then knowing I'm not going to be fulfilling a full tour there.

Along the same theme of the burden the five-year rule may add to stateside agencies, Participant 8 talked about an experience with receiving an employee stateside through PPP:

> We were forced down our throat, a PPP, and we did not want the individual. And the reason why we did not want the individual, even though we don't do pre-selection, we knew somebody out there that was going to be very qualified for that position and would be very competitive for that position. So that individual who was kind of expecting to have a shot at that position, when they didn't get it because of a PPP, they became demotivated. And then I've seen management, because they were forced to take a PPP, didn't look kindly on that individual. And that individual ended up spending the majority of their time in that organization looking for another job because the local dynamics just made it pure hell for them to perform. So that's a serious pitfall.

Summary

Hermeneutical phenomenology was chosen for this study's methodology to learn more about first-hand experiences of the phenomenon of the five-year rule. Heidegger proposed the hermeneutic circle, which revises biases in a process of understanding based on new insight (Peoples, 2021). The researcher acknowledged prior biases and experiences with the five-year rule but was able to add to that knowledge significantly through the experiences of other leaders within IMCOM-Europe. The findings in Chapter Four, as a part of this hermeneutical phenomenological study, were combined to paint a picture of leaders' experiences on the ground at U.S. Army garrisons overseas. Chapter

Five will review the aim of this study, the research question, and discuss leaders' experiences compared to the current literature and goals of the five-year rule. It will also present proposed solutions and implications for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Aim of the Study

This study aimed to advance the knowledge of Army leaders by sharing results with leadership, including information learned from the civilian personnel on the ground leading garrisons impacted by the five-year rule. Identified impacts can be used to form solutions to mitigate issues and enhance any benefits of the rule. This data will be available to leadership to support or discourage the continuation of the policy, and the study will expand the small pool of public literature relating to civilian leadership within the U.S. Army. A leadership model based on servant and Army leader characteristics will be presented for those leaders living under, and supporting employees living under, the five-year rule.

Discussion of Findings

The following research question guided this qualitative research study: What are Army garrison leaders' lived experiences moving overseas under the purview of the five-year rule and taking over an organization that provides services to soldiers, civilians, and families and employs others also under the five-year rule? I chose this topic after moving overseas as a U.S. Army civilian employee and experiencing the impacts of the five-year rule firsthand. When I moved, I was fully aware of the time limitation on my appointment and the effects it may have on my personal life and professional career. Adding to my experience, that of the leaders I interviewed increased my insight into this phenomenon. Before conducting interviews, I typed out my responses to the protocol to record my initial experiences and thoughts. This transcript can be found in Appendix G. Participant responses were much more robust than mine based on the conversational aspect of the semi-structured interviews. As a single female employee within the organization, my demographic differs from the primarily male respondents accompanied by at least one family member overseas. The discussion of findings is broken down into the same three categories in which the results were presented: motivations and adjustments for living overseas, leadership and the Army People Strategy, and impacts on organizational effectiveness.

Motivations and Adjustments for Living Overseas

My motivation for moving overseas was to find a new job opportunity, and I have been promoted again to a new position since I have been here. This experience was in line with many of the study participants. The piece I was surprised by in the first section of questions, which, in hindsight, I should have considered, was the number of respondents with foreign-born spouses who replied to my invitation to participate. This could have been something to filter for in the initial invitation to participants to avoid skewing the results toward those with a family stake in the matter. However, this also highlights the importance of this topic to that demographic. A questionnaire to include specific demographic questions, such as exact dates of overseas tours and family relationships, could have been included in the interview process to provide more consistent, detailed demographics and ensure a balance of participants. Only two participants were female, which was not unexpected based on the organization's leadership demographics as a whole.

At the end of the interviews, questions 15 and 16 focused on career trajectory. Career experience and impact on career were significant motivators for expatriates to move overseas (Doherty et al., 2011; Pinto et al., 2012). Leaders confirmed the impact of return rights and the Priority Placement Program could hinder the possibilities for career growth. While overseas assignments do offer new experiences, the impact can be negative if employees have to return to positions they have outgrown and were motivated to leave in the first place to accept an overseas job. The Priority Placement Program was not discussed positively, with employees being uncertain where they would end up and if it would be in a location or position they desired and beneficial to their careers. Uncertainty reduces employee well-being (van Dierendonck et al., 2014), and the five-year rule and its associated programs are an example of that.

My lived experience adjusting to life overseas differed from my preconceived notions of what the move would be, but not in a bad way. My experience lined up with the adjustment process identified by Haour-Knipe (2001), including the honeymoon phase, depression, and finally, a leveling out that took me about a year and gave me a new perspective on the five-year rule and its impacts. Many respondents expressed having short adjustment times, which was not surprising given the number of respondents with foreign-born spouses or prior experience moving and living overseas during their military careers. Those who discussed positive experiences often referenced having good sponsors to help them adjust and navigate processes and a new culture. A willingness to embrace the local culture was also mentioned as a strategy for easing adjustment.

Leadership and the Army People Strategy

The Servant Leadership Model closely aligns with Army doctrine on leadership and provides a framework to examine how the Army is fulfilling its mission to put people first. Servant leaders put others first and focus on the well-being of the organization. According to Greenleaf (2002), the best test to determine if servant leaders prioritize others' needs is if those others are growing as people and becoming "healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants." Discussion toward this aim with leaders interviewed for this study focused on their leadership styles and whether the Army provided them the resources they needed to meet goals outlined in the Army's People Strategy.

Research shows public servants often see their jobs as a calling, a way to give back, and respond well to people-oriented leadership styles. In line with this, comments from leaders regarding their leadership styles weren't surprising and reflected both the Servant Leader Model and the Army Leadership Requirements Model. As referenced in Chapter Two, numerous studies and publications discuss military leadership, but few focus specifically on civilian leadership within the military. Respondents echoed that literature with comments on the lack of civilian development opportunities or that those opportunities available weren't as robust as those offered for service members. When the organization can develop employees through growth opportunities and professional development, the return rights and Priority Placement Program may hinder the retention of those employees the organization has spent resources to develop. The five-year rule also underutilizes employees who may accept lower-level positions just to remain in one location.

Of note, the question posed to participants referenced the "People First" Strategy. The actual publication is named the "Army People Strategy" (DA, 2019b), which lays out strategies for acquiring, developing, employing, and retaining employees. While leaders were asked if they were familiar with the strategy, many could also have been thinking of local "people first" lines of efforts within their own garrisons or simply of the idea of putting people first within the organization. No matter the thought behind it, responses provided experiences pertinent to employing and retaining staff, with most respondents referencing negative experiences and adding thoughts on how they could be better supported. While the consensus was the Army has the right idea focusing on people, the execution was lacking in some areas. Manpower was brought up in several instances. Policies such as the five-year rule and telework were mentioned along with overburdensome processes such as those for hiring and tour extensions. The Army People Strategy seeks to deliberately manage the talents of its workforce, retain and develop that workforce, and change regulations to improve talent management. Based on comments from leaders, the five-year limitation is one of those regulations that should be reviewed. Several respondents wondered if the regulation, which began in the 1960s, was still relevant and there wasn't a clear awareness of the policy's purpose or if it was fulfilling its goals.

Impacts on Organizational Effectiveness

With the importance of the Army's mission in Europe and around the globe, leaders need to understand how the policies they put in place impact the organization. The five-year rule creates avoidable turnover within the Army, and in the case of this study, IMCOM-Europe specifically. Regarding experiences with staff rotations, I agree with those who classified turnover as high and that teams never get much past the storming stage before things change again. While talking to leaders, I had several 'aha' moments in this section. Two participants discussed the impacts on specific employees. I was unaware of the challenges our law enforcement teams face in hiring and retaining lower-graded staff members due to the financial burdens of moving overseas. The cost was mentioned as a burden even by those making significantly more than GS-6 and GS-7 employees. I moved overseas before the relocation tax was implemented. The tax burden was brought up by quite a few participants in reference to costs, as well. Allen et al. (2010) discussed avoidable turnover that the agency can control and functional versus dysfunctional turnover. Functional turnover is that of easily replaced employees versus dysfunctional, which includes losing highly skilled or top-performing employees. One could argue no employees overseas are easily replaced since almost all hiring actions include the costs and time associated with moving families overseas. The challenges highlighted by leaders with hiring lower-graded staff reinforce how what may seem like it should be functional turnover is instead dysfunctional when adding in the challenges of overseas moves. Allen et al. (2010) classify dysfunctional turnover as losing highly skilled or top-performing employees. Because the five-year rule is not performance-based, losing highly skilled and top-performing employees is a certainty. As discussed previously, it may also lead to losing those employees to other agencies and underutilizing those who choose to stay and take downgraded positions. I had not expected the NAF director to have as much input on the five-year rule, but that perspective was enlightening to include the experiences of those staff who take NAF positions just to maintain their SOFA status. Other leaders back up this idea discussing their experiences of losing staff who had been trained and promoted, as well as under-utilizing staff who often take lower-paid jobs to stay overseas. This ultimately goes back to whether employees want to further their careers or seek stability in a location. It seems overseas, it is hard to find both, which is an opportunity that can be found in the States. Another aspect that added to my understanding was the differences between stateside jobs and the impacts to losing organizations stateside. I moved overseas from another federal agency, so I do not have return rights. Several leaders brought up the impact on the organization they left, and there were several mentions of staying in one job until you die, which is a perception of what happens in stateside assignments. No matter the reason for the turnover, it leads to added expense in rehiring and training new employees, a lack of continuity in services, loss of institutional knowledge, and a decline in productivity. (Lee et al., 2018; Allen et al., 2010). Leaders' experiences showed these impacts within their own offices in discussions of continuous team building, reinventing processes, and strained relationships with host nation partners. The five-year rule makes these consequences unavoidable, and they occur at a much higher rate than stateside installations would experience. As illustrated in Figure 5, no matter how well managed, over the course of three years, five years, and beyond, there are stressors and points of uncertainty for each employee, which is compounded by the number of employees at different points along their journey. Figure 5 illustrates the first year of overseas employment as described by Haour-Knipe (2001), with initial excitement turning to depression and then a leveling out. The next point of stress comes around two years as an employee waits for a decision on a three-to-five-year extension and then again at four years for a five-to-seven-year decision, if applicable. If not extended, as illustrated at the two- and four-year points, the stress and uncertainty of returning to an old job or finding a new position in the States begins.

Figure 5

Overseas Employment Adjustment Model

Everyone acknowledges the benefit of bringing fresh perspectives into the organization. However, as happens in most organizations, this could be accomplished through the natural turnover of employees, personnel management, and professional development. However, these are not the stated goals of the five-year rule, which "serves to increase employment opportunities for military spouses and family members and developmental opportunities for employees in the United States, periodically renew the knowledge and competencies of the overseas workforce, including familiarity with current strategic goals, enhance the interoperability of employees, and promote a joint perspective in the workforce" (DoD, 2012).

Implications

Phenomenological studies look at the essence of a phenomenon, which may not necessarily be a problem. This study was informed by open-source information and scholarly studies with the input of leaders who have dealt with the phenomenon of the five-year rule. Any internal Army information on the phenomenon, which may be considerable and to which the researcher does not have access within the scope of this study, was not considered. Discussion, if any, on the status of the rule at higher levels of Army and federal leadership is unknown. However, to fulfill the aim of this study, this completed dissertation will be provided to leadership within IMCOM-Europe and published publicly via the Creighton University library system. The researcher will also identify any relevant journal opportunities for paper submission to add to the public knowledge base on this phenomenon and provide data to support or discourage the continuation of the five-year rule.

Phenomenon analyzed through this methodology may not be problems. However, discussing the phenomenon of the five-year rule with leaders identified more negative experiences than positive ones. Employee uncertainty, which decreases employee well-being, and the questions of the necessity and currency of the policy are concerns that should be reviewed to ensure organizations are meeting their mission. Solutions to mitigate issues could range from abolishing the five-year rule to implementing a full-time sponsorship and career counseling program for incoming employees, with a wide range of possibilities in between.

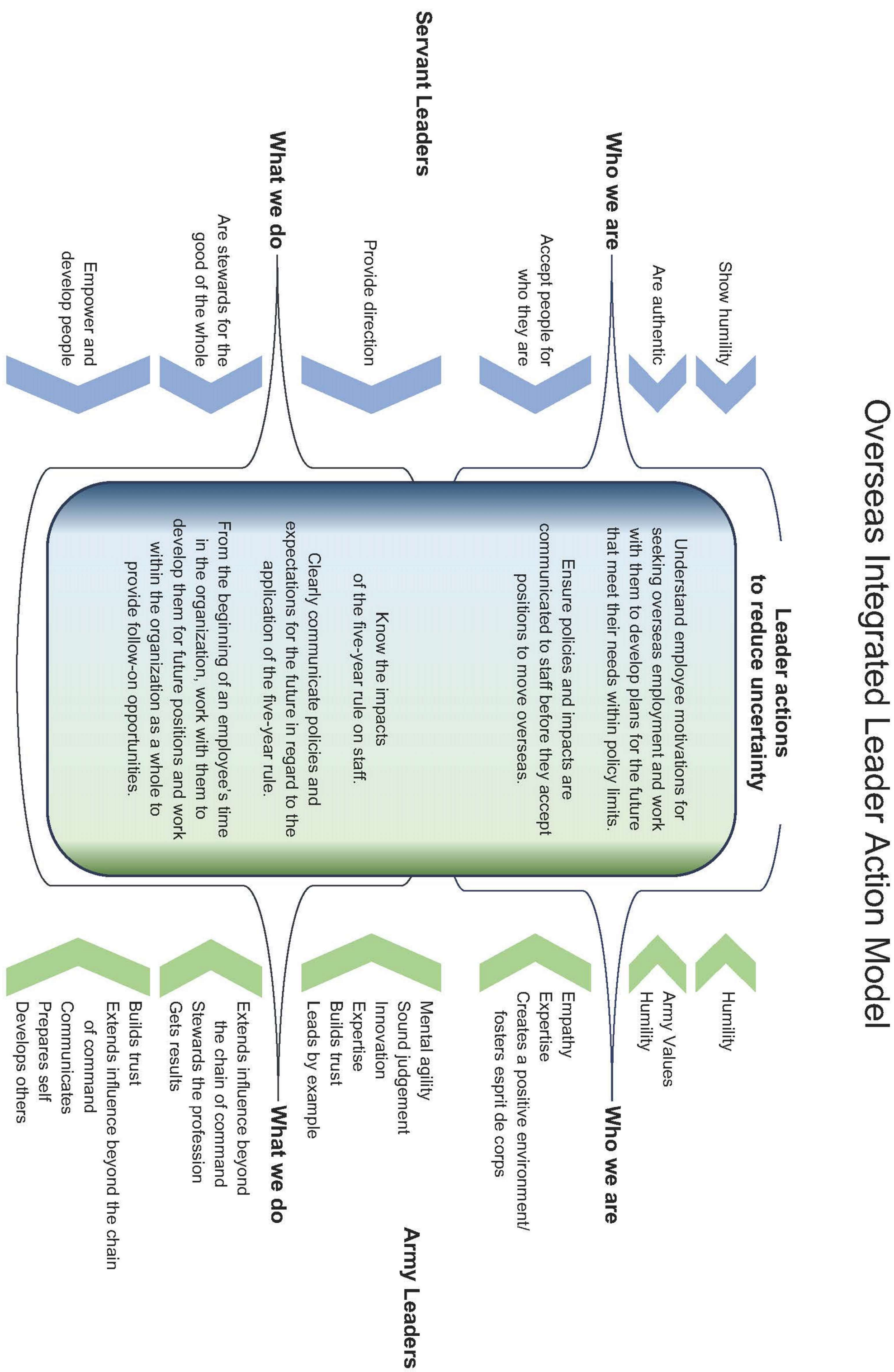
Proposed Solutions

Changes to the policy and law implementing the five-year rule must be taken at higher levels of leadership; however, leaders at all echelons within the Army and other organizations that fall under the rule can implement leadership practices locally to mitigate some of the impacts discussed throughout this study. Reviewing the crosswalk presented in Chapter One that shows the similarities between the Servant Leadership Model and the Army Leadership Requirements Model, a leadership model was developed to illustrate actions overseas leaders can take to meet the Army's goal to put people first and help decrease uncertainty among employees. The model is presented in Figure 6.

From the beginning of the hiring process to when employees move on to their subsequent positions, leaders can apply concepts gleaned from this study and the Overseas Integrated Leadership Model to lessen impacts on employees and the organization. The combined model shows how characteristics from the Servant and Army leadership models can inform leader actions to support employees. Clear communication from all levels, at all stages, can help decrease uncertainty. As the five-year rule also impacts many leaders within the organization, communication and acknowledgment of challenges are essential at all levels to develop individuals and the organization. As many leaders mentioned, staffing deficiencies can also create challenges in implementing new processes. However, prioritizing employee certainty and well-being can help improve morale and effectiveness.

Figure 6

Overseas Integrated Leader Action Model



As Army servant leaders, supervisors can support their organization, build trust, and help develop future leaders by clearly communicating the implications of the five-year rule from the beginning of the hiring process. Information on moving, adjustments, incentives, taxes, and other pertinent information from various organizations should be consolidated into easily understood formats provided to employees or accessible on publicly available websites. Leaders can use these documents and should discuss the implications of moving overseas with potential employees during the interview process, not wait for employees to ask. Ensuring employees understand the many costs, adjustments, and challenges of an overseas tour may also ensure employees who accept positions are best equipped to deal with overseas tours. As new employees onboard, sponsors should be available to answer questions and provide guidance. Sponsorship is often provided by other employees who have recently onboarded themselves and have varying levels of expertise and motivation to act as sponsors. Having formalized, full-time employee sponsors could ensure consistent information is provided to newcomers by knowledgeable staff and offer a customer-service center contact for incoming employees.

Once employees are onboard, leaders should continue the conversation with their employees about future plans and opportunities. Employees are often required to complete individual development plans and performance plans to outline their professional development and workplace goals. Leaders can ensure conversations about goals specifically include plans within the scope of the five-year rule to ensure employees make the most of their time within the organization. This continuing dialog will also reinforce the policy and allow leaders to address any uncertainty from the employee. As their tours come to an end, leaders can discuss options and opportunities with their staff. Many commands within the Army and other military branches have multiple locations worldwide. Building networks from the top down can help employees find new opportunities within the organization and prevent the loss of talent to other agencies. While there are some direct hiring authorities within the federal system, most civilian employees apply for their next position with no guarantee of selection. However, networking within the organization as a whole can help both leaders and employees identify upcoming talent and opportunities for which they might apply.

Many leaders in the study acknowledged there are employees with no intent to return to the States. While under the five-year rule, the organization is not required to keep these employees past the end of their tour or help them find employment that does not fall under the five-year rule so they can remain overseas. Clear communication from the beginning of an employee's tour and dialogue about their options may help decrease uncertainty for these employees. However, as long as organizations apply the five-year rule inconsistently, these employees can continue to seek opportunities elsewhere to stay, which, as identified in interviews, could be a waste of talent.

Without policy changes at hirer levels, clear and continuous dialog between leaders at all levels and overseas employees may be the best solution to mitigate challenges presented by the five-year rule. Understanding employee motivations to move overseas could also help leaders guide employees through their tours and help them better achieve their future goals. At a higher level, organizations could work to improve talent management processes to ensure they have more of a chance to keep high-performing employees within the organization if so desired. While these proposed solutions may help leaders navigate the challenges the five-year rule presents, further study and analysis of impacts should be conducted.

Further Research

This study has illustrated impacts on employees and garrisons based on the experience of 20 leaders within IMCOM-Europe and brought up numerous other questions. What is the cost impact of constantly relocating employees, both to employees and taxpayers? Is the policy meeting its stated intent? Is the aim of the policy still relevant in today's world? Does the policy hinder mission success? Does the policy hurt relations with host nations? In a manpower-constrained environment, how much time does support for rotation policies and processes take from other duties? What are the impacts on customers supported by organizations operating under the five-year rule? What are the time and cost implications for organizations in the states who hold positions for those with return rights? Within the Department of the Army and other federal entities that follow the five-year rule, I would propose further study of quantitative aspects of this topic. Studies could glean data from moving costs to the government and employees due to rotations. Manpower resources to process extension paperwork, priority placement, and hiring actions could be reviewed. At garrisons, customer service surveys could be implemented to learn more about organizational impacts from the customer's point of view. At the least, a review of the policy, its original intent, and its success in meeting its aim "to create employment opportunities for family members and developmental opportunities for employees in the U.S., refresh staff on organization goals, and create an institutional perspective in the workforce" (DoD, 2012) should be conducted and shared with the workforce.

Summary of Dissertation in Practice

The U.S. Army prioritizes its people and codifies that goal within numerous publications, including its Army People Strategy (DA, 2019b). It also places value on leadership and developing others while fostering the profession. These goals and values fit within the framework of the Servant Leadership Model and the Army's Leadership Requirement Model and provided a basis to explore the phenomenon of the five-year rule. The five-year rule prescribes the rotation of employees back to the continental United States from overseas positions. Interviews with 20 leaders within IMCOM-Europe provided more insight into the lived experiences of staff under the five-year rule. While leaders did have positive comments about the rotation of staff leading to new ideas within the organization, the overall tone of comments showed issues that warrant further research. In lieu of policy change, leaders can implement practices suggested in the Overseas Integrated Leader Action Model locally to mitigate impacts.

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Appendix A

Participant Invitation

Dear Participant,

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in this study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with your employer or the researcher.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to discover leaders' experiences on how the five-year rule, and the time needed to assimilate to their new positions and a new culture, impacts their effectiveness within their positions at Army garrisons overseas, and the organization's overall effectiveness. Data will be collected by conducting and recording individual, hour-long interviews with participants via video or teleconference. Further interviews may be scheduled if necessary or to clarify information, and you will have the opportunity to review a transcript of your interview for accuracy.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before participating or during the time that you are participating. We would be happy to share our findings with you after the research is completed. However, your name and organizational affiliation will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and only the researcher will know your identity as a participant.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are providing input on your experiences to further academic study relating to civilian leadership within the Army;

providing anonymous input to leadership on your experiences leading an organization overseas under the purview of the five-year rule; and furthering the role of servant leadership and review of the Army People Strategy within the service, contributing to Army civilian development.

Please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this consent form has been emailed to you to keep.

Appendix B

Letter of Agreement

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND
EUROPE
UNIT 23103
APO AE 09136-3103

May 19, 2021

Creighton University
Institutional Review Board
2500 California Plaza
Omaha, NE 68178

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are familiar with Anna Morelock's research project entitled "Leader Experiences of Limited Employment Terms at U.S. Army Garrisons Overseas." I understand Installation Management Command Europe's involvement will include providing access to contact information for garrison study participants.

We understand this research will be carried out following sound ethical principles, that participant involvement in this research study is strictly voluntary, and confidentiality of participants' research data is ensured, as described in the protocol.

Therefore, as a representative of IMCOM-Europe, I agree Anna Morelock's research project may be conducted at our agency/organization.

Sincerely,

Wesley A. Leisinger
Chief of Staff

Appendix C

IRB Approval

Creighton
UNIVERSITY
Office of the Provost
Research Compliance

DETERMINATION DATE:	28-Jun-2022
TO:	Anna Morelock
FROM:	Social / Behavioral IRB
PROJECT TITLE:	Leader Experiences of Limited Employment Terms at U.S. Army Garrisons Overseas
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Expedited
RISK LEVEL:	Minimal Risk
SUBMISSION #:	2002966-01
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Initial Application
REVIEW METHOD:	Expedited Review
DETERMINATION:	**APPROVED**
EXPIRATION DATE:	27-JUN-2023

Thank you for your Initial Application submission materials for this project. The following items were reviewed with this submission:

- DIP_Morelock_IRBSubmission_062822.docx
- citiCompletionCertificate_3483898_22129866.pdf
- Creighton University HS eForm
- IRB Consent Form.pdf
- Letter of Agreement (signed).pdf
- Interview Protocol.pdf

The board member reviewers have approved your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The consent document is stamped dated 15-Jul-2022. Only copies of the stamped, dated document(s) may be used when enrolling subjects in this project.

1. Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant.
2. Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the 'Request for Modification' form for this procedure. You must track all changes in the documents affected by the Amendment/Modification so that the Board can appropriately review and approve the submission.
3. All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON- COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the Reporting Form for Reportable New Information for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements must also be followed.
4. Advertisements, letters, internet postings, any other media for subject recruitment, and information given to subjects for use in this study require approval before posting or distribution. Please use the 'Request for Modification' form when requesting review for supplemental documents.
5. This project has been determined to be a minimal risk/expedited project and is subject to annual review. Please use the Annual, Continuing, or Project Termination form for this procedure. Your documentation for annual review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date. If you complete this project within the year, you are required to close the study and submit a final report prior to the expiration date.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 402-280-2126 or irb@creighton.edu. Please include your project title and number in all correspondence with this Board.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained in Creighton University's IRB records.

Institutional Review Board
T 402.280.2126 | T 402.280.3200
Dr. C.C. and Mabel L. Criss Health Sciences Complex I
2500 California Plaza Omaha, NE 68178

creighton.edu
creighton.edu/researchservices/rcocommittees/irb

Appendix D

Creighton University Research Informed Consent

Protocol Title: Leader Experiences of Limited Employment Terms at U.S. Army Garrisons Overseas
IRB project number: 2002966-01
Principal Investigator's Name and Department: W. Wayne Young Jr., Ph.D., Department of Residential Life

Principal Investigators': Telephone Number: 402-280-2189
Research Investigators' Names and Departments: Anna Morelock, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies
Research Coordinators' Names and Departments: n/a
24-Hour Telephone Number: +49 (0)151-158-06001

Study Summary

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study is to discover leaders' lived experiences with the five-year rule, the time needed to assimilate to their new positions and a new culture, and how those experiences impact their effectiveness within their jobs at Army garrisons overseas and the organization's overall effectiveness.

Important things to know:

- Taking part in research is voluntary. You can choose not to be in this study, or stop at any time.
- If you decide not to be in this study, your choice will not affect your relationship with the investigator of this study. There will be no penalty to you.

If you agree to participate in this study;

- Approximately 12 participants between the ages of 40 and 70 will be involved in this study.
- I will schedule, conduct and record an interview with you via video or teleconference. The interview is expected to take one hour, and follow up session can be scheduled if needed. You will have the opportunity to review the final transcript of your interview for accuracy.
- One to two number of visits are required
- You may be compensated between \$0-\$0 for each completed visit for a total of \$0 for

  your participation in the study

- These visits will take 1 hours (1-2 hours total)
- The potential benefits of participating in this study are 1) providing input on your

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experiences to further academic study; 2) providing input to leadership on your experiences working overseas; and 3) furthering the role of servant leadership and review of the Army People Strategy within the service.

- The potential risks to be in this study are minimal and no more than is encountered in everyday life is expected.

Introduction

Using the guidelines of the servant leadership model and the Army's People First Strategy, I seek to learn more about garrison leaders' experiences working overseas under the five-year rule to determine if the rule effects your organization's ability to accomplish its mission. You are invited to participate in this study as a garrison leader who is affected by the five-year rule and supervises others also working under the policy. I am available by email or phone to answer any questions you have about the project.

Study Purpose and Procedures

- The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological research study is to discover leaders' lived experiences with the five-year rule, the time needed to assimilate to their new positions and a new culture, and how those experiences impact their effectiveness within their jobs at Army garrisons overseas and the organization's overall effectiveness.
- Your participation is expected to last one hour unless follow up time is required for additional questions or clarification. Total participation times should be no more than two hours.
- I will schedule, conduct and record an interview with you via video or teleconference to learn more about your experiences leading an organization overseas under the purview of the five-year rule. The interview is expected to take one hour, and follow up session can be scheduled if needed. You will have the opportunity to review the final transcript of your interview for accuracy and the final report, if desired.

Benefits of Participating in the Study

- You will provide input on your experiences to further academic study relating to civilian leadership within the Army.
- You will provide anonymous input to leadership on your experiences leading an organization overseas under the purview of the five-year rule.
- You will further the role of servant leadership and review of the Army People Strategy within the service, contributing to Army civilian development.

Risks of Participating in the Study

- The potential risks to be in this study are minimal and no more than is encountered in everyday life is expected.

Full Accreditation	Creighton UNIVERSITY	
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- A possible risk involved in this study is the potential social and psychological risks associated with accidental disclosure of confidential information from the data collected throughout the study. Methods of storing and securing data are designed to minimize this risk.

Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to keep your records confidential. However, it cannot be guaranteed. We may need to report certain information to agencies as required by law. The records we collect identifying you as a participant will be maintained and stored in password protected files in the researchers Dropbox account. Any paper files will be stored in a locked file at the researcher's home.

Records that identify you and this consent form signed by you may be looked at by others. The list of people who may look at your research records are:

- The investigator and her doctoral committee members
- The Creighton University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and other internal

departments that provide support and oversight at Creighton University
We may present the research findings at professional meetings or publish the results of this research study in relevant journals. However, we will always keep your name and other identifying information private.
Disclosure of Appropriate Alternatives

• Another alternative would be to choose not to participate. **Compensation for Participation**

• No compensation will be provided to study participants. **Contact Information**

• For general questions concerning this research or in case of a research-related injury to the participant, contact: Anna Morelock at +49 (0)151-158-06001 or annamorelock@creighton.edu

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SIGNATURE CLAUSE

You are free to refuse to participate in this research project or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, or any effect on your medical care.

My signature below indicates that all my questions have been answered. I agree to participate in the project as described above.

Printed Name

Signature Date Signed

The Creighton University Institutional Review Board (IRB) offers you an opportunity (anonymously if you so choose) to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; or offer input about this project with an IRB administrator who is not associated with this particular research project. You may call or write to the Institutional Review Board at (402) 280-2126; address the letter to the Institutional Review Board, Creighton University, 2500 California Plaza, Omaha, NE 68178 or by email at irb@creighton.edu.

A copy of this signed form has been given to me. ________ participant's Initials

For the Research Investigator—I have discussed with this participant (and, if required, the participant's guardian) the procedure(s) described above and the risks involved; I believe he/she understands the contents of the consent document and is competent to give legally effective and informed consent.

Signature of Responsible Investigator Date Signed

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Appendix E

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.

2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.

3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.

4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.

5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.

6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.

7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.

8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research participant.

9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:

    a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.

    b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.

Appendix F

Interview Protocol

17. What is your current position and when did you move overseas for this position?
18. How many family members, of what ages, are living overseas with you? Are any still in the states, for instance, children in college?
19. Have you lived overseas before? If so, when and for how long?
20. Are you prior service? If so, for how long?
21. How long have you been a federal civilian employee? An Army civilian employee?
22. What was your motivation for seeking overseas employment?
23. Talk to me about your experience moving for this rotation?
24. Personally, how have you and your family adjusted to life overseas? Can you give me some examples?
25. Talk to me about your leadership style? What are some of the attributes you embody as a leader? Can you provide examples?
26. The Army has a "People First" Strategy – how do you feel your leadership style falls in line with this strategy and does the Army help you meet this strategy as a leader?
27. How many employees do you oversee and how many fall under the five-year rule?
28. When you came on board in your directorate, what was your experience as far as how your directorate functioned?
29. What has been your experience with staff rotations while you've been in charge of your directorate?

30. Talk to me about how your staff functions internally and with other directorates – what has been your experience with your teams' forming, storming, norming, and performing?
31. As a leader can you talk to me about how the five-year rule impacts your career trajectory and that of your employees? Can you provide examples?
32. What is your plan for your next position?

Appendix G

Researcher's Responses to Protocol

1. What is your current position and when did you move overseas for this position?

   I am the Deputy PAO for IMCOM-Europe. I moved here in June 2017 to take a position as the Deputy PAO for USAG Wiesbaden. I took my current job as a promotion in January 2021.

2. How many family members, of what ages, are living overseas with you? Are any still in the states, for instance, children in college?

   I moved here with three cats and a dog. No other immediate family members.

3. Have you lived overseas before? If so, when and for how long?

   No. This is my first time. I visited in 2000 for a couple of weeks, but this is my firsts time living overseas.

4. Are you prior service? If so, for how long?

   No. I've been a federal employee since November 2005.

5. How long have you been a federal civilian employee? An Army civilian employee?

   Federal since November 2005; for the Army about 10 years. The rest was with the VA.

6. What was your motivation for seeking overseas employment?

   I found a job that was a great fit for me and thought it would be interesting to live overseas.

7. Talk to me about your experience moving for this rotation?

    I took three weeks off work to get my household goods packed and my house ready to sell. Luckily, I had family in the states who helped me with getting rid of the last odds and ends and bringing three pets over. Without their help it would have been very overwhelming. I'm not looking forward to doing that in reverse. Also now we're taxed for overseas moves which wasn't the case when I moved here.

8. Personally, how have you and your family adjusted to life overseas? Can you give me some examples?

    I've adjusted but it's still hard since I haven't learned much of the language. I definitely understand more than I can speak, but wish I was better at speaking the language. I've taken classes, it just hasn't stuck – or I haven't practiced enough. At first it was fun being in a new environment and finding a new house, buying a new car. I do remember some very overwhelming days though – having a hard time communicating at a furniture store and just wanting to go back to my hotel to watch a show on my computer only to find out the show wouldn't play in this country. Just one frustration piled on top of so many others from the day. Now I realize how much I've adjusted when my sister came to visit and I realized all the things I do know and can point out to her. I do appreciate much of the cultural differences here; although I do miss being able to communicate with random people like in the line at the grocery store. You can here too – a smile is a smile – but I have no idea what the random comments mean most of the time!

9. Talk to me about your leadership style? What are some of the attributes you embody as a leader? Can you provide examples?

    I believe we're all a part of a team and should communicate as such. I try to foster communication and sharing amongst my group of influence. I'm not a leader as in a supervisory position, but I still try to model good leadership traits and give the best advice I can to those in positions of leadership. I also enjoy helping others, so I suppose I lean toward a servant leadership style.

10. The Army has a "People First" Strategy – how do you feel your leadership style falls in line with this strategy and does the Army help you meet this strategy as a leader?

    I want to say my leadership style falls in line with this but sometimes I feel my hands are so tied by bureaucracy I can't help people how I'd like to. This is frustrating that we don't have the resources we need.

11. How many employees do you oversee and how many fall under the five-year rule?

    I am not a supervisor.

12. When you came on board in your directorate, what was your experience as far as how your directorate functioned?

    In my current position, my role was new so it was a learning experience for all of us. I feel more comfortable with my role now, but still feel my role is a bit ambiguous – I don't always feel like I'm filling the intent or if I'm even sure of the intent.

13. What has been your experience with staff rotations while you've been in charge of your directorate?

    I've been in an acting role during my time here (for 8 months; some of it not paid as the higher grade) – because my boss was reaching his limit and moved back to the states early. One other employee also left during that time. She would have liked to stay, but was at her limit. I'm not sure I advised her correctly on all of her options. She had return rights so it seemed that was her only choice. I know she did not want to go back to that job, but didn't find another one in the timeframe although I know she interviewed for several. Within the garrison there was also a turnover for the DGC at the time – my boss. I don't feel I got great support from the person acting in that position at the time either.

14. Talk to me about how your staff functions internally and with other directorates – what has been your experience with your teams' forming, storming, norming, and performing?

    In my first position this was a constant. I feel like we were just getting to the norming and performing part when we had several people leave. Since I left about a year and a half ago there has been a complete turnover in that office. It's just a constant revolving door and the contacts you made are now gone and you have to figure out who's in what role now to answer your questions.

15. As a leader can you talk to me about how the five-year rule impacts your career trajectory and that of your employees? Can you provide examples?

I am happy that I was able to get a promotion while I've been here. I feel like they won't always look at you if you've been here too long – but I do think the experience here is very beneficial – I suppose it's like any other place; having some historic knowledge of the people, place and issues where you are is helpful – especially when there are always new people. I'd like to stay here a bit longer.

16. What is your plan for your next position?

Assuming I can't get another extension, I will start looking for a new job about a year from my DEROS. I'm not sure where I'd like to go, but hope I'll find something interesting.