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### **Navigating Virtual Mentorship: An Examination of Teleworking's Impact on Sailors' Perceptions of Mentorship Relationships, Processes and Outcomes**

March 2024

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Thesis Advisors: Dr. Kathryn J. Aten, Associate Professor  
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Department of Defense Management

**Naval Postgraduate School**

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Prepared for the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA 93943.

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The research presented in this report was supported by the Acquisition Research Program of the Department of Defense Management at the Naval Postgraduate School.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the practice of teleworking within the Navy, focusing on sailors' experiences of teleworking and perceptions of its influence on mentorship relationships, processes, and outcomes. It employs qualitative, thematic analysis of interviews with Navy personnel, to investigate sailors' perceptions of the dynamics between teleworking, mentorship, work-life balance, and identified training gaps, focusing on the shift to telework prompted by the COVID 19 pandemic. The analysis reveals critical themes that illuminate the challenges and opportunities presented by teleworking, particularly in relation to maintaining effective mentorship relationships virtually. The thesis concludes with recommendations for refining virtual mentorship and identifies opportunities for future research. This thesis contributes to the ongoing discussion on leveraging teleworking to enhance mentorship and professional growth in the Navy, underscoring the importance of evolving workplace strategies in a post-pandemic world.



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I extend my deepest gratitude to all those who have contributed to the completion of this thesis. First and foremost, I must thank the interview participants, whose invaluable insights have been the cornerstone of this research. I am immensely grateful to my advisors, Dr. Kathryn Aten and Dr. Mitchell Friedman, for their expert guidance, patience, and unwavering support throughout this journey. A special thanks goes to Lieutenant Commander Christopher Pisani, who has not only been a mentor but also a source of honest feedback and inspiration. His dedication to my growth has been a guiding light, for which I am thankful. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Captain Erick Lallemand for supporting me in the most constructive and caring manner. His role in this process has been invaluable, not only in a professional capacity but also as a profound source of motivation. Last but certainly not least, I thank my daughter, Ayana, whose presence and spirit have inspired me every step of the way. Her enthusiasm and joy have been a constant reminder of why this work matters, fueling my dedication to this project.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BUPERS	Bureau of Naval Personnel
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
DOD	Department of Defense
DON	Department of the Navy
ESS	European social survey
HR	human resources
ID	identification
IRB	Institutional Review Board
MLD	Marine leader development
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
U.S.	United States



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## I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The outbreak of the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) and resulting pandemic forced a rapid transition to teleworking, leading to a significant absence of face-to-face experience, much less mentoring, for U.S. Navy sailors. In the wake of the pandemic, the evolving landscape of telework practices may continue to pose challenges to the continuity and effectiveness of natural mentoring, potentially impeding its potential benefits. While leaders and scholars acknowledge the vital role of mentoring in career development and organizational performance, the impact of the shift to teleworking on sailors' perceptions of mentoring relationships, processes, and outcomes is unclear.

As outlined in the U.S. Navy Human Resources Officer Mentoring Program Guidebook, it is important to highlight the significance of 'natural mentoring,' a vital form of mentorship that traditionally thrives through face-to-face interactions. Natural mentoring, as defined in the guidebook, is the spontaneous emergence of career-enhancing relationships formed informally by individuals (United States Navy, Human Resources Community, 2017). Although employees report increased productivity during telework and studies show no measurable productivity decline while they worked remotely (Ramirez, 2022), little research has delved into how sailors perceive mentoring in this new telework landscape, and in particular, if, how, and to what extent they experienced natural mentoring while teleworking.

In May 2006, during President George W. Bush's administration, the United States Homeland Security Council introduced the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Implementation Plan. This comprehensive plan outlined specific guidelines, including the allocation of critical resources, notably information technology infrastructure, to facilitate telecommuting for employees during a pandemic scenario (Homeland Security Council, 2006). Fast forward to March 2020, and the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, which had about rapid and far-reaching consequences. The primary consequence of the pandemic was the urgent need for individuals to adhere to social distancing measures, often necessitating self-isolation in the initial phases. As a result, non-essential employees were instructed to work from home, while many essential workers who could do so were swiftly



transitioned into teleworking arrangements. Consequently, even after the initial pandemic restrictions were lifted, the Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel extended the telework and remote work program to grant supervisors the flexibility of allowing employees to continue teleworking voluntarily (Chief of Naval Personnel, 2022). This historical context underscores the significance of telework not only as a response to the pandemic but as a potential model for the future of work arrangements.

The Chief of Naval Personnel's BUPERS Instruction 12300.2B, titled "Telework and Remote Work Program," aims to establish and implement a policy that facilitates telework and remote work for eligible employees within the Bureau of Naval Personnel (BUPERS) commands and subordinate activities (Chief of Naval Personnel, 2022). This document distinguishes between "telework" and "remote work," defining the former as a voluntary arrangement where an employee performs assigned duties at an alternative worksite on a regular or situational basis, while the latter involves scheduled duties at an alternative worksite outside the local commuting area on a non-regular basis (Chief of Naval Personnel, 2022). Supervisors must conduct a thorough review of each position and employee for telework eligibility, with the determination recorded systematically. Eligible employees, as identified, have the option to choose to telework at a frequency deemed appropriate and in alignment with their supervisor's approval. This same document notably outlines the possibility of combining telework or remote work with alternative work schedules. Supervisors may also approve of "ad hoc" or situational telework. Pay, leave, and travel entitlements for employees in remote work settings are to be based on their official worksite. The instruction mandates that an agreement be established prior to the beginning of work that specifies the alternative worksite's location, work schedule, information security, equipment protection, standards of conduct, liability, injury compensation, and government access (Chief of Naval Personnel, 2022). Management retains the right to require telework employees to report to the traditional worksite based on operational needs. This document emphasizes the need for satisfactory completion of assigned work and adherence to performance standards for telework or remote work participants. Both employees and supervisors must undergo Department of the Navy (DON) telework training before entering into a remote work agreement. In short, these



guidelines provide a comprehensive framework for the successful implementation of telework and remote work while ensuring accountability, performance standards, and adherence to relevant regulations (Chief of Naval Personnel, 2022).

Despite challenges, such as working with children at home, previous research on the pandemic and post-pandemic periods suggests that teleworking may help federal workers balance their professional and personal responsibilities (Ramirez, 2022). On the other hand, other research suggests that if people work entirely from home, they can lose touch with their place of work and colleagues, so a balance must be maintained for teleworking to be effective for the development of one's career (Baruch, 2000). In summary, these studies suggest that teleworking may improve the perception of a better work-life balance, if done correctly. However, how teleworking may affect the quality, processes, and outcomes of natural mentoring, which develops from spontaneous relationships, has yet to be explored.

Career development looms large in any consideration of teleworking, as organizations with a greater concern for employee work life (e.g., that offer telework options) find it easier to attract and retain valued employees (Hayman, 2005). Johnson and Anderson (2015), moreover, argue that it is crucial to establish a culture of mentoring for teleworking Sailors to provide them with an opportunity to develop individually, ensure the Sailor is not overlooked when promotion opportunities are available, and hold leaders accountable for their subordinates. Quality of mentoring interaction fosters mentee growth and success and when it comes to retention, satisfaction, and morale, informal mentoring can outstrip formal mentoring's benefit (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019).

In light of these considerations, it is important to understand how teleworking Sailors perceive and experience mentoring relationships, processes, and outcomes. To this end, this study will explore mentorship in the U.S. Navy during and after the COVID-19 pandemic with two purposes: first, to explore if and how extended teleworking affected service members' perceptions of mentoring relationships, processes, and outcomes, and second, to identify perceived challenges and opportunities of teleworking mentoring. This research will provide recommendations to help leaders manage Navy mentor-mentee relationships in a telework environment.



## **A. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1. How did Sailors experience and perceive mentoring relationships, processes, and outcomes before and during their teleworking arrangements?
2. What were the key challenges and opportunities that teleworking presented for mentor-mentee relationships among Sailors?
3. How did teleworking impact the Sailors' perception of work-life balance?
4. What were Sailors' experiences of training?

## **B. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The structure of my study is as follows. In Chapter I, I explore the challenges the Navy faces in maintaining effective mentorship programs during the era of teleworking, along with pertinent contextual information, the rationale for my study, and the inquiries driving my research. Next, in Chapter II, I review the literature, elucidating insights gleaned from prior research on mentorship, teleworking, and achieving work-life balance. Chapter III outlines the methods I employed to collect and analyze data for the purpose of answering research questions, primarily centered on qualitative interviews. Subsequently, in Chapter IV, I present my analysis of the interviews with Naval officers and the insights gleaned from them. Lastly, Chapter V concludes my study and provides recommendations and avenues for further investigation. This includes a discussion of the possible long-term effects of teleworking on mentorship dynamics within the Navy, the effectiveness of virtual mentorship programs, potential strategies to mitigate challenges faced in remote mentorship relationships, and a discussion of the role of emerging technologies in facilitating mentorship interactions.



## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This review explores key themes in the literature related to mentorship, telework, and work-life balance. First, I examine literature covering the landscape of mentorship within the Navy, exploring definitions and factors that shape successful mentor-mentee relationships. Subsequently, I turn my focus to literature on the intricacies of telework environments, analyzing the factors that contribute to their efficacy or pose challenges. Finally, this exploration culminates in a discussion of the literature on crucial aspects of work-life balance, acknowledging its significance in maintaining the health and productivity of personnel. While extensive literature exists on mentorship, telework, and work-life balance individually, a notable gap exists in the current body of knowledge regarding how telework specifically impacts mentorship within the Navy. In response to this gap, my research aims to analyze perceptions of mentorship within a teleworking environment.

### **A. MENTORSHIP IN THE NAVY**

The literature on mentorship within the military context underscores its significance and explores traditional structures and practices of mentorship, with the focus on the Navy alone for the purposes of this study. For example, Johnson & Anderson (2015) focus on the Navy's Leader Development Strategy, emphasizing the importance of deliberate individual development with mentoring integrated into core elements such as experience, education, training, and personal development. The study suggests that, while informal mentorships, characterized by natural, mutual initiation, and ongoing interaction, often yield stronger outcomes, a degree of structure is essential for facilitating mentor-mentee matches. These conclusions, derived from a four-page survey and mixed-method research administered to 149 personnel (Johnson & Anderson, 2015), are further substantiated by anonymous quotes from respondents. The inclusion of these firsthand perspectives enhances the value of the study's findings.

Mentoring challenges arise from conflicting definitions, resistance to formal programs, and concerns about favoritism. Regarding these points, another study by Kisla



and Yang (2020) delves into the Marine Corps' shift from a formal mentoring program to the informal Marine Leadership Development Framework in 2017. Conducted through 23 semi-structured interviews that focused on individuals' backgrounds, perceptions of leadership, and mentoring relationships, the study reveals that only 13% of the interviewed Marines effectively implemented the Marine Leader Development (MLD) policy, underscoring the crucial role of senior leadership in shaping mentorship, and highlighting the ambiguity in defining and teaching mentorship (Kisla & Yang, 2020). It points out a lack of top-down leadership involvement as a potential factor contributing to the failure of mentorship and highlights the importance of coaching and counseling functions as indispensable for effective mentoring, underscoring the misconception that mentorship solely involves these aspects.

Johnson and Anderson (2015) and Kisla and Yang (2020) highlight the challenges of defining, implementing, and sustaining effective mentorship, raising questions about the role of leadership, the impact of formalized programs, and the understanding of mentorship functions. These two studies highlight the need for strategic approaches, thoughtful implementation of mentorship programs, and ongoing training for mentors in the military context, suggesting areas for further research and improvement.

In exploring the multifaceted concept of mentorship beyond the teleworking context, Mullen and Klimaitis (2019) critically evaluates traditional mentoring structures, acknowledging their limitations such as perpetuating power imbalances and excluding historically underserved populations, including but not limited to women and people with different racial backgrounds. This examination prompts a deeper exploration of alternative mentoring types, including formal and informal mentoring, electronic mentoring, and cultural mentoring. Specific topics addressed are alternative mentoring types, including formal mentoring, which typically involves structured programs with assigned mentors and mentees; informal mentoring, which occurs spontaneously and is often based on mutual connections or interests; electronic mentoring, which utilizes digital platforms for mentor-mentee interactions regardless of geographical location; and cultural mentoring, which focuses on guiding individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds to navigate professional environments and societal norms effectively (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019). Mullen &



Klimaitis (2019) emphasize the need for clear role boundaries between mentor and mentee to avoid compromising mentorship goals, and in so doing recognize the challenges in maintaining boundaries, especially when incorporating psychosocial development and friendship in mentoring relationships. Shifting the focus to alternative models, Mullen & Klimaitis (2019) advocates for fundamental changes in mentorship dynamics, exploring unconventional formations like peer mentorships and examining cultural identity as a crucial factor.

## **B. FACTORS IN A TELEWORKING ENVIRONMENT**

Factors such as organizational culture, trust, and personnel attitudes shape the practice of telework within the Department of Defense (DOD) (Baruch, 2000). The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 mandated federal agencies to establish telework programs for reasons ranging from recruitment and retention to environmental concerns, such as the physical office vs. home environment and continuity of operations during events like pandemics (Bricker, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in 2019, significantly disrupted global business operations, leading to widespread adoption of telework practices (Kisla & Yang, 202). In the case of the Navy, the pandemic necessitated swift action to implement remote work programs, highlighting the need to examine DOD and Navy practices and policies regarding telework (Chief of Naval Personnel, 2022).

The academic literature underscores the presence of telework in the federal workforce since the 1970s, with studies delving into its effects on productivity, quality of life, and attitudes toward remote work. While recognizing risks associated with maximizing telework, including concerns about information and technology security, supervisors and employees alike have experienced the advantages of work-ready mornings without a commute and the flexibility to take breaks at their convenience, challenging conventional assumptions about the necessity of physical presence at an office (Edwards et al., 2020). A related issue, managing teleworking employees, particularly in a military context, is acknowledged as a challenge requiring a shift in management style and structure. In the face of these challenges, the Navy must adapt its policies to remain



competitive in recruiting efforts and attract the younger workforce accustomed to remote work flexibility (Bricker, 2022).

The review of job descriptions across ratings and officer designators played a pivotal role in narrowing down which jobs could be done remotely. The finding that there is a potential to successfully shift 37 percent of jobs to remote work provides insight into the complex interplay between historical context, organizational policies, and the practical implications of telework based on the specific job (Bricker, 2022). For instance, understanding the factors influencing the feasibility of remote work arrangements sheds light on how historical norms and organizational structures shape the implementation of telework policies and the adaptation of job roles to remote environments (Bricker, 2022). Additionally, insights from surveys at the Air Force Acquisition Management and Integration Center's experience before, during, and after the pandemic underscore the ongoing challenges and decision-making dilemmas organizations face in adopting and adjusting telework policies (Ramirez, 2022). This study set the stage for an in-depth analysis of telework implementation in the DOD, considering factors such as productivity, job satisfaction, and the need for ongoing assessment and adaptation. The Federal Telework Law Model is proposed as a theoretical framework to guide this analysis, emphasizing the importance of clear definitions, employee satisfaction, and the consideration of unintended consequences in shaping effective telework policies (Ramirez, 2022).

In exploring the multifaceted landscape of workforce dynamics within the Navy, it is imperative to examine the intersecting realms of teleworking and mentorship. These two components represent integral pillars in addressing contemporary workforce needs. To visually elucidate their interplay and mutual contributions, see Figure 1. It illustrates the overlaps and synergies between teleworking and mentorship. This diagram serves as a visual aid to underscore the nuanced relationships between these elements and their combined impact on enhancing naval workforce effectiveness, resilience, and to discern the interconnectedness of teleworking and mentorship in meeting the evolving demands of the Navy's workforce.



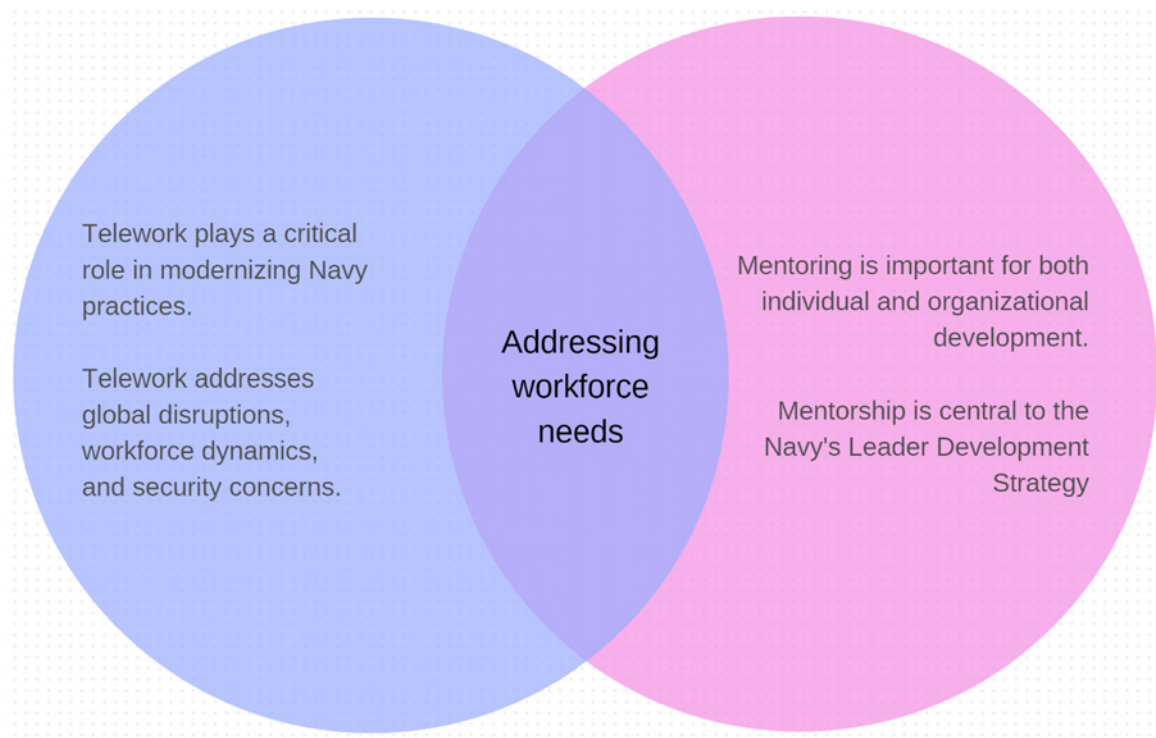


Figure 1. Intersecting Realms of Teleworking and Mentorship in Addressing Navy Workforce Needs

### C. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The literature on work-life balance has highlighted the challenges of reconciling family aspirations with paid work and its implications for policy. Using large-scale data from the European Social Survey (ESS) on work-life balance from 2003 to 2006, Pichler (2008) found that there are different definitions to what work-life balance is, and that only the paid work is being considered by the ESS – not the other types of “work” that could lead to an imbalanced life. Concerns arise regarding the measurement of work-life balance, as existing scales often conceptualize the work component more specifically than the life component. This imbalance in conceptualization may result in the neglect of subgroup-specific dimensions, such as differences in caregiving responsibilities, community involvement, or personal hobbies, which are essential aspects of individuals’ life experiences and contribute significantly to their overall sense of balance and well-being. Moreover, these scales exhibit limited correlation with external criteria such as subjective well-being, prompting a call to broaden quantitative empirical approaches to better capture

the multidimensional nature of work-life balance (Pichler, 2008). This broadening could involve the development of new measurement tools that incorporate qualitative assessments alongside quantitative metrics, the inclusion of diverse life domains beyond traditional work and family roles, and the exploration of innovative data collection methods such as experience sampling or ecological momentary assessment.

In Pichler's (2008) study, work-life balance emerges as a focal point in political institutions, companies, trade unions, and families, evident in its prioritization on political agendas globally. His conceptualization of the concept encompasses various dimensions, including working time, flexibility, employment, welfare, social security, family, fertility, migration, and leisure time. Pichler (2008) emphasizes the structural component of work-life balance through research on demographic trends, sustainable welfare provision, and social security, while also addressing an individual-centric perspective by examining personal circumstances, family arrangements, and well-being. Furthermore, he critiques large-scale social surveys for their emphasis on employment-related explanations, suggesting a more critical analysis that considers various life domains to provide a more nuanced understanding of work-life balance.

Shifting the focus to the specific context of work-family conflict and work-life balance, Hayman (2005) draws attention to the increasing interest from researchers and employers in these domains. This interest is evidenced by a questionnaire administered to 61 employees at a university in Australia, which reflects a growing recognition of the importance of addressing work-family issues in organizational settings and the need for empirical data to inform research and policy initiatives (Hayman, 2005). The lack of reported scales for assessing work-life balance led to the evaluation of a 15-item scale adapted from Fisher-McAuley et al. (2001). This study, conducted with human resource administrators in Western Australia, confirmed a robust three-factor solution, presenting a new measure for capturing employee perceptions of work-life balance. According to Hayman (2005), each of the 15 items could be categorized into the following three factors: work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work, and work/personal life enhancement. These factors highlight the changing landscape of the workplace, with increased female employment, dual-career couples, and telecommuting,



has blurred the boundaries between work and non-work life. The study emphasizes the potential usefulness of the scale in assessing work-life balance among administrative employees, measuring both positive and negative aspects of the work-personal life interface. The results of this study point to the application of the 15-item scale in evaluating the effectiveness of work-life balance programs and its potential for human resource management practices in the modern world, particularly in the Asia Pacific region (Hayman, 2005).

Combining the perspectives of Pichler (2008) and Hayman (2005), the literature collectively discusses the multifaceted concept of work-life balance, exploring its dimensions and the challenges associated with its measurement. It delves into the factors influencing work-life balance, emphasizing the dominance of work-related aspects in existing research. The discourse extends to different work arrangements, acknowledging the changing dynamics in the workplace and their impact on the balance between professional and personal life. The literature notes the implications of work-life balance on employee well-being and job satisfaction, highlighting the need for comprehensive and inclusive measurement approaches. Additionally, strategies and interventions aimed at promoting and maintaining a healthy work-life balance emerge as crucial considerations, with a call to evaluate the effectiveness of organizational programs. Throughout, the role of organizational policies and leadership in supporting work-life balance remains a key theme, underlining the importance of considering both individual and structural components in understanding and addressing this complex phenomenon (Pichler, 2008; Hayman, 2005).

#### **D. SUMMARY**

The investigation into teleworking within the Navy and its impact on mentorship and work-life balance reveals a significant gap in the existing literature, particularly in the limited understanding of how teleworking arrangements influence the development and effectiveness of mentorship programs, as well as their implications for achieving work-life balance among naval personnel. This thesis aims to address this critical gap, as there is limited research on the interplay between teleworking, mentorship, and work-life balance.



The review emphasizes the importance of understanding how mentorship dynamics can influence and be influenced by the work-life balance of individuals engaged in teleworking within the Navy. Moreover, the lack of literature on best practices for maintaining mentorship and effective strategies in a teleworking Navy underscores the potential contribution of this research. This thesis aims to fill crucial gaps in understanding remote work in the Navy, particularly the role of leadership in supporting mentorship. It provides practical insights for Navy personnel and policymakers, contributing to the ongoing discourse on teleworking, mentorship, and work-life balance within the Navy while setting the stage for future investigations.



### **III. METHODS**

This study explored the perceptions of mentorship and teleworking in the U.S. Navy. Specifically, it focused on the interrelationship between the two topics, that is, on the intersection of mentorship and teleworking within the context of how remote work arrangements impact mentorship dynamics among Navy personnel. According to Brown (2013, as cited by Brown et al., 2016), mentors influence federal manager decisions to permit telework. The research found that mentors with personal experience in teleworking and in managing teleworkers led them to dissuade others from teleworking (Brown, 2013). This research contributes to research at the intersection of mentoring and teleworking by providing deeper knowledge of U.S. Navy participants' experiences and perceptions of mentoring throughout their careers and, in particular, while they were teleworking. To this end, I conducted semi-structured interviews with U.S. Navy officers. The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) Institutional Review Board (IRB) and reviewed this research project and determined that it does not meet the federal government's definition of human subjects research, so IRB approval was not needed.

#### **A. DEVELOPMENT OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND INFORMATION SHEET**

I crafted questions to solicit Sailors' descriptions of their experiences, including their perceptions of mentorship effectiveness, challenges they encountered while teleworking, and their perceptions of the impact of teleworking on mentorship dynamics. I relied primarily on open-ended questions and encouraged participants to provide rich accounts of their perspectives and insights. I encouraged participants to share the stories they deemed most important or impactful to them. During interviews, I maintained flexibility in the questioning process to adapt to participants' responses and delve deeply into emerging themes. Therefore, the order and focus of the interview probes varied, as did the specific wording of questions. I used probing questions to explore participants' responses in detail and uncover their underlying motivations and experiences. Throughout the data collection process, I refined the questions based on insights gained from earlier interviews. I added new questions to elicit further comments on topics raised by previous



participants and modified existing questions to address gaps in my understanding and explore emerging themes more comprehensively. In short, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for flexibility in questioning, which allowed key topics to be covered consistently and in detail.

Prior to conducting the interviews, I provided participants with a detailed information sheet outlining how the study was being conducted. The information sheet provided participants with a brief overview of the research objectives and the broader context within which the study was conducted and informed participants about the use of recording and transcribing devices, procedures for ensuring anonymity, and how long the interview was expected to take, which was about an hour. In addition to following guidelines for the ethical conduct of research, the participant information sheet expedited the interview process by providing participants with comprehensive information beforehand to minimize the need for an explanation during the interviews. Participants who agreed to be interviewed were provided the information sheet via email, along with a calendar invite, meeting details and a set of sample questions to help them prepare for the discussion. A copy of the information sheet and sample interview questions are included in Appendix A.

## **B. PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT**

I solicited participants who were U.S. Naval mid-level officers. Officers with experience in teleworking and informal mentorship were purposefully selected. These participants were recruited through multiple avenues, including outreach to students within NPS, personal contacts, and referrals from existing participants, employing a snowball sampling technique. I made initial contact with potential participants via various communication channels, such as text messages, phone calls, Facebook Messenger, or in person. Interviews were scheduled outside of regular work hours, and participants used their personal phone or computer for the interview sessions. Interviews with NPS students were scheduled outside of class hours. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary and participants were free to withdraw at any time during the interview process without penalty or consequence.



### C. INTERVIEW AND TRANSCRIPTION PROCESS

I conducted 11 semi-structured interviews during the period from November 10, 2023–January 25, 2024. Interviews lasted from 32 to 98 minutes, with the average running approximately 58 minutes. Demographic information, including time in service, designator, sex, and ethnicity, was collected through the initial interview questions.

Interviews were conducted remotely via video calls using platforms such as Microsoft Teams, FaceTime, or through phone calls, depending on participants' preferences and accessibility. Eight of the eleven participants appeared on camera. Interviews were arranged at a mutually convenient time for the interviewer and participants. Prior to each interview, verbal consent was obtained from each participant to record the interviews. I made sure that each participant understood that interview transcripts could serve as the basis of anonymous quotes or paraphrases and that their stories and examples could be included in research reports but would not be attributed to them. The purpose of this step was to encourage openness during questioning and to build a level of trust while also respecting the participants' privacy. All participants agreed to be recorded, quoted, and paraphrased anonymously for the purpose of this research. To protect participants' identities, the interviews and transcripts were assigned a participant identification (ID).

To mitigate the risk of data loss due to technical errors during the interview sessions, a backup audio recording was made using a separate recording device for all participants. This portable digital recorder allowed me to review the audio as needed for analysis as well as backup the recording as a precautionary measure to ensure data integrity and completeness in the event of any disruptions or failures in the primary transcribing method.

During the interview sessions, audio recordings were transcribed in real-time using transcription features available within the video conferencing capabilities of Microsoft Teams. These features allowed for immediate access to transcribed text, facilitating my ability to follow the conversation and to identify key themes or points for further exploration. In cases where technical issues occurred during the interview, rendering the



real-time transcription feature unavailable, the backup audio recording was utilized for transcript generation post-interview. This step ensured that no data or time was lost due to technical failures and enabled comprehensive analysis of the interview content during the subsequent data analysis phase. Although transcripts were available upon request, interviews did not request to review them afterwards.

#### **D. DATA ANALYSIS APPROACH**

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis is a flexible and systematic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of participants' responses and the generation of rich insights into the research questions.

Following each interview session, I kept an interview diary that I used to record immediate reflections, impressions, and observations related to the interview experience. This diary served as a personal log for capturing spontaneous thoughts and insights while they were fresh in my mind. The diary entries included notes on key moments, significant quotes, and notable themes or patterns emerging from the interview discussion. Additionally, each entry contained a summary of the interview content, highlighting key takeaways, surprises, and similarities observed across participants' responses. It also provided a means of capturing my initial reactions and emotional responses to the interview, offering valuable insights into the subjective interpretation of the data (Tang, 2002). Secondly, the diary served as a tool for organizing and synthesizing interview data, facilitating the formulation of preliminary themes and conceptual frameworks. These entries were integrated into the thematic analysis process, forming the development and refinement of thematic categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The diary entries served as a reference point for revisiting key moments in the interview and identifying recurring themes or patterns that warranted further exploration. This diary-keeping fostered a process of reflective practice, which encouraged me to critically evaluate my own biases, assumptions, and preconceptions throughout the research process (Tang, 2002). By



documenting personal reflections in real-time, I was able to maintain reflexivity and transparency in my approach to data analysis.

Interview transcripts were analyzed using Dedoose (version 9.0.107), a qualitative data analysis software program designed to facilitate the management, coding, and analysis of qualitative data (Dedoose, 2024). This program provided me with tools for organizing the transcript data, which enabled me to code segments, identify themes, and visualize patterns. Prior to analyzing the data, I cleaned each transcript, removing excess spaces, identifiable information, and time stamps. I then selected, coded and categorized segments of text.

The data analysis process involved multiple stages, beginning with familiarizing myself with the data through repeated readings of the transcripts. I generated the initial codes based on patterns and recurring ideas I identified in the data. These codes were then systematically organized into higher-order themes, reflecting broader patterns and concepts present across multiple interviews. I developed themes through an iterative process of data coding, review, and refinement. Themes were refined based on their coherence, relevance to the research questions, and the extent to which they captured the essence of participants' experiences and perspectives. Once themes were finalized, Dedoose was used to generate visual representations of the data, such as word clouds and concept maps, to aid me in interpreting and presenting the data.

## **E. STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS**

### **(1) Purposeful Recruiting**

The recruitment process was primarily reliant on soliciting participants from my own professional network, predominantly consisting of other HR officers within the Navy, some of whom were students at NPS. Consequently, participants were largely HR officers (Figure 2) which limits the diversity of perspectives and experiences reflected in the analysis. While the concept of mentorship is Navy-wide and extends beyond HR, teleworking may hold greater relevance to HR officers given their involvement in personnel management and policy implementation related to remote work arrangements.



Mentorship transcends occupational specialties within the Navy, and insights from a broader range of roles could have provided valuable perspectives on this aspect.

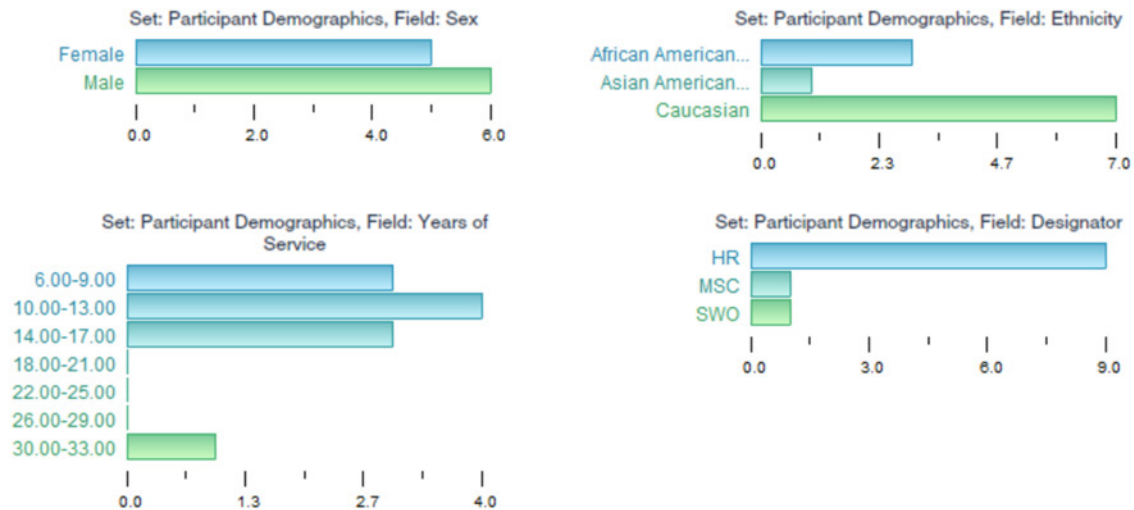


Figure 2. Participant Demographics. Adapted from Dedoose (2024).

## (2) Research Design

Thematic analysis is a widely-used qualitative research method known for its flexibility and accessibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Its adaptability allowed me to tailor the analysis process to my specific research questions and data type. Thematic analysis offered a means to gain in-depth understanding through the exploration of patterns and themes within the transcript data, providing insights into my participants' perspectives and experiences. However, thematic analysis is not without its limitations. Subjectivity in interpretation can introduce bias, and the time-consuming nature of the process limits the number of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006).



## IV. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The findings presented in this chapter are based on an analysis of data gathered through 11 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Naval Officers from diverse professional backgrounds. Employing thematic coding, I examined the interview data to extract key patterns and insights. Five main categories emerged, mentorship, teleworking, the interaction between teleworking and mentorship, work-life balance, and gaps in training. I identified three distinct themes within the mentorship category: organizational context, interpersonal efficiency, and emotional satisfaction.

Table 1 displays the 29 codes grouped into categories, themes, and sub-themes. The codes emerged from a comprehensive analysis of 238 excerpts from the interview data. Appendix C provides a visual representation of the frequency with which these codes were applied across the interview transcripts, totaling 608 instances.

Table 1. Categories, Themes, and Sub-themes

Category	Theme	Sub-theme	
Mentorship	Organizational Context	Role Distinction	
		Mandated Mentorship	
		Multiple Mentors	
		Unsupportive Environment	
		Cross-rank Mentors	
	Interpersonal Efficiency	Initiative	
		Interpersonal Boundaries	
	Emotional Satisfaction	Being Mentored	Positive
			Negative
		Mentoring Others	Positive
Negative			
Teleworking in the Navy		Supervisor Role	
		Productivity Gains	
		Hybrid Schedule	
Teleworking and Mentorship		Traditional Relationship Building	
		Technology and Social Platforms	
		Effect on Mentorship	
Work-Life Balance		Preference for Telework	
		Boundary Challenges	
Gaps in Training			



## **A. MENTORSHIP**

Mentorship emerged as the most prominent category in the interviews. The interviews suggest that mentorship in the Navy is deeply intertwined with the organizational context, interpersonal dynamics, and emotional experiences of service members. Participants' responses suggest that Navy organizational structure, traditions, and cultural norms influence the dynamics of mentorship and professional development within this branch of service.

### **1. Organizational Context**

In categorizing the subthemes into the overarching theme of “organizational context,” I relied on participants' descriptions and discussions related to the cultural nuances within the Navy. Organizational context refers to the internal and external environments that influence the norms, behaviors, and operations of an entity. Within the Navy, this context encompasses cultural nuances, including traditions, values, and social structures, that shape the organization's unique character and approach to mentorship. Throughout the interviews, a consistent pattern emerged: interviewees repeatedly referenced cultural nuances within the Navy, such as beliefs, values, and attitudes. These references were both explicit and implicit, with interviewees sharing anecdotes, observations, and reflections that shed light on the relationships between organizational culture and their experience of teleworking and mentoring. For instance, some interviewees directly discussed specific cultural practices or norms, while others alluded to them indirectly through their experiences and interactions within the organization. The recurrence of these references across multiple interviews underscored their significance and suggested a common recognition among Navy personnel of the importance of these cultural nuances.

I grouped the text segments in the theme organizational context into 5 sub-themes. Each subtheme—role distinction, mandated relationships, multiple mentors, unsupportive environments, and cross-rank mentors—was identified based on participants' accounts of their experiences and observations within the organizational setting. By organizing these subthemes under the umbrella of organizational context, the analysis aimed to provide a



comprehensive understanding of the cultural and structural factors that participants perceive influence mentorship dynamics within the Navy.

***a. Role Distinction***

The interview data suggests that the role distinction between supervisors and mentors is paramount within mentorship dynamics due to the hierarchical structure of the organization. While mentees typically discerned the disparity between these roles, participant comments suggest that it is equally imperative for supervisors and mentors to uphold this demarcation. Participant 1 elucidated on this point, stating, “There are people who assume that they are my mentors because they are senior in rank to me, but they are not an actual mentor to me.” This observation underscores the misconception that seniority automatically equates to mentorship, emphasizing the need for clarity in defining mentorship relationships. Participant 6 acknowledged the occasional blurring of lines between the roles of mentor and supervisor, stating, “I think sometimes the lines for me get a little bit blurred between times where I was a mentor versus times where I was a supervisor.” This acknowledgment highlights the potential challenges in maintaining role distinction, necessitating heightened awareness and conscientious effort from individuals occupying dual roles. Participant 7 emphasized the accountability inherent in the supervisor role, stating, “As a supervisor you’re accountable and that will tell you how you need to either adjust your approach or maybe keep going with how you are doing things.” These statements underscore the importance of supervisors being cognizant of their responsibilities and adjusting their approach accordingly to ensure appropriate fulfillment of both supervisory and mentorship duties. These insights suggest that the role of mentors and supervisors should be distinct.

***b. Mandated Relationships***

Another theme that emerged was the participants’ negative perception of the required mentoring programs. Participant 3 expressed strong disdain for mandated mentorship, stating, “So personally, I think forced mentorship is awful. Point blank.” In the military context, mandated mentorship programs typically involve assigning mentors to service members without considering their personal preferences or compatibility. This



process may involve a hierarchical assignment where senior personnel are paired with junior members, regardless of whether there is a natural rapport or shared interests between them. Participants highlighted the ineffectiveness of assigning mentors without considering personal compatibility, emphasizing the importance of genuine connection for meaningful mentorship. Participant 5 echoed these sentiments, recounting a disappointing experience with an assigned mentor, stating, “So I was assigned a mentor as well and that didn’t seem to go well. It seemed very forced.” This sentiment was further exemplified when Participant 5 attempted to seek guidance from their mentor, only to be unable to find them. Participant 9 similarly voiced opposition to mandated mentorship, stating, “I’m not a fan of mandating that type of relationship.” Participants’ accounts underscore their perceptions of the detrimental effects of mandated mentorship programs. They felt obligated to participate in mentorship relationships that lacked authenticity and genuine connection, which not only diminished participants’ perception of the quality of mentorship relationships but also contributed to their feelings of disengagement and disillusionment, ultimately detracting from the benefits they gained from mentorship initiatives.

*c. Multiple Mentors*

The reliance on multiple mentors emerged as a prominent feature in the interview data. Participants described a rich tapestry of mentorship dynamics, wherein mentors served diverse functions, hailed from various communities, and espoused different ideologies. Participant 3 delved into this diversity, probing, “Are you talking about personal mentors or like the actual mentorship program within the community?” This inquiry highlights the nuanced distinctions between formal mentorship programs and informal mentorship relationships that exist within the Navy. Participant 5 further underscored this diversity, remarking, “Navy mentorship is different for every community. I’ve noticed it’s different now. I’ve seen it in different regions, it’s completely different.” This observation emphasizes the contextual nature of mentorship, which is shaped by individual communities and organizational structures. Participant 8 provided insights into the strategic utilization of multiple mentors, stating, “I utilized the different mentors based on my perceived strengths that they have, and from there I just leverage them and their resources.” Participants’ experiences highlight the potential advantage of seeking guidance



from a diverse range of mentors, who can each offer unique perspectives and expertise. This approach, embraced by participants, underscores the importance of leveraging multiple mentor relationships to enhance professional development within the Navy.

***d. Unsupportive Environments***

While mentorship is often touted as a cornerstone of professional development, participants painted a more nuanced picture. Their comments suggest that the presence of harsh work environments in the Navy poses significant challenges to fostering effective mentorship relationships, contributing to the perception of an unsupportive atmosphere. Participants recounted experiences where mentorship interactions were marred by hidden agendas and ulterior motives. Participant 3 provided a poignant example, stating, “When I was prior enlisted, where they thought they were mentoring me, but they were using their interests, you know, and that’s not good. That’s not mentorship.” This participant’s input suggests that self-serving behaviors undermine the integrity of mentorship relationships. Moreover, Participant 11 commented on the hierarchical and directive nature of military leadership, expressing doubts about the depth of personal connections within professional relationships. They remarked, “You wonder, do I really need to know everything about them? I mean, I know enough for us to get the work done and for us to respect each other, but I don’t know them.” This lack of intimacy and depth in professional interactions not only raises questions about the authenticity and effectiveness of mentorship in the Navy but also underscores the challenges faced in cultivating meaningful mentorship relationships within environments characterized by high operational demands and hierarchical structures.

***e. Cross-Rank Mentors***

Participants described cross-rank mentorship, which involves junior officers seeking guidance and support from senior or prior enlisted personnel. This sub-theme is underscored by participants’ vivid accounts of the invaluable support and direction provided by experienced enlisted leaders early in their careers. Participant 2 eloquently reflected on this dynamic, stating, “I have a lot of Chiefs at my previous command who took me under their wing.” Similarly, Participant 7 recounted a transformative experience



from when they were fairly new to the Navy, stating, “There was a Warrant Officer and he taught me how to validate my research, instead of solely relying on hearsay.” Cross-rank mentorship relationships among participants did not emerge through formal programs. Instead, these connections developed organically on the job, indicating a natural inclination towards such mentorships outside the structured confines of formal programs. These firsthand accounts highlight the pivotal role of cross-rank mentorship in facilitating professional development and knowledge acquisition among junior officers.

From navigating role distinctions to grappling with the challenges of mandated mentorship programs, these experiences show that participants encountered a diverse array of mentorship experiences shaped by the unique context of naval operations and organizational structure.

## **2. Interpersonal Relationships**

The second theme that emerged from the data within the mentorship category was interpersonal efficiency, which refers to the capacity to navigate social and professional interactions effectively, fostering clear communication and positive relationships. According to the interview data this skill set encompasses active listening, empathy, assertiveness, and adaptability, all vital for productive engagement with peers, superiors, and subordinates. Participant responses suggest that establishing rapport, fostering open communication, and cultivating mutual trust between mentors and mentees are essential elements of effective mentorship relationships within the Navy.

### ***a. Initiative***

Participants’ responses highlighted their perception that initiative was paramount in their success at seeking and fostering mentorship relationships. Participants explained that they were expected to take ownership of their own professional development. Yet many participants, particularly those in the early stages of their careers and lacking mentors, expressed apprehension about initiating mentorship. Participant 1 articulated this sentiment, stating, “Just finding one on a list is scary.” Participant 2 echoed this uncertainty, remarking, “I don’t know where to start.” Participant 3 emphasized the importance of voluntary engagement in mentorship, stating, “Somebody has to choose



mentorship; they have to want it.” Participant 5 highlighted the necessity of intentional efforts in connecting with potential mentors, stating, “You have to intentionally find ways to connect with people.” Participant 6 emphasized the proactive nature of seeking mentorship, stating, “It’s not like anyone’s going to come and find you to help you.” Participant 7 described their mentorship interactions as primarily initiated by seeking advice, stating, “My interactions with them have been more or less asking for advice or them being proactive in giving me advice.” Participant 8 stressed the responsibility of the mentee in fostering mentorship relationships, stating, “I intentionally try and make sure that I maintain that [relationship].” Participants emphasized the importance of asking for guidance, stating, “the best thing that you can do is ask.” Participant 10 highlighted the importance of discernment in selecting mentors, stating, “Not everybody is a good mentor... you have to look for that and that you want to mentor people.” These quotes underscore the proactive stance required from both mentees and mentors in initiating and fostering mentorship relationships within the Navy. These insights highlight the role of participants’ initiative in both seeking and fostering mentorship relationships, emphasizing the proactive stance required from both mentees and mentors within the professional development landscape.

#### ***b. Personal Boundaries***

Personal boundaries was another sub-theme that emerged from participants’ accounts, when considering how to maintain a healthy interpersonal dynamic within the context of mentorship. Participants’ responses illustrate their sense of satisfaction in mentoring others, whether it involved helping others to achieve their goals or supporting them through tough times. Participants explained their belief that it’s crucial to maintain a balanced perspective on the emotional aspects of these interactions. Participant 5 reflected on the importance of being realistic about one’s capacity to support others, stating, “I think in some cases I take on too many people and I don’t know if I can support. I try to be upfront with what I can and can’t support.” This acknowledgment underscores the necessity of setting realistic expectations to ensure effective mentorship. Additionally, Participant 6 shared insights into the importance of not overclaiming credit for a mentee’s success, stating, “I didn’t really take a lot of pride in their accomplishments... they did it.



They did the work.” This highlights the importance of recognizing the mentee’s efforts and achievements, while also acknowledging the mentor’s role in providing guidance and support. Participant 7 emphasized the need for coordination and effective time management in maintaining sustainable mentorship relationships, stating, “It requires coordination, and it may be a little bit more challenging, but it’s certainly doable.” Furthermore, Participant 10 stressed the importance of recognizing when mentorship efforts must be handed over to the mentee, stating, “Once you’ve done what you can... it’s on them.” This underscores the principle of empowering mentees to take ownership of their development. Finally, Participant 11 highlighted the importance of maintaining professional boundaries and practicing appropriate skills, stating, “You also have to be sure you’re not a therapist... draw the line and practice those skills.” This emphasizes the distinction between mentorship and other forms of support, such as therapy or other Navy-specific resources, and the importance of maintaining clarity in the mentor-mentee relationship.

In summary, the data gathered from participants’ experiences suggests that interpersonal efficiency plays a role in nurturing successful mentorship connections, particularly as service members grapple with the challenges of communication and relationship-building within the hierarchical structure of the military. Participants’ experiences emphasize the critical importance of interpersonal efficiency as a cornerstone for fostering their effective mentorship relationships within the Navy.

### **3. Emotional Satisfaction**

The third theme within mentorship that emerged from the participants’ comments was their emotional satisfaction. Emotional satisfaction refers to a continuum of feelings ranging from deep dissatisfaction and distress to high fulfillment and happiness, indicating the extent to which individuals feel their emotional needs and desires are being met. This scale encompasses the entire spectrum of emotional experiences, from negative states of unhappiness and frustration to positive states of joy, and contentment, reflecting the dynamic nature of emotional well-being as influenced by personal interactions. Participants recounted examples of feeling some level of emotional satisfaction when their



mentoring relationships met their expectations. The exploration of the emotions that emerged, as revealed through the interviews, highlights the significant role of emotional satisfaction in navigating the benefits and challenges within these relationships. This analysis introduces the upcoming sub-themes that further dissect the complexities and nuances involved in mentorship.

***a. Being Mentored***

Participants' experiences with mentorship in the Navy evoked a diverse spectrum of emotions, positive and negative. Many participants expressed profound feelings of gratitude, motivation, and empowerment stemming from the guidance and support they received from mentors. Participant 1 exemplified this sentiment, expressing gratitude by stating they felt, "...grateful that there's someone out there that is looking out for me." The participants frequently reported experiencing positive emotions when they perceived they were making tangible progress in skill development, career advancement, and personal growth through their mentorship relationships. However, participants also recounted feeling frustration, disappointment, or inadequacy alongside their positive experiences. Participant 5 vividly described this struggle, expressing disappointment and a sense of wasted time, stating, "I felt like I was wasting my time because it just wasn't getting me anywhere... I was also disappointed because I was hoping for more and I was looking for that guidance." Participants frequently reported experiencing negative emotions when they faced challenges in identifying compatible mentors or encountered mismatches in mentor-mentee relationships. Despite these challenges, Participant 9 reflected on the positive aspects of mentorship, highlighting the safe space it provided for seeking advice without fear of judgment, stating, "You could go and ask for advice or experience and feedback without having to worry about any type of reprisal or judgment... It was good." These firsthand accounts underscore the complex emotions surrounding participants' experiences of receiving mentorship in the Navy, emphasizing both its potential benefits and challenges.



***b. Mentoring Others***

Interview participants also experienced a myriad of emotions when reflecting on their roles as mentors. Participants frequently described experiencing positive emotions such as fulfillment, pride, and a sense of accomplishment when they actively guided and supported their fellow service members. Participant 4 encapsulated this sentiment, stating, “So I think honestly that’s the best part of the job.” Participant 10 echoed the sentiment, regarding mentoring others as “absolutely the best thing about the Navy.” These mentors expressed satisfaction in witnessing the growth and success of their mentees, fostering a strong sense of camaraderie and mutual respect. However, participants who had mentored also shared experiences of grappling with negative emotions stemming from the inherent challenges encountered during the mentoring process. Participant 5 articulated feelings of frustration with systemic issues and concerns about adequately supporting mentees, stating, “Frustration, to be honest with the systems... I feel like too many people fall through cracks.” Participant 7 reflected on the dual nature of mentoring, expressing love for the mentoring aspect despite its everyday demands, stating, “Yeah, but I love the mentoring aspect. It’s one of the things that keeps me fresh... but it’s every day.” Participant 8 described the validation and sense of value derived from mentoring, stating, “So it made me feel like, hey, I’m a valued member of the team. He wants to know what I think.” Finally, Participant 11 emphasized the empowerment inherent in active listening, stating, “Just listen to what they’re saying, and I think just doing that makes them feel empowered.” These quotes provide insights into the rich emotional landscape of mentoring within the Navy, highlighting both the rewards and challenges associated with this integral aspect of Navy culture. Participants’ reflections offer examples of the nuanced emotional dynamics at play in mentoring others within the Navy, emphasizing both its rewards and the ongoing commitment required to support and empower mentees effectively.

The emotional satisfaction theme encompasses a wide spectrum of emotions, ranging from profound gratitude and motivation to frustration and disappointment. As service members progressed through their mentorship journeys, they often experienced moments of deep connection and personal growth, fostering feelings of gratitude towards their mentors for their invaluable guidance and support. Conversely, challenges in finding



suitable mentors or experiencing mismatches in mentor-mentee relationships evoked feelings of frustration and disappointment. However, amidst these challenges, mentorship also offered a safe space for seeking advice and feedback without fear of judgment, fostering a sense of emotional security and camaraderie. Similarly, mentors derived a sense of fulfillment and pride from guiding their mentees, yet also grappled with the inherent challenges of the mentoring process, such as concerns about adequately supporting their mentees or balancing mentorship responsibilities with their own career obligations.

## **B. TELEWORKING**

Teleworking within the Navy was the second category that emerged from the interview data. Participants described how teleworking offered a flexible alternative to traditional office-based routines. The perceived complexities and opportunities associated with teleworking in the Navy came to light through various subtopics, such as supervisor roles, productivity gains, and hybrid schedules, reflecting mentors' and mentees' ongoing adaptation to modern work practices.

### **1. Supervisor Roles**

Many of the participants found the teleworking experience frustrating due to inadequate guidance from leadership and insufficient communication across departments. Supervisors emerged as pivotal figures in shaping the success or failure of participants' teleworking arrangements. Participants identified clear expectations set by supervisors and a team culture that prioritized accessibility and open communication as crucial contributors to a productive and healthy remote work environment. However, participants recounted persistent challenges. Officer integration at new commands was particularly challenging, according to participants, as face-to-face interactions were scarce, making it challenging for officers to establish working relationships and find their footing within the command structure while teleworking. Participant 3 highlighted variation in individuals' ability to work unsupervised as a key factor in the success of different supervisor roles, stating, "Obviously, you have individuals who are better at working in an unsupervised environment and then you have those where you kind of got to worry about, like, what the hell are you doing?" Participant 5 expressed concerns about decreased productivity due to



difficulties in contacting colleagues while teleworking, stating, “You know, again, if I can’t get ahold of someone, then productivity has gone down.” Participant 7 voiced confusion about the lack of promotion of teleworking by supervisors, stating, “I was kind of confused about why teleworking wasn’t more widely advertised by supervisors.” Participant 10 highlighted the need for supervisors to adapt to managing a diverse workforce in a teleworking environment, stating, “So there are a lot of people like me that are older, and they’re used to hands-on, seeing people. I think...[there is a shift]as a manager and a supervisor in this new world you need to be able to effectively manage a very diverse workforce.” The quote highlights the challenge of adapting to managing a diverse workforce, especially for those accustomed to in-person interactions. The move to teleworking adds another layer to this challenge, requiring managers to develop new skills to effectively lead their teams in a remote setting. Participant 10 further emphasized the necessity for a change in management philosophy to accommodate remote work, stating, “the management side of it has to change their philosophy and people have to get used to it.” These insights highlight the perceived importance of supervisor roles in fostering successful teleworking arrangements and the obstacles supervisors encountered in adjusting to the changing work environment.

## **2. Productivity Gains**

According to the interview data, teleworking provided an opportunity for individuals to experience heightened productivity due to reduced interruptions commonly encountered in traditional office settings. In addition, some participants noted that working from home was conducive to productivity, particularly as they found their personal computers to be faster and more efficient than the ones provided in the office. Participants explained that in teams where teleworking proved successful, characterized by clear expectations and realistic goals, remote work emerged as the preferred method for task completion. Participant 2 emphasized the lack of outside distractions while teleworking, stating, “The ability to just sit down and knock work out or not without a whole lot of outside distractions was really helpful.” Participant 11 expressed a sense of uninterrupted workflow while teleworking, stating, “I just feel like I get more done because I’m not getting interrupted.” Participant 7 compared the efficiency of personal computers at home



to those in the office, stating, “So the computers, ...were limited... my personal computer at home was more effective and efficient at doing just the basic things and hung up a lot less.” They further elaborated on the productivity gains, stating, “I was able to follow up on people’s requests and get them done quicker, so I felt better that I was able to do that.” Participants’ observations emphasize that teleworking fostered focused and efficient work environments, resulting in productivity gains for some participants. Conversely, the need to incorporate one’s home life, such as children and household tasks with was a challenge noted by several interviewees. The challenge is discussed subsequently under “Boundary Challenges.”

### **3. Hybrid Schedule**

Participants expressed a preference for a hybrid schedule, combining teleworking and in-person attendance, as the most favorable option - even if they didn’t use the term “hybrid schedule.” Participant 3 highlighted the implementation of different zones to regulate office occupancy, stating, “We had different zones where only a certain amount of people could be in the office at a time. So, we’d split up teams, you know, like a blue and gold team.” Participant 4 reflected on the initial challenges of adapting to a different model but noted the eventual establishment of a watch rotation, stating, “I would say the first three months were tough and then after that we kind of settled into a groove where we made a watch rotation.” Participant 6 emphasized the importance of finding a balance between telework and in-person interaction, describing it as a “blended system,” stating, “I think that kind of balance, like a blended system of telework where it’s not gonna be 100% because human interaction is good for people, but it’s not like 100% telework.” These insights underscored the nuanced approach desired by participants, combining the benefits of remote work with the value of face-to-face collaboration.

To summarize the teleworking category, the interview responses suggest that the role of supervisors stood out as crucial in shaping participants’ perceptions of the success or failure of teleworking arrangements. Productivity was another focal point for the participants, with teleworking often resulting in many individuals reporting reports heightened efficiency and smoother workflow. A preference for blended schedules,



combining teleworking with in-person attendance to maximize flexibility and collaboration, emerged from the interviews.

### **C. TELEWORKING AND MENTORSHIP**

It was clear from the interview data that teleworking has significantly reshaped the mentorship dynamics for participants, affecting both traditional relationships and their use of social and technological platforms for mentor-mentee interactions. The impact of teleworking on mentorship perception varied among participants, with some believing it had minimal impact, while others expressed concerns about reduced opportunities for genuine mentorship in remote settings. Within the category of teleworking and mentorship, insights from the interviews highlight the sub-topics of traditional relationships, social and technological platforms, and the effect of mentorship, revealing a spectrum of opportunities and challenges inherent for mentorship in remote work environments.

#### **1. Traditional Relationships**

Participants expressed that their mentor-mentee relationships often originated from in-person interactions. From the perspective of the participants, initial familiarity, established through face-to-face encounters, laid the foundation for the mentorship dynamic. According to the participants, this connection necessitated a fundamental level of trust between both parties, though responses suggested that the burden of trust-building (initiative) fell more heavily on the mentee. Participant 1 expressed uncertainty about finding the right mentor in a new community, stating, “I don’t know what I don’t know, and I don’t know who would be the best fit for me in a community that I’m brand new in.” Participant 2 echoed this sentiment, noting the lack of time to gauge others, stating, “I don’t think there was enough time to, you know, feel other people out.” Participant 3 emphasized the importance of natural trust-building, stating, “Let me see people and know that they’re trustworthy.” They highlighted the challenge of identifying suitable mentors in a telework environment, noting, “So for the most part, like when I first got there, I was teleworking, really like, kind of hard to figure out who can be a mentor and who isn’t.” Participant 6 further emphasized the impact of in-person interactions on mentorship, stating, “So for me, the mentors that I’ve kept throughout my career have been people that I’ve met in person.”



These insights from participant accounts underscore the significance of face-to-face interactions in fostering trust and forming traditional relationships for the purpose of mentorship. Evidence from the interview data suggests that working remotely disrupted the natural inclination to form traditional relationships with others.

## **2. Social/Technological Platforms**

Some participants expressed that teleworking has introduced new ways for maintaining connections with mentors, particularly in the Navy where frequent relocations heightened the likelihood of mentor-mentee separation. Participants recounted that sustaining communication over long distances necessitated accessible modes of interaction, making video calls a feasible option whether both parties adhered to teleworking schedules or not. Participant 1 noted the enhanced communication facilitated by platforms like Microsoft Teams, stating, “...the use and integration that the Navy has done with Microsoft Teams does make it a little bit better and a little bit easier because it’s not just a phone call anymore. It’s virtual face to face.” Participant 2 emphasized the convenience of video calls in maintaining connections, stating, “being able to see each other and do these video calls has made it easier.” Participant 7 acknowledged the value of face-to-face interactions in mentorship but recognized the potential of video calls to bridge the gap, stating, “the face-to-face portion of mentorship can actually be overcome by video calls.” Social media emerged as a popular tool for mentor-mentee engagement. Participant 8 explained how it facilitated connections by sharing information, “We have access to social media... I follow them, they follow me... they may reach out and be like ‘Hey, thank you for posting that’.” Participant 10, however, highlighted challenges with technology and social media, stating, “I don’t have Facebook... it’s hard to connect.” These experiences that participants recounted highlight the diverse approaches using various social and technological platforms they used to maintain mentorship connections in a teleworking environment.

## **3. Effect On Mentorship**

In terms of mentorship, participants exhibited varying perceptions of the impact of teleworking. According to participants, factors such as rank and position within the organization, familiarity, or accessibility to teleworking tools for both the individual and



their mentor, and preferences for in-person communication all contributed to this divergence in opinions. While Participant 1 expressed, “I don’t think it has changed.” Participant 3 emphasized the difficulty of establishing connections remotely, stating, “If you’re working remotely through a screen, it’s hard to make that connection and have a relationship with somebody to trust in order to be a mentor.” On the other hand, Participant 6 remarked, “I don’t think telework really impacted it too much.” However, Participant 9 raised concerns about reduced casual opportunities for mentorship, noting, “And then you throw in that if you’re not in the office, you’re not going to have those... It kind of lessens the opportunity for genuine mentorship.” Participant 10 echoed similar sentiments, expressing, “I still think you can do the mentoring, but I think it’s more inconvenient, and I don’t know if you get the same quality that you could when you can sit there in front of somebody.” Participants suggested that the impact of teleworking on mentorship depended on the interviewees’ familiarity and willingness to use new social platforms to interact with others.

According to the interviews, mentor-mentee bonds often relied on in-person encounters to establish trust and familiarity. However, participants’ accounts suggest that teleworking has disrupted this process, posing challenges in finding suitable mentors, as noted by participants who highlighted the difficulty of gauging others remotely. Despite these challenges, participants also highlighted that teleworking has introduced new methods for maintaining mentorship connections. Interviews revealed video calls became a viable option for sustaining communication over long distances, while social media platforms facilitated mentor-mentee engagement and information sharing. However, participants noted challenges with technology proficiency.

#### **D. WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

Interview data suggests that managing work-life balance is characterized by the integration of both domains or the separation of them. Participants’ feedback reveals that navigating the professional and personal workload is often equipped with a preference for telework, coupled with challenges in setting clear boundaries between work and personal life.



## **1. Preference for Telework**

For some participants, teleworking has become the preferred choice for seeking a harmonious blend of professional responsibilities and personal life. Participants lauded telework for its effectiveness in eliminating the distractions prevalent in traditional office environments. Freed from constant interruptions and background noise, participants noted a marked improvement in their concentration and productivity levels. Moreover, the absence of daily commutes for participants was celebrated as it provided extra time for personal endeavors or fostering a more relaxed morning routine. For these participants, teleworking represented more than just a remote work arrangement; it embodied a lifestyle choice aimed at enhancing overall well-being and promoting a healthier work-life balance. Participant 4 shared insights into the dual responsibilities of work and parenting during telework hours, stating, “And then from 6 am to about 7 am, you’re kind of doing the parenting side of life with your phone on.” Participant 8 highlighted the efficiency gains of teleworking, expressing, “Because I know how productive I could be, I could have been cleaning the house on the meeting, making a smoothie. I could have done things during this time that I’m just sitting here waiting for an email to come.” Participant 10 emphasized the work-life balance facilitated by telework, stating, “The thing I like about telework is that it’s a great work-life balance that allows me to do things that I normally couldn’t do.” These testimonies from the interview participants revealed their preference for teleworking and perception that it enhanced their productivity and personal fulfillment.

## **2. Boundary Challenges**

Participants revealed that while teleworking could offer advantages, it could also bring forth unique challenges particularly regarding the demarcation between work and home life. Some participants struggled to establish clear boundaries between their professional responsibilities and personal time. Without the physical separation of a traditional office, the distinction between work and non-work hours became blurred for some participants. This ambiguity often resulted in interviewees feeling compelled to address work-related matters well beyond standard working hours, encroaching on their personal time. Participant 5 highlighted the assumption that teleworking equated to no



responsibilities, stating, “they just wanted to telework because they assume they don’t have to do anything,” which made it difficult to manage a team remotely and added to work-related stress. Participant 6 echoed the sentiment, describing how “it just felt like the work never ended.” Participant 9 expressed a preference for the separation between work and home, stating, “I like being in the office and the separation between work and at home.” Participant 11 shared experiences of struggling with boundaries, noting, “I do tend to work at night sometimes, and it just happens because my work is here... when I was physically going to work, I had better boundaries.” These insights underscore the importance of a proactive approach to addressing boundary challenges to preserve one’s work-life balance amidst the flexibility and convenience of teleworking.

To summarize the work-life balance category, teleworking emerged as a popular choice among the participants who were seeking to harmonize their professional duties with personal commitments. This arrangement was favored for its ability to reduce distractions, enhance productivity, and afford individuals more time for personal pursuits. However, alongside these benefits came challenges for interviewees, particularly regarding the delineation between work and home life. Some participants found it challenging to establish clear boundaries, which led to a blending of work and personal time for them.

## **E. GAPS IN TRAINING**

The final category identified in the interviews was the absence of formal training or telework guidance. The participants highlighted a significant gap in organizational support and resources for individuals navigating telework environments. All participants felt they were left to navigate the complexities of teleworking without adequate preparation or guidance. Participant 8 lamented the lack of emphasis on telework training, expressing, “I think most of the Navy is trying to put telework and COVID-type postures behind us.” Participant 9 emphasized the need for guidance, stating, “as far as the execution of what needs to be done and how it needs to be done, it was just like ‘go home and telework’.” Participants felt this lack of training not only hindered them from maximizing their productivity and effectiveness in the remote setting but also impeded their ability to adapt to telework requirements.



One participant's experience underscored a notable exception, wherein they received training to become a certified coach through the Navy. This training which mirrors mentorship in many aspects but, according to the participant, required a different set of skills and produced a different set of outcomes. However, that the participant believed that this training opportunity was not widely publicized, and only a few individuals were selected to attend the training. Participants perceived limited accessibility to mentorship-related training programs and a missed opportunity for the Navy to cultivate a culture of mentorship and support among personnel. Participant 5 expressed this sentiment, stating, "I'll be honest, I don't feel that the Navy has given very much training at all." Participant 6 echoed this, saying, "I don't know if I've ever done any official training... some of it was just kind of from experience." Participant 9 further emphasized, "some guidance or some best practices would be probably beneficial for those who either want to mentor or need a mentor." Participants emphasized the importance of developing best practices and sharing knowledge to enhance the mentorship experience and promote effective mentorship relationships.

## **F. SUMMARY**

Participants' responses suggest that there is an intricate dynamic between teleworking, mentorship, and work-life balance within the context of the Navy. Figure 3 presents a framework developed from the data that depicts the connections between these elements and their relationship to trust. As shown in the framework, successful mentoring and teleworking were grounded in trust. Teleworking emerged as a preferred option for the participants seeking to balance professional commitments with personal life, citing benefits such as increased productivity and flexibility. However, challenges with boundary management highlighted the need for clearer delineation between work and personal time for some participants. Mentorship, though valued by participants, was challenged by a lack of formal training and organizational support. These themes intersected to underscore the importance of comprehensive training, effective boundary-setting, and organizational support systems in fostering a collaborative and supportive professional environment conducive to remote work and mentorship.



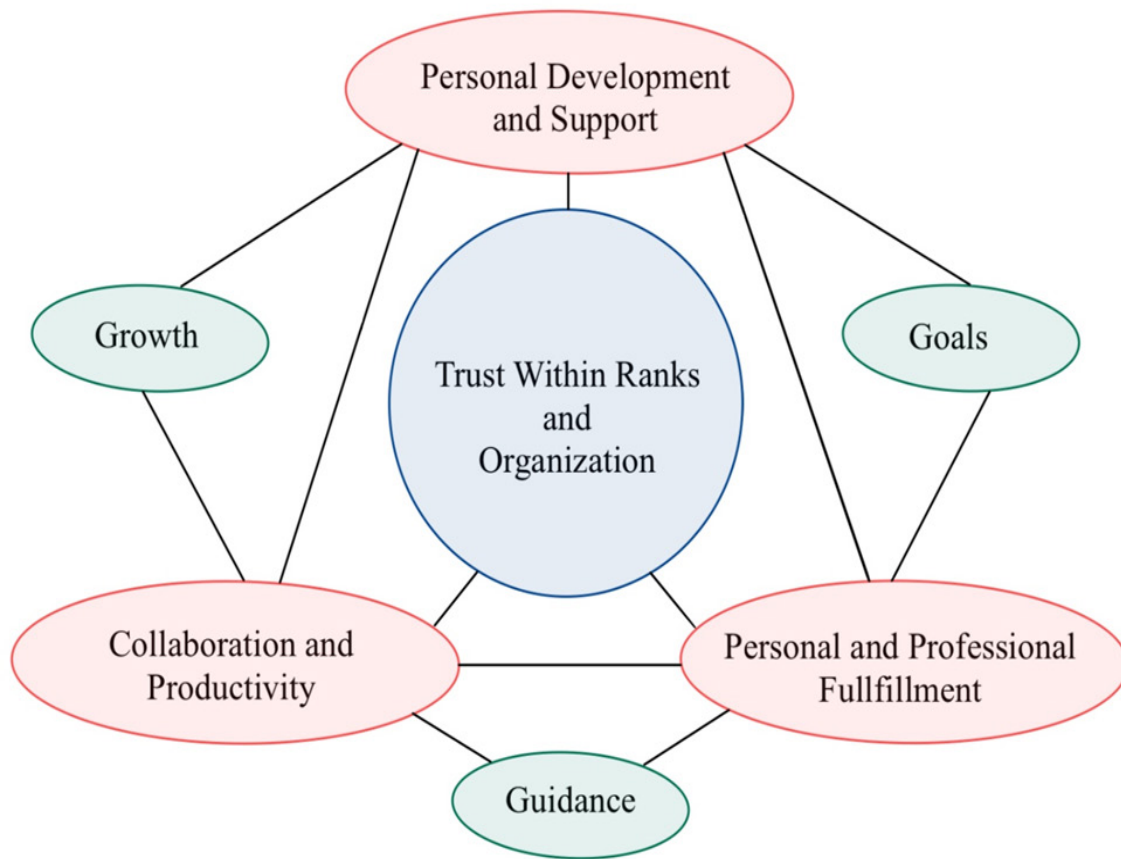


Figure 3. Trust Triangle and the “3 G’s”

Below these layers lay an intricate connection between the goals participants expressed for collaboration, the pursuit of professional development, and the attainment of personal fulfillment. Growth, goals and guidance, the “3 G’s,” highlighted in green form a triangle of trust, which supports the achievement of these goals. Participants required adequate guidance to navigate the complexities of collaboration and ensure a harmonious working environment. Clear and achievable goals were paramount for the professional development, ultimately leading to participants’ personal fulfillment. Finally, a continuous sense of growth was essential for participants’ progress and the advancement of their collaborative unit. Each of these components played a crucial role in fostering trust among the participants.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

In this concluding chapter, I consolidate the insights gleaned from this thesis by addressing four key questions that have guided my investigation into the intersection of teleworking, mentorship, work-life balance, and training within the Navy. Through analysis and exploration, I illuminate the intricate interplay between these crucial components. I offer practical recommendations for guiding the Navy's strategic course in an evolving landscape of remote work and professional development. This chapter summarizes the findings of the analysis, which shed light on the perceptions, challenges, and opportunities presented by teleworking arrangements. Recommendations offer actionable steps for addressing the identified gaps and leveraging the potential of virtual mentorship. I outline future research directions to suggest areas where further inquiry could enhance our understanding and support for Sailors in this digital era. Finally, a closing statement encapsulates the essence of this research, underscoring its contribution to the dialogue on virtual mentorship and pointing towards a continuous journey of adaptation and growth within the Navy. Through the summary of findings, recommendations, future research, and a reflective closing statement, this chapter offers a comprehensive roadmap for navigating the complexities of virtual mentorship in the Navy, aiming to foster a resilient, connected, and forward-thinking force.

### **A. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND ANSWERS**

This summary of findings presents a distilled overview of the answers to the research questions and critical insights and perspectives I gathered through this research.

- (1) How did Sailor's experience and perceive mentoring relationships, processes, and outcomes before and during their teleworking arrangements?

Before the implementation of teleworking arrangements, interview participants often perceived mentoring relationships as primarily face-to-face interactions that allowed for immediate feedback, direct observation, and a more personal connection between mentors and mentees. The physical presence in a shared workspace facilitated informal learning opportunities and spontaneous discussions that were highly valued. However,



transitioning to teleworking reshaped these perceptions and experiences. Although initially challenging due to the lack of physical proximity, the participants found that teleworking can sustain, and in some cases enhance, mentoring relationships with the use of digital communication programs and even social media platforms. These tools enabled continuous and flexible mentorship, allowing mentors and mentees to stay connected, share knowledge, and work collaboratively despite geographical separations. The shift also prompted a more structured approach to mentoring, with scheduled check-ins and goal setting becoming more prevalent, ensuring that the mentoring process remains focused and effective even in a virtual environment.

- (2) What were the key challenges and opportunities that teleworking presented for mentor-mentee relationships among Sailors?

Teleworking presented several challenges for mentor-mentee relationships among the participants, including reduced opportunities for spontaneous interactions, potential communication barriers, and the difficulty of establishing trust and rapport without face-to-face interactions. The absence of non-verbal cues made it harder to gauge understanding or engagement, potentially leading to misunderstandings or feelings of isolation. Despite these challenges, teleworking offered significant opportunities for enhancing these relationships. It encouraged the adoption of new communication technologies and platforms that supported more diverse and flexible mentoring arrangements. Furthermore, teleworking facilitated mentoring relationships across different geographic locations, broadening the pool of potential mentors and mentees. This suggests teleworking can lead to more diverse perspectives, experiences, and knowledge being shared, enriching the mentoring experience for all involved.

- (3) How did teleworking impact the Sailors' perception of work-life balance?

Teleworking had a profound impact on the interviewees' perceptions of work-life balance. On one hand, the flexibility of teleworking arrangements was often cited as a positive factor that can lead to an improved balance between professional and personal life, allowing Sailors more control over their schedules and reducing commuting time. This flexibility can contribute to increased satisfaction and well-being, which are crucial for a



healthy work-life balance. On the other hand, teleworking also blurred the boundaries between work and home, leading to challenges such as overwork, difficulty in disconnecting from work, and potential feelings of isolation. This suggests that ensuring clear boundaries and communication about availability and work hours is essential for maintaining a healthy balance in a teleworking environment.

(4) What were Sailors' experiences of training?

The transition to teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic not only highlighted several training gaps but also brought to the forefront the almost non-existent comprehensive training for Sailors in areas crucial for effective remote work. Participants have specifically pointed out deficiencies in training related to digital literacy, remote communication, supervising, and self-management skills. More challenging is the participants' experience that existing training opportunities were not universally accessible; they were either not widely advertised or were available to only a selected few, creating disparities in skill development and preparedness for teleworking or mentorship. This situation exacerbated the challenges faced by Sailors in adapting to telework environments, where such skills are essential for maintaining productivity, ensuring effective communication, managing mentorship relationships, and managing both teams and individual workloads remotely. The findings suggest a critical need for a systematic overhaul of the training program to make it more inclusive and comprehensive, ensuring that all Sailors have the opportunity and resources to develop the necessary competencies for successful teleworking.

In conclusion, these findings not only highlight the transformative potential of teleworking on mentorship dynamics but also underscore the necessity for adaptive strategies to navigate this evolving landscape, ensuring that mentorship continues to thrive as a pivotal element of professional development within the Navy.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the summary of findings and interview data, I offer the following recommendations to improve mentor-mentee relationships, improve training, and enhance the teleworking experience:



### (1) Enhance Flexibility in Remote Mentoring Initiatives

Given the feedback on the current formal mandated mentoring programs, the Navy should transition towards a more flexible, opt-in model of remote mentoring that emphasizes volunteerism and personal agency while retaining elements of structure that benefit both mentors and mentees. This approach would allow Sailors to choose their involvement level in mentoring relationships, supported by a framework that facilitates meaningful connections without the pressure of mandatory participation. Key components could include a mentor-mentee matching platform based on shared interests and career goals, access to resources for best practices in remote mentoring, and the establishment of informal virtual networking events to simulate the spontaneous interactions that are valued in traditional work environments. This model encourages the organic development of mentorship relationships, supported by regular, but voluntary, check-ins and goal-setting sessions that provide structure and continuity. Such flexibility ensures that mentoring remains a beneficial process, enhancing the mentor and mentee experience by fostering a sense of autonomy and personal investment in the relationship's success.

### (2) Develop and Offer Training to Cultivate Teleworking Skills

Addressing the identified training gaps requires the development of targeted training programs focused on digital literacy, remote communication, and self-management skills. Such programs should be designed to equip Sailors with the necessary competencies to thrive in a teleworking environment, including managing their workload effectively, communicating clearly and effectively in a remote setting, and leveraging digital tools to collaborate with colleagues. Additionally, mentorship training programs should be introduced or expanded to include modules on establishing and sustaining mentoring relationships remotely, ensuring that both mentors and mentees are prepared for the nuances of remote interaction.

### (3) Implement Work-Life Balance Initiatives

To address the impact of teleworking on work-life balance, it is crucial to clearly define telework and related expectations. Initiatives should delineate work hours and encourage disconnecting from work. This could include setting guidelines for



communication outside of standard working hours, promoting the use of “do not disturb” features on communication platforms, and encouraging regular breaks and time off. Training on time management and self-discipline in a remote work context can also help Sailors maintain a healthy balance between their professional responsibilities and personal life, reducing burnout and enhancing overall well-being.

#### (4) Deepen the Navy Culture of Continuous Learning and Adaptation

Fostering a culture that values continuous learning and adaptation is essential for navigating the evolving landscape of teleworking. Encouraging feedback, sharing best practices, and being open to experimenting with new approaches can help organizations and individuals adapt more quickly to the challenges and opportunities of remote work. This cultural shift can promote resilience, innovation, and a sense of community among Sailors, ensuring that the organization remains agile and responsive to changes in the work environment.

#### (5) Enhance the Use of Available Digital Communication Platforms

To overcome the challenges posed by the lack of physical presence, it is recommended to invest in using digital communication platforms. The Navy has provided access to high-quality video conferencing tools but should also invest in training on how to use these platforms effectively for mentoring. By leveraging technology, mentors and mentees can simulate face-to-face interactions to a certain extent, enabling better rapport and understanding. Ensuring that all Sailors have access to and are proficient in using these tools can help maintain the richness of mentoring relationships, even in a remote setting.

Implementing these recommendations can help address the challenges identified by this research, leverage the opportunities presented by teleworking to enhance mentoring relationships, improve work-life balance, and fill the critical training gaps.

### C. FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should focus on the following topics.



### (1) Longitudinal Studies on the Impact of Teleworking on Career Progression

Future research should conduct longitudinal studies to explore the long-term impacts of teleworking on the career progression of Sailors. This research should track the career trajectories of individuals who have engaged in teleworking and compare their progression, professional development, and job satisfaction levels with those who have primarily worked in traditional settings. Such studies could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of teleworking as a strategy for career development and identify any potential disparities or benefits that it may offer over time. This research could also help refine mentoring programs to better support career advancement in a teleworking context.

### (2) Comparative Analysis of Traditional vs. Virtual Mentoring Outcomes

Future research should include comparative analyses of the outcomes of traditional face-to-face mentoring versus virtual mentoring arrangements. This research should examine various metrics such as the strength of mentor-mentee relationships, the speed and quality of skill acquisition, and the overall satisfaction of participants with the mentoring process. By identifying key factors that contribute to successful mentoring outcomes in both settings, future research can offer actionable insights for designing more effective mentoring strategies that leverage the best of both worlds, potentially leading to hybrid mentoring models.

### (3) Exploring the Meaning of Work-Life Balance for Sailors

Future research should delve into understanding what work-life balance specifically means to Sailors within the Navy and what factors contribute to their perception of having a balanced home and work life. Research should uncover the unique needs and preferences that Sailors have regarding balancing their professional duties with personal time. By conducting surveys, interviews, and focus groups, researchers can gather in-depth insights into the aspects of work and personal life that Sailors value most and the challenges they face in achieving a sense of balance. Research should also examine how perceptions of work-life balance vary among different designators, ranks, roles, and life stages within the Navy, providing a comprehensive understanding of the diverse needs. The findings from such research would be instrumental in developing targeted strategies,



policies, and support systems that more effectively promote a healthy work-life balance for Sailors, recognizing that achieving this balance is crucial for their well-being, job satisfaction, and overall productivity.

#### (4) Impact of Teleworking on Organizational Culture and Team Dynamics

Future research should also explore the impact of teleworking on organizational culture and team dynamics within military settings. Research should assess how widespread teleworking influences aspects such as communication patterns, cohesion, trust, and collaboration among teams. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing strategies that maintain a strong organizational culture and effective teamwork in a remote work context. The findings could guide the implementation of team-building practices and communication protocols that foster a positive and collaborative work environment, even when team members are geographically dispersed.

#### (5) Training and Development Needs for Effective Teleworking

Lastly, a comprehensive analysis of the training and development needs required for effective teleworking among Sailors could provide critical insights for future initiatives. Future research should identify specific skill gaps and educational needs that hinder the effectiveness of teleworking and propose targeted training programs to address these issues. By focusing on areas such as digital literacy, remote leadership, and virtual collaboration, this research could help in designing educational interventions that enhance the teleworking competencies of Sailors, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving work environment.

Each of these research ideas offers a pathway to deepen our understanding of teleworking's implications for Sailors, providing valuable insights that can inform policy, training, and organizational culture in the context of a modern and flexible workforce.

### **D. CLOSING STATEMENT**

In conclusion, this study explores the dynamic and evolving nature of mentorship within the context of teleworking in the Navy. This thesis illuminates the complex interplay between technology, remote work practices, and the traditional values of mentorship,



revealing both challenges and opportunities that define the current landscape. By examining Sailors' experiences and perceptions, this research uncovers sailors' experiences of the training gaps, work-life balance in a virtual setting, and the critical role of digital tools and communication in shaping effective mentorship from afar. As the Navy continues to navigate the waters of teleworking, this research underscores the importance of adapting mentorship practices to meet the changing needs of Sailors, ensuring that they remain connected, supported, and prepared to face the challenges of tomorrow. Through targeted recommendations and a call for further research, this thesis contributes to the ongoing dialogue on enhancing virtual mentorship—a cornerstone for the development, well-being, and success of Sailors in an increasingly digital world.



## APPENDIX A. INFORMATION SHEET

**Thesis Title:** “Navigating Virtual Mentorship: An Examination of Teleworking’s Impact on Sailors’ Perceptions of Mentorship Relationships, Processes, and Outcomes”

You have been invited to participate in a research study that will explore the impact of teleworking on Sailors’ perceptions of mentorship relationships, processes, and outcomes with the goal of providing recommendations to the Navy to support mentoring in telework environments.

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed and asked to discuss your experiences with mentorship within the context of teleworking in the Navy. Your input is invaluable and will contribute to a better understanding of this important subject.

The purpose of this interview is to gather your experiences and perspectives on teleworking and mentorship. The information you provide will help us gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and benefits associated with virtual mentorship. The interview will be conducted in an informal, conversational manner. It is an opportunity for you to share your experiences of mentorship in a teleworking environment.

During the interview, you will be asked a series of open-ended questions related to your experiences with mentorship in the Navy while teleworking. These questions may include topics such as the impact of teleworking on your mentorship relationships, the effectiveness of virtual mentorship processes, and the outcomes you have observed. The interview will be recorded to ensure that your responses are accurately captured, with your permission. Upon agreement to record the interview, a transcript will be shared with you upon request. However, rest assured that all recorded data will be anonymized to protect your identity. Your name and personal details will be kept strictly confidential, and any identifying information will be removed from the data to ensure anonymity.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and all information you provide will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Your name and personal details will be kept strictly confidential. The interview is expected to last approximately 60 minutes. You are encouraged to share as much or as little information as you feel comfortable with. Participation in this interview signifies your informed consent to take part in the discussion. If at any point you feel uncomfortable or wish to withdraw, you are free to do so without any consequences.



If you agree to participate in this interview, please confirm your availability for the scheduled date and time or propose an alternative if necessary. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [valerie.serna@nps.edu](mailto:valerie.serna@nps.edu).

Thank you for considering taking part in this interview. Your input is essential and will help us gain valuable insights into the world of teleworking and mentorship within the Navy.



## APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Thesis Topic:** Navigating Virtual Mentorship: An Examination of Teleworking's Impact on Sailors' Perceptions of Mentorship Relationships, Processes and Outcomes.

**Interview questions include but are not limited to:**

### 1. MENTORING QUESTIONS:

- a. Being mentored:
  - i. Tell me about your experience with mentors in the Navy.
  - ii. Can you give me an example of a situation where you sought feedback from your mentor?
  - iii. Can you share an example when you found having a mentor to be particularly helpful?
    - 1. Please describe your feelings during and about this interaction.
  - iv. Can you share some examples of situations where you had challenges with your mentor?
    - 1. Please describe your feelings during and about this interaction.
- b. Mentoring:
  - i. Tell me about your experience in mentoring others in the Navy.
  - ii. Can you give me an example of a situation where a mentee asked for feedback from you?
  - iii. Can you share some examples where you felt effective as a mentor?
    - 1. Please describe your feelings during and about this interaction.
  - iv. Can you share some examples of a time where you felt ineffective as a mentor?
    - 1. Please describe your feelings during and about this interaction.

### 2. TELEWORKING:

- a. Tell me about your teleworking experience in the Navy.
- b. Can you tell me about a time when teleworking had a positive impact on your productivity?
  - i. Please describe your feelings during and about this interaction.
- c. Can you tell me about a time when you were teleworking and had a negative impact on your productivity?
  - i. Please describe your feelings during and about this interaction.
- d. How has your experience with mentorship in the Navy changed since the implementation of teleworking policies or remote work options?
- e. Can you describe a specific instance where teleworking impacted your ability to access or provide mentorship?
  - i. How did you adapt to this situation?
- f. Have you encountered any challenges or barriers to effective mentorship in a teleworking environment?
  - i. If so, what were they, and how did you address them?



- g. How has the frequency or quality of mentorship interactions changed for you since the introduction of teleworking.
- h. How has the Navy leadership supported or facilitated mentorship in a teleworking context, and what improvements, if any, would you suggest?
- i. What training or guidance have you received on how to mentor effectively in a remote work setting, and how has this training influenced your mentoring practices?



APPENDIX C. DISTRIBUTION OF CODES

Codes		Media										
Mentorship	P01.docx	7	4	1								
Organizational Context	P02.docx	4	1									
Role Distinction	P03.docx	13	5		2	1		3				
Mandated Mentorhsip	P04.docx	5	1			1						
Multiple Mentors	P05.docx	12	2	1	1	1						
Unsupportive Environment	P06.docx	12	2	2		2						
Cross-Rank Mentors	P07.docx	10	4	1				2	1	3	5	1
Interpersonal Efficiency	P08.docx	9	1		1	1						
Initiative	P09.docx	6	3		2	1			1	1	5	2
Interpersonal Boundaries	P10.docx	25	4		4	1						
Emotional Satisfaction	P11.docx	5	2					2	1			
Being Mentored	Totals	108	29	5	10	8	10	4	29	15	14	43
Positive												
Negative												
Mentoring others												
Negative												
Positive												
Teleworking												
Supervisor Role												
Productivity												
Hybrid Schedule												
Teleworking and Mentorship												
Traditional Relationship Building												
Technology and Social Platforms												
Effect on Mentorship												
Work - Life Balance												
Preference for Telework												
Boundary Challenges												
Gaps in Training												
Totals												

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