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Sexual Assault Complaint Management from the Perspectives of Ex-Military Air Force Leaders

Annmarie Macaraeg
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Walden University

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Annmarie Macaraeg

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Sexual Assault Complaint Management from the Perspectives of Ex-Military Air Force

Leaders

by

Annmarie Macaraeg

MA, American Military University, 2008

BS, Wheeling Jesuit University, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

Walden University

August 2016

Abstract

Military sexual assault continues to be a persistent problem for the Department of Defense despite the development of new reporting procedures. A sexual assault in the military can cause a lapse in mission accomplishment, negatively interrupt the victim's career, and lead personnel to fail at meeting high standards and expectations. The management of sexual assault complaints in the military has not been effective in preventing sexual assaults from occurring. This grounded theory study looked to explain how military leadership approaches the sexual assault complaint management process. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development was the conceptual lens used for this study. Data were collected and analyzed from a sample of 20 ex-Air Force leaders using internet-based open-ended questions. Data analysis included first- and second-cycle coding, theoretical sampling, reflection, and ultimately the construction of a substantive theory. The study identified a bio-social operative (BSO) theory that suggests operational management of sexual assault complaints must encompass positive relationships between leaders and subordinates, coupled with constructive sexual assault prevention strategies and the eradication of preconditions such as biasness. This study contributes to social change through discovery of a theory that may provide military leaders and researchers with insights on how sexual assault complaint management is perceived from former military leaders. It also provides a basis for the development of future support programs that are tailored to the specific needs of military populations. These findings may ultimately raise awareness and contribute to the well-being and quality of life of military personnel.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the men and women of the Armed Forces who are affected by military sexual assault. May you find the strength, fortitude, and courage to fight this unwanted sexual experience.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The U.S. Air Force, hereinafter referred to as the Air Force, strongly emphasizes core values of integrity first, service before self, and excellence (U.S. Air Force, 2015). The core values of the Air Force are more than just infinitesimal standards. For airmen, the values act as a reminder of what is required for mission accomplishment, are an inspiration to do one's best, enable unification of external and internal forces, and bind Air Force personnel to the public servants of the past (U.S. Air Force, 2015).

In a press conference, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel (as cited in Burns, 2014) expressed that the "present military is suffering many ethical lapses; leaving some military personnel falling short of high standards and expectations" (p. 1). Knowledge of an ethical code does not dictate that members will act accordingly to that code within the confines of moral dilemmas and daily activities (Williams, 2010). In recent years, an increase of criminal misconduct in the Armed Forces has created a deep concern for officials at the Pentagon (Cloud, 2013).

Despite the development and initiation of new and improved reporting procedures from the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), military sexual assault (MSA) remains a persistent problem for Department of Defense officials (Department of Defense, 2014a). A Department of Defense publication (2014a) labeled sexual assault as a "crime that is not tolerated, condoned or ignored" (p. 6). Another noted that one of the chief priorities of the administration of the Department of Defense is to eliminate sexual assaults within the military forces (Department of Defense, 2014b). Turchik and Wilson (2010) disclosed that the rate of MSAs was "as high if not higher"

than rates of civilian accounts of sexual assaults reported (p. 268). According to a Department of Defense Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of active duty members, 6.1% of women and 1.2% of men indicated experience of unwanted sexual contact (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2013a). During the 2014 fiscal year, military services received a total of 6,131 sexual assault reports (Department of Defense, 2014c). Out of the 6,131 reported cases, 5,284 of the cases involved a service member as a victim; 745 of the cases involved U.S. civilians, foreign nationals, and others who were not on active duty service with the U.S. Armed Forces as victims. In the remaining 102 cases, data was not available on service member status (Department of Defense, 2014c).

In this chapter, I focus on MSA and the challenges that it poses to the Department of Defense and the problems that servicemen and servicewomen can face if they become a victim of MSA. This background information provides context for introduction to the problem statement, purpose, and research question specific to the study. I then provide the conceptual framework followed by the nature of the study. Definitions are provided to offer clarity of the terms that are most commonly used throughout the study. Finally, I provide the assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and significance of my research.

Background

Sexual assault in the military poses a compounding problem that disrupts the balance of normalcy for soldiers and their professional relationships to the point that it “undermines the institutional values of the armed forces: duty, loyalty, and honor” (Felsman, 2014, p. 362). Defending the United States is the key mission of the military (Stimson, 2013). In order to ensure that the mission is carried out, military leaders need to guarantee that their soldiers are combat ready and combat effective, all the while

maintaining good order and discipline (Stimson, 2013). However, a military environment that has not yet alleviated sexual misconduct betrays the trust upon which the military's profession of arms depends (Felsman, 2014).

Inconsistent definitions and the inability to investigate the problem of sexual misconduct among military service members has been a problem for the Department of Defense since the early 1990s when the first case of sexual misconduct was brought forward (Rodman, 2013). The Congressional attention that the Department of Defense has received regarding sexual misconduct has fueled the efforts to prevent and respond to such acts (Mengeling, Booth, Torner, & Sadler, 2014). Through routine surveys of active duty members and Reserve component members, the Department of Defense has begun to absorb and review the prevalence of sexual misconduct in the Armed Forces. Victim reporting of a sexual assault is crucial to the Department's fight against MSA (Duncan, 2015).

Sexual assault is a crime that is constantly underreported in the military and in the civilian sector (Mengeling et al., 2014). MSA is a common stressor for both male and female service members, causing severe impacts on their mental health (Street, Kimerling, Bell, & Pavao, 2011). Women who were raped and then experienced a subsequent sexual assault developed difficulties that effected their mental health, military career effectiveness, and overall trust in Department of Defense policy (Vedder, 2015). Recently, servicewomen who reported an assault have faced issues of leader suitability and distrust from unit colleagues (Duncan, 2015). However, on account of the sexual stressors that servicewomen deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan faced, women were more likely to report sexual harassment and a sexual assault (LeardMann et al., 2013). In

addition, unit cohesiveness, studied by Walsh et al. (2014), among military members was seen as a factor that decreases sexual harassment and assault.

Statement of the Problem

While new and improved reporting procedures from SAPRO have been introduced, MSA remains an insistent management problem for Department of Defense officials (Department of Defense, 2014a). The term *management* for this study pertains to the consistency needed to develop strategies and plans in a coordinated effort to work toward a desired end. According to the Department of Defense (2014a), a sexual assault is not “tolerated, condoned or ignored” (p. 6). A chief priority of the Department of Defense is to eradicate sexual assaults within military forces (Department of Defense, 2014b).

At the outset of this study, I found no research regarding current management practices of MSA complaints from an operational leadership perspective. In 2014, a focus group study was conducted with active duty military members that discussed the current changes in sexual assault policy and programs that have a direct effect on military members and their workplace environment (Rock, Van Winkle, Namrow, & Hurley, 2014). However, I have not found studies that address the operational management of MSA complaints from the perspective of ex-military leaders. Active duty personnel who are in a leadership role tend to face institutional checks and balances for reasons of confidentiality and directed adherence to Air Force Instruction (AFI), specifically *AFI 1-1 Air Force Culture*, *AFI 1-2 Commander’s Responsibilities*, *AFI 35-105 Community Relations*, *AFI 61-302 Cooperative Research and Development Agreements*, as well as, *Air Force Doctrine* (Air Force E-Publishing, 2014).

Commanding officers in the Armed Forces have a plethora of disciplinary tools available to them to enforce order and discipline such as informal and formal counseling, Executive Officer inquiry, nonjudicial punishment under Article 15 of the United States Code of Military Justice, and, as a last resort, a court-martial referral (Stimson, 2013). In 2013, there were 5,061 reported MSA's, a 50% increase over the 3,374 reports received in 2012 (Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office; SAPRO, 2014). While there is not an easy way to prevent MSA from occurring in the military, a scholarly understanding of MSA and sound prevention initiatives may forge a strategy that can reduce the occurrences of MSA (Department of Defense, 2014a). While current leadership may not be free to discuss these issues, recently retired or separated military leaders may shed light on how the problem was and is being managed. The goal of my study was to provide researchers and military professionals with an understanding of MSA complaint management so that future support services and policies could be developed to aid those soldiers that fall victim to a sexual assault.

Although the literature was sparse regarding the content-specific problem area, a synthesis of research surrounding the concept of MSA revealed that sexual assault remains a concern among the Forces. Ferris, Schell, and Tanielian (2013) indicated that a victim of sexual assault in the Armed Service can experience a plethora of emotional and psychological repercussions such as shock and betrayal and mental health deterioration. They may also be vulnerable to subsequent assaults. The Department of Veteran Affairs (2014a) specified that survivors of a sexual assault can experience strong negative emotions, numbness, difficulty sleeping, illegal substance abuse, feelings of being unsafe in their own environment, lack of trust in others, and can develop physical health

problems. Vedder (2015) specified that there was a lack in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of Department of Defense policy and procedures for effectively managing sexual assaults. Bryan, McNaughton-Cassill, Osman, and Hernandez (2013) concluded that suicidal ideation was common among those who suffered from physical abuse or battery. LeardMann et al. (2013) suggested that women who experienced combat-like environments were more likely to report a sexual harassment or a sexual harassment and a sexual assault. While it can be argued that not all victims of a sexual assault experience that which is listed above, researchers have indicated that such experiences are common.

The relationship between gender and sexual assault has been documented by past researchers (Hoyt, Klosterman, & Williams, 2011; Katz, Cojucar, Beheshti, Nakamura, & Murray, 2012; Maguen et al., 2012; Mattocks, Haskell, Krebs, Justice, Yano, & Brandt (2012); Mengeling, Booth, Torner, & Sadler, 2014; Morris, Smith, Farooqui, & Suris, 2014; Turchik, McLean, Rafie, Hoyt, Rosen, & Kimerling, 2013; Turchik, Rafie, Rosen, & Kimerling, 2014). While women are the predominant victims of sexual assault in the military, Hoyt, Klosterman, and Williams (2011) indicated that .09% of male service members reported a military sexual trauma (MST; a sexual assault experience or a repeated and threatening sexual harassment exchange) over a 30 year period with 1.1% of male service members reporting an MST over the course of their military career.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to develop an understanding and build a substantive theory surrounding the management of MSA complaints from the perspectives of experienced ex-military leaders who served in the

Air Force. This formulation of a sub theory provides the basis for future researchers to develop subsequent studies to formulate a grander theory. To understand how MSA is managed from a leader perspective, I distributed an internet-based, open-ended questionnaire to a sample of ex-military Air Force leaders.

The new context-specific theoretical model that I constructed may contribute to new policies, procedures, and advances in handling sexual assaults that occur in the military. This discovery may also advance the ability to open up new lines of communication between military leaders and subordinates. The concepts central to my study were sexual assault management techniques and sexual assault functioning programs and methods.

Research Question

The primary research question is provided below:

RQ1: What role does military operational leadership play in the management of MSA complaints?

Conceptual Framework

The framework of this study was informed by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development. This theory assists researchers in understanding the interrelationship between individuals and a particular environment. This model suggests that within a certain society or social group, the arrangement and affluence of macro-, micro-, meso-, and exo systems tend to be alike or equivalent to one another, functioning in similar ways or contrasting significantly among the various roles (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the Armed Forces, these varied ecological systems can be viewed as the different levels of leadership and command, operating independently or collectively in

positions of noncommissioned officer, senior noncommissioned officer, and officer. The building blocks of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, while they are not a new concept in the behavioral and social sciences, are in fact new to the development stages of a person. As noted in Bronfenbrenner, the theory expands on how a person's environmental connections impact and affect their psychology. For instance, a supervisor who has personal exposure on the battlefield can have a distinctly different perspective of that battlefield compared to a supervisor who observes the same battlefield from a distance.

I used this theory to develop a conceptual framework that looked at the ecological relationship between a leader's position, responsibility, and the accountability of airmen under their command as it relates to MSA. It is possible to distinguish the ecological properties of a larger social setting and how those systems interact by studying the interconnected systems of a social institution. In other words, leaders can learn from their institutionalized cultures to promote the desired change in a specific area. Secondly, the creation of a model allows for analysis of discipline routines regarding decreasing MSA, prevention alternatives, and future suggestions for changing the existence of MSA. I provide additional details on the conceptual framework in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

I implemented a grounded theory design for this research study. Sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed grounded theory as an additional method to study participants due to past inquiry approaches lacking efficiency and substance.

The foundation behind grounded theory lies in the data that it produces. Grounded theory can be composed of both deductive and inductive reasoning, can be useful in understanding how individuals solve problems that concern them (Adolph, Hall,

& Kruchten, 2011), and can generate hypotheses by interconnecting the experiences and perceptions of individuals (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Charmaz (2008) labeled grounded theory as a method of “systematic and analytic strategies that combine explicitness and flexibility” (p. 156). Rather than testing a theoretical hypothesis from an already existing theoretical framework (Dunne, 2011), I developed a sub-theory of a leader’s role in managing MSA from the empirical data that was collected.

The purpose of this study was to develop a theory that contributes to an understanding of MSA from the perspectives of experienced ex-military leaders that served in the Air Force. I used a convenience snowball sampling technique to recruit 20 study participants which I initially recruited through four convenience samples. A sample of 20 participants is a large enough qualitative sample to detect patterns, themes, and emerging concepts (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). To qualify for the study, the participants must have:

- Served no less than a 4-year active duty military commitment,
- Retired or separated from the Air Force under honorable conditions,
- Functioned as a supervisor to airmen,
- Served in a role of noncommissioned officer, senior noncommissioned officer, or officer.

I performed data collection using an internet-based, self-administered questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions. I also conducted follow-up telephone interviews with participants who self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. I used NVivo, a qualitative research software program, to categorize all data. I used first- and second-cycle coding that included verbatim words or phrases from the participants. I cut

down the data text into repeating ideas, themes, and theoretical constructs, and from that, formed a theoretical narrative (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

As I used a constant comparison strategy to evaluate the data categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I formed new abstracts that ultimately formed theoretical constructs (Charmaz, 2006). This process led to the construction of a sub-theory. According to Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), a theory is a set of observed patterns and processes that show relationships, change, and outcomes identified through data analysis. This process is explained thoroughly in Chapter 4.

Definitions

Listed below are terms that I utilized throughout the study.

Armed Forces: Also known as the United States Armed Forces. This term denotes the federal military forces of the United States. The Armed Forces are composed of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard and has the President of the United States as a Commander in Chief. The Armed Forces operates under the Department of Defense.

Department of Defense: This term is also synonymous with the United States Department of Defense. The Department of Defense is in charge of the Armed Forces and is headed by the Secretary of Defense, with headquarters located at the Pentagon (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.). The mission of the Department of Defense is to provide military forces to deter war and to protect and defend the United States (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.).

Ex-military leader: A person who has served in one of the military forces such as Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard. For the purposes of this study, ex-military leader will refer to someone who has served in the Air Force.

Leaders: This term refers to influential people who have authority among a group of individuals and who motivates said individuals in accomplishing a goal (Răducan & Răducan, 2014). This term is interchangeable with non-commissioned officer, senior non-commissioned officer, and officer.

Management: The order and consistency needed to develop strategies, forecast plans, and organize and coordinate work efforts (Răducan & Răducan, 2014). This includes exerting control, regulating, or directing towards a desired end.

Military sexual assault (MSA): An intentional sexual contact characterized by the use of force, threats, intimidation, or abuse of authority or when a victim does not or cannot consent (Department of Defense Instruction, 2014). This includes specific sexual offenses under the Uniform Code of Military Justice such as rape, sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, forcible sodomy, or any attempt to commit the listed offenses (Department of Defense Instruction, 2014). This term is used throughout the study and denotes when a member of the military conducts such an act.

Military sexual trauma (MST): Under Federal Law Title 38 U.S. Code 1720D, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2014a) an MST is a sexual assault experience or a repeated or threatening sexual harassment exchange.

Sexual assault: Any type of contact or behavior that occurs without the recipient's consent (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). Such activities that constitute a sexual assault

are: forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016).

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO): This office serves as the single point of authority for accountability and oversight of sexual assaults that occur in the military (Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, n.d.).

United States Air Force: This term is used to describe a branch of military service under the Department of Defense. The mission of the United States Air Force is to fly, fight, and win in air, space, and cyberspace (U.S. Air Force, 2015). Will also be referred to as Air Force.

Assumptions

The primary assumption that I made during this study was that each participant would provide truthful and detailed answers to all questions on the internet-based questionnaire. In addition, I assumed that men, who make up 80.9% of the active duty Air Force manpower (Air Force Personnel Center, 2015), and who hold approximately 168,000 of the noncommissioned officer, senior noncommissioned officer, and officer positions in the Air Force (compared to women, who hold approximately 40,000 of the above positions [Defense Manpower Data Center, 2013b]), would provide a substantial perspective on the issue of MSA. Thirdly, I assumed that the use of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development was the appropriate conceptual framework for understanding how MSA complaints are managed in the Armed Forces. Fourth, I assumed that the use of grounded theory was the appropriate design method to answer my research question. I also assumed that the use of a convenience snowball sampling procedure was an adequate technique to recruit my hard-to-reach participants.

Lastly, I assumed that by narrowing down the unit of analysis to ex-military members, the appropriate level of rich data would be derived for qualitative analysis and interpretation to ultimately generate a theory (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was focused on a subset of the population that met the aforementioned participant criteria. The study also depended upon the recruited participants to recall and reflect on sexual assault management techniques, programs, and policies in the Armed Forces while they were on active duty. A delimitation of my study was choosing the type of research problem. My decision for choosing MSA as my research problem stems from the fact that MSA is still a constant problem that military personnel face. In addition, the exclusion of the other branches of the military is also seen as a delimitation. My decision was based on the fact that specific knowledge can be gained by answering the research question first before expanding to other populations.

Limitations

The three limitations of this study were: a new internet-based questionnaire, the sample population, and dependency on participants to produce rich data. First, I designed the internet-based questionnaire that was used for this study. I managed this limitation by drawing upon the guidance of Rowley (2014), which explored key stages in the design and utilization of research questionnaires. Three important elements to the production of the questionnaire were: precise thinking, expressing questions in a clear manner, and engaging the audience.

Secondly, I anticipated that the sample population would be small in size and would be drawn from a hard-to-reach population. As a result, there was a risk of sample

bias. I managed this bias by not limiting my geographic area to a particular location. By doing this, I was able to reach out to participants on a global scale. By using a convenience snowball sampling technique, I was limited on how my results may be generalized or applied to a larger population. I also anticipated that on account that the Air Force has a male-dominated manpower presence, I would receive only male recruits as study participants. While majority of the study participants were male ($N = 13$), I did have seven female participants.

A third limitation that I identified was reliance upon the recruited participants. A grounded theory study relies on the rich data that it produces. Relying upon participant recollections, as well as openness about a sensitive subject, can be a downfall for gaining honest answers to study questions. To manage this, I chose to utilize an internet-based questionnaire that the participants could complete in an environment of their choosing.

Significance of this Research

The aim of this study was to contribute to positive social change by providing additional research to military officials and professionals with the insight to provide additional support programs for MSA prevention. This study can also initiate new and innovative leadership training workshops on how to effectively combat MSA in the military. Furthermore, extending the literature on MSA can lead to changes in the way military hierarchy determine how MSA will be handled, how certain environments can promote sexual violence, and how the power structure in the military can hinder reporting MSA (Turchik & Wilson, 2010). Using a grounded theory design allowed for an understanding of how MSA is managed in the military from an operational leadership

level, beyond what is already known from official Department of Defense Climate Assessment surveys.

The group that will benefit from this study are members of the United States Armed Forces. Results from this study can push for improved military standards regarding MSA and may also lead to increased improvements among professional military relationships. Family support centers, family readiness centers, military chaplains, mental health offices, and alcohol and drug abuse prevention and treatment offices and all other offices and centers providing counseling services on military installations can also benefit from this study's findings by modifying their current services to meet the needs of those affected by MSA.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the study by indicating that MSA is still a persistent management problem for Department of Defense officials despite the development and initiation of new reporting procedures. Next, I discussed the problem that sexual assaults pose for members of the Armed Forces. I highlighted the emotional implications of MSA as well as touched on gender and its relation to MSA. I introduced the problem, which was concerned with the amount of MSA still occurring in spite of new procedures and guidelines. I then provided the research question and offered the study's purpose, concepts, framework for this study, and the rationale for choosing a qualitative approach and a grounded theory design. I included a list of common terms with their definitions. My assumptions for this study, along with limitations and delimitations were also disclosed. Finally, I provided the study's significance and how the results of the study can exhibit positive social change.

In Chapter 2, a review of literature is presented and I expand upon the knowledge related to my study's conceptual framework. Ecological theory and the relationship that it has to this study is also presented. I provide an examination of MSA, the military's response to sexual assaults, emotional implications of a sexual assault, and what can occur after an assault.

In Chapter 3, I provide an introduction to my study's methodology. I reiterate the research question and present my rationale for choosing and grounded theory design and qualitative inquiry. The remainder of the chapter includes describing my role as the researcher, study risks, ethical considerations, participants and sampling strategy, instrumentation, data collection, data management, data analysis, and my approach to trustworthiness.

I provide an overview of the research setting, participant demographics, data collection process, data analysis, results, discrepant cases, and trustworthiness in Chapter 4. Results of the study are also presented in Chapter 4 along with evidence of trustworthiness, transferability, and dependability.

In Chapter 5, I provide interpretations of the findings as it relates to the research question. I also provide information pertaining to study limitations, recommendations, implications, positive social change, and researcher reflection.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Sexual assault is an insidious problem for the United States Armed Forces (Holland, Rabelo, & Cortina, 2014). For approximately 25 years, the United States military has struggled with sexual assaults occurring in the ranks (Rosenthal & Korb, 2013). The hush regarding sexual assault in the military was broken in 1992 after a female Navy lieutenant came forward about her assault that occurred a year previously (Rosenthal & Korb, 2013). The Tailhook Case, as it was known, revealed that 83 women and seven men were sexually assaulted at an annual aviator convention (Winerip, 2013). This case forced the resignation of the secretary of the Navy, the censure of numerous admirals, and the enactment of a zero tolerance policy (Winerip, 2013). Two decades later, and only after additional scandals such as the Aberdeen 12 and a report citing that hundreds of female soldiers were sexually assaulted in Iraq and Afghanistan, Congress developed a Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (Rosenthal & Korb, 2013).

The Department of Defense (2014a) labeled sexual assault as a “crime that is not tolerated, condoned, or ignored” (p. 6). Specifically, the Department of Defense defined sexual assault as the “intentional sexual contact characterized by use of force, threats, intimidation, or abuse of authority or when the victim does not or cannot consent” (Sexual Assault Prevention and Response SAPR Program, 2013, p. 20448). A soldier who engages in a sexual assault in the military not only calls into question their morals and values, but, according to President Obama, is “betraying the uniform” (as cited in Levy, 2013, para. 1).

An assault undermines trust and cooperation among parties (Rosenthal & Korb, 2013). In spite of the new and improved sexual assault reporting procedures initiated by SAPRO, MSA remains a persistent problem (Department of Defense, 2014a). According to Castro, Kintzle, Schuyler, Lucas, and Warner (2015) the failure to reduce sexual assault occurrences stems from the complexity of a sexual assault. The authors went on to further comment that it is those complexities that need to be understood in order to develop effective strategies to end MSA (Castro et al., 2015). President Obama (as cited in Brook, 2014) indicated in a statement to Department of Defense officials that “additional reforms may be required to eliminate this crime from our military ranks and protect our brave service members who stand guard for us every day at home and around the world” (para. 9). As a result, the chief priority of the Department of Defense (2014b) is to completely eliminate sexual assaults from within military forces. While there is no easy way to prevent MSA from taking place, a scholarly understanding and sound initiatives may forge a strategy that can reduce MSA occurrences (Department of Defense, 2014a). The purpose of this qualitative study is to develop an understanding of the management of MSA from the perspectives of experienced ex-military leaders that served in the Air Force.

To start, a review of research approaches is presented to identify the location of articles. The contents of this literature review highlight pivotal research on MSA and MST. The literature also addresses the implications of a sexual assault and the effects of sexual assaults among civilian and military populations. Lastly, I illustrate how sexual assaults are managed in the military and the effects that MSAs can have among military personnel.

Literature Research Strategy

I used several sources to conduct the online literature review. The online library at Walden University provided the majority of the articles that were utilized for this chapter. Additionally, the Crestview Florida Public Library, Google Scholar search engine, and the World Wide Web provided supplementary items. The following databases were queried: Thoreau Multi-Database Search; Academic Search Complete; ProQuest Criminal Justice; SAGE Premier; PsycINFO; and PsycARTICLES. I expanded the search to include abstracts from the databases above and dissertations from the Walden University Library. This was conducted in order to ensure a full in-depth scholarly understanding of the topic.

I conducted an exploration of the literature using the following keywords as a single search and in a combined format to yield results: *sexual assault, military, military sexual assault, crime, military lifestyle management, prevention, military sexual trauma, assault, leadership, management, socio-ecological theory, Bronfenbrenner, and ecological model of human development*. From articles found through this strategy, I reviewed references that the authors used to locate additional sources that matched the search criteria. I used only recent literature contributions dated no later than December 31, 2011, with the exception of seminal works. I conducted an exhaustive search of the literature until no new literature was returned. I achieved research saturation when searches were returned with duplicate findings that I had already catalogued. I catalogued the research using a systematic electronic filing process with folders and subfolders on my personal laptop computer.

The literature that I identified was used to organize this chapter into themes. First I provide the conceptual framework which is composed of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development. In the next section I provide an overview of MSA, MST, military response to a sexual assault, and the emotional and psychological implications that result from a sexual assault.

Conceptual Framework

My grounded theory study was designed to extend the literature through my findings. Understanding the management of MSA from the perspectives of ex-military leaders is best addressed by through socioecological theory. Based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development, socioecological theory assists researchers in understanding the interrelationships among individual and particular environmental factors. The ecological model of human development was Bronfenbrenner's attempt at propelling the field of developmental science (Espelage, 2014) by analyzing a person's subsystems that support and guide their development. The socioecological model thus focuses on the interrelationships between individuals and their immediate environments.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) postulated that there are five systems that support human development. Microsystems account for the relationships and interactions that are close to a person and possess the greatest influence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Mesosystems are specific interactions or associations that strengthen a person's bond closer to their respective microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The exosystem of human development is a larger social system, which a person does not directly function in, but is where a person can feel positive or negative attributes occurring (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A

macrosystem is comprised of values, customs, and laws that characterize a society or social group that a person can be subjected to (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Lastly, the chronosystem refers to the concept of time as it relates to a person's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) these systems can be alike or equivalent to one another in that the systems function in similar ways or can contrast significantly due to a person's role. In the Armed Forces the various systems can be viewed as the different levels of leadership and command. The Air Force is composed of a series of coordinated and controlled systems with each system operating independently or collectively in leadership levels such as commander, chief, first sergeant, and supervisor.

Socioecological theory explains four elements: (a) interactions between a person and their environment, (b) improved transactions within one's environment, (c) expansion of human growth and development in particular environments, and (d) environmental improvements to support the individual.

As a framework, I utilized socioecological theory to determine the relationship between a leader's position, responsibility, and accountability for MSA occurrences under command or supervision. It is possible to distinguish the ecological properties of a larger social setting and how those systems understand and recognize one another by studying the interconnected systems of a social institution such as military leadership dynamics. Military leaders adapt their leadership styles to account for mission demands and by way of different strategies, capitalize on strength and endurance.

An Overview of Military Sexual Assault

According to a report released by the Department of Defense and the RAND Corporation (as cited in Kime, 2014), the number of sexual assaults in 2014 dropped among active duty personnel. The number of rapes and violent sexual assaults, however, were listed significantly higher (Kime, 2014). While the amount of sexual assaults dropped, the number of service members reporting incidents of sexual assaults increased. Department of Defense officials (as cited in Kime, 2014) contributed this to “victim’s growing confidence in the military system and increased emphasis on fixing the issue in the Defense and Homeland Security departments” (p. 8).

Results from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study indicated that 1.5% of the active duty military population “experienced at least one sexual assault in the last year” (National Defense Research Institute, 2014, p. 9). That accounted for approximately 20,000 out of 1,317,561 active duty military personnel (National Defense Research Institute, 2014). The report cited that the rate of sexual assaults among active duty military showed a significant gap: one out of 100 servicemen and one out of 20 servicewomen experienced a sexual assault (National Defense Research Institute, 2014). Air Force service members were estimated to be at a lower risk of experiencing a sexual assault compared to members of other branches.

Morris et al. (2014) noted that among the overall population, there has been increased attention on the amount of sexual violence that occurs in the military. Roeder (2015) discovered that sexual assaults were cited as the most commonly unreported crime within the Armed Forces. MSA has developed into a dangerous military issue, with critical implications for the victim, suspect, organization, and society. Holland et al.

(2014) stated that MSA has become a serious problem, resulting from a less than significant Department of Defense sexual assault training initiatives. The authors highlighted that comprehensive training and management exposure can lead to lower sexual assaults among the military branches and superior knowledge of sexual assault resources and protocols. Public and congressional attention to Department of Defense efforts to prevent and respond to MSA has seen an increase over the years (Mengeling et al., 2014). This is a direct result from an attempt by Department of Defense to promote sexual assault reporting in restricted and unrestricted manners.

Military Leadership and Operational Response

The Department of Defense Manual for Courts-Martial (2010) stated that “military law is to promote justice, to assist in maintaining good order and discipline, in the armed forces, to promote efficiency and effectiveness in military establishment, and thereby to strengthen the national security of the United States” (p. I-1). When a military member engages in sexual misconduct, he or she undermines the institutional values of duty, loyalty, and honor that are the building blocks of the Armed Forces. This is reaffirmed by the fact that “sexual assault and harassment wholly undermines trust and cooperation” (Rosenthal & Korb, 2013, p. 10); obstructs mission accomplishment, and impedes military readiness (Hoyle, 2014).

Rosenthal and Korb (2013) established that the scope of sexual assaults in the military were vast in that it touches the links that preserve the military chain of command. According to Rosenthal and Korb (2013), military commanders take “less than one-third of the actionable sexual assault cases reported each year to court martial” (p. 15). Hoyle (2014) attributed this to a liberal act of discretion for additional investigating, a desire to

seek minor administrative actions, and electing to pursue a non-judicial punishment. According to Snyder, Fisher, Scherer, and Daigle (2012), if the perception of military leadership is altered, the long term effects can weaken the successfulness of military esprit de corps. Gillibrand (2013) emphasized that sexual assault victim's lack confidence in their chain of command in achieving justice. Furthermore, the authors noted that half of female victims do not file a report for fear of retaliation, retribution, and a lack of faith in the military justice system (Gillibrand, 2013).

The young men and women of the United States Armed Forces take an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States (Felsman, 2014). In conjunction, military leaders must ensure that soldiers under their command are ready to execute military orders effectively and efficiently, adhere to evolving combat environments, and maintain good order and discipline. A violent event such as an MSA can "represent a threat to good order and discipline and undermines the command structure" (Farris, Schell, & Tanielian, 2013, p. 1). A strong military voice, good order, and discipline from military leadership is a way to ensure that defenses do not falter because of MSA.

As an example, leadership initiatives to combat sexual harassment were calculated by Buchanan, Settles, Hall and O'Connner (2014). The authors determined that the best practice for system-level intervention for reducing sexual harassment in the military was the dissemination of clear and consistent anti-harassment messages from organizational leaders (Buchanan et al., 2014). More precisely, this can be achieved through written policy, regular educational training, and formal and informal reporting procedures. Military leaders can incorporate MSA information into this best practice initiative to ensure that appropriate actions on sexual assault prevention is achieved.

Cohesiveness amongst military personnel is essential for mission accomplishment. Unit support against sexual harassment and assault at a deployed location was analyzed by Walsh et al. (2014). Participants of the study consisted of Ohio Army National Guard service members ($n = 1,674$) who deployed at least once (Walsh et al., 2014). Through a telephone survey, the members completed measurements of sexual harassment/assault, unit support, and psychosocial support (Walsh et al., 2014). The authors, by using logistical regression, concluded that 198 men and 74 women reported a case of sexual harassment and 17 men and 32 women reported a sexual assault during their most recent deployment (Walsh et al., 2014). From these findings, they determined that the better the unit supported their military members, the lower the risk was for sexual harassment and assault. While self-reporting of sexual harassment and sexual assault can run the risk of biased results, findings from this study suggest that developing and initiating effective prevention and policy programs from unit leaders can lessen sexual harassment and assault at deployed locations (Walsh et al., 2014).

Feedback from active duty military members regarding sexual assault prevention and response was established through the use of focus groups in a study conducted by Rock, Van Winkle, Namrow, and Hurley (2014), with guidance from the National Defense Authorization Act and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The purpose of their study was to understand the current changes in sexual assault policy and programs that have had an effect on military members and their workplace environment and to address the overall significance of the Department of Defense sexual assault and prevention initiatives (Rock et al., 2014).

In the focus groups, active duty members gave constructive feedback to senior Department of Defense leadership personnel. A total of 647 participants from all six branches of service were randomly selected for the study. The researchers addressed topics of perceptions about unwanted sexual contact, options for reporting a sexual assault, changes to sexual assault prevention and response policy, command climate/culture, sexual assault training and bystander intervention (Rock et al., 2014). Under the topic of command culture, results of the study indicated that: (a) senior leadership encouraged dignity and respect from the soldiers under their command, (b) a portion of unit leaders led by example or will speak up about inappropriate behavior, and (c) soldiers thought senior leadership would protect the privacy of the victim, guarantee victim safety, and treat the victim with respect (Rock et al., 2014). While the study cannot be generalized to the total military force, the findings of this study can be used to aid Department of Defense officials in reviewing sexual assault programs and initiate future policy reform.

Effects of MSA. An MSA in the military can differ from a sexual assault that occurs in the civilian sector. In the Armed Services, a victim of a sexual assault can experience: (a) shock and betrayal, (b) are at a greater risk of developing mental health problems, and (c) can remain vulnerable to repeated MSAs if the assault occurred within a soldier's chain of command (Ferris et al., 2013). In a qualitative study, Vedder (2015) examined U.S. Navy military women who were raped during active duty service. In the study, Vedder (2015) also intended to achieve an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Department of Defense policy and procedures for managing sexual assaults. The study consisted of nine active duty women in the U.S. Navy who had

experienced a rape while serving and then fell victim to a sexual assault during their military commitment. Results of the study indicated that women who were raped, and then experienced a subsequent sexual assault, developed difficulties that affected their mental health, military career success, and overall trust in Department of Defense policy (Vedder, 2015). Cognitively, the researchers also revealed that all nine women provided subsequent recommendations to aid in improving sexual assault policies and procedures. The recommendations can be seen as an effort to raise awareness of MSA, ensuring that victims have access to advocacy, forensic health, and mental services while serving.

Bryan et al. (2013) examined the associations of physical and sexual assaults with suicide attempts and ideation among active duty military personnel. Study participants included 273 men and women from Air Force Security Forces units located at two different installations. Results of the study indicated that victims of rape, robbery, or violent physical assault showed a stronger relationship with suicide attempts compared to other forms of assault (Bryan et al., 2013). The authors also concluded that victims of physical abuse or batter exhibited a stronger relationship with suicide ideation (Bryan et al., 2013).

The military lifestyle can have consequences not just at home station but at a deployed location as well. The role of women in the military has expanded over the last decades to include combat positions. This new position has led to more women participating in male dominating environments. LeardMann et al. (2013) examined sexual stressors in relation to female troops deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Using longitudinal data from Millennium Cohort participants, the researchers conducted a multivariable analysis to investigate associations between deployments and individual

and environmental factors against sexual harassment and sexual assaults. Results of their study indicated that women who were exposed to combat were more likely to report sexual harassment or both sexual harassment and a sexual assault as a result of their combat-like experience (LeardMann et al., 2013). The researchers suggested that understanding the factors that underlie sexual stressors is the initial step in initiating policy and interventions that address the sexual stressors that can develop in a combat environment.

MST. Based on the literature reviewed thus far, it appears that there is a substantial impact, both mentally and physically, concerning sexual assault among military personnel. Under the heading, MST, studies are highlighted to provide additional information on sexual assaults that a military service member experienced during his or her service. Table 1 provides the emotional and physical consequences of surviving an MST.

Researchers have documented the impact that MST has according to gender; specifically among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with and without post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) female veterans with MST are four times more likely to develop PTSD compared to those OEF/OIF female veterans without the diagnosis of MST (Maguen et al., 2012). As a contrast, men were associated with nearly a threefold increase of developing PTSD symptoms as a result of a MST (Maguen et al., 2012).

Past researchers also documented that female OEF/OIF veterans that were diagnosed as having PTSD were more susceptible to developing depression, anxiety, and eating disorders compared to males who develop alcohol and substance use disorders.

Table 1

Emotional and Physical Consequences of Surviving an MST

 Depression, anger, and irritability

Numbness

Trouble sleeping/disturbing nightmares

Attention, concentration, and memory issues

Illegal substance abuse

Difficulty feeling safe/feeling uneasy

Feeling isolated or disconnected with others

Difficulty in trusting others

Physical health problems such as sexual difficulties, weight or eating problems, and gastrointestinal problems

Note. U. S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2014a

In comparison, Katz, Cojucar, Beheshti, Nakamura, and Murray (2012) also examined MST among men and women deployed to Iraqi and Afghanistan. Results indicated that 51 out of 408 men and 26 out of 62 women that were sampled reported an MST at a deployed location. In this case, the authors surmised that MST was a direct cause of environmental readjustment, intimacy problems, and war-related stress. In addition, Hoyt et al. (2011) discovered that MST was reported by approximately .09% of servicemen each year over a 30 year period; with 1.1% of servicemen reporting an MST over the course of their military career.

The 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress estimated that there were approximately 49,933 homeless veterans on a single night in January 2014 (Henry,

Cortes, Shivji, & Buck, 2014). Early research has indicated that MST may be linked with homelessness among women veterans (Pavao et al., 2013). Pavao et al. (2013) assessed the relationship between MST and mental health conditions among homeless men and women veterans that utilized Veteran Health Administration (VHA) outpatient care in 2010. Of the homeless veterans that used the VHA outpatient care, approximately 40% of the women reported having experienced an MST compared to homeless veteran men at 3% ($n = 126,598$). The authors determined that those veterans who experienced MST were at a higher risk of developing mental health conditions compared to other homeless men and women. The most common found were depression, PTSD, anxiety, substance use, bipolar and personality disorders, suicide, and schizophrenia and psychotic disorder (men only; Pavao et al., 2013).

Physical and psychological problems have moved to the forefront for health care providers that care for veterans. Prior research has shown that MST results in psychological and physical problems for veterans (Mattocks et al., 2012) and that experiencing a sexual assault can cause neurologic, musculoskeletal, genitourinary, and gastrointestinal symptoms (Smith et al., 2011). Turchik et al. (2012) went further and examined sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and sexual dysfunction disorders (SDDs) among OEF/OIF veterans in conjunction with MST. Approximately 400,000 OEF/OIF veterans who used the VHA between 2002 and 2010 were utilized in the cross-sectional study. Those who reported a MST were more likely to develop STIs and SDDs (Turchik et al., 2012). It was also determined that the risk of having an STI or SDD increased if the veteran was diagnosed with mental health illness; specifically PTSD, depressive disorder, and substance use disorder (Turchik et al., 2012). While the results of this study sound

grim, it highlights the importance of progressing a multidisciplinary collaboration between health providers and mental health specialists to provide adequate health assessments, management, and care to veterans with sexual health concerns. The literature in the next section will highlight additional consequences of sexual assault among the general population.

Emotional Implications of a Sexual Assault

Despite the human condition of overcoming and adapting, it has been confirmed that a traumatic experience, such as a sexual assault, can alter a person's psychological, biological, and social equilibrium (Van der Kolk, McFarland, & Weiseth, 2006).

According to Çelikel, Demirkiran, Özsoy, Zeren, and Arslan (2015) a sexual assault has the capacity of diminishing one's harmony between his or her disposition and their environment; producing fear, psychiatric diseases, acute stress, depression, and PTSD.

Au, Dickstein, Comer, Salter-Pedneault, and Litz (2013) assessed PTSD and depression symptoms following a sexual assault. They found that co-occurring symptoms of PTSD and depression were pervasive among women who survived a sexual assault. The authors examined PTSD and depression symptoms across the first four months following a sexual assault using four distinct symptomatic subgroups: mild, low-moderate, high-moderate, and severe. Through a latent class analysis, the authors concluded that PTSD and depression co-existed tightly in each month (Au et al., 2013). Study participants were considered a strength in this study in that all participants were exposed to an interpersonal severe trauma and were recruited regardless of distress or intent on receiving treatment (Au et al., 2013). While results of the study cannot be generalized to a larger clinical population, the study captured a broad spectrum of trauma

and symptom severity. Moreover, in a study to examine the effects of trauma, substance use coping, and PTSD in women who experienced a sexual assault, Ullman, Relyea, Peter-Hagene, and Vasquez (2013) found results that indicated that PTSD and substance usage as a coping mechanism mediated the effects of trauma associated with sexual assault. This study also showed the importance of trauma history documentation in identifying substance use problems.

In a study directed by Badour, Feldner, Babson, Blumenthal and Dutton (2013), disgust and metal contamination in relation to sexual assaults were assessed. Through the use of an interpersonal assault-related script imagery technique, 22 women with a history of sexual assault trauma and 19 women with a history of traumatic non-sexual assault were studied (Badour et al., 2013). The researchers reported that the more severe the sexual assault and post-traumatic stress (PTS) was; disgust, feelings of dirtiness, and urges to wash were prevalent (Badour et al., 2013). Moreover, the type of assault, sexual versus non-sexual, affected the association of PTS and the severity of dirtiness and the urge to wash. This result was an essential finding among those sexually assaulted individuals and indicates that future research is warranted in understanding the relation between mental disgust, uncleanness, and PTS (Badour et al., 2013).

It appears that the result of a traumatic event, like a sexual assault, can be a predictor of hopelessness and suicidal thoughts among college students (Chang et al., 2015). Chang et al. (2015) examined the link between feelings of loneliness after experiencing a sexual assault and the relation that the loneliness can have on suicidal tendencies. More specifically, the researchers examined loneliness and sexual assault as a precursor to suicidal thoughts and if the interaction between the two accounts for

variances among suicidal thoughts. They surmised that loneliness and sexual assault were significant and unique precursors to suicidal risks in college students (Chang et al., 2015). This study suggests that a negative life experience can have a profound effect on the life expectancy of an individual. While the sample population was mainly Caucasian students, additional studies among diverse ethnic and racial groups can depict how different cultures link a sexual assault to suicidal inclinations.

Using strategies that alleviate the stress that occurs from a traumatic event, without addressing the primary source of the distress, can increase the chance of revictimization (Najowski & Ullman, 2011). Prior research has shown that using maladaptive coping strategies might contribute to further assault. Najowski and Ullman (2011) concurred with past research in that all traumatic events that are experienced by women should be considered to understand the totality of how sexual assaults influence coping and recovering strategies. Developing initiatives and interventions to reduce a victim's coping and increase recovery efforts can lead to fewer revictimization possibilities (Najowski & Ullman, 2011). Possible support services offered by military installations such as chaplain services and mental health counseling can be seen as a key to coping and reducing the propensity of revictimization.

It seems that resilience may not be the model outcome following a sexual assault, but that recovery is (Steenkamp, Dickstein, Salter-Pedneault, Hofmann, & Litz, 2012). The scholars examined how traumatic stress can propose distinct mental health life course trajectories. Steenkamp et al., (2012) monitored sexual assault survivors at one, two, three, and four months post-assault to address the lack of resilience as a model course for adaptation. Through a latent growth analysis, the authors found four distinct

PTSD growth trajectories: high chronic trajectory, a moderate chronic trajectory, moderate recovery trajectory, and a marked recovery trajectory (Steenkamp et al., 2012). It was determined that those victims who are highly distressed in the immediate weeks post-assault, will see a gradual decline in symptoms (Steenkamp et al., 2012). In cases where a progressive decline does not occur, a chronic trajectory is possible and clinical intervention might be necessary (Steenkamp et al., 2012).

An emerging topic among the African American culture is that religious coping after a sexual assault has become the protective factor against psychological symptoms. A person's religion and spirituality have been identified as components of the physical and mental health of a woman (Adofoli & Ullman, 2014). In an exploratory study conducted by Adofoli and Ullman (2014), the researchers analyzed the cohesiveness between religion, trauma history, and life satisfaction among alcohol use in adult sexual assault survivors. Through the use of hierarchical regression the authors established that for non-religious women, interpersonal trauma was related to frequent alcohol use; for moderate religious women, interpersonal and contextual traumas were associated with heavy alcohol use; and for highly religious women, religious coping was related to less alcohol consumption (Adofoli & Ullman, 2014). This study suggests that positive religious coping for sexual assault survivors can have an encouraging effect on a person's mental strength. A collective effort between physicians and military chaplains can be viewed as a rehabilitative tool to overcome the impact of an MSA.

Physical assault and rape can have an intense effect on a woman's psychological well-being, with PTSD being the common occurrence in both. Elklit and Christiansen (2013) examined risk factors related to PTSD severity in support seeking sexual assault

victims. The authors inferred that sexual assault is associated with PTSD severity and prior nonsexual victimization (Elklit & Christiansen, 2013). It was also determined that high levels of negative affectivity increases the vulnerability of developing symptoms of assault related PTSD (Adofoli & Ullman, 2014). In the following section, studies will identify post-assault occurrences.

After an Assault

Given that the threat of a sexual assault is as widespread in the military as in society, there is currently no easy solution to the problem (Turchik & Wilson, 2010). The issues for civilian and military personnel are: (a) how are assaults handled, (b) what happens to those that report a sexual assault, and (c) what is the future of sexual assault prevention. In a report on sexual assaults, authors Rosenthal and Korb (2013) highlighted eight key problematic issues that can transpire in the military. The authors marked challenging issues such as heightened occurrence of sexual assault in the Armed Forces, severe underreporting of MSA, high levels of command abuse, chain-of-command obstruction and retaliation in reporting and investigation, lack of accountability, sexual assault rates at service academies, lack of concrete research, and misrepresentation of existing research.

There are multiple issues of significance when providing the proper treatment and management of a sexual assault. Appropriate action is necessary not only to decrease victim suffering but to lessen negative psychological effects from occurring. Relyea and Ullman (2015) reported that women who disclosed a sexual assault can receive two types of reactions known as reactions of being turned against and unsupportive

acknowledgment. Social feedback plays a noteworthy part of the care and recovery process for victims.

Orchowski, United, and Gidycz (2013) acknowledged that social reactions that attempted to govern the decision making of sexual assault survivors were associated with PTS, depression, anxiety, and lessened reassurance. Nonetheless, the authors recognized that positive reactions that treated the survivor differently mentally and physically, resulted in the victim having higher self-esteem (Orchowski et al., 2013). Peter-Hagene and Ullman (2014) went further and tested whether or not controlling the recovery process of a sexual assault victim mediates social reactions and health outcomes. They found that enhancing control over a victim's recovery process can be seen as a potential reducing agent for PTSD and problem drinking (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2014). A central element regarding the care of sexual assault victims is nonjudgmental, compassionate support from informal and formal support personnel (Farris et al., 2013).

It is known that recovery from a traumatic event often involves telling others what has occurred (Foyne & Freyd, 2013). However, Mattocks et al. (2012) discovered that women returning from stressful situations, like wartime, used behavioral avoidance coping strategies, and cognitive avoidance tactics to deal with deployment-related stress. In detail, the authors revealed in their qualitative study that women veterans who might have experienced a MST while deployed were typically unwilling to utilize veteran medical services for fear of encountering individuals who may have perpetrated the sexual trauma. Establishment and access to gender-specific counseling services can be seen as a way to reduce avoidance coping strategies.

In a study to address the use of outpatient health services, researchers measured sociodemographic factors related to utilization intensity of MST care (Turchik, Pavao, Hyun, Mark, & Kimerling, 2012). Data from the Veterans Healthcare Association (VHA) National Patient Care Database was reviewed to identify veterans who had a face-to-face outpatient service at a VHA facility in the one year following a positive MST screening. A total of 4,458 veterans were selected for the study. Turchik et al. (2012) found 75.9% of OEF/OIF veterans that deployed in 2008, had at least one MST related visit with 55.4% of veterans having an MST related mental health visit and 59.6% having at least one non-medical MST health visit following a positive MST screening. The researchers also found that men, older veterans, and Marine and Air Force veterans were less likely to use MST related care, as well as those in the National Guard or the Reserve services (Turchik et al., 2012). The most common diagnostic of MST related care for half of men and women veterans (56.8% of women and 49.5% of men) were mental health diagnosis's that consisted of PTSD, depression, and other anxiety disorders (Turchik et al., 2012).

The military lifestyle has its barriers and men can be at the forefront when it relates to experiencing MST. Turchik et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews with 20 veteran men enrolled in VHA who reported an MST but did not receive mental health care related to their MST. It was concluded that veteran men experienced numerous barriers relating to their MSA treatment. From information gathered by interviews, the researchers classified the barriers experienced in the following categories: (a) stigma (not wanting to talk about the problem, embarrassment/shame, privacy/confidentiality, self-blame, not urgent or serious enough,

sensitivity and reaction of a provider, and fear that they will not be believed), (b) gender (men seen as less effective than women, masculinity, sexuality/sexual orientation, and provider gender preference), and (c) knowledge (lack of knowledge about service availability and financial concerns regarding services) (Turchik et al., 2013). This study suggests that future research is needed to clarify the exact barriers and preferences that can impact male access to MST services (Turchik et al., 2013). The study also suggests that similarities and differences between men and women regarding social and behavioral barriers should be examined in order to inform future interventions and access (Turchik et al., 2013). While the study cannot be generalized to other men who are MST victims due to sample size, the study is the first to inform upon barriers to MST care for veteran men.

Wardle (2014) determined that when management of assault disclosure is conducted appropriately, victims feel liberated and empowered. Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) is an example of a community-level management intervention. Greeson and Campbell (2012) through an exhaustive search, summarized that SARTs seek positive relationships and collaborative efforts with sexual assault victims, responders, community volunteers, and the criminal justice system; improving upon multidisciplinary response and prevention. The authors surmised that establishing a positive relationship among sexual assault responders is a hallmark of a successful SART (Greeson & Campbell, 2012). In conjunction to initiating positive relationships, a study conducted by Smith et al. (2013) focused on clinical care of sexual assault survivors. The authors found that key training initiatives for healthcare providers increased respect for patient rights to include knowledge and confidence in direct care of the patient. This compassionate and

competent care can result in victim empowerment. Confidence in reporting procedures will help mold and develop synergistic programs. Such programs have the potential of fostering a comprehensive environment among victims and responders that can reduce future sexual assaults and increase preventive measures.

The increasing public and congressional demands to prevent and respond to sexual assaults in the military established Department of Defense Directive 6495.01, Sexual Assault and Prevention Policy, in October 2005. SAPRO, formed from the directive, affords oversight of the Armed Services sexual assault prevention and response programs. Under the Directive, SAPRO conducts a comprehensive Department of Defense report, a military service academy report, a special victim's capability report, and a report for the President of the United States on sexual assault prevention and response strategies on an annual basis.

Mengeling et al. (2014) expanded SAPRO report data by analyzing the following in an inclusive study: (a) female reporting experiences throughout military service, (b) non-reporting barriers, (c) demographic factors associated with reporting, (d) reporting differences between active and Reserve and National Guard, and (e) the continuing barriers to reporting a sexual assault. Results specified that active duty servicewomen were more likely to report an assault over Reserve and Guard members. While restrictive reporting was favored among the participants, unrestrictive reporting was seen as the primary source of reporting a sexual assault (Mengeling et al., 2014). Outcomes of the study also indicated concerns about lack of confidentiality for victims and fear of adverse treatment by associates (Mengeling et al., 2014). An unease that 'nothing will come out of reporting a sexual assault' was also noted (Mengeling et al., 2014). Clearly post-

assault treatment of sexual assault victims was of high concern and should be addressed to ensure mission readiness and to guarantee the health and safety of all service members.

The literature presented thus far has indicated that care after a sexual assault is critical for victim rehabilitation and for the forthcoming development of sexual assault prevention strategies. According to Wall (2013) sexual assault prevention requires social change and a multi-level evaluation strategy that targets the complex and systemic causes of such a crime. For instance, a more contemporary form of a sexual assault prevention strategy encourages verbal consent communication between persons (Jozkowski, Peterson, Sanders, Dennis, & Reece, 2014) compared to nonverbal consent actions (Hall, 1998; Beres, Harold, & Maitland, 2004) and no response (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999). Jozkowski et al. (2014) discovered that men and women college students defined the term “consent” similarly, however, how the genders portrayed their consent differed. Women college students exhibited more verbal strategies compared to college men who used more nonverbal strategies (Jozkowski et al., 2014).

Verbal and nonverbal indicators of consent are not the only forms of prevention that can be used as a mechanism to reduce sexual assaults. Potter and Stapleton (2012) expanded upon knowledge about the practices and prevention strategies that can range from one target audience to another. Through a social marketing campaign centered on prosocial bystander behaviors depicting images of sexual and relationship violence, the authors set to determine if a social marketing campaign on a military installation would increase a soldier’s role responsibility in reducing sexual assault. The authors also wanted to determine if the social campaign would increase a soldier’s confidence in acting as a bystander to the point of reporting a sexual assault when one was witnessed.

Results of their study demonstrated that reducing sexual assault through passive intervention tactics such as images on posters (social self-identification) can raise an awareness of a person's role in a society or community. More specifically, the authors concluded that "images increased the soldiers' sense of responsibility (pre-contemplation) for the prevention of sexual assault on their installations" (Potter & Stapleton, 2012, p. 1613). While sample size, utilization of a posttest-only design, and examination of Army personnel residing in the barracks were seen as limitations to the study, the exploratory nature of this study yielded promising findings on social self-identification behavior and sexual conduct (Potter & Stapleton, 2012).

Summary and Conclusions

In general, I showed in the literature review that there is an awareness of sexual violence that occurs within the Armed Forces and in the civilian sectors (Farris et al., 2013). The perils and the emotional implications of experiencing a sexual assault in the military can lead to shock and betrayal, mental health problems, and an increase in vulnerability within a soldier's chain of command (Farris et al., 2013). With the expansion of women in combat operations comes an increase in the potential of additional sexual stressors in combat environments (LeardMann et al., 2013) and with the rise in MSA against men, barriers to MSA treatment are abundant (Turchik et al., 2013).

These conclusions offered that although there is detailed literature specific to MSA and its implications, there continues to be a gap specific to understanding MSA from a military leadership perspective. MSA can have the potential of interrupting the mission and inhibiting personnel who need to accomplish the mission. Hoyle (2014) has elaborated that protection of military service members should be the number one priority

for leaders. Ignoring the sexual violence that occurs in the military perpetrates a mixed signal of military justice and mission accomplishment. What is not known are the perceptions of ex-military leaders regarding the role of military occupational leadership and the management of MSA. Will MSA management from the supervisor position to a command position encompass the same principles and policies? Do military leaders mismanage MSA reports and inquiries to achieve unit successfulness? The intent of this study was to portray the different perceptions of MSA management in the Air Force from the perspectives of ex-military leaders. In Chapter 3, I provide information on how this study was performed, how participants were identified, and how the results were organized and analyzed. I also define my role as the researcher and disclose potential conflict and biases and how they were managed. I cover the sampling strategy later in the chapter as well as data collection, data analysis, verification of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 3: Research Design

Introduction

In the previous chapter I provided an overview of MSA, the military's response to MSA, the emergence of MST, the emotional implications of a sexual assault, and what occurs after an assault. Having an understanding of the effects of MSA on military personnel can inform policymakers on how best to design new interventions and establish additional sexual assault treatment programs (Farris et al., 2013). Secretary of Defense Carter (2015) stated that military leaders, "must promote an appropriate climate where sexual assault and other destructive behaviors are prevented, reporting and intervention is encouraged, and victim support is unparalleled" (p. 3). A goal of this project is to discover a fundamental theory that explains how MSA is managed at the operational level from the perspectives of ex-military Air Force leaders.

The justification for selecting qualitative methodology in addressing MSA management from a leadership perspective is addressed in this chapter. In addition, I discuss the historical origins of grounded theory as a basis for this study's design. Furthermore, I discuss my role as the researcher, any potential conflicts and biases, and the methods to manage them. In the remaining sections I provide information on data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness verification, and ethical considerations.

Research Question

The primary research question for this study was: What role does military operational leadership play in the management of MSA complaints?

Central Concepts

The central concepts that I explored in this study were management and leadership style/position and the potential impact that it has on MSA. My study focused on the following concepts: (a) MSA overview, (b) military and sexual assault response, (c) emotional implications and sexual assault, and (d) the aftermath of a sexual assault.

There is a continued emphasis in the Department of Defense on sexual assault response and prevention in the military (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2013b). Sexual assaults occurring in the military can cause unreasonable harm to the victim and can undermine the workplace (Farris et al., 2013). This can cause mission failure and a threat to national security. The call for a long-term strategy in combating MSA will support the Armed Forces institutional values of duty, loyalty, and honor instead of undermining them. My study's research question and proposed interview questions were designed to understand the effect of leadership on MSA management. I selected grounded theory to address this study's research question.

Paradigm and Tradition: Grounded Theory

In a qualitative study, components of a design interact and are interconnected with one another rather than constituting a predetermined starting point or a fixed sequence of steps (Maxwell, 2013). Grounded theory has become attractive to current researchers in that the theory allows for understanding of behavior and actions in real-world situations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). While there are a substantial amount of grounded theory definitions that researchers have developed over the years, the creators Glaser and Strauss (1967) defined the theory as originating "from data... systematically obtained and analyzed in social research" (p. 1). A more detailed explanation is as follows:

Grounded theory is a ‘general methodology,’ for developing theory that is grounded in data, systematically gathered, and analyzed. Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection. A comparative method of constant comparative analysis. (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273)

Qualitative grounded theory enables researchers to not only understand the progressions of events, but to also understand how individual participants interpret and make meaning of progressions in their everyday lives (Maxwell, 2013).

Through the years, the application of grounded theory has developed into two distinct approaches, one favored by Glaser (1965) and the other by Corbin and Strauss (2015), resulting in a split between Straussian and Glaserian paradigms. In Glaser’s view, grounded theory is a constant comparison strategy, persistently comparing indicators and concepts as the theory developed. Corbin and Strauss, on the other hand, concluded that data and analysis are interconnected. More specifically, “the concepts derived from the analysis form the basis for subsequent data collection” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 7). While Glaser asserted that this is seen as data forcing, Corbin and Strauss saw it as a systematic strategy, or coding paradigm, helping novice researchers “reduce and reorganize large amounts of data” (Fram, 2013, p. 2).

Charmaz (2014), who is also a grounded theorist, emerged within the social sciences with her constructivist grounded theory. It encompasses “inductive, comparative, emergent, and open-ended approach of Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) original statement” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 12). In addition, the constructivist approach treats research as under a constant construction, acknowledging that the research occurs under specific

conditions of which the researcher may or may not be aware of (Charmaz, 2014). This approach focuses on the “mutual construction of knowledge of the researcher and the participant” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510). In my study, I drew upon the structure of classical grounded theory first developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

The Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2013) qualitative research is a natural and interpretative way to understand the meaning behind an individual phenomenon. By using a qualitative methodology, I was able to explore a social reality. Utilizing a qualitative method allows a researcher to break the encounter of imposing a single paradigm by using open-ended naturalistic approaches (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

In a quantitative research design, relationships among variables are examined by study instruments allowing for numbered data to be analyzed (Creswell, 2009). Rossman and Rallis (2012) classified qualitative inquiry as a mixture of both art and science, capturing individual stories and weaving the thoughts and perceptions to reveal insight into real-world occurrences. While I found only one qualitative study that used focus groups among active duty service members to discuss sexual assault prevention and response (Rock et al., 2014), I have found no studies that have provided a theoretical explanation surrounding the management of MSA complaints from an operational leadership point of view. While focus groups provide insight and perceptions as a result of the interactions with one another in the group (Derksen et al., 2012), small sample size, controlling groups discussions, peer pressure, and researcher skill can pose a disadvantage. My study sought to generate a mid-level theory to understand MSA management practices from the perspective of ex-military leaders through the use of an

open-ended internet-based questionnaire. When there is a lack of sufficient literature, as in this study, Charmaz (2014) has indicated that such a study is a prime contender for a grounded theory design.

The literature on MSA has been studied from a quantitative perspective where known variables such as PTSD (Au et al., 2013; Maguen et al., 2012; Pavao et al., 2013; Van der Kolk et al., 2006;), unit support (Walsh et al., 2014), suicide (Bryan et al., 2013; Chang et al., 2015), and combat environments (Katz et al., 2012; LeardMann et al., 2013) were examined. I selected a qualitative design for this study to garner rich information with descriptive data. Maxwell (2013) states that by gathering rich data, a researcher can provide an in-depth theoretical explanation of participants' experiences without the use of barriers known as variables

My study provides new insight regarding how sexual assault complaint management is perceived in the Air Force by ex-military leaders. More importantly, the developed theory and findings from this study help to acknowledge and allow the perceptions, beliefs, and views surrounding the sexual assault complaint management culture of a military branch. My study's theory may also inform the research community by providing a stage for future study's based on my primary findings.

Role of the Researcher

The depth and complexity of a qualitative study puts a researcher into the very makings of history all the while guiding and constraining future work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Rossman and Rallis (2012) stated that a qualitative researcher must: (a) view the social world in a holistic fashion, (b) systematically reflect on who he or she is, (c) be sensitive to personal biography, (d) use complex reasoning, and (e) conduct systematic

inquiry. As the researcher, I ensured emotional maturity and possessed strong interpersonal skills to hear the stories of others through text, and in return, I used the participant's words to describe an experience or phenomena (Collins & Cooper, 2014).

According to Maxwell (2013) a primary role of any researcher in a project is to pilot the study in a manner that obeyed ethical standards and human subject protection principles. Kyrvik (2013) states that researchers should act in accordance with rules and regulations; understanding all roles, role behavior, and role achievement. In order to solidify my role as a researcher, I completed a Researcher Identity Memo that examined my goals, experiences, assumptions, feelings, and value as they relate to the study. A memo such as the one above can allow a research to discover any potential concerns that past identity and experience can create (Maxwell, 2013).

For an additional protection, I completed training related to the protection of human research participants offered by the National Institute of Health Office (2012; see Appendix A, Certificate Number: 939512). I felt that I was competent and capable of conducting this study and if additional training was needed to ensure that I am ethically within standards, I would have accessed the appropriate training. However, additional training was not needed. In accordance with Walden University Institutional Review Board governance, I used record management procedures to ensure participant confidentiality and privacy. I assigned a unique identifier consisting of letters and numbers for all documentation associated with each interview and cross-referenced materials such as the online questionnaire and transcribed materials. I stored all study data in a locked file cabinet in my home office and in a password-protected file on my personal computer. I deleted audio recordings of the follow-up telephone interviews after

transcribing was completed. In addition to my role as a researcher, I ensured that an informed consent was completed by all study participants before having access to the internet-based questionnaire.

Study Risks, Conflicts, and Biases

As with any research study, the threat of creditability is significant. To increase study validity and reduce biasness, I maintained an awareness of protecting human participants, reduced everyday assumptions, and maintained neutral interpretation of results. In addition, I utilized the concept of bracketing. By bracketing, Schwandt (2007) explains that a researcher is able to suspend commonsense conventions about the external world thereby understanding how the participants experience their world as “real, concrete, factual, and objective...” (p. 24).

As a veteran of the Air Force and prior supervisor and Team Leader and as a current Special Investigator with the Department of State, I was aware that my background and personal experience could cause a variance in data collection and analysis. According to Schwandt (2007) data analysis needs to be “rigorous, disciplined, systematic, carefully documented, and methodical” (p. 6). As the primary researcher, it was important that I remained impartial in my relationships with the study participants. My background as a special investigator provided me with the appropriate training in creating structured questionnaires and interview procedures by performing over 300 interviews and transcriptions. The training that I received as a Walden University doctoral student, my professional background, and the guidance and assistance from my dissertation committee provided me with the necessary confidence in order to execute and finish my study.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research has an orientation that is central to the happenings that occur in the natural world (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). I conducted this research with the highest ethical standards. As previously stated, I completed the National Institution of Health (2012) Protecting Human Reach Participants training (see Appendix A, Certificate Number: 939512). During the course of the study, I adhered to the National Organization for Human Services (2015), Ethical Standards for Human Service Professionals. Human service professionals should always: (a) respect the dignity and welfare of all, (b) promote independence, (c) honor diversity, (d) advocate for social justice, and (e) act with integrity, honesty, validity, and impartiality.

I conducted this study with specific instructions that addressed the exact concerns of the Walden University IRB. The study's design, sample criteria, informed consent, and recruitment documentation was approved by Walden University's IRB. I did not begin data collection until I received approval from Walden University's IRB (IRB Approval No.10-15-5-0352235; see Appendix B). Potential ethical violations included but were not limited to: lapse in confidentiality, improper informed consent, misinterpretation of data; psychological harm, and absence of academic exactitude.

Methodology

Participants and Sample

The sample for my study was ex-military leaders who had served no less than a 4-year commitment in the Air Force, had been honorably discharged or retired under honorable conditions, functioned as a supervisor for airmen, and had served in a role as a noncommissioned officer, senior noncommissioned officer, or officer. I selected former

Air Force leaders as my sample since active duty personnel who are in a leadership position tend to face institutional checks and balances for reasons of confidentiality and directed adherence to AFIs and Air Force doctrine. I also selected that participants who were supervisors on account that those airmen whom they directly supervised would have had to report to them directly with an issue or complaint. I did not set a geographical setting for my study.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study was 20 participants. Sample sizes in qualitative research are typically not large in order to not make it difficult for all experiences or perceptions to be revealed without becoming superfluous (Mason, 2010). They should, however, not be too small so as to make it difficult for the researcher to achieve saturation (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). While a quantitative approach provides a specific number, a qualitative study approach produces a process in order to achieve in-depth rich data (Trotter, 2012). I conducted the sampling in a systematic and logical manner. According to Suri (2011), sampling should be conducted purposefully, be thoroughly reviewed, properly analyzed, and fully synthesized.

According to Trotter (2012) grounded theory is an emergent, exploratory approach that requires a saturated sample on account that a valid, reliable, and generalizable sample cannot be pre-determined given a need for a thorough exploration of an unknown belief or behavior. While reaching saturation is the norm for determining how much sampling should be done, a researcher however must continue to collect data until the theory is dense and logical so as to diminish any gaps in the explanations (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Justification of Sampling Strategy

For this study, I utilized a convenience snowball sampling technique. First, I sought personnel that I had access to who met the sample demographics. These initial personnel were not one of the 20 participants that I recruited for the study but instead acted as the convenience sample to recruit the study's 20 participants. Those recruited in turn were asked to forward the survey to additional participants or provide a participant email address for distribution. The initial convenience sample served as the seeds in which the first set of participants (Wave 1) were recruited and from those Wave 1 participants, Wave 2 participants were recruited, and so on and so forth. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) compared this type of sampling procedure as a snowball rolling down a hill, enlarging along its way until it finally reaches the bottom.

This type of sampling procedure was seen as justified in that it is a nonprobability approach that allows a researcher to gain access to hard-to-reach or hidden populations (Heckathorn, 2011). If I used a standard statistical method of sampling, I would have had to have access to a sampling frame or a list of potential study participants (Heckathorn, 2011). For this particular study, I did not have access to a master list of ex-military leaders who met the sampling demographics.

Recruitment

After I gained IRB approval, I contacted my convenience sample by email (see Appendix C). In this email I provided a brief background about myself, my program of study, and information regarding my research study. I also provided background information on MSA and how the perspectives of operational leaders can positively affect the management of MSA. In this email letter of assistance, I also explained to the

recipients that I wish to garner their assistance in recruiting participants that fit the sample demographics. I provided the convenience sample with an option to forward the survey to participants or recommend by email additional potential recruits. I explained in the letter how anonymity of individuals that they recruited for the study would be protected. From this convenience sample, I received participants who were categorized as Wave 1 participants. When I received a lull in returned questionnaires, I contacted another convenience sample set by email which begun Wave 2 of study participants. In total, I sent emails to four sets of convenience samples consisting of five personnel each for a total of 20 convenience sample participants.

Participants that were selected for the convenience sample choose to forward the study invitation email (see Appendix D) to participants that fit the study criteria. The invitation email explained how they were chosen for the study along with the purpose of the study and a link to the Internet-based, self-administered open-ended questionnaire. An Internet-based data collection method allowed me to reach a large number of ex-military Air Force members at various locations while providing the participants the opportunity to consider their responses along with anonymity.

Before completing the questionnaire, participants had to first acknowledge a consent form (see Appendix E). The consent form consisted of the following:

- Participant selection process
- Identity of the researcher
- Identity of Walden University as the research institution
- The purpose of the research study
- Study procedure

- Statement advising the voluntary nature of the study
- Statement advising participants they can withdraw from study at any time
- Risks and benefits for participating in the research study
- Explanation of the measures taken to protect participant anonymity and confidentiality
- Contact information for the researcher, Dissertation Chair, and Walden University's Research Participant Advocate

Wright (2005) confirms that to enhance study credibility, a researcher should provide contact information, information about the study, and ensure participant protection. The questionnaire was administered through SurveyMonkey; a secure third-party server. The invitation email included the URL address for accessing the SurveyMonkey questionnaire conducive to the study along with an informed consent. Study participants were redirected to the questionnaire once the participants consented to the study. If a participant chose to not consent to the study, the study was terminated and the participants were directed to a closing statement.

Instrument

I chose an internet-based questionnaire on account of the geographic dispersion of my study participants. The technological advantages for online research has evolved over the years (Wright, 2005). A corresponding disadvantage to using the internet however is that participants must be connected to the internet and must be a competent user of a computer system to the point that proper communication is established (Scott, 2011).

Studies have indicated that collecting qualitative data in an online forum is equivalent and almost superior to face-to-face interviews (Campbell et al., 2001;

Hincheliffe & Gavin, 2009; Kenny, 2005; Reid & Reid, 2005). In Table 2 I list some of the advantages and disadvantages of online survey research. I was the primary instrument developer for this study (Maxwell, 2013). According to Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008) before a researcher develops a new tool to measure, existing instruments that measure the construct of the research question should be considered.

Table 2

Online Survey Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Access to unique populations that share specific beliefs, attitudes, and values	Sampling characteristics of online communities
Saves time for researchers while they work on other tasks (work/family commitments)	Generating samples from virtual groups and organizations
Cost efficient	Generating a sample from an online community

For instance, in selecting an instrument, a researcher should consider the following:

- Does an instrument already exist that is similar to what is proposed?
- How well to instrument variables match the constructs that were defined in the proposed study?
- Is evidence of reliability and validity established?
- In previous studies, was there a large piece of data that was missing?
- Are there any past studies that corroborate the instrument's responsiveness to change in the construct of interest?

- Is the instrument available to the public?
- What is the cost for using the instrument?
- How much training or expertise is required to use the instrument?
- Will the instrument be acceptable to all participants? (Kimberlin & Wintersten, 2008).

I constructed an internet-based online questionnaire with open-ended questions (see Appendix F) by using SurveyMonkey's design templates. I constructed the questions in a manner that was conducive to the research question and that would elicit insightful information from each study participant. I developed each question with respect and dignity of the participant and I comprised each question with simple language so as to not sound condescending to the participants. The developed questionnaire was approved by Walden's IRB (Approval No. 10-15-5-0352235).

Participants, after receiving the invitation email, had the option of clicking on the provided link that prompted them to the study's consent form where the study's purpose, risks, and benefits would be reviewed; or the participants could have disregarded the link altogether. After clicking on the link, and when the participants consented to the study, they were directed to the questionnaire. From there, the participants answered one open-ended question at a time. Participants were given the option to skip a question. After a question was answered, the participant clicked on the "Next" button to proceed to the following question. After the last question was answered, the participant exited the questionnaire. A brief letter of thank you was provided at the end of the questionnaire along with an area where the participants could have chosen to provide the contact

information for additional study participants or forward the study link to additional participants. The participant was then able to exit the interface.

The quality of a qualitative research project is always recognized; explaining what or how a researcher achieves that quality is difficult (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Evaluation is necessary in any type of research, however, what constitutes an effective evaluation tool for qualitative researchers is difficult to answer. When an instrument measures the concepts that are most relevant to a study or that a user purports it so, then the instrument is deemed valid (Patrick, et al., 2011). Ultimately, it was the in-depth understanding and detailed participant responses afforded by past qualitative research that led to the final determining factor for research method, design, and data collection techniques.

The Pilot Case Study

In qualitative studies, pilot studies afford researchers an understanding of concepts and theories that are held by individuals that a researcher wants to study (Maxwell, 2013). Pilot studies are convenient and at the same time allows a researcher to test any expected complications to the real study. I conducted a small pilot study for this research project to support the time constraints of this dissertation. In a dissertation conducted by a Walden University student, Newcomer (2013), was able to adequately test his instrument validity and the reliability of his data collection plan. From the feedback that he received from the pilot study, Newcomer (2013) was able to refine and clarify his questions and data collection process.

In my pilot study, 10 purposively selected ex-military leaders in the state of Florida, who were not part of the study sample, was utilized. As in the main research study, pilot study participants received an email with a link to the internet-based

questionnaire on SurveyMonkey to complete. Results of the pilot study are discussed in Chapter 4.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was accomplished through the use of an internet-based questionnaire and only began after the approval from Walden University's IRB (Approval No.10-15-5-0352235). Figure 1 is a visual representation of the data collection process for my study. I also created a study protocol (see Appendix G) that acted as a guide while I was collecting my data. Qualitative researchers can find themselves immersed in an abundance of rich data which can pose a number of advantages and disadvantages. Some of the advantages to qualitative research are: (a) researchers are provided with rich historical data, (b) participants are able to explain how or why a phenomenon exists, and (c) researchers gain detailed information from the participants. Conversely, coding (by means of time consuming), bias responses, poor recollection, flawed articulation, and participant setting are all seen as disadvantages to qualitative research. In order to prevent this, I followed my study protocol and data collection process.

I collected data from study participants in two ways: internet-based questionnaire and follow-up telephone interviews with those participants that self-identified at the end of the study. When I noticed a lull in returned questionnaires, I sent an email to another convenience sample to recruit more participants. I anticipated that data collection would take approximately two months. I began data collection on November 20, 2015 and ceased collection on December 18, 2015.

I received an email from SurveyMonkey when a questionnaire was completed.

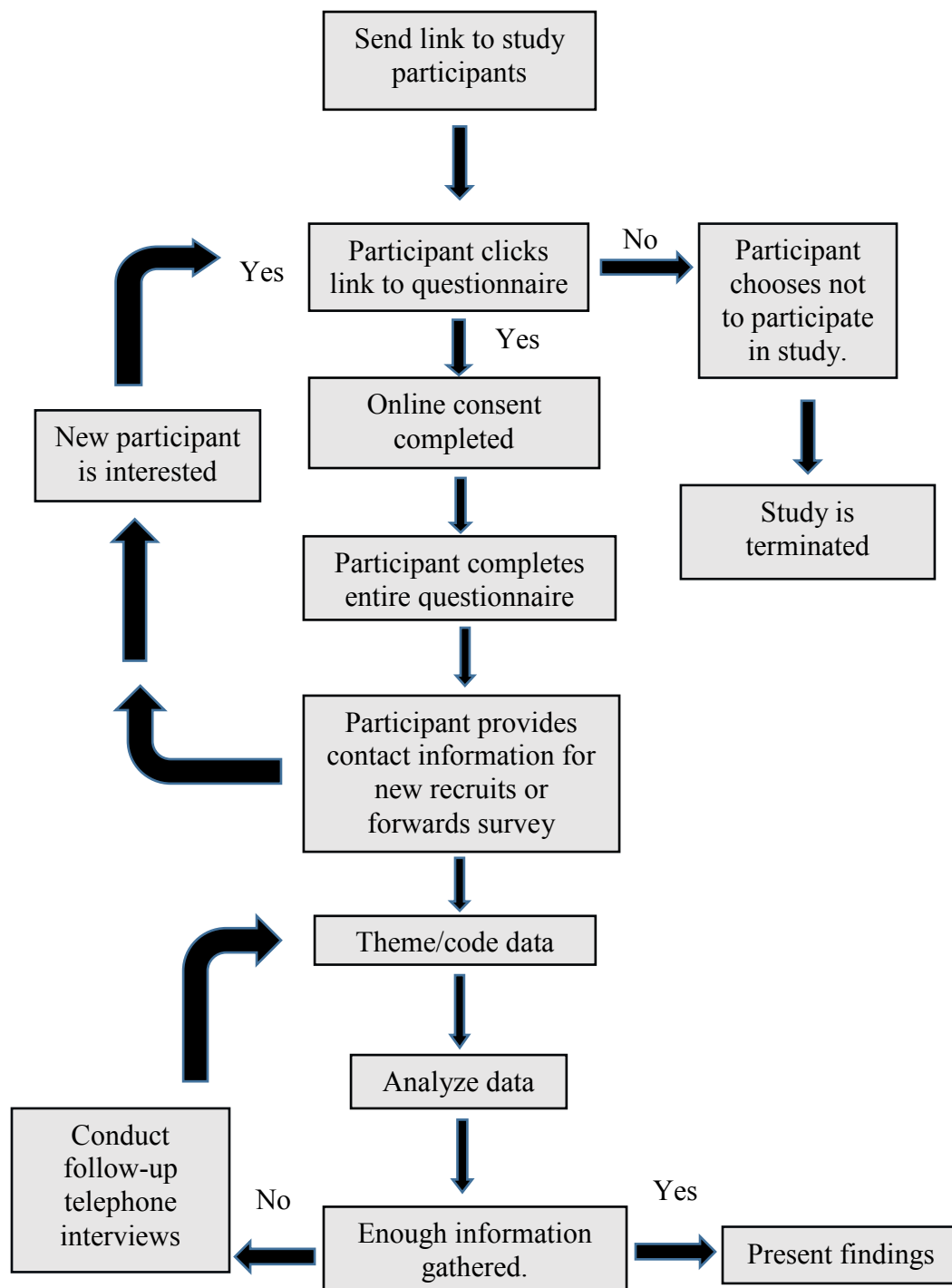


Figure 1. The study's flow chart for data collection.

Upon notification, I downloaded the results of each questionnaire into a password protected file on my personal computer. I also printed hard copies of each returned questionnaire and secured the printed documents in a secure file cabinet in my home office. I reviewed each questionnaire as they were returned to determine if a participant had self-identified for a follow-up telephone interview. For those participants that self-identified, I attached a follow-up telephone interview guide to that respective questionnaire (see Appendix H) for future use. In the follow-up telephone interview guide, I included a brief introduction about the study, my role as the researcher, that the interview will be recorded for transcribing purposes, duration of the interview, and a verbal consent statement to proceed with the interview. I asked questions during the follow-up telephone interview based on the answers that the participant provided on the questionnaire.

At the conclusion of each interview, I thanked each participant for allowing me to gather additional information. I also provided the contact information of my Dissertation Chair, the Walden University Research Participant Advocate, as well as my personal contact information if they had any future questions or concerns.

Data Management

In order to preserve data, ensure quality, certify anonymity, and safeguard confidentiality, I incorporated data management techniques. How data is managed from day to day strongly influences the kinds of analysis that can be done and how easily the analysis can be conducted (Miles et al., 2014). I assigned a unique identifier to each returned questionnaire. The nomenclature that I used was type (OQ = online questionnaire), date (month/day/year) and a sequential number (01, 02, 03...) to preserve

anonymity. For example, a questionnaire that was returned on November 11, 2015, and was the fourth questionnaire completed on that day, has the following nomenclature: OQ 11/22/201504.

For those participants that had a follow-up telephone interview, the word “Transcription” was added before the given nomenclature (e.g., Transcription OQ 11/22/201504). The questionnaires that were returned acted as the participants acknowledged informed consent due to a participant could not have begun the questionnaire without choosing “Yes” on the Statement of Consent screen.

In order to account for anonymity, I utilized SurveyMonkey’s guidelines (SurveyMonkey Inc., 2015; see Appendix I) to make personal identifiable information and IP addresses of study participants anonymous. By using SurveyMonkey as a collection interface, the data from my study was automatically backed up and password protected on the www.surveymonkey.com webserver each time a new questionnaire was returned. As a result, there was no interference from others viewing the data. When I received an email from SurveyMonkey advising that a questionnaire was returned, I immediately checked the interface. In addition to having the data saved on SurveyMonkey, I stored all data in a Microsoft Windows filing system, under the nomenclature given for each returned questionnaire and in a master file labeled Dissertation Study Project Data.

Materials related to the study such as questionnaire templates, drafts, and final versions of documents was backed up on a USB drive and stored in a secure area within my home office. I will archive the data for a period of no more than five years from the project completion date to which after the five years has elapsed, the information will be

destroyed. All audio recordings of follow-up telephone interviews were deleted when transcribing was completed.

Data Analysis

By conducting a qualitative study, I was able to explore the rich descriptions and explanations of human processes in a linear flow. Miles, Hubberman, and Saldaña (2014) acknowledge that this can allow a researcher to see which events led to which consequences. The levels of activity in qualitative data analysis encompass data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). I categorized all data in NVivo; a qualitative research software program. Qualitative researchers use NVivo when deep levels of analysis are needed for the data that is collected (Bergin, 2011).

In a grounded theory study, researchers set out to define the meaning behind the data; determining what the research is all about. I began data analysis as soon as questionnaires were returned. I compared the data to my research question to ensure that the research question is in fact answered. The data from the questionnaires and the follow-up telephone interviews that I conducted became the raw data that I used for coding. During the coding process, I analyzed each of the participant's answers line-by-line, with consideration to the study's research question and conceptual framework. Simplifying participant's answers down into manageable proportions known as relevant text allows a researcher to then configure the information into repeating ideas, themes, and theoretical constructs (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). I was able to create codes/nodes in NVivo which allowed me to manage a large volume of data.

From the theoretical constructs that I developed, I summarized what I learned about the research question into a theoretical narrative. As I continued with the coding process and as more questionnaires were returned, the process became iterative; data was transformed to codes and were compared to existing codes or formed new codes. As more questionnaires were returned and follow-up telephone interviews were conducted, the meaning of the codes and themes became clearer and were refined into theoretical constructs. I remained open-minded during the coding process in order to let the emergent data answer the study's research question. I expand on the coding process in Chapter 4.

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) advise that researchers should keep the data that is specific to the research question and discarded all other irrelevant information. I was able to keep discrepant data to a minimum because of the online environment that my study possessed. I had only one participant that was categorized as a discrepant case because the participant did not meet study requirements.

Issues of Trustworthiness

One of the primary goals of my study included broadening the management processes of MSA in the military. This should be done in a creditable, dependable, conformable, transferable, and authentic manner so as to allow possible future research (Elo et al., 2014). For this study, I ensured that all processes, procedures, and steps were documented accordingly and incorporated into the findings of the study. I also guaranteed that my work was valid, unbiased, and based on approved methods. I also ensured trustworthiness and rigor by describing sampling procedures in detail and by providing participants perceptions and beliefs in context.

Creditability

Steps to add creditability to my study were carried out by the use of saturation, reflexivity and member checking. A study has creditability when it allows others to “recognize the experiences contained within the study through the interpretation of participants’ experiences” (Thomas & Magilvy, 2001, p. 152). When data is saturated, it guarantees comprehension and completeness and categorization and abstraction (Elo et al., 2014).

To ensure reflexivity, I inspected the research process in its entirety from participant recruitment to data interpretation. Researchers, while doing this, should stay critical of self-reflection and personal biases (Schwandt, 2007). To strengthen reflexivity, I recorded, or wrote down, any potential thoughts, assumptions, and reactions that I had during the duration of the study to control any biasness.

In addition to the above, I also verified what each respondent provided during follow-up telephone interviews by paraphrasing or restating what the participants had said. This method is known as member checking. By member checking participant information, I was able to seek clarification if needed.

Transferability

One of the goals of any researcher is to establish that their study’s conclusions have a bigger impact on society; if they are transferable to other contexts (Miles et al., 2014). In order to protect my study from threats to validity, I employed the following strategies: (a) ensured that sampling was theoretically diverse, (b) provided a thick description of the findings, and (c) offered additional settings where the study can fruitfully be tested further. By doing this, a reader will have the ability to establish

similarity between the present study and case to which findings might be transferred (Schwandt, 2007).

Dependability

I took every step to make sure that my study was logical, traceable, and properly documented. According to Schwandt (2007) this is a way to guarantee dependability. I provided an audit trail for other researchers to follow. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) advise that an audit trail should consist of information relating to: (a) purpose of the study, (b) how and why participants were selected, (c) steps for data collection, (d) how the data was coded, (e) data interpretation, and (f) data quality checks to determine creditability of the data

Confirmability

Researchers are considered to be a unique instrument in qualitative studies to the point where biasness can occur. In order to elevate unacknowledged research bias (Miles et al., 2014), I kept a reflective journal to which I wrote any personal thoughts that I had over the duration of the study. This ensured that I provided a self-awareness about personal assumptions, values, and biases that could have potentially come in to play during the study. In addition, by linking assertions, findings, and interpretations of the data in discernible ways (Schwandt, 2007), I established that the data received was not merely just a figment of my imagination but was real perceptions and experiences of participants.

Summary of Research Design

In this chapter, I provided reasoning behind selecting qualitative methodology and a grounded theory design. I restated my research question and its alignment within the

qualitative paradigm. Also, I provided information regarding the role that I took as the researcher in this study; placing emphasis on conflicts, trustworthiness, and biasness.

In addition, I discussed data collection techniques and data management practices. Strategies to achieve verification and trustworthiness were also provided. I also included ethical considerations and researcher competence. In Chapter 4, I discuss the research setting, participant demographics, data collection process, and study results.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to construct an applicable theory that explains how sexual assault complaints are perceived by military Air Force leaders. I used the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development to frame the data analysis of the different perceptions from three groups: noncommissioned officers, senior noncommissioned officers, and officers, regarding sexual assault complaint management. I also utilized grounded theory methodology to develop specific themes and theoretical constructs. In this chapter I provide an overview of my analysis of participant responses that ultimately led to the development of my theory. This chapter describes a pilot study, research setting, ethical considerations, participant demographics and profiles, data collection, data management and analysis, coding, and study results.

The Pilot Study

I determined the need to conduct a pilot study to examine the feasibility of my research approach. I conducted a pilot study to inform practicality and to identify modifications needed in the study design that I developed, including: the invitation letter, the letter of consent, and questionnaire. I distributed the study questionnaire through the SurveyMonkey website to 10 individuals who were selected because they matched the participant requirements. I reviewed the returned questionnaires and determined that a portion of the study responses were brief, consisting of only one or two sentences in length. I concluded that the responses lacked rich and descriptive data that would effectively answer the research question.

I submitted a *Request for Change in Procedure* to the Walden University Institutional Review Board to add a self-identification option to the questionnaire and a follow-up telephone interview guide. Telephone follow-up interviews allow for a greater alignment between research question, study questionnaire, and a study's conceptual framework. I added a self-identification statement (see Appendix J) to the consent form along with a self-identification section in the questionnaire asking the participant to leave a name, phone number, and preferable time to contact. I developed a follow-up telephone interview guide (see Appendix H) to act as a guideline for study information disseminated over the telephone. I received re-approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB Approval No.10-15-5-0352235) on November 16, 2015.

The Research Setting

I collected data for this study using the World Wide Web. Mason and Suri (2012) acknowledged that the use of the internet has provided researchers a conduit for conducting studies. I distributed a questionnaire consisting of six demographic questions, seven open-ended questions, and a self-identification section through SurveyMonkey. Twenty-one questionnaires were returned and 16 participants self-identified for follow-up interviews. I conducted follow-up interviews over the telephone at the convenience of the participant.

Out of the 16 participants who self-identified, I choose 10 participants for follow-up interviews based on limited data and required clarification of provided information on the questionnaires. Of the six participants that were not chosen for follow-up telephone interviews, three of the participants provided rich, in-depth, and descriptive perceptions and personal accounts in multiple paragraph form. Given (2016) recognizes that

discussion of a particular incident, feeling, or belief can last for several minutes or may be the point of discussion that lasts for several hours. Even though the participants answered in written form, I compared the different datasets and looked for substantial points of evidence of rich and descriptive data (Given, 2016). The remaining three participants who self-identified reside outside of the United States (England and Germany). I did not have the ability to contact the three participants that reside in England and Germany.

I maintained separate logs for participants who self-identified, participated in telephone follow-up interviews, and those that did not self-identify. For those that self-identified, I recorded the participant's first name and contact phone number to include a unique identifier consisting of letters and numbers. After I conducted the telephone interviews, participants were recognized only by their given identifier in order to maintain confidentiality.

Ethical Considerations

I followed all ethical procedures identified in Chapters 2 and 3. I received approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB Approval No.10-15-5-0352235) before I initiated data collection. Corbin and Strauss (2015) emphasized that when a researcher embarks on a project, the researcher has an ethical obligation to themselves, to the participants, and to their profession.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, I provided each participant with an invitation letter to participant in the study. The letter described the purpose of the study and advised the participants that the study was voluntary. Next, I provided an informed consent statement informing each participant of duration of study, study risks, benefits,

expectations, self-identifying requirements, and contact information of the researcher, dissertation chair, and Walden University research participant advocate.

I read a consent statement to the participant at the beginning of the follow-up telephone interviews. I advised the participants of the purpose of the study, that the interview was to be recorded for transcribing purposes, approximate duration of interview, risks, and contact information of the researcher, dissertation chair, and Walden University research participant advocate. I assigned a unique identifier consisting of letters and numbers to all documentation associated with each telephone interview and cross-referenced materials such as the online questionnaire. I stored all study data in a locked file cabinet and in a password-protected computerized file. I deleted audio recordings of the follow-up telephone interviews after transcribing was finished.

Participant Demographics and Profiles

In this section, I provide an overview of the study participants who agreed to the online informed consent. I provided a unique identifier for each participant and the below profiles provide context and background for future discussion. The profile information emerged as a result of the demographic questions that were provided at the beginning of the questionnaire. Participants acknowledged that they were a supervisor to airmen, a veteran of the Air Force, and served no less than a 4-year commitment. Unique demographics such as separation status, rank, gender, and self-identification status are provided in Table 3. A narrative of each study participant is also provided. Data contained in the table below is self-explanatory and is conveyed through participant narratives below.

Table 3

Summary of Participant Demographics

Participant	Separation status ^a	Separated/Retired as ^{a,b}	Gender	Self-identified
1	Retired	Officer	Male	Yes
2	Other	SNCO	Female	Yes
3	Retired	SNCO	Male	No
4 ^d	Separated	NCO	Female	No
5	Retired	Officer	Male	Yes
6	Retired	Officer	Female	Yes
7	Retired	SNCO	Male	No
8	Retired	SNCO	Male	Yes
9	Retired	SNCO	Male	Yes
10	Retired	NCO	Male	Yes
11	Retired	Officer	Female	Yes
12 ^d	Separated	NCO	Male	No
13	Separated	NCO	Female	Yes
14 ^d	Retired	SNCO	Male	No
15	Retired	SNCO	Male	No
16	Retired	Officer	Male	Yes
17	Retired	SNCO	Female	Yes
18	Separated	NCO	Female	Yes
19	Retired	NCO	Female	Yes
20	Separated	NCO	Male	Yes
21	Separated	Officer	Male	Yes

Note. ^aUnder Honorable Conditions. ^bSNCO = Senior Noncommissioned Officer, NCO = Noncommissioned Officer. ^cThis participant did not meet study requirements. ^dParticipant did not answer all study questions.

Participant 1, OQ 11-20-201501, retired under honorable conditions as an Officer of the Air Force. As a result of his retirement, he served no less than a 4-year military commitment. He was also a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 1 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire, however no additional information was added to his responses.

Participant 2, OQ 11-21-201501, through a follow-up telephone interview, identified herself as still being on active duty status with the Air Force. Participant 2 did not meet participant study requirements. Her responses, along with the additional information that she provided during the follow-up telephone interview were not used during data analysis.

Participant 3, OQ 11-21-201502, retired under honorable conditions as a senior noncommissioned officer of the Air Force. As a result of his retirement, he served no less than a 4-year military commitment. He was also a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 3 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. A follow-up telephone interview was not conducted because he resides in the United Kingdom.

Participant 4, OQ 11-22-201501, separated under honorable conditions as a noncommissioned officer of the Air Force, serving no less than a 4-year military commitment. She was also a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 4 provided an incomplete questionnaire, answering only four out of seven study questions. A follow-up interview was not conducted because she did not self-identify at the end of the questionnaire.

Participant 5, OQ 11-22-201502, retired under honorable conditions as an Officer of the Air Force. As a result of his retirement, he served no less than a 4-year military

commitment. He also was a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 5 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire; however, no additional information was added to his responses.

Participant 6, OQ 11-22-201503, retired under honorable conditions as an officer of the Air Force. As a result of her retirement, she served no less than a 4-year military commitment. She also was a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 6 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. A follow-up interview was conducted and additional information was added to her responses.

Participant 7, OQ 11-22-201504, retired under honorable conditions as a senior noncommissioned officer of the Air Force. As a result of his retirement, he served no less than a 4-year military commitment. He also was a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. A follow-up interview was not conducted because he did not self-identify at the end of the questionnaire.

Participant 8, OQ 11-24-201501, retired under honorable conditions as a senior noncommissioned officer of the Air Force. As a result of his retirement, he served no less than a 4-year military commitment. He was also a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 8 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. A follow-up telephone interview was not conducted because he resides in the Germany.

Participant 9, OQ 11-24-201502, retired under honorable conditions as a senior noncommissioned officer of the Air Force. As a result of his retirement, he served no less than a 4-year military commitment. He also was a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 9 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. A telephone follow-up interview was conducted and additional information was added to his responses.

Participant 10, OQ 11-28-201501, retired under honorable conditions as a noncommissioned officer of the Air Force. As a result of his retirement, he served no less than a 4-year military commitment. He was also a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 10 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. A follow-up telephone interview was not conducted because he resides in Germany.

Participant 11, OQ 11-29-201501, retired under honorable conditions as an officer of the Air Force. As a result of her retirement, she served no less than a 4-year military commitment. She also was a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 11 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. A follow-up telephone interview was conducted and additional information was added to her responses.

Participant 12, OQ 12-01-201501, separated under honorable conditions as a noncommissioned officer of the Air Force, serving no less than a 4-year military commitment. He was also a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 12 provided an incomplete questionnaire, answering zero study questions. A follow-up interview was not conducted because he did not self-identify at the end of the questionnaire.

Participant 12, OQ 12-04-201501, separated under honorable conditions as a noncommissioned officer of the Air Force, serving no less than a 4-year military commitment. She was also a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 12 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. A follow-up telephone interview was conducted and additional information was added to her responses.

Participant 14, OQ 12-05-201501, retired under honorable conditions as a senior noncommissioned officer of the Air Force, serving no less than a 4-year military

commitment. He was also a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 14 provided an incomplete questionnaire, answering only five out of seven study questions. A follow-up telephone interview was not conducted because he did not self-identify at the end of the questionnaire.

Participant 15, OQ 12-08-201501, retired under honorable conditions as a senior noncommissioned officer of the Air Force, serving no less than a 4-year military commitment. He was also a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. A follow-up telephone interview was not conducted because he did not self-identify at the end of the questionnaire.

Participant 16, OQ 12-08-201502, retired under honorable conditions as an officer of the Air Force. As a result of his retirement, he served no less than a 4-year military commitment. He also was a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 5 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire, however no additional information was added to his responses.

Participant 17, OQ 12-10-201501, retired under honorable conditions as a senior noncommissioned officer of the Air Force. As a result of her retirement, she served no less than a 4-year military commitment. She also was a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 17 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. A telephone follow-up interview was conducted and additional information was added to her responses.

Participant 18, OQ 12-10-201502, separated under honorable conditions as a noncommission officer of the Air Force, serving no less than a 4-year military commitment. She also was a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 18

self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. A follow-up telephone interview was conducted and additional information was added to her responses.

Participant 19, OQ 12-11-201501, retired under honorable conditions as a noncommissioned officer of the Air Force. As a result of her retirement, she served no less than a 4-year military commitment. She also was a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 19 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. A follow-up telephone interview was conducted and additional information was added to her responses.

Participant 20, OQ 12-18-201501, retired under honorable conditions as a noncommissioned officer of the Air Force. As a result of his retirement, he served no less than a 4-year military commitment. He also was a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 20 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. A follow-up telephone interview was conducted and additional information was added to his responses.

Participant 21, OQ 12-18-201502, separated under honorable conditions as an officer of the Air Force, serving no less than a 4-year military commitment. He also was a supervisor to airmen while on active duty. Participant 21 self-identified at the end of the questionnaire. A follow-up telephone interview was conducted and additional information was added to his responses.

The Data Collection Process

I utilized qualitative inductive reasoning and grounded theory methodology as a guide for data collection. I began data collection on November 20, 2015 and ceased collection on December 18, 2015. During that time frame, I sent an email to four different convenience samples, consisting of five individuals per sample, for a total of 20

individuals. The convenience sample received a Letter of Assistance and the SurveyMonkey link to forward to potential study participants that matched the following requirements: (a) U.S. Air Force veteran, (b) served no less than a 4-year commitment, (c) discharged or retired under honorable conditions, (d) functioned as a supervisor to airmen, (e) and served in a role of either a noncommissioned officer, senior noncommissioned officer or officer. I received 21 returned questionnaires. Individuals that were part of the convenience sample were known to me or served on active duty status with me in the Air Force.

As described in Chapter 3, I used a multiple sampling strategy comprised of convenience and snowball sampling strategies. Since I did not have access to a master list of ex-military leaders in the Air Force that fit the aforementioned requirements, I utilized these two sampling strategies. This allowed my questionnaire to be dispersed on a global scale. Emerson (2015) has claimed that utilization of these two types of sampling techniques can lead to participants living in the same geographical area, having identical socioeconomic statuses, and sharing similar ethnic backgrounds; resulting in skewed study results. However, my goal in this study was to acquire a homogeneous sample. In grounded theory, the more identical and uniform a sample is, theoretical saturation is achieved at a greater rate (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). In qualitative studies, sufficiency of a sample size is measured by the depth of data that is acquired, not frequencies (Morse et al., 2002). When a researcher has explored a category or theme in depth, identifying different properties and dimensions, he or she can ultimately say that the research has reached a level of saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

I used convenience sampling to recruit my initial study participants. I followed this procedure with a snowball sampling strategy. I asked participants at the end of the questionnaire to forward the study link to potential individuals that fit the participant demographics. I sought to acquire at least 20 to 25 participants. I achieved the goal of recruiting 21 participants through the use of four convenience samples. When I incorporated follow-up telephone interviews, I saw signs of theoretical saturation before receiving the last questionnaire. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) in their study surrounding fathers and fathering, reached data saturation at 20 participants. Hoare, Mills, and Francis (2012), achieved saturation with a sample size consisting of 11 participants. The answers and the questions that researchers often need to fill in are found in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) not necessarily in the amount of participants.

I accomplished data collection through SurveyMonkey, an internet-based website. I received email notifications on my Walden University email from SurveyMonkey informing me that a questionnaire was returned. Upon notification, I immediately assigned a unique identifier to each questionnaire and I downloaded the responses to a secure file folder on my personal computer as well as printed hard copies. I kept a separate log for those participants that self-identified. As a backup, I also saved and password protected responses under my personal account on SurveyMonkey.

I conducted follow-up telephone interviews during the time frame that each participant identified at the end of their questionnaire (morning, afternoon, or evening) approximately three to five days after participants submitted their questionnaire. While interviews for qualitative studies are typically conducted in-person, a telephone interview allows a researcher to concentrate on a participant voice rather than facial expressions;

allows for rapport to be established at a faster rate; and there is a lack of the participant feeling judged or feeling inhibited (Ward, Gott, & Hoare, 2015). I directed the follow-up telephone interviews according to the protocol that I identified in my IRB application (see Appendix H). I verbally read the consent statement over the telephone. I received permission from each participant to record the interview.

I utilized my personal cell phone to call each participant and I used my personal iPad as a recording device during the telephone interviews. I named each audio file at the conclusion of the telephone interview with the corresponding participant identifier on the questionnaire and I saved each audio file in a secure folder on my iPad. I emailed each audio file to my personal Walden University email and subsequently downloaded each file onto my personal computer and saved each one in a protected file. I transcribed each audio file into a Word document and assigned each document with the corresponding participant identifier. I saved each transcription on my personal computer in a password protected file.

Variations or Unusual Circumstances

I encountered no variations in data collection from my plan that I presented in chapter 3. I did encounter one unusual circumstance during the data collection process. When I started to collect my data, I discovered that Participant 2, OQ 11-21-201501, was still on active duty status in the Air Force. As a result, I did not utilize responses from Participant 2 when I conducted data analysis.

Data Management and Tracking

I organized study data using consistent record management practices. I maintained password protected files and I secured hard copy files in a locked file cabinet

in my office. I also kept a research journal to keep track of convenience samples and significant dates conducive to data management and analysis. I followed the data management procedures that were outlined in my IRB application. I assigned a unique identifier to each returned questionnaire and corresponding follow-up telephone interview. I also used this identifier in the NVivo qualitative data analysis software.

Data Analysis

I used grounded theory as a way to look for patterns in data, to name the patterns, identify any relationships between known patterns, and to write the conceptualized patterns into a theory (Simmons, 2011). I used qualitative methodology, instead of hypothesis testing or experimental designs, to ground the interpretations in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In this study, I used a theoretical model to form the origin of collaborating a theory related to the specific study data. I was able to break down data into manageable pieces of information and from that information use a constant comparison process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) to distill a large volume of information into themes that ultimately contribute to the creation of an applicable theory. To accomplish this, I summarized 147 open-ended questions and 23 pages of transcribed audio recordings. I describe how coding was accomplished in the following sections.

First Coding Sequence

I used a personal systematic way to conduct my data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I exported all returned SurveyMonkey questionnaires into NVivo qualitative analysis software along with the 10 transcribed follow-up telephone interviews. I conducted a line-by-line analysis and I searched for any reoccurring words or phrases that held a significance to my research question. I tagged relevant text by using NVivo's

highlighting tool, and I assigned those texts to specific nodes that I created. A node is a cluster of references that pertain to a specific group of words, paragraphs, or themes that are identified in the data.

I validated the relevant text that I identified in my analysis by using NVivo's tools such as word-cloud and word-frequency queries. I used three specific code types to label the relevant text. I used verbatim quotes (identified by quotation marks) from the participants, emotion coding (those expressing a concern or want), and universal coding (for large chunks of data such as stories). These specific code types can be found throughout this document. I repeated the coding process and analysis until all text was reduced to manageable themes. The first round of coding that I conducted resulted in 44 nodes (combined child-nodes and properties) which I condensed into seven themes. Table 4 shows results supporting the seven developed themes.

Table 4

Results for Coded Responses

Themes	Coded Responses
Sexual Assault Prevention Lines of Effort	139
Professional Relationships and Development	101
Perceptions of Command Dispositional Authority	65
Victim Transfers	55
Squadron and Unit Dynamics	18
Sexual Assault Reporting Procedures	61
False Report Prosecution	32

Note. Coded responses totaled 455.

Second Coding Sequence

I used a second coding sequence to further store critical information from study questionnaires, gather additional critical information, and open up the meaning behind participant data to develop categories or themes; exploring the dimensions of the data (Richards, 2014). I concentrated on organizing the nodes and themes into theoretical constructs by organizing the themes into larger, more abstract ideas.

I conducted second coding, or theoretical coding according to Glaser (1978) by analyzing how the categories and nodes constructed from the data relate to one another. According to Thornberg and Charmez (2014) this is done by inspecting, choosing, and integrating theoretical codes as an analytical tool to organization a researcher's own codes and categories to develop a coherent grounded theory I conducted a two-step coding progression in this study; first coding and second coding (theoretical coding); one right after another. Additionally, I compared all codes to the identified conceptual framework for this study and my research question.

I sorted the study data in a master code list with the seven themes that I discovered in this study. I provided an excerpt below which illustrates the theme I named *Perceptions of Command Dispositional Authority*. Table 5 contains a portion of the coded data that depicts the respondents' perceptions of command authority over sexual assault cases. This is one of seven themes that I identified in the data that will be discussed later in this chapter. I provide and discuss the remaining themes in the section entitled, *findings*.

Table 5

Results for Perceptions of Command Dispositional Authority

Participant Responses	Node Assignment
<i>“Disconnected and unaware of true problem.”</i>	Impression of Commanders
<i>“Commanders have to effectively control the situation from start to finish.”</i>	Impression of Commanders
<i>“Don’t have a perception.”</i>	Neutral/Does not matter
<i>“AF Officer development (PME) does not provide the kind of training and education necessary in dealing with non-judicial and/or courts martial processes.”</i>	Lack of proper education/training
<i>“Establish a more comprehensive process that involves multiple commanders (such as a panel) to address and deal with these situations.”</i>	Future recommendations
<i>“Appropriate at this time.”</i>	Command authority approval
<i>“That is where the main authority should lie.”</i>	Command authority approval
<i>“Do not think it is a good idea.”</i>	Command unsupportive
<i>“If they are going to take sides, then I would say that it is hard to say a CC should.”</i>	Command unsupportive
<i>“(Victim) expected a certain punishment and personally it was none of her business what happens to him.”</i>	Victim expectation of Commander

Results

Based on the findings from this study, I formed two theoretical constructs; professional power phenomenon of sexual assault management culture and sexual assault functioning programs and methods. I constructed bio-social operative (BSO) theory from the principle constructs that resulted from this study. This specific theory entails various

military leaders' perceptions behind sexual assault prevention strategies, leader and subordinate professional relationships, squadron and unit dynamics, views regarding a commander's dispositional authority, sexual assault reporting procedures, victim transfers, false report prosecution, and sexual assault prevention lines of effort. I present the research question and the aforementioned findings below.

The study's research question focused on the following:

RQ1: What role does military operational leadership play in the management of MSA complaints?

The following theoretical constructs make up the system that is BSO theory. Each of the constructs will be reported more in depth later in this section.

Professional Power Phenomenon of Sexual Assault Management Culture

The subsequent themes provided the foundation for professional power phenomenon of sexual assault management culture: professional relationship and development, perception of command dispositional authority, and squadron and unit dynamics.

1. *Professional Relationship and Development.* The study participants reported in areas of supervisor expectations and subordinate expectations, apprehensions about professional relationships, leader and subordinate connection environments, information dissemination, and relationship dynamics. I found that the majority of the participants commented that transparency, trust, openness, and respect were traits that are needed in order for military leaders to strengthen their relationships with the airmen that they supervise.

2. *Perception of Command Dispositional Authority.* The study participants conveyed their concerns in areas comprising of overall impression of a commander, neutrality in command authority, educational barriers, and dispositional authority recommendations. I was able to conclude that the perceptions from study participants regarding commanders having dispositional authority were overwhelmingly negative. For instance, I discovered that the majority of participants expressed that a commander that has dispositional authority over an airman in the same unit will allow for biasness and favoritism. Others claim dispositional authority a positive factor in remote areas all the while having effective control of the situation. Some of the participants that agreed negatively on dispositional authority, expressed that a commander from another unit or an external agency should have the authority.

3. *Squadron and Unit Dynamics.* The study participants disclosed information regarding involvement of unit and squadron personnel, treatment of sexual assault victims and offenders, and confidentiality expectations. I discovered that expressions of zero tolerance, support, and confidentiality were among those expressed by research participants.

Key Research Results for Professional Power Phenomenon

According to the results expressed by noncommissioned officers, senior noncommissioned officers and officers, solidifying relationships with airmen is one of the prominent factors in the formation of BSO theory. A NVivo word frequency cloud for professional relationships can be found in Appendix K. The relationship between leader/supervisor and airmen was partially reflected in the response from participant 1, a male officer who retired under honorable conditions.

Participant 1: They have to know you, first of all, and you have to know them. It is not enough to tell them they can report sexual assaults, they have to know they can trust you generally to do the right thing. As a leader, if you know your subordinates well, you can direct changes in their behavior that should trigger you to intervene in some way to see what is going on. Be proactive.

As a comparison, participant 13, who is female and separated under honorable conditions as a noncommissioned officer, indicated that building trust is also important when it comes to issues such as sexual assaults in the military. She commented “building a relationship with your troops so they trust you to come to you when they need help.” I found that participant 3, a male senior noncommissioned officer that retired under honorable conditions also expressed issues of trust. Participant 3 provided that “the most effective way is simply to getting to know their Amn...and building trust before something happens.” Building upon trust as well, participant 14 a male senior noncommissioned officer who retired under honorable conditions, solidified the importance of building confidence in supervisor and subordinate relationships. He mentioned that leaders should “assure the airmen that [sexual assault] reporting will not get them into trouble and that there will not be any repercussions.”

Unit commanders can provide their own recommendations regarding initial disposition to the special court-martial convening authority for a sexual assault case (Department of Defense, 2014d). While the commanders do not make their initial decisions in isolation, I established that half of the study participants still felt that commanders should not have dispositional authority over a sexual assault case.

Participant 10, a male noncommissioned officer who retired under honorable conditions,

stated that “I don’t personally think they [commanders] should.” As a recommendation, he further provided to having “a team on every installation to have overall authority over a sexual assault case so to remain impartial.” Participant 15 who is a male senior noncommissioned officer that retired under honorable conditions agreed with participant 10 in saying that “commanders should not prosecute in their own unit...should be handled from an external agency that is not influenced by the local agenda.” In addition participant 19, a female noncommissioned officer who retired under honorable conditions, expressed that commanders should not have a part in dispositional authority on account of “conflict of interest” because of personal knowledge of individuals.

Participant 17 a female senior noncommissioned officer that retired under honorable conditions, had mixed feeling regarding command dispositional authority. I conducted a follow-up interview with participant 17 and discovered that her response to this question varied in that commanders should have a voice in the military performance of individuals only.

Participant 17: Yes I do think they should be able to, depending on each scenario because it is probably going to be different, and I wish that there was an open book clear cut way to deal with that. I guess it is going to be on a case by case basis. But it is going to be able to speak to the victim or perpetrator’s military record. Not any personal opinion of the individuals. It would be to their military record of performance.

Through the data, I discovered that five out of the six officer participants agreed that commanders should have dispositional authority to the extent that officers remain impartial and unbiased. According to participant 7, a male senior noncommissioned

officer who retired under honorable conditions, commanders having dispositional authority is the “foundation of military justice.” Participant 5, a male officer who retired under honorable conditions expressed that it is a vital component of a commander’s duty and responsibilities.

Participant 5: Removing the commander from dispositional authority erodes the position and their ability to lead the unit; holding the ‘carrot’ as well as the ‘stick’ is critical for a commander. Holding the person ‘in the chain’ ultimately responsible for EVERYTHING under their command and yet removing their ability to take action/determine disposition of what happens under their command cuts them off at the knees.

Participant 1, provided a personal reflection on dispositional authority as well.

Participant 1: As a commander myself...my experience was that commanders genuinely want to do the right thing. The limiting factor, in my opinion, was never commanders who wanted to cover up or excuse behavior, though I know that has happened, but rather their ability to seek justice for the victim was limited by what could be proven in court. Many sexual assault cases lack physical evidence or witnesses beyond the victim. So they can be damned hard to prosecute...Commanders make their decisions in conjunction with legal advice and it is rare that they ignore that advice. If the lawyers told me that they could get a conviction, I’d go for the Courts-Martial every time.

Participant 6, a female officer that retired under honorable conditions, handled a sexual assault case in her eyes “swiftly and justly.” I conducted a follow-up telephone interview with her and she added that commanders need to remain impartial. She said:

“Commanders have favorites. I don’t care what anybody else says.” A recommendation that she gave was having someone outside of the chain of command, a commander of another unit for example, having dispositional authority of a sexual assault case in order to create “less stigma on both parties.”

Along the same lines, participant 11, a female officer who retired under honorable conditions, sided with participant 6 in saying that “good commanders will take it seriously; average commanders and less than good will be risk adverse and try to make it disappear.” Participant 3, articulated that while commanders should have the authority, it should be “coupled with a checks and balance system with legal and the wing commander.”

Having an additional transparent factor overlaps with a response that was given by participant 13. In her answer she recommended having a commander that is “nowhere in the chain of command” of the victim or perpetrator. She explained further in her telephone interview that I conducted with her.

Participant 13: A commander that’s not in the chain of command then they won’t have those biasness then they will hopefully look at it with [a] pair of fresh eyes. I feel like if the commander does not know the assailant and the victim, then they are just going to look at the facts.

I conclude that the above responses have shaped the bio-social element of the study’s developed theory. Each theme that formed the *Professional Power Phenomenon of Sexual Assault Management Culture* theoretical construct, established the groundwork for the various interaction aspect and the social relationships of military personnel.

Sexual Assault Functioning Programs and Methods

I found that the following themes provide the groundwork for sexual assault functioning programs and methods: false report prosecution, sexual assault reporting procedures, victim transfers, and sexual assault prevention lines of effort.

1. *False Report Prosecution.* The overwhelming majority of study participant's portrayed favorable beliefs about prosecuting airmen that falsely accuse another airman of sexual assault.
2. *Sexual Assault Reporting Procedures.* The study participants provided their thoughts and feelings regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of restricted and unrestricted reporting procedures offered by the Department of Defense to military personnel. Participants also disclosed their perceptions regarding the consequences that can develop from reporting a sexual assault. I found that the majority of study participants favored restricted reporting due to quick victim support initiatives such as medical and counseling services.
3. *Victim Transfers.* Study participants provided their perceptions about a sexual assault victim requesting a transfer to another duty assignment to escape possible stigma and retaliation. Participants expressed mixed concerns with victim transfers citing from a feeling of liberation to manipulation.
4. *Sexual Assault Prevention Lines of Effort.* Thinking back to their time on active duty service, the study participants provided their thoughts and feelings of the sexual assault policy and prevention strategies at their last instillation and if adding additional memorandums, programs, or ideas to strengthen sexual assault awareness were necessary. *Lines of Effort* refers to the amount of and quality of sexual assault prevention

programs and tactics. Half of the participants expressed that they did not consider adding additional prevention strategies to the already established policies, procedures, and strategies that were already available at their unit or squadron. Others expressed more victim impact based statements or scenarios should be incorporated into training initiatives in order for airmen to understand the effects of a sexual assault.

Key Research Results for Sexual Assault Functioning Programs and Methods

According to the responses from the study participants, I discovered that significant words such as *just, training, reporting, victim, support, and positive* helped customize the latter part of the study's theory. In other words, the programs and methods of sexual assault complaint management need to contain unbiased authority, up-to-date training initiatives, proper reporting procedures, victim assistance and confidence in chain of command duties and responsibilities.

I compiled an NVivo word frequency cloud that describes the significance behind sexual assault functioning programs and methods (see Appendix L). For every participant that answered the questions regarding prosecuting airmen that falsely accuse another airman of a sexual assault, the overwhelming participant reaction surrounded punishment for those airmen that falsely accuse another. Participant 15 summed it up when he provided that "a false accusation is in direct conflict with the AF core values." Participant 6 remarked that "false accusations are...detrimental to a unit." The response given by participant 10 was a direct reflection of the answer given by participant 6. Participant 10 provided that "when you lie about it, this hurts unit cohesion." The overwhelming majority of participants that agreed to prosecution, stressed that elements

such as having a substantial and exceptional amount of evidence needs to be palpable in order to go forth with prosecution.

When I asked about sexual assault reporting strategies, the overwhelming majority of the participants felt that restricted reporting (a confidential disclosure of a sexual assault to a person, receiving of medical treatment, and no investigation) was the most adequate reporting procedure offered by the Department of Defense. I compiled a breakdown of participant demographics and favored reporting procedure in Table 6.

Table 6

Participant Demographics and Favored Reporting Procedure

Restricted	Unrestricted	Both are Beneficial	Neither
1 Male, noncommissioned officer	1 Male officer	1 Male senior noncommissioned officer	1 Female noncommissioned officer
2 Female Officer	1 Male noncommissioned officer	1 Male Officer	
1 Male Officer			
4 Male senior noncommissioned officer			
3 Female noncommissioned officer			
1 Female senior noncommissioned officer			

Participant 21, a male officer who separated under honorable conditions and participant 9, a male senior noncommissioned officer who retired under honorable conditions, showed a correlation with each other when they provided that they were in favor of having airmen go outside their chain of command to report a sexual assault.

Participant 9 surrounded his reasoning with the fact that airman need “support and fairness” and that the best way of achieving this is by going outside of their chain of command. Participant 17 also added that a restricted option allows for less stress and anxiety on part of the victim, reducing the feeling of “what others may think.” This statement is accurate when it came to the response from participant 4, a female noncommissioned officer who separated under honorable conditions. She provided that while she told one of her airman to make an unrestricted report, after the airman had done so, everyone avoided the airman. This resulted in the airman separating from the Air Force. Participant 4 felt that the report “should have been confidential.”

However, I discovered that participant 16, a male officer who retired under honorable conditions, vouched that while both restricted and unrestricted have “pluses and minuses,” the restricted reporting procedure is the one that needs the most improvement due to the overbearing notification process.

Participant 16: The military is heavily attached to the ‘chain of command’ notification process whereby NUMEROUS personnel feel they must be notified on a potential situation...especially when a case many involve 2 airmen from different commands. In such cases, 2 commanders, 2 chiefs, 2 first sergeants at the unit level will be notified. Then it’s possible that 2 group commanders and 2 group superintendents would be notified. It’s possible that personnel from the command post, family support, hospital, public affairs (camera), and many others would be contacted...giving the victim little to almost no confidentiality.

Under the current Department of Defense sexual assault policy, victims can request a transfer to another base or duty assignment on their same base when they make

an unrestricted report. I was able to conclude that the majority of the study participant engage the idea of transfers for sexual assault victims attributing their answers to feelings of “liberation,” “safety,” “support,” “fear-freeing” and “fresh start.” For instance, participant 10 agrees that a transfer is a positive step towards victim rehabilitation, adding that the victim should be able to get “out of the place her or she may feel discomfort or disgust with.” Participant 9 favors a transfer because of a lack in fairness in the person’s unit or squadron. Participant 11 agrees in that a victim may experience “retribution, especially from the friends of the accused.”

Some participants expressed that while they were in favor of transfers, a transfer must only be granted after a sexual assault claim is deemed to be valid. It was annotated in some of the participant’s responses that many have seen transfers used in false claims; to simply “move to another base,” as stated by participant 3, a male senior noncommissioned officer who retired under honorable conditions. In order to request a transfer, participant 16 exclaims that “the claim needs to be substantial.”

Participant 13 and participant 18, a female noncommissioned officer who separated under honorable conditions, while favoring the transfer policy, gave additional recommendations on the policy. Participant 13 provided that the reason for a victim to request a transfer can follow the person to their new base or duty assignment leaving for more signs of retaliation and disgust. In order to prevent that from occurring, participant 13 suggests that the transfer happen “as a humanitarian reassignment so that the new chain of command is not aware of the reasons or circumstances of the reassignment.” Participant 18 provided a recommendation that at times, a victim may want to stay and that the “better option would be to transfer the alleged perpetrator.”

While acknowledging the reason for its existence, participant 5, a male officer who retired under honorable conditions, raised the question of “why” a victim would request a transfer in his answer. Participant 5 attributes his “why” to “confidence in...unit leadership.” Participant 21, a male officer who separated under honorable conditions, centered his answer on the “state of mind” of the victim.

Participant 21: I believe that having the option of transferring can be liberating depending on the victims position, fight, and or state of mind. If the victim couldn't stand being in the presence of the assailant or a culture that supported that behavior and felt a transfer would be in their best interest, I would support it. However, I believe, if the victim left to another base or duty assignment the assailant would be empowered; feeling a sense of invincibility and depending on the outcome of the unrestricted report may feel compelled to continue their current path.

Lines of effort for sexual assault prevention was prevalent in all of the participant's responses except for two. This was on account of service dates for participant 13 and participant 18. During a follow up telephone interview that I conducted with participant 13, she disclosed that she separated in 2005. She recalled that she never had to participate in any type sexual assault training, but instead had to participate in sexual harassment training. Participant 13 advised that when she went to visit her husband at the squadron, in 2008 or 2010 that was the first time that she saw flyers illustrating how to report a sexual assault. When I asked her what she thought of those flyers, participant 13 voiced that the flyers “was a good step in the right direction ...the first way to solve a problem is to acknowledge that you have one.” She mentioned also

that seeing the flyers in the bathroom and on the elevator, reassured her that “people are trying to take the right step [to solve the problem].”

Participant 18 described training as having “zero positive effects.” When I conducted her follow-up telephone interview, she stated that the preventive training she had was “half-assed” and centered more on discrimination, political correctness and what to do if you were sexually assaulted in a combat zone. She mentioned though that this could be attributed to her service dates; November 1988 to November 1998. I found out through our discussion that she was one of the very few women that was assigned to a security forces unit and that women fighting alongside men in the security forces combat career field was just in its infancy when she entered the Air Force. Participant 18 stated that “it was kind of tough back then being a women in the service anyway, let alone in a [career] field that was particularly male dominated.” She felt that her squadron had to play “catch-up” with introducing sexual assault prevention strategies.

I developed a word frequency cloud that describes lines of effort for sexual assault prevention (see Appendix M). I found that the consistency of participant responses yielded around strategies such as computer-based training, commander’s call, guard mounts, small group meetings, and mandatory annual training. Participant 16, a male officer who retired under honorable conditions, felt that the training tried to “establish an incident free environment from sexual innuendo, harassment and assault.” Participant 5 explained how he personally briefed the members of his unit on his support for sexual assault strategies and that he “charged the senior female noncommissioned officers to provide mentorship and guidance to both female and male members of the unit on interpersonal relationships, sexual harassment and sexual assault.”

Participant 8, a male senior noncommissioned officer that retired under honorable conditions provided that his organization had “zero tolerance towards sexual assaults.” I found that the model of zero tolerance was also mentioned by participant 15, when he stated that a “no tolerance [policy] was written by the commander.” Along with zero tolerance policies from leadership, participants also disclosed that prevention came from guest speakers such as the sexual assault response coordinator, sexual assault survivors, and Air Force members from other key units on the instillation.

While I discovered that the sexual assault prevention strategies described among participants was vast, some participants questioned the effectiveness of the abundant prevention strategies. For example, I asked participant 9 during his follow-up telephone interview, which strategy was more beneficial than the other, he advised that “someone facilitating the training in my opinion was far more effective than online because during online training people just want to get through it so they just click, click, click.”

Participant 20, a male noncommissioned officer who separated under honorable conditions, was in agreement with participant 9 when he expressed “hands-on [training], because you can get more people’s input in a classroom setting than a computer setting where you are basically reading and reciting what they [computer] said.”

Participant 9 discussed how there was “so much sexual assault training” that there was not room for any additional training. When I talked with her during her follow-up telephone interview she discussed areas such as values and morals and how that aided in her understanding of mandatory training.

Participant 9: I can’t say that it was too much or too little cause it varies so much as far as need goes. I mean like a person like myself I don’t feel like I need any of

that stuff because I was brought up to act a certain way and I think if everyone was brought up that way then we wouldn't have a problem in the first place. By the same token, everybody don't think like I do....they don't get it I guess you can say. So they need that training more frequently so you know it is kind of one of those things that if you live in an environment to where you have to be all inclusive, it is kind of hard to, well it is kind of impossible to pick out segments of people and say okay you did this much training whereas this person did that much training. You kind of just have to do it all. I think the military strikes an equal balance. It can be a bit much sometimes you know especially when you have to do the same training over and over and over. But sometimes people need to hear it over and over again.

In summary, the aforementioned theoretical constructs and their configuration with the research question contributed to formulate BSO theory. I formed two theoretical constructs: *Professional Power Phenomenon of Sexual Assault Management Culture* and *Sexual Assault Functioning Programs and Methods* from the data that I collected. I looked at the constructs as two different entities when I developed BSO theory. Bio-social is the interaction of the social relationships between people and organizations encompassing the following: professional relationships of leaders and subordinates, power ranking phenomenon, and the dynamic ability of leaders and subordinates on "building bridges" to overcome negative instances that hinder mission accomplishment.

The operative part of BSO theory pertains to the entities uniting and functioning together in order to have an effect on a population or person; for instance, determining program effectiveness and enhancing awareness among a population. The terms bio-

social and operative are dependent upon one another and cannot be used as separate entities for sexual assault deterrence. The distinguishing qualities of BSO theory answers this study's research question specific to understanding the management of sexual assault policies, programs, and complaints. For the first time, the perceptions of ex-military leaders regarding sexual assault complaint management is presented; offering new constructs in understanding the Department of Defense's sexual assault prevention and policy standards.

Discrepant and Nonconforming Data

The discrepant cases that I found were used to scrutinize the data to determine if study results were accurate. For instance, if the majority of participants supported a proposition, but there were a marginal of cases that did not, I rigorously examined the data to understand why that participant did not conform to the norm. I asked additional supplemental questions during a follow-up telephone interview in order to get a more detailed response if the participant self-identified at the end of their questionnaire, For example, one participant did not express *False Report Prosecution* as other participants did. In essence, the participant provided that the decision to prosecute should be left up to the one who was falsely accused to sign a complaint to proceed further.

I found another discrepancy in the question that addressed *Sexual Assault Reporting Procedures*. One participant chose neither reporting procedure, citing that the military should follow a civilian protocol when dealing with a sexual assault report. I conducted a follow-up telephone interview with the participant, who at the time of the interview was working in civilian law enforcement. She provided an example of how a civilian police agency handles a sexual assault case. The participant's explanation

resulted in a provision of options for a victim and I deemed that her response was a warranted description for the study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness and Creditability

I assured trustworthiness and qualitative objectivity by thoroughly following the identified research protocol that I outlined in my proposal and in my IRB application. I conducted rigorous record management practices, I used memos to control any biasness or personal thoughts, and I conducted 10 follow-up telephone interviews. I also member checked the results during telephone follow-up interviews when needed for clarification. I also sought advice and support from my dissertation committee and peers.

I used record management practices to label participant questionnaires and follow-up telephone interviews accordingly. I kept hard copies of questionnaires and interviews in a locked filing cabinet in my office and electronic copies of each were password protected in a secure file on my personnel computer. I used a research journal to write down my thoughts and reflections about the study and to control any biasness that developed. My overall study, to include the pilot study and follow-up telephone interviews, lasted from October to December 2015. Familiarity with my research population was attributed to my time serving in the Air Force. Finally, I checked in with my peers to elicit feedback and review.

Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

I made sure that my sample was theoretically diverse, provided thick and rich descriptions of the study's findings, and offered a research setting that was conducive to study participants (Miles et al., 2014) to ensure transferability. I used a NVivo program to code the relevant information behind the participants' voices in the returned

questionnaires and telephone interviews to preserve participant perceptions as much as possible.

To confirm dependability, I provided an audit trail for future researchers that consists of the study's purpose, the participant selection process, how study data was collected and coded, and overall results of the study. In addition, I verified my findings by utilizing the "query tools" in NVivo.

I kept a personal journal where I wrote down my processes, thoughts, and reflections of the study to keep confirmability in order. Miles et al. (2014) explains that researcher who write down processes and thoughts have a self-awareness of personnel assumptions, values, and biases.

Summary of Results

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the research setting, ethical considerations, participant demographics and profiles, data collection process, data management, data analysis, coding, and study results. I provided participant responses through the introduction and alignment of seven themes discovered during data collection and analysis. The themes led to the discovery of two theoretical constructs which developed BSO theory. From the data, I formed two theoretical constructs; *Professional Power Phenomenon of Sexual Assault Management Culture* and *Sexual Assault Functioning Programs and Methods*.

To reiterate, the distinguishing factors of BSO theory answers this study's research question specific to understanding the management of sexual assault policies, programs, and complaints. For the first time, the perceptions of ex-military leaders regarding sexual assault complaint management is presented; offering new constructs in

understanding the Department of Defense's sexual assault prevention and policy standards.

In summary, BSO theory comprises a system of tightly interrelated constructs that are *Professional Power Phenomenon of Sexual Assault Management Culture* and *Sexual Assault Functioning Programs and Methods*. I presented these constructs as they originated from the initial codes developed in NVivo. Each theme was reinforced thoroughly by answers to the research question via participant questionnaires and follow-up telephone interviews. I discussed discrepant cases and I addressed this study's trustworthiness, creditability, transferability, dependability, and confidentiality were noted.

In Chapter 5, I present my interpretations of the findings and explain each thematic findings as it relates to the literature in Chapter 2. Additionally, I discuss study limitations, recommendations, and study implications. Finally, I provide this study's contribution towards positive social change and offer closing reflections.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to construct a functional theory that explains how ex-military leaders perceive the management of sexual assault complaints in the Air Force. Specifically, I sought to understand the impact of sexual assault prevention and policy standards and what, if any, new and innovative policies and procedures should be adopted. I concluded that grounded theory was best suited for this study because I found no universal theory or theoretical model to address my research concerns and knowledge gap.

Through this study, I developed a preliminary theory that can lead researchers to develop subsequent studies to formulate a broader theory. I identified a research gap in understanding how ex-military leaders perceive the management of sexual assault complaints in the Air Force. My study also extends the understanding regarding how ex-military members perceive sexual assault prevention and policy standards and if new policies and procedures should be adopted. Finally, my research findings have helped fill in the gap in research knowledge and scarcity of literature that is specific to understanding how ex-military leaders perceive the management of sexual assault complains. These results are explained through bio-social operative (BSO) theory.

In this chapter, I present a brief overview of research findings, followed by interpretations of my findings. I identify how the findings are linked to the literature review and assimilate discussion specific to this study's conceptual framework. I provide limitations, recommendations, implication for social change, and my reflections as a researcher as well as final concluding thoughts.

Overview

I conducted this study through a naturalistic inquiry that was conducive to understanding the population under consideration. Participants in this study included men and women who served no less than a 4-year commitment in the Air Force, retired or separated under honorable conditions, functioned as a supervisor to airmen, and was either a noncommissioned officer, senior noncommissioned officer, or officer. I used an online questionnaire consisting of open ended questions and follow-up telephone interviews to collect data. I followed the grounded theory methodology, using data analysis to procure theoretical constructs to ultimately form the basis of a sub-theory. I based my study on the following research question:

RQ1: What role does military operational leadership play in the management of MSA complaints?

I refined the above research question into seven open ended questions that were distributed in the online questionnaire. I addressed each question in Chapter 4 and was satisfied with the findings. This study revealed that military leaders play a direct role in connecting, communicating, and conveying to their airman operational and preventive sexual assault practices. Male and female participants expressed that solidifying trust with airmen and building positive relationships create a professional, open, and diverse work atmosphere. Concerns for sexual assault victims, as well as offenders, were seen as causative factors in proper management of sexual assault complaints.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this study I fashioned BSO theory as an answer to this study's research question. BSO describes the precursors, methods, and outcomes associated with sexual assault complaint management conducive use in the Air Force. This theory is grounded in the testaments provided in the participant's answers and their perceptions of leadership, sexual assault prevention strategies, reporting procedures, and prosecutorial justice. This theory encompasses the organized themes of how sexual assault complaints are managed in the Air Force from the perspectives of ex-military leaders.

It should be noted that BSO theory largely applies to sexual assault complaint management policies and procedures of the Air Force. While the Department of Defense sets policy for MSA across the services, BSO theory serves as the sexual assault managerial practices that are reinforced and maintained in the Air Force.

Theoretical Narrative and Model

My research question asked: What role does military operational leadership play in the management of MSA complaints? The answer to that question is addressed through grounded theory and is reflected in the model below (See Figure 2). The theoretical model for this study is entitled bio-social operative (BSO) theory. This theory is based upon two theoretical constructs (see TC #1 and TC #2) that reflect ex-military leader's perceptions of sexual assault complaint management, as reported in this study.

Figure 2. Bio-Social Operative (BSO) Theory

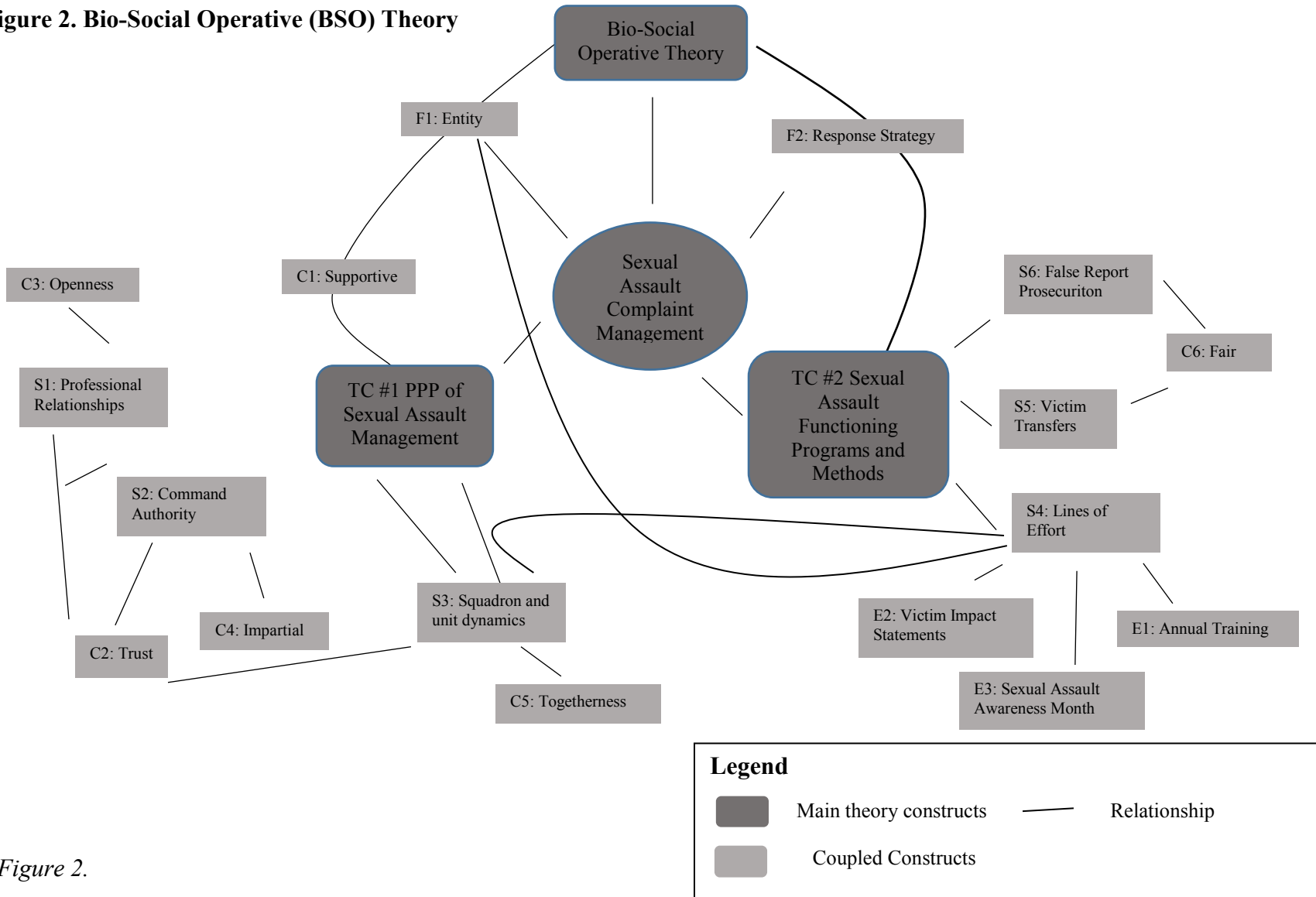


Figure 2.

The model contains tightly coupled constructs that operate as interrelated and independent experiences; significant to each other or in a cycle of reinforcing closeness.

BSO theory explains the sexual assault complaint management process as it relates to the perceptions of ex-military leaders in the Air Force. Based on the participant's perceptions, the foundation of sexual assault complaint management must have an entity (F1), in this case a leader, and an exerting force or influence to effectively develop a military response strategy (F2).

Firstly, the leader needs to be supportive (C1) of the environment in which they are a part of constructing. The professional power phenomenon culture that is created is contingent upon the professional relationship between leader and subordinate, command authority (S2), and squadron and unit dynamics (S3). Professional relationships that are in the same environment need to be supportive of others (C1), show trust (C2), have open lines of communication (C3) with others in the same environment, all the while being impartial (C4). This will ultimately lead to a squadron and/or unit having positive dynamics (S3) due to togetherness (C5). The above findings correspond with Farris et al. (2013), who indicated that nonjudgmental and compassionate support from informal and formal support personnel is central to caring for sexual assault victims.

The operative concept of BSO theory relies heavily upon a leader formulating effective response strategy foundation (F2). Within these strategies are prescribed sexual assault functioning programs and methods for combating MSA. Programs and methods such as lines of effort (S4), victim transfers (S5), and false report prosecution (S6) are seen as key components to effectively try to control MSA. Fairness (C6), or impartiality, was viewed by the participants as a determining feature for false report prosecution (S6)

and victim transfers (S5). For insistence, according to Participant 5, when warranted, an airman should be prosecuted under the Uniform Code of Military Justice for falsely accusing another of a sexual assault. Participant 5 goes on to state that “the alleged perpetrator is now the victim and deserves due process.”

This study also demonstrated that appropriate action is necessary to not only decrease victim suffering but to lessen the negative psychological effects of an assault from reoccurring. Participant 6 stated that a victim transfer can be a positive alternative only when it is deemed significant. She states that the victim can get a “fresh start without any reminders of what happened... triggers that can cause emotional setbacks.” The proper treatment and management of a sexual assault is critical due to the fact that social feedback plays a noteworthy part of the care and recovery process of the victim. This coincides with the findings of Orchowski et al. (2013) that stated that positive reactions toward the survivor resulted in higher self-esteem.

In this study, squadron cohesiveness, as a source of togetherness and unit dynamics is seen a crucial part of providing sexual assault lines of effort (S4) for disseminating sexual assault prevention strategies and policy. This finding supports the claim from Walsh et al. (2014) that the greater the unit support, the greater the risk of assault decreased. Participants described lines of effort as annual sexual assault training (E1) (computer based and Commander’s Calls), victim impact statements/testimonies (E2), and participation in awareness responsiveness activities during sexual assault awareness month (E3). The verbal and physicality aspect of prevention strategies from leaders and supervisors was seen as being the most beneficial to bringing awareness to Airmen. Such findings support the claims of Buchanan et al. (2014) who indicated that

the best practice for a system-level intervention is the dissemination of clear and consistent messaging from organizational leaders.

Model of Human Development

In Chapter 2, I offered Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development as a theoretical lens that helped make up the conceptual framework used to examine sexual assault complaint management. This framework focuses on the interrelationships of individuals and their immediate environments to include interactions and associations, feelings of positive or negative occurring attributes, values, customs, and laws of a society, and the overall person's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). I determined that Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory was well suited for this study's purpose because it allows for reconstructing of the different systems relevant to the Armed Forces. Specifically, this theory supported the relationship between a leader's position, responsibility, and accountability for MSA occurrences.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) a person's ecological environment is considered a topologically nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next. These structures are known as micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro- levels. I examined the study's data through the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model (See Figure 3).

Evidence shows that these structures or levels are dependent upon one another. Turchik et al. (2013) stated that one of the many barriers to MST treatment is stigma; not wanting to talk about the problem, embarrassment/shame, privacy/confidentiality, self-blame, not urgent or serious enough, sensitivity ad reaction of provider, and fear that they will not be believed.

Figure 3. Ecological Environment for Sexual Assault Management in the Air Force

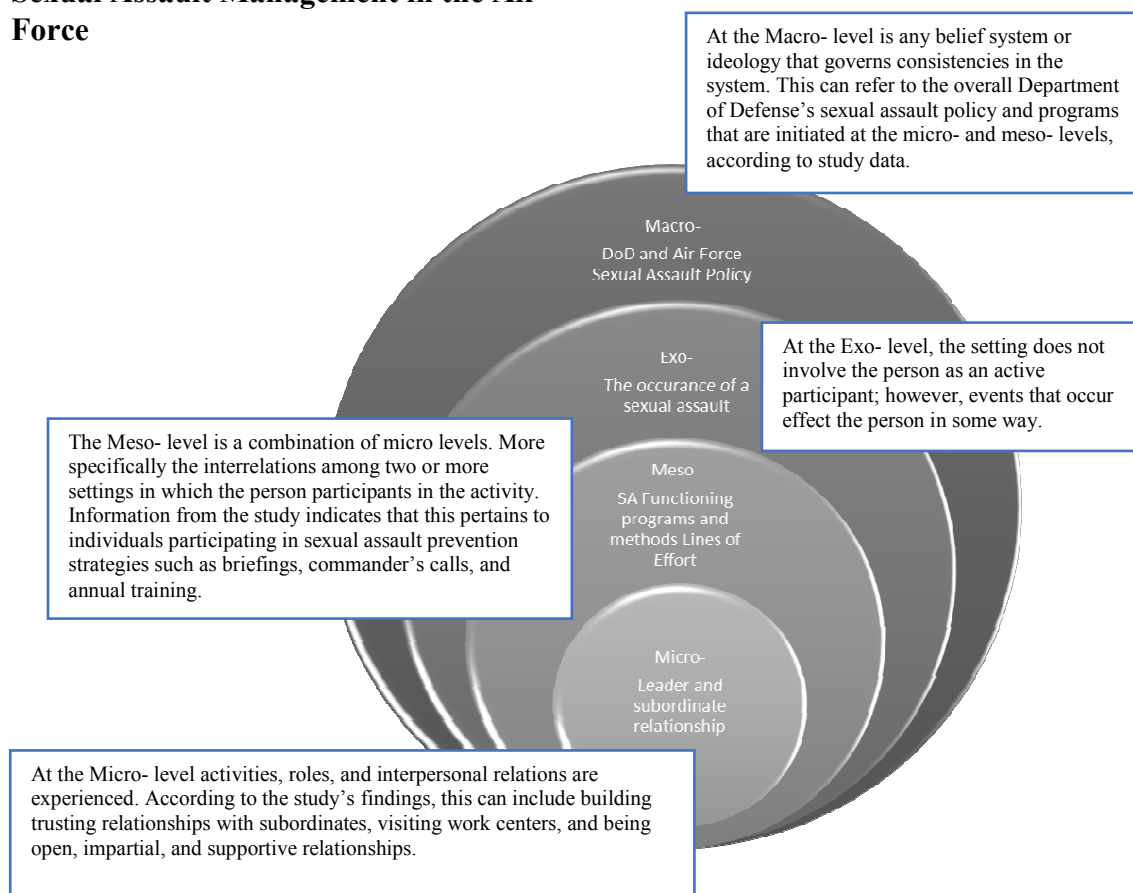


Figure 3.

In my study, participants stressed that in order for subordinates or victims to feel comfortable in approaching their leader regarding a sexual assault complaint; trust, impartiality, and supportive traits, to name a few, need to be prevalent in the leader/subordinate relationship. This relationship at the micro- level is contingent upon how effective sexual assault functioning programs and methods are at the meso- level.

In alignment with Wall (2013), and according to participants perceptions, sexual assault prevention strategies requires social change and a multi-level strategy that targets the complex and systemic causes of such a crime. Participants described sexual assault prevention strategies consisting of annual computer based training, discussions during commander's calls, flyers/posters in common areas, survivor testimonials, and scenario based workshops.

The findings of this study support the literature that indicated that a contemporary sexual assault prevention strategy encourages knowing verbal communication skills (Jozkowski et al., 2014) and reducing sexual assaults through passive intervention tactics such as images on posters can raise awareness of a person's role in a certain community (Potter & Stapleton, 2012). The discovery regarding sexual assault training also coincides with the literature of Holland et al. (2014) when they promoted that comprehensive training and management exposure can lead to lower sexual assaults among military branches. These aforementioned findings of micro- and meso- levels aid to understand the role of the leader and subordinate in relation to sexual assault prevention strategies.

At the exo- level, a particular incident/setting does not include the developing person(s), but the developing person(s) are indirectly affected by the incident/setting. The

sexual assault occurs at the exo- level and indirectly affects the leader and subordinate relationship, sexual assault prevention and training strategies, and the macro- level; the final level of the ecological environment.

The findings of the study suggest that military leadership and operational response to sexual assault complaints are contingent upon one another. Responses by the participants indicates that biasness can decay a person's perception of command dispositional authority and thus commander's should not have any part in determining the end result of a sexual assault complaint.. This is evident when participant 6 reveals that commanders are given too much leverage to inject their bias by having dispositional authority over a case and when participant 17 states that: "[Commanders] should only be able to speak to the victim or perpetrator's military record and not [inject] any personal opinion of the individuals." Participant 11 summed up the background of command dispositional authority by stating: "Good commanders will take it seriously; average commanders and less than good [commanders] will be risk adverse and try to make it disappear." This correlates with a significant piece of literature when Gillibrand (2013) accentuated that sexual assault victim's lack confidence in their chain of command in achieving justice.

This study confirmed that in order to have proper and adequate sexual assault complaint management, leaders and subordinates must recognize and understand one another by adhering to the systems of a social institution, in this case the Air Force; to include proper sexual assault training, prevention strategies, and observance to DoD's sexual assault policy standards. BSO theory is conditional upon the personal socialization

of leaders and subordinates in order to develop concrete lines of effort as a response strategy to sexual assault complaint management.

In this section I offered the theoretical narrative of bio-social operative (BSO) Theory as the answer to the overarching research. This primary question sought to understand the perceptions of ex-military leaders regarding sexual assault complaint management. BSO theory was based upon the foundation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development. This study reveals that leader and subordinate relationships coupled with positive and constructive sexual assault prevention strategies and the eradication of bias and preconditions offer a tangible part of operational management of sexual assault complaints.

Limitations

It should be considered that the findings of this study are based on a small sample ($N=20$) of ex-military Air Force leaders. While I based my conclusions on this small homogenous sample, the participants are considered the specialists on sexual assault complaint management. This study's design should be applied to the remaining military service branches, gender groups, and other heterogeneous samples. While collecting data, I excluded one participant from this study because she was still on active duty military service with the Air Force and thus did not meet participant study requirements. While a small sample is considered a limitation to this study, it is imperative to recognize that the purpose of this grounded theory study was to develop a context specific sub-theory to serve as the foundation for future research; extending to other samples to further develop the base theory that is provided from this study.

Another possible limitation to this study is the use of open-ended questions. By utilizing open-ended questions, I was able to obtain a direct view of perceptions from ex-military leaders. However, a concern with using open-ended questions are nonresponses. Three of the study participants did not answer all seven open-ended questions. Reasons behind not completing the questionnaire can include ineloquence or lack in the necessary rhetorical response. Future research can consider using close-ended questions that cue respondents to think of particular policies, causes, or treatments.

Finally, follow-up interviews were conducted by telephone. As a result, any nonverbal actions were not able to be recorded. However, during the course of the follow-up telephone interviews that were conducted, I annotated verbalized emotions such as laughter, sighs, and long pauses in thought.

Recommendations

Based on the perceptions of ex-military leaders in this study, the lack of trust and support from leaders can impede on providing adequate lines of effort in managing sexual assault complaints. Through my analysis I have concluded that there are fundamental recommendations that are a natural extension of this study. These recommendations include the use of incorporating an open door policy by command leadership for subordinates, use social self-identification teaching scenarios to broaden sexual assault training styles, confirm confidence in provided reporting procedures, and eliminate factors that result in retaliation and ostracism.

It is suggested that in order to shape trust and build confidence in command authority, leaders in a subordinate's chain of command should establish an open door

policy to create a positive work environment and eliminate the fear behind reporting a sexual assault. The actual and perceived consequences of reporting a sexual assault in the military is seen as a deterrent to reporting (Mengeling et al., 2014). Military leaders need to demonstrate that they have confidence in the provided sexual assault reporting procedures so that Airmen feel at ease to report. Reporting can make a person feel liberated, confident, and empowered (Wardle, 2014) when managed appropriately.

It is recommended that sexual assault training initiatives, provided by home station personnel be reviewed and modernized as needed. This study underlined that new and innovative training measures need to be developed in order to engage the member. Computer based training was seen as an annual requirement that is completed in a detached mindset. According to Participant 9, computer based training was “something that you just wanted to get through...you are really just clicking buttons to get through the whole thing.” Passive intervention tactics such as social based interactive scenario training can increase one’s awareness and responsibility within a certain environment. Future research should consider examining training procedures both in a quantitative and qualitative manner to determine the effectiveness of current sexual assault training procedures.

Finally, it is reasonable to recommend that in order to not only reduce victim retaliation and ostracism but also offender retaliation and ostracism, improvement upon multidisciplinary response and prevention maneuvers, for both victim and offender, must be conducted. Establishing a positive relationship amongst sexual assault responders can create an increased respect for victim and offender. Supportive advocacy in a private

environment, such as the military, may enhance emotional well-being. As a military society, we have a responsibility to acknowledge when a person has become excluded and find an appropriate solution. Based on participant's perceptions, and as an example, the rights of the offender should also be taken into consideration when considering a base or work transfer.

Implications

Research has shown that even with the establishment of new and improved reporting strategies, MSA remains an insistent problem for Department of Defense officials (Department of Defense, 2014a). Findings from this study indicate that leader and subordinate relationships coupled with positive and constructive sexual assault prevention strategies and the eradication of bias and preconditions offer a tangible part of operational management of sexual assault complaints. Findings from this study offer an opportunity to extend the relevance of military leadership, military environment, leadership characteristics, and military continuity.

Additionally, this study offers multiple singularities for researchers to examine fully in future studies: *Professional Power Phenomenon of Sexual Assault Culture* and *Sexual Assault Functioning Programs and Methods*. These findings may be applicable across the disciplines to include health services, human services, leadership development, and academia. Although preliminary, results from this study offer that military leadership has a significant impact on managing sexual assault complaints. Therefore executive leadership coaching/programs could include approaches that consider sexual assault training with organizational development and growth.

Positive Social Change

I conducted this study with the goal of positive social change. During this study, I sought to understand a social problem that has effected the composition of military personnel and secondly, I wanted to give voice to those in the military than have been affected directly and indirectly by sexual assault. As specified, one of the primary findings from this study is inclusive military leadership characteristics. The lack of compassionate, trustworthy, and considerate characteristics from the military leadership community can have a profound effect on proper sexual assault complaint management. Therefore, it is my intention that military leaders, and those who are projected to be promoted to leadership positions by way of rank or position, are provided with the informational testimonies from this study so they may in turn recognize the characteristics and attributes needed of a leader to combat MSA.

My social change goal is to ultimately educate the new military leaders, as well as the current ones, on relational, collaborative, and consultative practices to become an instrument of change for those affected by a sexual assault. This type of leadership instruction can help clarify the vision of the Department of Defense's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. I will also disseminate this research to partnering units such as family support and readiness centers, military chaplain's, mental health services, and other offices that provide counseling services to personnel on military installations in order to seek positive relations and to ensure a multidisciplinary response and prevention approach to MSA.

Second, I plan to disseminate this study's findings to the research community by presenting at professional and military-based conferences. By extending the literature on MSA complaint management, I will ultimately provide contextual evidence and additional resources that can aid military leaders when and if they ever have to handle a sexual assault complaint. It will also bring an awareness to a sensitive subject matter that continues to plague the military forces. The specific content grounded in participants testimonies can help to provide first-hand insights and experiences; ultimately generating a scholarly discussion on how to best improve upon sexual assault complaint management techniques.

Finally, it is known that a sexual assault affects not just one person, but many individuals. It is hoped that when military leaders have knowledge of the study's findings, they will reach out and publicize the information to the military community as a whole; to include the family members of active duty personnel. Informing and educating spouses and even adolescent children of active duty military members, which reside on an installation, of the resources and support structures that are available to assault victims, can strengthen the community bond amongst family members and open new lines of communication between military members and the community around them.

Reflection

During this study I learned how grounded theory methodology can be utilized to uncover significant and noteworthy perceptions of sexual assault complaint management. I found that my former military service and the literature that I presented prior to the

study enabled me to have a theoretical understanding of the sexual assault management culture in the Air Force.

The greatest experience was the educational aspect that was offered through the participants stories. The participants trusted me with their personal reflections of how they had fallen victim to an assault, all the way to commander's detailing their step-by-step process of how they handled a sexual assault complaint in their unit. The boundless nature of grounded theory allowed me to become fully immersed in the data and how the data from 20 differing participants interconnected to form a sub-theory. While I am drawn to studies that are quantitative in nature, I have come to realize that qualitative studies offer a richer and more comprehensive account of personal experiences, relationships, and even vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

It is my philosophy that change primarily occurs through passing legislation and by conducting research. Although this study only formed a basic sub-theory of sexual assault complaint management, BSO theory has the potential of opening new research opportunities to further the literature; ultimately becoming a significant piece of information to assist in passing new legislation regarding military sexual assault. BSO theory proposes a starting point for effective sexual assault complaint management; leadership willingness and capability. Grounded theory was the best option in answering this study's research question on account of the lack in theory or model found at the onset of this study. The discovered theory, BSO, now offers a foundation for future research studies.

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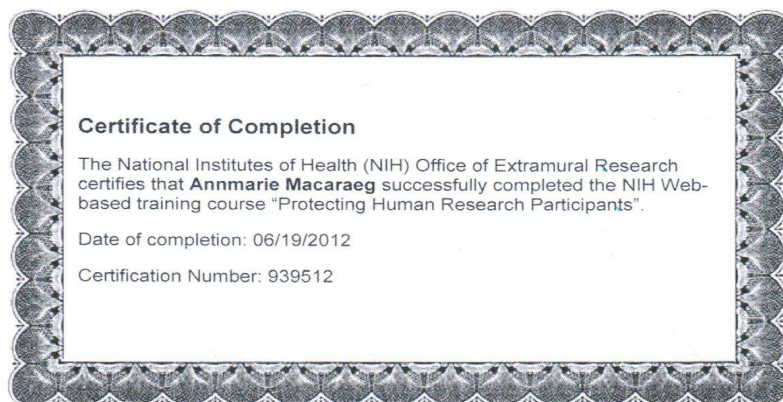
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Appendix A: National Institute of Health; Protecting Human Research Participants



Appendix B: Walden University IRB Approval Letter

IRB Materials Approved - Anmarie Macaraeg

INBOX/Dissertation Correspondence x



IRB <IRB@waldenu.edu>
to me, Barbara

10/15/15



Dear Ms. Macaraeg,

This email is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your application for the study entitled, "Management of Sexual Assault Complaints in the Air Force from the Perspectives of Ex-Military Leaders."

Your approval # is 10-15-15-0352235. You will need to reference this number in your dissertation and in any future funding or publication submissions. Also attached to this e-mail is the IRB approved consent form. Please note, if this is already in an on-line format, you will need to update that consent document to include the IRB approval number and expiration date.

Your IRB approval expires on October 14, 2016. One month before this expiration date, you will be sent a Continuing Review Form, which must be submitted if you wish to collect data beyond the approval expiration date.

Your IRB approval is contingent upon your adherence to the exact procedures described in the final version of the IRB application document that has been submitted as of this date. This includes maintaining your current status with the university. Your IRB approval is only valid while you are an actively enrolled student at Walden University. If you need to take a leave of absence or are otherwise unable to remain actively enrolled, your IRB approval is suspended. Absolutely NO participant recruitment or data collection may occur while a student is not actively enrolled.

If you need to make any changes to your research staff or procedures, you must obtain IRB approval by submitting the IRB Request for Change in Procedures Form. You will receive confirmation with a status update of the request within 1 week of submitting the change request form and are not permitted to implement changes prior to receiving approval. Please note that Walden University does not accept responsibility or liability for research activities conducted without the IRB's approval, and the University will not accept or grant credit for student work that fails to comply with the policies and procedures related to ethical standards in research.

When you submitted your IRB application, you made a commitment to communicate both discrete adverse events and general problems to the IRB within 1 week of their occurrence/realization. Failure to do so may result in invalidation of data, loss of academic credit, and/or loss of legal protections otherwise available to the researcher.

Both the Adverse Event Reporting form and Request for Change in Procedures form can be obtained at the IRB section of the Walden website: <http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec>

Researchers are expected to keep detailed records of their research activities (i.e., participant log sheets, completed consent forms, etc.) for the same period of time they retain the original data. If, in the future, you require copies of the originally submitted IRB materials, you may request them from Institutional Review Board.

Both students and faculty are invited to provide feedback on this IRB experience at the link below:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBjzkJMUx43pZegKlmdtQ_3d_3d

Sincerely,
Libby Munson
Research Ethics Support Specialist

Appendix C: Convenience Sample Letter of Assistance

Dear USAF Veteran,

My name is Annmarie Macaraeg and I am a Ph.D. Candidate at Walden University studying Human Services with a specialization in Criminal Justice. I want to understand the management of sexual assault complaints in the Air Force from the perspectives of ex-military leaders. By doing so, I hope to exhibit a positive social change and develop a sustained awareness of a subject matter that has continued to be a persistent problem for Department of Defense officials.

I am asking for your assistance in recruiting participants for my study. I am looking for participants that are:

1. A veteran of the U.S. Air Force,
2. Served no less than a 4-year commitment,
3. Discharged or retired under honorable conditions,
4. Functioned as a supervisor for Airmen,
5. Served in a role of either noncommissioned officer, senior noncommissioned officer, or officer.

If you know of someone who meets the above criteria, please copy and paste the attached SurveyMonkey link in a separate email to a participant or provide an email address of a potential participant in response to this email. All participants will remain confidential and anonymity will be ensured.

If there are any questions or concerns, I can be contacted at XXX-XXX-XXXX or at XXXXXXXX@waldenu.edu. I will be more than happy to discuss my proposed study with you. My Dissertation Chair, XXXXXXXXXXX; Academic Program Coordinator and Core Faculty at Walden University College of Social and Behavior Sciences and School of Social Work and Human Services, can also be contacted at XXX-XXX-XXXX or by email at XXXXXXXX@waldenu.edu. Thank you for your assistance.

Respectfully,

Annmarie Macaraeg

Ph.D. Candidate, Walden University

Appendix D: Invitation Letter to Participate in Study

Invitation Letter to Participate in Study

Dear USAF Veteran,

You are invited to take part in a research study regarding the management of sexual assault complaints in the Air Force. Your name was acquired from a convenience sample of other USAF veterans.

I want to understand the management of sexual assault complaints in the Air Force from the perspectives of ex-military leaders. By doing so, I hope to exhibit a positive social change and develop a sustained awareness of a subject matter that has continued to be a persistent problem for Department of Defense officials.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an online questionnaire consisting of seven open-ended questions.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision of not participating will be respected. If you start the study and then change your mind, you may stop at any time.

At the end of the questionnaire, you will be given the option to self-identify by providing a name, first name only, and a contact phone number. Self-identification will afford me the opportunity to speak with you by conducting a follow-up telephone interview. This will allow for maximize response and rich data.

Your responses will remain confidential and will not be used for any purposes outside of this study. If you choose to self-identify, your name and any other identifiable information will not be included in any reports of study. SurveyMonkey's guidelines for making returned survey's anonymous will be followed. As a result, IP addresses of respondents will not be known or tracked.

If this study is of interest to you, please review the consent form provided on the following screen.

Respectfully,
Annmarie Macaraeg
USAF Veteran
Ph.D. Candidate, Walden University

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Appendix E: Letter of Consent

Letter of Consent

Study Title: Management of Sexual Assault Complaints in the Air Force from the Perspectives of Ex-military Leaders

Introduction: You are invited to take part in a research study regarding the management of sexual assault complaints in the Air Force because:

1. You are a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, and
2. You served no less than a 4-year commitment, and
3. You were discharged or retired under honorable conditions, and
4. You functioned as a supervisor to Airmen, and
5. You served as a noncommissioned officer, senior noncommissioned officer, or officer.

This letter is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part in it. I, Annmarie Macaraeg, a U.S. Air Force veteran and Ph.D. candidate at Walden University, will be the sole researcher for this study. This study is for academic research purposes only and is not an official U.S. Air Force project.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of how military sexual assault complaints are managed from the perspectives of ex-military leaders that have served in the Air Force.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to take about an hour to participate in an online questionnaire consisting of seven open-ended questions asking your opinion about the management of military sexual assaults. You can fill out the online questionnaire at any time. The questions will be presented to you on the computer screen one at a time. Only after providing your answer and clicking the "Next" button on the screen will you be able to move on to answer the next question. If you decide to not answer a question, you can also click on the "Next" button and you will move to the next question. At the end of this study, I will ask for your assistance in recruiting additional participants.

Self-identification: At the end of the questionnaire you will have the option to self-identify by providing a name, first name only, and a phone number. The purpose behind self-identification is to conduct a follow-up telephone interview to clarify and maximize your questionnaire responses.

Voluntary Nature of this Study: Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision of whether to participate or not will be respected. If you decide to join the study and then change your mind during the course of filling out the questionnaire, you can stop the study at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: Being in this type of study can involve minor discomforts such as stress, fatigue, or being upset. This study will not pose risk to your safety or overall well-being. The intention of this study is to exhibit a social change and an awareness of a subject matter that has continued to be a persistent problem for Department of Defense officials.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: No one will know that you participated in this study. Any information that you provide will be kept confidential. I will not use your information for any purpose outside of this project. I will not include your name or any other identifiable information in any reports of study. For those participant's that self-identify, upon the conclusion of the follow-up interview, your responses will be given a numerical identifier for identification purposes and data analysis. SurveyMonkey's guidelines for making survey responses anonymous will be followed. As a result, the IP addresses of respondents will not be known or tracked.

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Letter of Consent Cont.

Contacts and Questions: If you have any questions or concerns, I can be contacted at [redacted] or at [redacted]g@waldenu.edu. If you would like to speak more privately, you can contact [redacted], Academic Program Coordinator and Core Faculty at Walden University College of Social and Behavior Sciences and School of Social Work and Human Services [redacted], the Walden University representative who can discuss this study with you. She can be contacted at [redacted] or by email at [redacted]@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk about your rights as a participant, please call [redacted], Walden University Research [redacted] or at IRB@waldenu.edu.

Walden University IRB Approval number: 10-15-15-0352235

IRB Approval expires on: October 14, 2016

Statement of Consent: I have read the information provided in this letter and I feel that I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By choosing "Yes" I am agreeing to the terms described in this Letter of Consent.

*** 1. Statement of Consent**[Prev](#)[Next](#)

Appendix F: Management of Sexual Assault Complaints Study Questionnaire

Management of Sexual Assault Complaints Study Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this online study. The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the management of military sexual assault complaints from the perspectives of ex-military leaders that have served in the Air Force. Participation in this questionnaire is completely voluntary and all responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. You may withdraw from this study at any time by exiting out of the questionnaire.

The following questions will determine whether you meet the requirements for this study.

2. Are you a Veteran of the United States Air Force?

- Yes
 No

3. Did you serve no less than a 4-year military commitment?

- Yes
 No

4. Please indicate your separation status with the United States Air Force.

- Separated under Honorable Conditions
 Retired under Honorable Conditions
 Other

5. While you were on active duty, did you supervise Airman?

- Yes
 No

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Management of Sexual Assault Complaints Study Questionnaire

6. At the time of separation or retirement from the United State Air Force, I was a

- Noncommissioned Officer (NCO)
 Senior Noncommissioned Officer (SNCO)
 Officer

Other (please specify)

7. What is your gender?

- Male
 Female
 Prefer not to answer

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Management of Sexual Assault Complaints Study Questionnaire

As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the management of military sexual assault complaints from the perspectives of ex-military leaders that have served in the Air Force. Participation in this questionnaire is completely voluntary and all responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. You may withdraw from this study at any time by exiting out of the questionnaire.

Your answers should be based on when you were on active duty service with the USAF.

8. Describe the sexual assault prevention strategies of the last squadron or unit that you were a member of while on active duty service.

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Management of Sexual Assault Complaints Study Questionnaire

9. What are examples of ways that NCO's, SNCO's and Officers can strengthen their relationship with Airman that they supervise when it comes to being confident in reporting a sexual assault?

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10. What is your perception of Commanders having a role in dispositional authority for a sexual assault case?

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Management of Sexual Assault Complaints Study Questionnaire

11. The Sexual Assault Prevention and response Office, under the Department of Defense, currently has two ways to report a sexual assault; restricted and unrestricted reporting.

***Restricted reporting allows a sexually assaulted victim to confidentially disclose the assault to a specified individual (typically a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator) and receive medical treatment without triggering an official investigation.**

*** Unrestricted reporting allows a sexual assaulted person access to medical treatment and counseling and request an official investigation using existing chain of command only.**

Which reporting procedure do you feel is the most beneficial to the victim and why? In what ways can reporting procedures be improved?

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Management of Sexual Assault Complaints Study Questionnaire

12. Under the Department of Defense sexual assault policy, victims can request a transfer to another base or ask to be transferred to another duty assignment on the same base when they make an unrestricted report. What do you think about this type of request? Are there any positive or negative aspects about such a request?

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Management of Sexual Assault Complaints Study Questionnaire

13. Thinking back to your time on active duty service, what additional memorandums, programs, or ideas did you consider developing or forwarding up to your chain of command to aid in strengthening sexual assault awareness and reporting procedures in your squadron or unit?

[Prev](#)[Next](#)**Management of Sexual Assault Complaints Study Questionnaire**

14. Describe your thoughts on prosecuting Airman that falsely accuse another Airman of a sexual assault?

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Letter of Assistance

This concludes the study questionnaire. Thank you for your participation.

I am asking for your assistance in recruiting additional participants for my study. I am looking for participants that are:

1. A veteran of the U.S. Air Force,
2. Served no less than a 4-year commitment,
3. Discharged or retired under honorable conditions,
4. Functioned as a supervisor for Airmen, and
5. Served in a role of either noncommissioned officer, senior noncommissioned officer, or officer.

If you know of anyone who meets the above requirements, please forward this questionnaire by email to a qualifying participant. You can copy the below study link along with the provided message in the body of your email. If you choose for me to email the study link to another participant, please send an email to g@waldenu.edu with only the email address of the participant.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MGTSA2015>

You are invited to take part in a research study regarding the management of sexual assault complaints in the Air Force. Your name was acquired from a convenience sample of other USAF veterans. Please click on, or copy and paste the above web link in your browser, to proceed to the Invitation Letter, Letter of Consent, and Study Questionnaire.

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Done

Appendix G: Study Protocol

Qualitative Grounded Theory Protocol: Management of Sexual Assault Complaints in the Air Force from the Perspectives of Ex-military Leaders**Data Collection Steps**

Opening Date: Projected 15 October 2015 **Time:** 5:00 PM

Closing Date: Projected 15 November 2015 **Time:** 11:59 PM

Researcher: Annmarie Macaraeg

1. Send out convenience sample letter to five personnel requesting study participants.
2. Create www.surveymonkey.com questionnaire that contains the following items:
 - a. Consent form that covers purpose, risks, and benefits of the study
 - b. Questions identified in item #3 below.
 - c. Thank you page that offers the participants the option of providing additional participants that fit the study criteria.
3. Questions:
 - a. Describe the efforts surrounding sexual assault prevention in the Armed Forces when you were on active duty.
 - b. Describe some ways that military NCO's, SNCO's, and Officers can solidify confidence among their subordinates in reporting a sexual assault.
 - bb. In what ways can a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator provide guidance to Airman on an installation?
 - c. What are your thoughts regarding removing dispositional authority from a soldier's "chain of command" to determine prosecution for sexual misconduct?
 - d. Which reporting procedure do you feel is the most beneficial to the victim and why? In what ways can reporting procedures be improved?

- e. What additional strategies can be developed to strengthen the existing sexual assault policy for the Armed Forces?
 - f. Describe your thoughts on prosecuting soldiers that falsely accuse another soldier of a sexual assault?
4. Once approximately 20 to 25 questionnaires are received, close the study.
 5. Organize, theme, and code data using NVivo software before analysis and presentation.

Appendix H: Follow-up Telephone Interview Guide

Management of Sexual Assault Complaints Follow-up Telephone Interview Guide

Introduction to the Participant: Thank you very much for agreeing to a follow-up interview to discuss your answers that you provided on the Management of Sexual Assault Complaints in the Air Force questionnaire. My name is Annmarie Macaraeg and I am a Doctoral Candidate at Walden University and I am the primary researcher for this study. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, Approval #10-15-15-0352235, expiring on October 14, 2016.

Before we begin, this interview will be recorded for data verification and transcribing purposes. This recording and any self-identifying information discussed during the interview will remain confidential. No one will know that you participated in this study. I will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research study. This recording will be assigned an identifier for reference purposes. Information obtained during this interview will only be used to compile study findings. In conjunction with the recording, I will also be taking hand written notes.

This interview can take approximately thirty minutes to complete. The risks of taking part in a telephone interview can involve minor discomforts such as stress, fatigue, or being upset. This study will not pose any risk to your safety or overall well-being. The intention of this study is to exhibit a social change and an awareness of a subject matter that has continued to be a persistent problem for Department of Defense officials. Do you wish to proceed with the interview? (If the participant answers “yes” I will continue with the interview by going over each response that the participant gave on the study questionnaire. If the subject answers “no,” the interview will be terminated and all recordings will end).’

Today’s Date is _____

And I am speaking with participant _____

Conclusion to the Participant: Again, thank you for your time. The purpose of this telephone interview was to gather additional information and clarify parts of your responses on your original study questionnaire. Information provided in this interview along with your questionnaire answers will be transcribed, coded, and used during data analysis.

If you have any questions or concerns, I can be contacted at XXX-XXX-XXXX or at XXXXXXXXXXXX@waldenu.edu. If you would like to speak more privately, you can contact XXXXXXXXXXX; Academic Program Coordinator and Core Faculty at Walden University College of Social and Behavior Sciences and School of Social Work and Human Services. XXXXXXX is the Walden University representative who can discuss this study with you. She can be contacted at XXX-XXX-XXXX or by email at XXXXXXXXXXXX@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk about your rights as a participant, please call XXXXXXX, Walden University Research Participant XXXXXXX, at XXX-XXX-XXXX or at IRB@waldenu.edu.

Appendix I: SurveyMonkey Guidelines

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying 'http://help.surveymo...' and the page title 'Making Responses Anony...'. The browser's address bar also shows 'Amazon.com - Online Sh...'. The page content is titled 'Making Responses Anonymous' and is part of the 'Design & Manage / Creating Surveys' section. The main heading is 'Making Responses Anonymous'. Below the heading, a paragraph states: 'The default option for every collector type is to store certain respondent information to help you track respondents.' A warning icon is followed by a text box: 'To collect anonymous responses, **edit the collector options before sending out your survey**. If you have multiple collectors, you need to edit each collector separately to make sure all your survey responses are anonymous.' Below this, a paragraph explains: 'If you choose to make responses anonymous, collector data which makes your respondents personally identifiable will not be included in your survey results. However, if you collected responses before changing the collector options, information from respondents who already took the survey may be stored in survey results.' The page is divided into two sections: 'Web Link Collector' and 'Email Invitation Collector'. Under 'Web Link Collector', it states: 'By default, your survey results will include the IP addresses of respondents. To turn off IP tracking:' followed by a numbered list: 1. Go to the Collect Responses section of your survey. 2. Click the name of the collector. 3. Click Show advanced options. 4. Click Make Anonymous and choose Yes. Your changes are saved automatically. Under 'Email Invitation Collector', it states: 'By default, your survey results will include the name, email address, and IP address of each respondent. You can stop storing this information by turning on Anonymous Responses. To turn on Anonymous Responses:' followed by a numbered list: 1. Go to the Collect Responses section of your survey. 2. Click the name of the collector. 3. Go to the collector options. If you've already sent an invitation, go to the Options tab. When sending your first invitation message in the collector, you'll choose collector options after composing your message. 4. Click Anonymous Responses and choose On. Your changes are saved automatically. At the bottom, a note states: 'To ensure your results are anonymous, do not add identifiable information in other custom data associated with recipients. This data may be passed through to survey results even when Anonymous Responses is turned on.'

Note. Adapted from “Making Responses Anonymous” by SurveyMonkey, [1 October 2015]. Retrieved from http://help.surveymonkey.com/articles/en_US/kb/How-do-I-make-surveys-anonymous

Appendix J: Self-identification Statement

Self-identification

In order to clarify and maximize your responses and gather rich data, I would like to conduct a follow-up telephone interview with you. If you are interested, please provide a name, first name only, and a good contact number in the space below. As stated in the consent form, any information that you provide will be kept confidential. I will not include your name or any other identifiable information in any reports of study. For those participants that self-identify, upon the conclusion of the follow-up telephone interview, your responses will be given a numerical identifier for identification purposes and data analysis. SurveyMonkey's guidelines for making returned questionnaires anonymous will be followed. As a result, the IP addresses of responses will not be known or tracked. If you choose not to self-identify, please click on the "Next" button below.

15. Please indicate the time of day that you would like to be contacted. You may choose more than one.

- Morning
- Afternoon
- Evening

16. Address

Name

Phone Number

Prev

Next

