WALDEN UNIVERSITY
A higher degree. A higher purpose.

Walden University
ScholarWorks

Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies

Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection

2019

Social Construction, Policy Design, and Program Efficacy in the U.S. Navy's Family Readiness Group Program

Linda Tsubaki
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations

 Part of the Public Policy Commons, and the Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Linda M. Tsubaki

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Anne Hacker, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. James Castleberry, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Tanya Settles, University Reviewer,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

The Office of the Provost

Walden University
2019

Abstract

Social Construction, Policy Design, and Program Efficacy in the U.S. Navy's Family Readiness Group Program

by

Linda M. Tsubaki

MPA, Walden University, 2009

BA, University of Washington, Seattle, 2004

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

August 2019

Abstract

It was unclear what the actual role of the Family Readiness Group (FRG) was in helping the spouses of U.S. Navy submariners (SMSs) in learning to live the submariner-family lifestyle. Submarines deploy in regular cycles regardless of world conflict. Submariners and their spouses are isolated from each other during deployments, communities of submariner spouses are smaller than other Navy communities, and spouses must acquire unique social capital to manage unique challenges. The purpose of this study was to explore how SMSs experience or perceive the FRG role in their social construction and adaptation to the SMS lifestyle. The examination was guided by Ingram, Schneider, and DeLeon's social construction and policy design theory. Data were collected using an open-ended survey distributed to 83 SMSs through an online survey platform. Data were coded for themes and subthemes using an iterative process including values and process coding. Key results were that SMSs construct themselves differently than how they are constructed by policy principals. Among SMSs, benefits and burdens perceived to be distributed by the FRG program are different than the distribution of actual benefits and burdens. These differences influenced participants' engagement with the FRG program. More research is needed to define this influence and to explore the origins of relationships that increase lifestyle capital. The implication for social change is that a better understanding of the nature of SMS lifestyles can contribute to better policy decisions and improved program design, leading to better outcomes for military spouses.

Social Construction, Policy Design, and Program Efficacy in the U.S. Navy's Family Readiness Group Program

by

Linda M. Tsubaki

MPA, Walden University, 2009

BA, University of Washington, Seattle, 2004

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

August 2019

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The nature of military service means members of the armed forces and their spouses experience life circumstances that are not well known in civilian life. U.S. Military spouses often move frequently and endure the absence of a deployed active duty spouse for long periods of time, ranging from weeks to in excess of a year (Hall, 2011). The length and frequency of deployment varies depending on the branch of service, the mission of the unit, and the state of conflict in the world. For example, Navy submarines deploy regularly regardless of world conflict, and deployments generally last from 3 to 6 months (Navy Recruiting Command, 2015).

The general community of military spouses becomes subdivided into more specialized communities that are formed around the units to which the active duty spouses are assigned. The nature of more specialized communities and the experiences of the spouses within the communities are unique compared to the nature of the general military lifestyle and other types of military units. For example, the community of spouses attached to an aircraft carrier will experience a different lifestyle with different challenges than will a community of spouses attached to an Air Force unit, or to an administrative unit that does not deploy.

The mission of the unit directly influences what kinds of demands are placed on the service members and their spouses. The general military lifestyle has features generalizable to all military units, such as the authority structure, authoritarian culture, privileges, and benefits (Gall, 2009). However, the mission of a specialized unit has an

influence over types and magnitudes of stressors the spouses of the unit may encounter, and what expectations the spouses may have of the military lifestyle experience.

In this study, I explored the nature of the lifestyle of the spouses of submariners in the U.S. Navy and what role the Family Readiness Group (FRG) plays in how spouses learn to manage the submariner spouse (SMS) lifestyle. The FRG is a volunteer-based formal support program in the U.S. military that is intended to facilitate opportunities to foster greater resilience in the military family community (Navy, 2018). It is not clear from current research whether the FRG benefits the spouses of U.S. Navy submariners in terms of acquiring the knowledge necessary to navigate the SMS lifestyle. I also examined how SMSs perceive the FRG and its role, and whether they benefit from the FRG, specifically in terms of increasing their knowledge of and ability to weather the SMS lifestyle.

The premise of this study was that all military communities share common traits that are associated with the general military lifestyle and deployments. These common traits are well represented in the literature (Aducci, Baptist, George, Barros, & Goff, 2011; Burton et al., 2009, Carroll, Orthner, Behnke, Smith, Day, & Raburn, 2013; Hall, 2011; Joseph & Afifi, 2010), and current family support programs appear to be based upon this general knowledge. However, there appears to be scant literature with the SMS lifestyle or the experiences of SMSs as the focus. In reviewing the literature, I also found very few studies concerning any aspect of the Navy spouse lifestyle.

This inquiry was significant because, based on my review of the literature, the differences in lifestyles among specialized military units have not been examined directly

for their potential to contribute to the efficacy of military spouse support policies and programs. The results of this inquiry can be useful to military leaders in guiding the development of future policies and programs, creating greater efficacy, and growing individual and community capacity. These benefits may serve communities beyond military families. Furthermore, there is scant literature on the spouses of U.S. Navy sailors and the nature of the Navy-spouse lifestyle. This research may fill that gap in the literature. Specialized knowledge of unique military communities may have the potential to influence the development of family support programs. Participation in such programs may result in stronger, more resilient, and more secure military spouses, which may engender stronger service members, stronger units, and a stronger military.

The major sections of this chapter will include the background, the purpose of the study, the research question, the theoretical foundation, and the nature of the study. It will also include definitions, assumptions, scope and delimination, and limitations. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the significance of the study, and a summary.

Background

Since 1991, literature exploring the characteristics, needs, and trials of military spouses has proliferated along with the increase in deployments to conflict zones (Kane, 2006). However, there is much that remains unexplored in the literature. In this section, I will summarize related topics found in the current literature to provide background for this inquiry.

Spouses of active duty service members must gain some level of knowledge about military culture, organizational, and leadership structure. They must also gain knowledge

of the military social structure, what the lifestyle demands, and what the benefits and privileges are (Gall, 2009; Talkington, 2001; Villagran et al., 2013). However, there are differences in jargon, terminology, job functions, and the various demands of different roles between the military branches that the spouse at home may want or need to understand. Furthermore, spouses assigned to different kinds of units will have different expectations of military life, and will gain different kinds of knowledge based on the unit type and the mission of the unit (Padden et al, 2011).

Researchers have explored different facets of military life in the literature, and common themes across studies have become apparent. Common themes include giving a voice to the military spouse (Aducci et al., 2011), the effects of deployment on the spouse left behind (Asbury & Martin, 2012), and coping with stressors (Blank, Adams, Kittelson, Connors, & Padden, 2012, 2012, Burton et al., 2009) The study of specific aspects of military life within specialized units remains in its infancy and, in many cases, is unexplored, according to my research. Despite this knowledge deficiency, the military must still develop programs and policies that are intended to provide effective family support (Lapp et al, 2010; Spera, 2009). The level of support that the spouse of the active duty member receives, or perceives to receive, is positively related to the spouse's ability to adapt to and cope with the military spouse lifestyle (Spera, 2009). The spouse's ability to effectively navigate and manage the military lifestyle has a direct relationship with the ability of the service member to perform within his or her function, particularly when deployed (Hall, 2011; Westphal & Woodward, 2010).

In response to the growing body of research, constituent feedback, and practical experience, the U.S. military continuously revisits its formal social and family support programs. One current program model of formal social support in the U.S. Navy is the FRG. The Navy's FRG was adapted by service leaders from the Army's FRG, and was implemented throughout the Navy in 2006 (Commander, 2018). The FRG replaced the previous Family Support Group (FSG) program model, which had replaced the traditional and less formally organized wives' club.

The purpose of the Navy FRG is "to help plan, coordinate, and conduct informational, care-taking, morale-building and social activities to enhance preparedness and command mission readiness and to increase the resiliency and well-being of Sailors and their families" (Commander, 2018, p. 2). The problem is that the role the FRG plays in the community only fulfills part of this function, and the actual role of the FRG in the SMS community is not well understood (Marek et al., 2013; Parcell & Macguire, 2014; Rossetto, 2015). The FRG can be an effective program to create a social structure to foster care-taking, morale-building, and social activities (Blank et al, 2012; Bowen & Martin, 2011; Eran-Jona, 2011; Huebner et al,. 2009; Lapp et al., 2010; Spera, 2009) However, preparedness, mission readiness, resiliency, and well-being appear to require a base of knowledge and skills to become attributes of a military spouse and a military community (Gall, 2009; Padden et al., 2011;Talkington, 2001; Villagran et al., 2013). Whether the FRG facilitates the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills has not been well studied, according to my research; furthermore, the existing literature suggests that other dynamics overwhelm this potential, such as disenfranchisement or

marginalization from the community (Gorbaty, 2009; Parcell & Macguire, 2014; Rossetto, 2015). Therefore, there appears to be a disparity between the purpose and mission of the FRG and the social, support, and learning needs of the spouses.

Given the influence that the spouse has on the service member, and therefore on the mission of the unit, family support is a critical responsibility for the U.S. military. The objective of this study was to explore the nature of the lifestyle of SMSs. I also explored the role of the FRG in helping spouses learn to adapt to the military lifestyle. Focal points for the study were how members of the community perceived their experiences within the lifestyle and how they perceived the role of the FRG. In other words, what do SMSs say their lives as SMSs are, what are their needs within that life, and does the FRG really play a role in fulfilling those needs?

Ultimately, the policy goal of all family support programs is to grow family readiness and therefore resilience (Blank et al, 2012; Bowen & Martin, 2011; Eran-Jona, 2011; Huebner et al,. 2009; Lapp et al., 2010; Spera, 2009). *Family readiness* is a term used by the military to describe the growth of individual and community capacity to be resilient and weather the demands of military life (Commander, 2018). It lacks a concrete definition because what *readiness* encompasses varies from family to family, and resilience is similarly unique to the individual. Family readiness is meant to encompass all the aspects of preparing for and weathering deployment, navigating the military lifestyle, preparing for life in general, supporting the service member, and supporting the mission of the unit (Commander, 2018). Family readiness is applicable to individual spouses and to the community (American Psychological Association, 2007; Carroll et al.,

2013). Family readiness is the construct of choice used by the U.S. military, and is the policy and program goal for military family support programs (Commander, 2018). However, the apparently nebulous nature of family readiness makes it an unsuitable construct to examine how military spouses may or may not benefit from the programs that are designed to grow family readiness. For this reason, I based this inquiry on related constructs that are more easily defined.

Of the literature that more broadly examines the lives and experiences of military spouses, several studies concern specific aspects of the general military lifestyle. Examples include studies on the history of family support (Di Nola, 2008), the effects of deployment (Sheppard, Malatras, & Israel, 2010), emotional cycles of deployment (Morse, 2006; Pincus, House, Christensen, & Adler, 2001), common stressors of deployment (Lapp et al., 2010; Sheppard et al., 2010), and coping with deployment (Chapin, 2009; Dimiceli, Steinhardt, & Smith, 2010; Faber, Willerton, Clymer, Macdermid, & Weiss, 2008; Park, 2011; Tollefson, 2008; Varcoe, Lees, & Emper, 2003; Wheeler & Stone, 2010). Having a greater understanding of specifics within the general military lifestyle may expand knowledge in these areas. Findings from the current study may also inform policies, programs, and practices.

Other researchers have examined dynamics that influence how the military lifestyle is lived, such as formal and informal support networks (Hoshmand & Hoshmand, 2007), community capacity in military communities (Huebner et al., 2009), wellness and resilience (Saltzman et al., 2011; Saltzman, Pynoos, Lester, Layne, & Beardslee, 2013), themes related to how to be a good military spouse (Aducci et al.,

2011; Carroll et al., 2013; Eran-Jona, 2011), and the military lifestyles in other branches (Spera, 2009). Exploring these dynamics that influence the military spouse lifestyle adds depth, and this research is often suggestive of directions for policy and practice to improve support for military spouses.

Finally, researchers studying military spouses have specifically explored the types of impacts that certain conditions of deployment have, such as battle injuries and other major shifts for spouses (Burton et al., 2009; Demers, 2009; Lester et al., 2011). This topic was beyond the scope of this inquiry because it was not particularly applicable to the SMS community. In addition, focusing on these impacts would have created a scope that was too broad.

Most researchers studying military spouses have drawn their samples from the Army population, basing the need for study on the impact that extended deployments to conflict zones have on spouses, and the unique, and sometimes extreme, stressors that Army spouses endure (Aducci et al., 2011; Asbury & Martin, 2012; Blank et al., 2012; Davis, Ward, & Storm, 2011; Dimiceli et al., 2010; Gall, 2009, Padden et al., 2011; Talkington, 2011; Wheeler & Stone,2010). Many researchers also have drawn from the National Guard population, citing the decentralized nature of the National Guard community and its general disconnect from the military and the military lifestyle except when service members are called to active duty and deployment (Lapp et al., 2010). Few researchers have taken their population from other branches of the military (Spera, 2009), or from foreign militaries (Andres, Moelker, & Soeters, 2012; Eran-Jona, 2011).

There are two reasons that this study was needed. First, the voices of Navy spouses are underrepresented in the literature. Second, the Navy develops and implements family service programs and policies to meet the social and support needs of the spouses. Knowledge regarding those needs and how the spouses fulfill or want to fulfill them is incomplete, particularly in relation to SMSs. This study may begin to fill the gap in the literature regarding the Navy spouse lifestyle in general, and the SMS lifestyle specifically, with the ultimate intent to better inform policy.

It is unclear what the actual role of the FRG is in how SMSs learn to live the SMS lifestyle. Furthermore, there is incomplete general knowledge about how military spouses learn the military spouse lifestyle, nor is there much exploration in the literature about the lifestyles of the spouses attached to specialized military units. The focus of the literature since the 1990s has been on the broad impact of deployment on spouses and families. These studies have focued very heavily on Army spouses and families. The Army has borne the greatest share of deployments to conflict zones since the 1990s, and studies focused broadly on those impacts without much account for the possible influences on the lifestyle and impacts of specialized units. Yet, formal support programs based on the general military spouse lifestyle have been applied to specialized military communities. This problem was explored by identifying the nature of the SMS lifestyle, and how SMSs acquire knowledge about the SMS lifestyle. If unique knowledge positively contributes to effectively weathering a specialized military lifestyle, then whether formal support programs are effective is unknown. It is also unknown if they create opportunities for that knowledge to be acquired by inexperienced spouses. Furthermore, there is a lack of

literature specifically about Navy spouses, and the spouses of U.S. Navy submariners. I examined the literature to uncover what is currently known, as well as key literature outside of what is most current that continues to shape and inform military spouse policy and programs.

The FRG program mission and goals suggest that one goal of the program is to expose SMSs to opportunities for social or lifestyle learning (Commander, 2018). There is silence in the literature about this topic, which suggests that the FRG is not utilized in accordance with its stated mission and program goals. Making the assumption that how the FRG is utilized is in fact not in alignment with the mission of the program, then it is plausible to also assume that the program is underserving the spouses.

Furthermore, how new spouses acquire knowledge of the military lifestyle, and of the lifestyle specific to their kind of unit, is not well understood. In the literature, there have been some studies that call for a better understanding of how this knowledge is acquired, directly and indirectly, as well as multiple studies that support the need for specialized knowledge about unique military communities (Aducci et al., 2011; Bowen & Martin, 2011; Burton et al., 2009; Carroll et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2011; Dimicelli et al., 2010; Huebner et al., 2009; Lapp et al., 2010; Saltzman et al., 2011; Spera, 2009).

There is scant literature studying Navy spouses, and even less literature studying the spouses of submariners. Only a portion of the findings in the current literature are generalizable to the broad population of military spouses. The rest is simply not applicable to the Navy or SMS lifestyles. The better-studied themes in current literature regarding military spouses focused on specific needs such as the impact of posttraumatic

stress disorder (PTSD) on service members and their spouses (Chan, 2015; Fische, Sherman, McSweeney, Pyne, Owen, & Dixon, 2015; Ohye, Brendel, Fredman, Bui, Rauch, Allard, Pentel, & Simon, 2015), the impact of deployment on children and various aspects of childhood (Balderrama-Durbin, Cigrang, Osborne, Snyder, Talcott, Slep, Heyman, Tatum, Baker, Cassidy, & Sonnek, 2015; Creech, Hadley, & Borsari, 2014; Rodriguez & Margolin, 2015;), and how health and mental health professionals can better serve military spouses (Kees & Rosenblum, 2015; Vaughn-Coaxum, Smith, Iverson, & Vogt, 2015; Westphal & Convoy, 2015). Furthermore, trends in the literature illustrate a shift away from exploring the impact of deployment on spouses toward exploring reintegration and resonating impacts such as posttraumatic stress disorder. It is important to remember that the deployment tempo of the Navy remains steady whether there is conflict in the world or not. Therefore, there is a need to fill this gap in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to define how SMSs perceive the lifestyle and the acquisition of lifestyle-specific knowledge in relation to their role as an SMS. The study was a qualitative examination of the SMS lifestyle and the efficacy of the FRG from the perspective of SMSs. I used Ingram, Schneider, and DeLeon's (2007) social construction and policy design as the theoretical framework to guide the inquiry.

Research Question

The objective of the study was to examine the experiences of spouses within the SMS community to discover the nature of the military lifestyle within that community. Through this examination, I wanted to elicit a deeper understanding of the efficacy of

formal support structures and the mechanisms that facilitate lifestyle learning. It then followed that the central research question must explore the nature of the SMS lifestyle to gain that deeper understanding. The central research question was, how do SMSs experience or perceive the FRG's role in their social construction and adaptation to the SMS lifestyle?

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for this inquiry was Ingram et al.'s (2007) theory of social construction and policy design, which is rooted in the broader notion that reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/2011). How reality is constructed, by whom, and how it shapes the policy that impacts target populations is the focus. Ingram et al. introduced social construction and policy design in the late 1980s to explain policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, particularly the distribution of benefits and burdens. The basis of the theory is that a combination of the political power of the target group and how they are socially constructed heavily influences how benefits and burdens are distributed (Ingram et al., 2007). There are six major propositions of social construction and policy design. The first is the message that the policy sends to the target group. The second is how benefits and burdens are allocated. The third is how power and social construction affect policy design. The fourth is public approval or approbation influences social construction. The fifth is that social constructions can change. Finally, the sixth is that different patterns of change are related to different policy designs (Ingram et al., 2007). Chapter 2 contains a more detailed explanation of these propositions.

Nature of the Study

The nature of the study was qualitative, and the purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of SMSs in relation to a formal support program that is intended to support them. This narrative of lived experiences was best suited to a qualitative approach, and was relevant to understanding the behaviors, beliefs, and decision making of SMSs (Patton, 2015). Social construction and policy design was related to the study approach because how SMSs construct themselves, the SMS lifestyle, and SMS culture may be different than how policy principles construct them. These differences may explain the disparity between the articulated mission of the FRG and how SMSs engage with and benefit or do not benefit from the program.

Given that the research objective was to explore the nature of the SMS lifestyle, a qualitative inquiry was best suited for this study. Much is known about the nature of the general military lifestyle. However, the SMS lifestyle needed to be explored to be better understood, and therefore, was well suited for qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2009). Very little research has been done about SMSs, and very little research has been done about the general population of Navy spouses. More about the SMS and the Navy-spouse lifestyles needed to be explored and understood, making a qualitative approach ideal (Creswell, 2009). Instrument development was guided by the research question and the qualitative approach, with exploring the nature of the lifestyle and the acquisition of knowledge about the lifestyle as a specific focus. Themes that emerged from the data were then used to broadly explore the social construction of policy. The phenomena that was investigated are the nature of the SMS lifestyle, and how SMSs acquire lifestyle capital.

I gathered data by inviting participants to answer a series of open ended questions online using an online survey platform. I then analyzed the data for themes using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software to code the verbatim text of the online survey responses. The themes that emerged were then synthesized along with the findings from the existing literature to describe the nature of the SMS lifestyle and how SMSs acquire lifestyle capital.

Definitions

Community capacity: The shared responsibility for the welfare of the community, the collective competence to address individual needs within the community, and the synergy between stakeholders in the community (Huebner et al., 2009; Spera, 2009).

Family or submariner family: For the purpose of this inquiry, *family* is used interchangeably with the word *spouse*. While the focus of this inquiry is on spouses, and not whole family units that may also include children, the word *family* is used to avoid confusion where the word *spouse* is not wholly accurate or changes the connotation of the language. For example, the military refers to all formal support programs as "family support programs," and the common understanding of "spousal support" does not refer to a formal social support program.

Family readiness: A term coined by the U.S. military to describe the highly individual strength building and resilience of military family members within the context of the demands of the military family lifestyle that create the need to weather adversity (Carroll et al., 2013).

Formal support network: Structured programs or activities that target specific individuals or communities. They are meant to facilitate connection to and participation in the community by providing a structured framework (Bowen & Martin, 2011; Huebner et al., 2009).

Informal support network: Less organized networks than formal support networks, usually consisting of networks of relationships and the mutual exchange within these relationships. These relationships are voluntary; may be formed and maintained organically; and may include family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and group associations. Informal support networks are the most accessible to individuals (Bowen & Martin, 2011; Huebner et al., 2009).

Lifestyle capital: Relevant knowledge and skills that are assumed to be necessary to transition into a new social reality. The concept of lifestyle capital is an amalgamation of the thinking of Putnam's (2000) notion of social capital and Bourdieu's (1986) notion of cultural capital. A more detailed discussion of the etiology of this term will be included in Chapter 2.

Military unit: A specific group to which a service member is assigned. For this study, this term is meant to replace the military-jargon term *command*, which is the correct military term for specific groups. In this usage, command refers to the most specific level of functional organization where multiple highly specialized divisions operate under a single leadership structure and unit identification.

Resilience: A combination of functional role performance, individual qualities, cycles of social exchange, social support, the obstacles and challenges that may impede

or interfere with functional role performance, and the need to re-establish or regain functional role performance within the context of adversity (Bowen & Martin, 2011; Cacioppo, Ries, & Zautra, 2011; Chapin, 2009; Riggs & Riggs, 2011; Meadows et al., 2016).

Resiliency: A concept that is related to resilience in that is it classified on a continuum from low resilience to high resilience. Placement along the continuum is dependent on the outcome of the resilience process that occurs when functional role performance is challenged by adversity (Bowen & Martin, 2011; Chapin, 2009).

Social capital: A concept that describes a network of social relations and the reciprocity that occurs between relationships within that network, calling attention to the ways that social connections are beneficial to the lives of individuals (Putnam, 2000). Examples of social capital may include social care and facilitating connections to formal support programs and services (Bowen & Martin, 2011).

Assumptions

Assumptions in social science research are necessary to establish the relevance of the research. They are not just things that the researcher assumes are true, but they are the things that must exist for the research to exist. Assumptions that are relevant to the research must be justified as probably true to pursue the research question (Simon, 2011).

There were a few assumptions that applied to this study. The first assumption was that the acquisition of lifestyle capital is necessary to live, navigate, and weather the SMS lifestyle. Second, it was assumed that SMSs want or need to acquire lifestyle capital. Third, it was assumed that lifestyle capital is necessary to create or become part of a new

social reality, to build individual and community capacity within the SMS community, and also to grow family readiness. Fourth, it was assumed that there is supposed to be some sort of mentorship mechanism incorporated into the function of the FRG for the FRG to fulfill its articulated mission to mentor inexperienced spouses and support all spouses. What this assumption does not account for is the idea that the existence of the FRG and the presence of SMSs at FRG meetings and events is itself facilitating of the transfer of knowledge through the social experience. Fifth, it was assumed that the theory of Social Construction and Policy Design will provide a framework that will enlighten the topic. Finally, it was assumed that the responses of the study participants will be honest. These assumptions were necessary to explore the nature of the SMS lifestyle, and to explore the mechanisms or resources that SMSs used to acquire lifestyle capital.

Scope and Delimitations

Scope refers to what defines what limits the breadth of the study, or what defines the focus of the study. Scope is defined by what limits the study, which is also called the limitations and delimitations. These define the boundaries of the study, and are chosen by the researcher (Simon, 2011).

The scope of this study focused exclusively on the SMS community, and did not address the lifestyle of the larger Navy or military community. There is enough literature to be able to understand broad generalities about the military lifestyle and the experiences of military spouses. That understanding can be transferrable to the general community of Navy spouses, with exceptions for variances in the roles of different military units. The specific focus was chosen because the experiences of the SMS community are unique

compared to other types of military units, but support programs are based on broad knowledge.

A very large segment of the literature explores various stressors, coping, and the implications of stress and coping. Little of the literature explores learning, themes related to social construction, policy indicators, or policy and program innovation and development. None of the current literature links any of these themes together, nor are there inquiries in the current literature that explore how policy and programs influence social learning in military spouses.

The narrow selection of literature that has themes broadly related to social learning and social construction includes a handful of theoretical frameworks that were not investigated. Those theoretical frameworks include Carroll et al.'s (2013) exploration of essential life skills and marriage education for military spouses using expectancy-value theory and possible-self theory. Expectancy-value theory posits that the means to satisfy basic needs will be acquired, including experience and a sense of the future self. Possible-self theory, in this context, is complimentary to the future-self component of expectancy-value theory because it connects learning to what may be valuable in the future. Cacioppo et al. (2011) explored the idea of resilience and social fitness using multi-level selection theory, which posits that social groups have adaptive advantages over individuals or uncoordinated groups. Finally, Gall (2009) explored the Army family team building program using transformative learning theory, which is a process of learning that is fostered through an awareness of mind and engaging in discourse and reflection. Theories

that appear in the related current literature were not selected because the scope of their application is too narrow to answer the research question for this study.

There is potential for the framework of this study to be transferable to examinations of other populations. There are a variety of communities that have unique needs that are in addition to needs generally attributed to living in mainstream societies. This framework could be applicable not only to the examination of other specialized military communities, but also to communities whose spouses endure other forms of absence, risk, or ambiguous loss, or where lifestyle capital might be an important component of resilience when resilience becomes necessary. Those communities need not be geographically centralized or have high levels of social capital between community members. Supporting the growth of individual and community capacity through policies and programs may still be informed very well by an understanding of the nature of these communities and the experiences of individual community members. For example, potential applications for further study might include the communities of family members of those incarcerated, mentally ill, homeless, or who abuse substances. Likewise, it might also apply to family members who endure frequent absences of spouses who have demanding private-sector jobs, or to the spouses of law enforcement officers and other first responders who fulfill roles in society that require an elevated level of risk.

Limitations

There were similar limitations in this study as in many other studies that focused on military spouses. Limitations are the elements that may affect the outcome of the

study, but are beyond the control of the researcher (Simon, 2011). The first limitation of the study was that the population of SMS spouses and significant others is composed almost entirely of women. Historically, only men have been allowed to serve aboard submarines, and open homosexuality and same-sex partners were actively discouraged and were not institutionally recognized by the military. Recent policy changes in the military and in the Navy will change the composition of the SMS population as open same-sex relationships and marriages are now recognized and accepted in the military, and women are beginning to serve aboard submarines. Now, male partners of submarine sailors are a very small fraction of the SMS community, and male partners and spouses are also consistently underrepresented in the literature regarding other military-spouse communities for similar reasons. However, the demographic of male partners of active duty service members within the SMS and larger military communities may grow in the future. It is important to note that the voices and experiences of the male partners of submarine sailors will need to be added to the knowledge regarding the nature of the SMS community and to how lifestyle capital is acquired.

The second limitation of the study was that the instrument was self-designed. The scope and delimitations of this study were unique compared to other examples in the literature that focused on other military communities, so questions for participants were developed to address the specific focus of this inquiry rather than relying on existing instruments.

Bias was also a potential limitation to the study. The largest possible source of bias is that I have been a member of the SMS community in some capacity since 1992,

and I was married to a submarine sailor for 13 years. I served as an FRG board member for a year and a command ombudsman for two and a half years for one of the submarines that my husband was assigned to. I have an enormous amount of experience in this lifestyle, and have shared experiences with close social connections within this community. However, there are gaps in my knowledge as a member of the SMS community. For example, my experience in the community is limited to Ohio-class submarines and one unique research submarine that was decommissioned in 2006. I have no experience with Virginia-class or Los Angeles-class submarines, which serve different missions than Ohio-class submarines.

Maintaining a heightened awareness of my own experiences was critical in my effort to avoid allowing my experiences to become sources of bias. I practiced reflexive writing (Anderson, 2012) throughout the research process to identify where I might have had expectations about the data I retrieve from an online survey platform. As I developed the interview questions, I purposefully chose language as though I had no knowledge about the SMS lifestyle. I also thoroughly answered the interview questions outside of the survey, reflecting on my experiences as they related to the questions so that I could identify where I may or may not have expectations. By doing so, I became aware of my own potential biases and how they might influence my approach to the data I collect. My own responses were of course be excluded from the data.

Finally, the electronic and non-interactive nature of the survey was a limitation. Many of the questions required more context to better understand the full meaning of the answers provided by the respondents. Had data been gathered using in-person interviews

rather than with an electronic survey, that context could have been gleaned from further discussion. The environment that the respondents was also unknown. In-person interviews would also have ensured that data was gathered in comparable environments.

Significance

With this study, I challenged the top-down construction of policy formulation and program development. The dominant themes in the literature and military spouse surveys reflect a focus on the stressors of military spouse life, which only have applications to specific aspects of military spouse life, and fail to capture the breadth of the lived experience from the perspective of military spouses. The focus on stressors, particularly by policy principals, also shows a paradox and a conflict between the articulated mission of the FRG, and its actual use by military spouses. Parcell and Macguire (2014) and Rossetto (2015) note that FRGs have the potential to marginalize spouses into in groups and out groups by the (dis)confirmation of one's behavioral or family choices, thus creating barriers between the spouses and coping resources. FRGs have the potential to not be able to create meaningful opportunities and relationships that enable spouses to learn about how to life the military spouse lifestyle. Furthermore, they have the potential to increase the induced burdens of the military spouse lifestyle rather than reducing those burdens.

Likewise, almost all studies of military spouses examine coping, stressors, resilience, well-being, or other similar themes. Fewer studies examine the nature of a specific kind of military lifestyle, and the specificity of those findings mean that they are not applicable to other kinds of military communities. For example, the nature of the

military lifestyle for National Guard spouses, who are highly decentralized and are not continuously connected with the military community, is very different from any other military community. Even within the same branch of service, there will be variance among lifestyles. With this study, I built upon what is known about the general military lifestyle, and examined the nature and needs of the SMS community.

This study has implications for a number of applications in practice and policy. Policy makers are often plagued with having to *muddle through* (Lindblom, 1959/2004) when creating or refining the infrastructure that is meant to support and stabilize a social system. Muddling through happens when policy or program solutions are not clear, and policy makers do the best they can with what they have between what is known about the issue and the interests of stakeholders within the issue. The potential for this study to advance practice is to potentially diminish the necessity to muddle through by shifting the consideration for program and policy goals to specific needs for specialized communities after general needs are accounted for. With this study, I may highlight the importance of discovering what the needs of specialized communities are when developing programs or policies, or I may find that programs or policies based on general knowledge are sufficient to meet the needs of specialized communities. Either way, the development process will be better informed, thus diminishing the necessity to muddle through.

The implication for positive social change is that a greater understanding of the nature of specialized communities and the specific needs of those communities has the potential to support the growth of individual and community capacity. The growth of capacity can then strengthen the resilience of individuals and communities (Cacioppo et

al., 2011; Wang, Nyutu, Tran, & Spears, 2015), making the demands of a lifestyle easier to weather and navigate. There is nothing that can make the military lifestyle easy for the spouses of service members. This is especially true for the spouses of service members who experience deployments. However, it should be possible to make it easier for spouses to acquire lifestyle capital or create new social realities by improving the policies and programs that create opportunities for growth and learning, and therefore also improving individual capacity, community capacity, and resilience. In the military community, the resilience and well-being of spouses is critical to support the service member and the mission of the unit (Hall, 2011; Westphal & Woodward, 2010), so the implication for positive change has the potential to extend beyond the spouses and into better support for the functions of the military. In non-military, specialized communities, especially for para-military communities, the implication for positive social change is likely very similar, if not the same.

Summary

Military spouses and how best to support them have been a focus of military policy for decades. Policy and program development has been responsive and adaptive in defining what aspects of the military spouse lifestyle become areas of interest and indicators for policy support or intervention. The literature is complete enough to provide a detailed picture of the general military spouse lifestyle. However, the specialized communities within the general military spouse lifestyle have unique experiences as military spouses that may or may not be served by general support programs such as the FRG.

Social construction and policy design highlights a space that requires exploration to better advance the knowledge that informs military family support policy. To explore this space, I focused on the spouses of U.S. Navy submarine sailors, using social construction and policy design as the theoretical framework. The next chapter will contain an exploration of the literature regarding how this theory and framework are suitable to approach exploring the nature of the SMS lifestyle and its policy implications, as well as synthesizing what is known about military spouses and the military spouse lifestyle.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The lifestyle of military spouses includes experiences that are not well known among civilians. Those experiences are often unusually demanding for the military spouse, and for the individuals within the military family (Asbury & Martin, 2012; Blank et al., 2012; Sheppard et al., 2010) Current programs and policies that are intended to provide for these unique needs of military spouses appear to have been designed from the perspective and experience of the broad military spouse community. Therefore, they tend to address the needs of the broad military spouse community, and not any unique needs of specialized units. One such program is the FRG.

The problem with the FRG, as it relates to the needs of military spouses, is that it does not appear to be utilized by military spouses in alignment with its purpose. Broadly stated, the purpose of the FRG is to provide a structure to create opportunities for spouses within a military unit to make social connections and to form social support and mentorship relationships with other unit spouses (Commander, 2018). If the goal of military family support is to build resilient communities and resilient spouses, but a major support program like the FRG does not appear to be utilized according to its family support mission, then it is uncertain whether the FRG is addressing the needs of the military spouse. More specifically, the question becomes whether a major program that is based on the general military spouse lifestyle can address the unique needs of the spouses attached to highly specialized military units.

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of the lifestyle of the spouses of U.S. Navy submariners (SMSs) and explore the role of the FRG in helping spouses learn to adapt to the military lifestyle. Specifically, I explored whether the realistic role of the FRG contributes to the acquisition of lifestyle capital, and what spouses identify as the sources of their lifestyle capital. The question that this study addressed was what the nature of the SMS lifestyle is as it is socially constructed by SMSs, and how adapting to the new social reality is or is not facilitated by the FRG program.

There is an ample selection of literature exploring a variety of topics related to military spouses. I observed that the literature that explores the lives and experiences of military spouses can be largely categorized in one of two ways. First, themes in the literature describe lifestyle phenomena that happen to spouses because they are married to active duty military service members. These themes describe circumstances and experiences that are either unique to the military community, or are highly uncommon in the lifestyles of general population. Stressors and coping with deployments are the dominant themes in this category of current literature, as well as themes related to resilience and various forms of social and psychological support in response to stressors and deployments.

The second category of themes that I observed in the literature is far less common. These are themes related to the nature of the military spouse lifestyle. The difference between the nature of the lifestyle and themes that describe lifestyle phenomena is that the nature of the lifestyle describes what one must be as a result of or in response to being a military spouse. The nature of the lifestyle requires the acquisition

of knowledge and skills that enable the spouse to navigate, understand, and participate in the lifestyle of the military spouse. It is a process that is internal to the spouse, as opposed to external and involving interaction with others. The nature of the lifestyle is the new *social reality* that the spouse must learn about, adopt, or adapt to, in part or in whole, when transitioning from a civilian lifestyle to a military one (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/2011; Cartwright & Zander, 1968). Social reality is defined as the social consensus of acceptable beliefs. Those beliefs may or may not be evidence-based within the social system, but they are held as social values that are generally agreed upon by the larger group (Cartwright & Zander, 1968).

The question then becomes to what extent is the new social reality a dominating factor in the lifestyles of military spouses. When a spouse connects with the military spouse lifestyle, how much of the new social reality becomes important to the spouse and incorporated into the spouses' existing civilian lifestyle varies from person to person (Padden et al, 2011; Spera, 2009; Villagran et al., 2013). Some spouses reject military life altogether, purposefully maintaining a distance from all things military, while others fully embrace it, and the rest fall somewhere in between (Talkington, 2011).

During my years as an SMS (2004 - 2018), I occasionally participated in official online surveys regarding the Navy family lifestyle and its formal support programs and services. It was my experience that the U.S. military regularly surveyed spouses for such input, but it was unknown whether the variable of social reality of military spouses is a consideration for family support policies and programs. It was also unclear whether specialized military lifestyles are a consideration for family support policies and

programs. The official surveys that I have participated in as a military spouse, like the dominant themes in the literature (Blank et al., 2012; Carroll et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2011; Dimiceli et al., 2010) were largely about stressors, deployments, and how well I was or was not coping. Yet, being a military spouse and living a military life has much more depth than stressors, deployments, and coping. Stressors, coping, and deployment do not occupy the entire lifestyle in the day to day context, and are not the only point of learning for the spouse.

The basis for current family support programs is fundamentally atheoretical and lacks an understanding of the social spectrum of the military spouse lifestyle (Bowen & Martin, 2011; Parcell & MacGuire, 2014) and parts of Pincus et al.'s (2001) cycle of deployment, particularly reintegration (Theiss & Knobloch, 2014). FRGs and formal support programs are viewed as a critical component of family readiness and family support (Parcell & MacGuire, 2014). Furthermore, some researchers have identified the need to understand the lifestyles and experiences of specialized military communities to better serve their support needs (Aducci et al., 2011; Bowen & Martin, 2011; Burton et al., 2009; Davis et al., 2011; Hall, 2011; Huebner et al., 2009; Lapp et al., 2010; Saltzman et al., 2011; Spera, 2009; Talkington, 2011). In this study I explored the nature of the U.S. Navy SMS lifestyle and the efficacy of the FRG relative to its ability to facilitate the transition from a purely civilian social reality to a social reality associated with being a military spouse. I also explored the origin of lifestyle capital for SMSs and whether these origins are related to the FRG.

I began to fill several gaps in the literature with this study. First, there are comparatively few studies that focus on Navy spouses (Glisson et al., 1980). Second, there is scant literature that examines the spouses of submarine sailors (Glisson et al., 1980). Third, I contributed to the comparatively small body of literature regarding the nature of the military spouse lifestyle with this study (Aducci et al2011; Andres et al., 2012; Blank et al., 2012; Huebner et al., 2009), versus themes regarding stressors and deployments. Fourth, I contributed to the very small body of literature that focuses specifically on the lifestyles and experiences of the spouses of service members in specialized units with this study (Dimiceli, 2010; Glisson et al., 1980; Lapp et al., 2010; Wheeler & Stone, 2010), rather than on broad populations of military spouses. Finally, the outcomes of this study may offer a theoretically informed basis for program and policy support for military spouses.

The major sections of this chapter will include the search strategy that I used to find relevant and current articles, an in-depth discussion of the theoretical foundation, and a review of key concepts that are found in the literature. The discussion of theory will include Ingram et al.'s (2007) social construction and policy design. Additionally, the rationale for selecting the literature, theories, and concepts will be included.

Literature Search Strategy

Studies related to military spouses span many fields and are informed by a broad scope of practice. To best capture relevant literature, I accessed all available databases in EBSCOhost, including those with dissertations, as well as databases external to EBSCOhost through ProQuest and Google Scholar. The EBSCOhost databases that

returned results were Academic Search Complete, the Military and Government Collection, Political Science Complete, PsychInfo, and SocIndex with Full Text. ProQuest and Google Scholar yielded a few additional articles that were not found in the EBSCOhost databases. Searching dissertations yielded several relevant doctoral works in addition to master's theses. Using my final iteration of key words and key word exclusions, I created a search notification in Google Scholar to be notified when relevant new research was published. Databases were searched using a variety of combinations of keys words as shown in Appendix A. Key words were searched for all applicable constructs and frameworks.

I used combinations of search terms with and without quotations around groups of terms to return relevant or related results and exact results; I also used the Boolean operator *AND* to return more limited results. Cursory searches using these combinations of key words yielded similar and overlapping results, including hundreds of articles relevant to military spouses, but beyond the scope of this paper. Search terms were then refined to yield results that excluded as many of these peripheral topics as possible. In the final iteration of key words, I used military families OR military family as Boolean search terms with quotations to return exact results, and used health, violence, PTSD, child, combat, veteran, veterans, children, youth, abuse, violence, divorce, suicide, traumatic, assault, tax, education, and immigrant as exclusionary terms.

I limited the selection of articles to those published in scholarly journals within the past 5 years, though I returned to the databases to retrieve older articles of significance that I discovered as I reviewed the current literature. Furthermore, I searched

all sources using the Boolean terms *navy AND submarines* to see if there was any published literature available specifically regarding the study population. A search of all sources yielded one article from 1980 regarding spouses that included a sample population drawn from the spouses of U.S. Navy submariners who were serving aboard Trident submarines. However, this study from 1980 was not about the military or SMS lifestyles. It was a study about job-induced separation (Glisson et al., 1980). Given the lack of research regarding Navy spouses or the spouses of submariners, I focused the search process on finding literature containing constructs that are generalizable to military spouses and relevant to the theoretical framework.

Other areas where the search process yielded few results were the application of social construction to community capacity, resilience, or social service delivery. To discover applicable literature related to social construction, I did not limit my searches to military spouse communities. For these searches, the use of key words was as broad as possible to capture the most results potentially applicable to target concepts.

Theoretical Foundation

Social construction and policy design emerged as a cohesive theoretical framework in the late 1980s as a way to explain the variables of policy design, and how policy is selected, implemented, and evaluated. It is rooted in the broader theory of social construction, first synthesized by Berger and Luckmann in 1966, which posited that social reality is constructed and one's consciousness is determined by one's social being. Consciousness accumulates knowledge and experience that is then used by the social being to construct a social reality that the being operates within and interacts with. How

the knowledge of the social being is ordered is determined by the society. As it relates to policy, Ingram et al. (2007) state that the positive or negative social construction of target groups by policy makers determines how policy design distributes benefits and burdens to those populations. This construction by policymakers not only influences the distribution of benefits and burdens, but the policy design then reflects and perpetuates the construction. This reflection of social construction helps to explain policy outcomes, successes, failures, the relationship between the target population and government, and other effects in target populations (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/2011; Ingram et al., 2007).

What is different about social construction and policy design is that it holds social standing, reputation, and image as influential forces separate from economic and political resources as political power, and that how target populations are treated affects their image of government and political participation (Ingram et al., 2007). More far reaching than target populations, how policy is socially constructed also impacts public and elite opinion and knowledge systems. Socially constructed policy can influence the institutions of knowledge systems by influencing the application of preferences, the distribution of knowledge, and the creation of political capital. Ultimately, socially constructed policy designs influence participation opportunities, resource allocation, and shape the target population through the messages that it sends (Ingram et al., 2007).

There are six major propositions of social construction and policy design. The first is that policy sends a message to target populations about how government will behave toward them and how they can expect to be treated. The second is that how benefits and burdens are allocated depends on the political power and the positive or

negative social construction of the target population. The third is that the power and social construction of target populations affects policy design elements. The fourth is that policy principals, especially elected principals are motivated by public approval or approbation to help socially construct target groups. The fifth is that social constructions can change, and policy design can create change. Finally, the sixth proposition is that in the context of degenerative policymaking, different patterns of change are related to different policy designs. In the following section I will examine these propositions in more detail.

Proposition 1

The first proposition is that target populations are treated in a specific way by government, and government behaves in a specific way toward target populations. How this treatment and behavior is manifested depends on the policy design structures and the messages policy design is intended to send. The design structure and its' messages affect the political orientation of the target population, as well as the participation. Messages convey who or what is important, including whose voice will be included in the formulation of the social construction and policy. Policy can be both material, which affects resources, and symbolic, which have interpretive affects. Resource effects are enforced with either political or economic authority, and interpretive effects are associated with the social construction of target populations (Ingram et al., 2007).

Proposition 2

The second proposition states that how benefits and burdens are allocated depends on the political power and the positive or negative social construction of the target

population. The positive or negative social construction will fall somewhere along a spectrum between deserving or undeserving, and coupled with a positive or negative social construction, target populations will fall into one of four categories. The categories are not meant to be hard classifications. Some target populations have political power, but do not have a positive or negative social construction. Instead, the categorizations are meant to conceptualize the policy environment. They will be advantaged groups, contenders, dependents, or deviants (Ingram et al., 2007).

Advantaged groups are groups that have substantial resources for political power and are positively socially constructed. They tend to be constructed as important in the social and political hierarchy, are likely to receive more benefits than burdens through policy, and are likely to be treated respectfully. What burdens advantaged groups is often voluntary or consistent with professional codes of ethics. Policy implementation tends to involve agency outreach to the target population to distribute benefits. There are many opportunities to engage with the policy and its benefits, as well easy mechanisms for complaints and agency accountability. The benefit to advantaged groups and policymakers is mutual. Policy makers gain political capital by distributing benefits to advantaged groups, which generates positive momentum for related areas of policy that benefits other or similar advantaged groups (Ingram et al., 2007).

Contender groups are similar to advantaged groups in that they have substantial political resources. However, contender groups are negatively constructed as morally suspect, selfish, and untrustworthy. The political power of contender groups makes it likely that policy will favorably distribute benefits to group members, however, the

distribution of benefits is not obvious and is often difficult to identify. There is some social and political shame associated with openly distributing benefits to contender groups because they are constructed as undeserving (Ingram et al., 2007).

Dependent groups enjoy a positive social construction by policymakers, but are generally considered politically weak, therefore, the idea of being deserving tends to lend itself toward sympathy and pity. Because they have very little political power, benefits tend to be under-prescribed and burdens tend to be overprescribed because the lack of adequate political power means that resources are directed away from them. Additionally, dependent groups are generally not supported by policies in finding or creating opportunities for self-help, and are therefore left to rely on agencies or other services. However, policy makers generally want to appear to be working in the interest of dependent groups, such as mothers and children, so allocated benefits may be hidden, and allocated burdens may be empty. Policy intended for dependent groups can be symbolic or hortatory instead of substantive, because symbolic or hortatory policy still creates the impression of support. The responsibility for allocating of benefits tends to be left for the private sector, nonprofit and faith-based organizations, or for lower levels of government. Since dependent groups are constructed by government as needy, powerless, or helpless, dependent groups tend to regard government passively and with a lack of interest (Ingram et al., 2007).

Finally, deviants are negatively socially constructed as underserving, and have almost no political power. Given this lack of power and their undeserving social construction, burdens are disproportionately allocated to deviant groups with very few

benefits, and are often in the form of sanctions or punishments. Policy makers do not fear the political retaliation from deviant groups, and the general public tends to approve of the allocated burdens or sanctions, making burdens and sanctions politically attractive (Ingram et al., 2007).

Proposition 3

The third proposition states that the treatment of target groups in policy design, implementation, and the distribution of benefits and burdens will differ depending their political power and how they are socially constructed. However, constructing target groups as deserving or undeserving is not necessarily characteristic of all policymaking. Policy making can also be driven by expertise and science, which is dominated by reasoning and interests instead of political power and how target groups are socially constructed (Ingram et al., 2007).

Proposition 4

The fourth proposition states that public approval or public approbation influences how policymakers respond to, create, and perpetuate social constructions of target groups. The consequences of policies feed back or forward, helping to institutionalize the social construction, reinforcing power relationships and institutional cultures. Feeding back or forward also discourages negatively constructed groups from participating in government, and encourages positively constructed groups to participate. Institutionalization means that some social construction remains relatively stable over time, but others are debated and manipulated. The social constructions that are debated and manipulated can change the categorization of the target group by changing how they

are positively or negatively constructed, as well as by creating an image of the target group (Ingram et al., 2007).

Scheider and Sydney (2009) further explored feed forward effects that reinforce institutionalization and institutional cultures, and identified four types of effects that impact the target policy environment. The first effect is the way that policy design creates target populations. The second effect is how citizens are differently impacted by the allocation of resources or the application of specific rules. The third effect is the way that policies embed rhetorical casual assumptions and rationales into the policy debate. Finally, the fourth effect is how pressing issues within target populations impact policy design. In a review of past applications of social construction and policy design, Pierce et al. (2014) noted that policy has a cyclical dynamic that flows between design, the target population, and the feed forward effects. How target populations are socially constructed and how policy is designed are functions of each other. The feed forward effects influence one or the other depending on whether social construction influences policy, or vice versa. This finding highlights the importance of feed forward effects within the dynamic between target populations, policy, and policy makers.

Proposition 5

The fifth proposition states that social constructions of target groups can change. Policy design can be a catalyst for change, but there are other forces that influence how social constructions evolve. Often, those forces are born of the consequences of previous policy, whether they are intended or unintended. However, social constructions, like many things in the policy environment, are resistant to change, particularly when policy

design reinforces social constructions. Policy design is influential in how social constructions evolve because policy design interferes with target groups' attempts to change how they are constructed, reinforces those attempts, or supports those attempts. For groups where social construction is not a consideration, science can have the same type of impact on policy change. However, for groups that are strongly socially constructed, science in opposition of the social construction is often disregarded, and can reinforce stereotypes (Ingram et al., 2007).

Proposition 6

Finally, the sixth proposition states that different patterns of policy change are related to differences in policy designs within a degenerative policymaking context. Degenerative politics and professionalized or expert politics characterize the institutional culture within the policy space. Degenerative politics are competitive and oppositional, and often divide into factions. Professionalized or expert politics are rational and scientific, where policymaking is instrumental (Ingram et al., 2007).

The long-term equilibrium of the policy environment is characterized by conferring benefits to advantaged groups and detriments to disadvantaged, or deviant, groups. Conferring benefits and detriments grows successively over time until it no longer produces effective results, thus causing the path dependency to end. It is much more difficult to confer detriments to advantaged groups because the marginal returns diminish. Advantaged groups are better able to resist the imposition of unaccepted detriments given the greater access to resources within the positive social construction and the amount of political power (Ingram et al., 2007).

Current Trends and Recent Applications in the Literature

Social construction has been applied frequently to public policy. Social construction and policy design became a framework that shed light on the role of social construction within the policy process. Socially constructed realities and identities can be shaped by policy design within the policy's target population. In turn, the policy feeds forward into the future and into governing institutions, social bases, and social processes to shape community politics and governance. What is different about social construction and policy design, versus Berger & Luckmann's synthesis of social construction and social reality, is that policy determines how costs and benefits are distributed among groups within the social system. In this way, social construction becomes an element of cost and benefit distribution (Ingram et al., 2007).

Social construction and policy design was developed in an effort to better understand why policies sometimes do not solve the problems or fulfill the purposes that they were designed to address, or why some groups are burdened, while others are benefited (Ingram et al., 2007). Pierce et al. (2014) reviewed past applications of social construction and policy design in the body of peer-reviewed literature between 1993 and 2013 to determine how and how broadly the theory has been applied. Their findings conclude that the theory has been broadly applied across many fields of public policy, most predominantly within the sphere of social welfare. They observed from the literature that policy, both internal and external to the target population, could influence the social construction of target populations. Most notably to the topic of this inquiry, Pierce et al. observed that external shocks to the policy subsystem can drive change in the

social reality. Pierce et al. also observed from the literature that learning about issues or problems by policy elites and external social systems can also change the social construction for the target population.

The current trends in social construction and policy design include Nowlin's (2011) findings that there was some trending toward narrative policy framework, where stories, context, heroes, villains, and other elements of storytelling are how individuals understand policy issues. In 2014, Shanahan, Jones, McBeth, and Radaelli explored social construction as it relates to narrative policy framework. Shanahan et al. observed that social construction matters as a core assumption of narrative policy framework, validating social construction as a factor of policy design. Unlike Ingram, Schneider, and DeLeon (2007), Shanahan et al.'s application of social construction was more aligned with Berger and Luckmann's (1966/2011) more basic notion of social construction in that its relevance to policy was in how groups assign value and meaning to processes or objects that are associated with policy.

Regarding the utility of social construction and policy design, Nowlin's (2011) synthesis of the application of social construction has a broad utility across policy domains. These findings support the notion that social construction and policy design was developed to be a cohesive theoretical framework. Nowlin found that social construction has been applied in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies, with a predominantly qualitative application. In quantitative studies, social construction has been applied as the dependent variables and the independent variables

Regarding military spouses specifically, there is some application of social construction in the literature, though not necessarily within the context of policy. Jennings-Kelsall, Aloia, Solomon, Marshall, & Leifker, (2012) applied a social constructionist framework to their inquiry of the relational aspects of stress in the spouses or partners of active-duty Marines. Villagran et al. (2013) and Mehta (2012) mentioned that the narrative that constitutes the identity and roles of military spouses is socially constructed, and Villagran et al. described unique realities related to specialized military communities. However, neither applied social construction or social reality as a framework in either inquiry. Finally, Harrell (2001) also argued that the military spouse is a socially constructed and gendered role, and indirectly, Saltzman et al. (2013) acknowledged social construction in military spouses by stating that meaning and sense must be made of life experiences.

Constructs that parallel social construction have also been applied to military spouses in the literature. Cacioppo et al. (2011) applied network reciprocity to their study of military spouses, where the social norm is to contribute to the good of the group, which fosters cooperation and collective action. In this regard, the norm of social contribution may be likened to the institutionalization of social contribution with the social construction framework. The military community is known for taking care of its' own, or having a culture of social contribution, particularly in times of great need. Similarly, Huebner et al. (2009) wrote of the bidirectional relationship between formal and informal support networks, how this relationship facilitates the formation of social capital, and the relationship between social capital and community capacity. Part of what

comprises social capital is knowledge and experience, and knowledge and experience are components that engage the individual in constructing a social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/2011). Outside of military spouses, Segal, Segal, and Eyre (1992) applied social construction to an examination of the social definition of military peacekeeping missions and the nature of the military. Their inquiry included service members and their spouses, and concluded that the military plays a central role in the transmission of knowledge regarding peacekeeping missions as objects within the applicable social reality.

Rationale for Social Construction Framework

While themes related to the socially constructed reality of specialized units is sparse, there is support in the literature for further exploring the nature and social construction of the military spouse lifestyle within specialized units (Aducci et al., 2011, Cacioppo et al., 2011; Dimicelli et al., 2010; Hall, 2011; Sheppard et al., 2010). Several studies with a variety of research approaches collectively amount to a consensus that the military spouse lifestyle is a unique reality that is separate from the lifestyle of the general population, and that there is a need to better understand that lifestyle. Military spouses live in multiple realities (Aducci et al., 2011), current models for support programs and services do not fully frame the military-spouse experience because they are atheoretical and are based upon social definitions that are too broad (Bowen & Martin, 2011), and social ecologies should be a focus of research so that diverse experiences and perceptions may be better understood (Cacioppo et al., 2011; Saltzman et al., 2011; Talkington, 2011).

Furthermore, military spouses face unique or specific stressors and challenges, not only in comparison to non-military spouses, but also within the context of military service. Several studies explored these unique aspects of military life, all calling for a better understanding. Carroll et al. (2013) reviewed the literature and existing support programs about National Guard spouses, and concluded that there is a need for essential life skills programs that include elements of social capital that are unique to the military spouse lifestyle. Dimiceli et al. (2010) was one of the few quantitative studies in this theme, and examined stressors. Dimiceli et al. asked participants to name their biggest stressors and describe their coping strategies, concluding that problem-focused strategies for military spouses were more effective that emotion-focused coping strategies. Huebner, Mancini, Bowen, and Orthner's (2009) qualitative study explored issues with military spouses that were related to deployment to a war zone, concluding with the development of capacity-building framework and implications for implementing a capacity-building model. Sheppard et al. (2010) reviewed the literature to understand the various aspects of deployment to a warzone and the impact on spouses and spouse resilience, offering a model for family stability. Spera (2009) qualitatively explored the perceptions that active duty service members had about the ability of their spouses to cope with deployment and adjust to Air Force spouse life, finding that there were protective factors that positively and negatively influenced the spouses' ability to cope and adjust. Finally, Wheeler and Stone (2010) also interviewed National Guard spouses in a qualitative study. Using a grounded theory approach, Wheeler and Stone explored how National Guard spouses cope with deployment. Each of these studies also called for

a better understanding of the military spouse lifestyle, though the study of National Guard spouses dominated this period of the literature.

The consensus of the literature that there is a need for further study. Previous applications can be indirectly applied to a social construction framework, making social construction an ideal framework to explore the nature of the SMS lifestyle. Social construction, and social construction and policy design specifically, accounts for all aspects that amount to the military spouse lifestyle and the SMS lifestyle, including how the social construction of military spouses affects formal support policies and programs. There is a clear difference between the literature, which broadly explores how military spouses socially construct themselves, and how military spouses are constructed by the policy principals who develop the formal social support programs. While both groups appear to positively construct military spouses, how a top-down approach to that construction by policy principals and a bottom-up approach to that construction may impact formal support programs remains to be explored.

With the research question, I challenged the top-down application of social construction and policy design, or in this case, program design. First, I asked how SMSs experience or perceive the FRG's role in their social construction and adaptation to the SMS lifestyle. Given that military spouses are advantaged because they are positively constructed as deserving, and have considerable political power (Ingram et al., 2007), the question becomes which social construction the allocated benefits, specifically the FRG, really serves. The allocated benefits can either serve how SMSs are socially constructed

by policy principals, or how SMSs socially construct themselves. I then explored how SMSs socially construct themselves, and the implications for policy and programs.

Lifestyle Capital

The term *lifestyle capital* is a synthesis of the constructs of social capital and cultural capital. It describes the new knowledge, skills, and relationships that are acquired during the creation of a new socially constructed reality, or during the period when an existing socially constructed reality is inculcated into a new member. Regarding military spouses, the socially constructed reality is a lifestyle, and the military spouse exists in two social realities or lifestyles. The first is the social reality of the civilian community, and the second is the social reality of the military spouse community. The military spouse may simultaneously exist in both realities in varying degrees. However, existence in the social reality of the military spouse community must be learned, hence, lifestyle capital must be acquired.

Social capital is a construct that Putnam (2000) examined within the context of the historic use of the term, which first appeared publication in 1916. How this term has been described has always referred to the important role that social ties play in the quality and productivity of our lives. The more the social being is in contact with neighbors, community, and community organizations, the more social capital accumulates.

As the construct evolved in the literature, the depth of the definition included the idea that individuals form relationships and connections that benefit their interests, and that those connections are of greater benefit in a community that is well connected with other communities. Within those connections, there is reciprocity between individuals,

which can either be a specific expectation of mutual benefit, or a general expectation of contribution to the larger community. Therefore, in the economic sense, social capital is simultaneously a private good that benefits the individual, and a public good that benefits the community. It also is distinguished as either *bridging* social capital, which is inclusive, or *bonding* social capital, which is exclusive (Putnam, 2000). Social capital within the military spouse community can be distinguished as both, depending on individual status as an insider or an outsider. Social capital can be bridging internal to the community of military spouses, to include new members of the community, and it can be bonding in reference to the general civilian community, who are not members of the community.

Unlike social capital, cultural capital represents the knowledge and skills that create advantages for an individual within a social system, and thus may grant an individual a higher social status. Cultural capital can be embodied, objectified, or institutionalized. *Embodied cultural capital* includes the properties of the self, particularly properties that are acquired over time though socialization, culture, and traditions. *Objectified cultural capital* includes the physical objects that are owned by an individual. Finally, *institutional cultural capital* includes institutionally recognized assets such as credentials, degrees, certifications, or other institutionally recognized qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986).

Together, social capital and cultural capital describe what sorts of connections or assets might be acquired when a spouse transitions from a civilian lifestyle into a military one. However, separately, these two existing terms are inadequate to describe all the

knowledge and skills that may need to be acquired during that transition. Given that the civilian social reality and the military spouse social reality are separate lifestyles, the term *lifestyle capital* is appropriately descriptive of all the fruits of the learning process as the spouse transitions from one into the other. Furthermore, encompassing all the aspects of learning and acquisition that amount to lifestyle capital and the construction of a new social reality into one cohesive term creates a new, more universal framework for policy principals to explore where the policy indicators may lie for family and community readiness and resilience.

Furthermore, in the study of organizational socialization, Bauer and Erdogan (2014) build on the idea of cultural capital, pointing out that along with Bourdieu (1986), that cultural capital is relevant to successful adjustment. Bauer and Erdogan synthesize the notions of human, social, psychological, and cultural capital into the notion of *personal capital*, to which parallels with lifestyle capital may be drawn. Personal capital, and therefore potentially successful adjustment to the organization, results when newcomers to an organization are socialized within the organization. Lifestyle capital, and therefore the potential for successful adjustment, results from the adoption of the socially constructed reality. That there are a variety of similar or related notions of capital in the literature reinforces the appropriateness of the notion of lifestyle capital.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

In the interest of focusing on what is broadly known about military spouses and the nature of the military spouse lifestyle, themes that are non-generalizable, such as combat deployments specifically, or topics related to combat related posttraumatic stress

disorder (PTSD) were not included. While these experiences continue to be common throughout the military spouse community and are important major stressors for military spouses, they are not generalizable because only a portion of all military units deploy to combat. They cannot be broadly applied to the whole of the military spouse community, and therefore do not contribute to the bigger picture of the defining the nature of the military spouse lifestyle. In addition to non-generalizable themes, all themes regarding children in military families and studies that focus on the experiences of unique communities, such as National Guard spouses, were omitted to narrow the scope of the inquiry.

Previous Approaches to Studying Military Spouses

Most previous research has approached military spouse topics without a purposeful focus on specialized units, and very little of the available literature directly examines the delivery of social services to military spouses (Andres et al., 2012; Blank et al., 2012; Bowen & Martin, 2011: Cacioppo et al., 2011; Talkington, 2011). Out of all of the diversity in the literature, a possible core construct emerges. That construct is that policies and programs meant to support military spouses and resilience in military families should account for whether the delivery of social services can effectively interface with the actual nature of the military spouse lifestyle.

One of the greatest strengths of previous research is that the stressors that affect military spouses have been well explored, especially stressors related to deployment, and stressors continue to be a focus for supportive policies and programs. However, a theme that has very strongly emerged from a review of the literature is that a focus on stressors

dominates the research. This emphasis on stressors ignores other important aspects of the military spouse lifestyle, such as the process individuals undergo to learn about and adapt to the lifestyle, key or defining points within the process of adaptation, and the role that constructing a new identity plays among individuals and the community in general. The emphasis on stressors also acknowledges the military spouse community as a social system, but broadly ignores how the dynamics within the social system affect learning and adaptation, which may or may not be related to stressors. These things have received a small amount of attention in the literature. Stressors and deployment are only part of the military spouse lifestyle.

All branches of the military are represented in the literature as well. However, by far, Army spouses have been studied the most, followed by Navy spouses. Experiences of the military spouse lifestyle that are generalizable to all branches of service and to most specialized units are also well represented. Furthermore, global conflict involving the US military since 1990 has also created opportunities to study the impact of deployment on military spouses, as well as repeated deployment, and deployment with increased potential for danger. The sum of the literature shows that much is broadly known about military spouses and the general military spouse lifestyle.

Almost all studies share the same weakness, which is a lack of data collected from male military spouses, and from the spouses or partners of homosexual military service members. This weakness is explained in part by the overwhelming predominance of heterosexual male service members in the military, and therefore the overwhelming predominance of female spouses among military spouses. Furthermore, the acceptance of

openly homosexual service members has only recently been incorporated into the institutional framework of the military, so homosexual spouses and partners are a very small minority of the military spouse community. That male spouses and homosexual spouses and partners are such a small minority in the military spouse community creates a potential problem for researchers in that it may be difficult to protect the anonymity of research participants when the sample population includes them. Nonetheless, the voices of male spouses and of homosexual spouses and partners are an important contribution to a complete understanding of the military spouse lifestyle, and this segment of the military spouse population lacks representation in the literature. Should this minority population grow, the difficulties that researchers may face in protecting the anonymity of minority participants may become less acute.

Rationale for Study Focus

There are very few studies that focus on the military spouse lifestyle of specialized units, and very few studies that address the learning and adaptation aspect of constructing a new social reality. However, there are many studies that address the impacts of stressors and deployment. To address these gaps in the literature, this study explored the nature of the military spouse lifestyle, specifically for the spouses of U.S. Navy submarine sailors (SMSs). It also explored how SMSs learn about the SMS lifestyle, and what does or does not contribute to lifestyle learning, or acquiring lifestyle capital. The concept of acquiring lifestyle capital is meant not only to explore the learning aspect, but also to discover what role formal support networks play within that process. More specifically, I specifically explored the actual role of the current FRG in

this process. It was not evident from the available military spouse literature that any of these concepts have been a direct focus of research, though some studies have indirectly or incidentally addressed the learning process and the lifestyles of specialized units.

Key Concepts

Much is known about the nature of the military spouse lifestyle and the social reality that new spouses must adapt to. Social reality is defined as the social consensus of acceptable beliefs. Those beliefs may or may not be evidence-based within the social system, but they are held as social values that are generally agreed upon by the larger group (Cartwright & Zander, 1968). Coming into that social reality, new military spouses must adapt to a new and distinct culture, a new social structure, a new system of protocols and standards, and a new language that is full of jargon and acronyms (Aducci et al., 2011; Hall, 2011).

It is the collective proposal of the literature that military spouses experience less distress when they are accepting of the military lifestyle, and that they are better able to withstand the hardships of deployment and the stressors. This finding is validated by the work of Larsen, Clauss-Ehlers, & Cosdan (2015), who studied the clinical implications of deployment stress and adaptation relative to the challenges of adjusting to new roles as a military spouse. Many spouses also desire a sense of belonging, which in large part is dependent on a sense of being supported socially and a sense of being able to support socially (Talkington, 2011).

How Military Spouses Are Constructed by Outsiders and Policy Principals

Constructions related to stress. Military spouses are broadly constructed as stressed by outsiders and policy principals, and this is reflected by the dominance of stressors in the literature and in the approach to the design of formal support networks. Much is known about the broad variety of stressors that military spouses experience. The consensus of the literature is that coping is a highly individual and multi-faceted dimension of the military spouse lifestyle.

The ability of the spouse to adapt to the military lifestyle and be resilient when experiencing stressors correlates very strongly with age, experience, and the experience of the active duty spouse. This correlation is prevalent in the literature. Spouses who have prior military experience also tend to adapt more readily to the military spouse lifestyle, and therefore be more resilient. These spouses may have either been in the military themselves, or a parent who served in the military may have raised them. Likewise, the time in service and the rank of the active duty spouse correlates positively with the adaptive ability of the civilian spouse, as does the active duty spouse's perception of the civilian spouse's ability to cope (Blank et al., 2012; Burton et al., 2009; Carroll et al., 2013; Davis, Ward, & Storm, 2011; Gorbaty, 2009; Lapp et al., 2010; Padden et al., 2011; Sheppard et al., 2010; Spera, 2009).

While deployment is the greatest source of a variety of stressors, the individual stressors themselves are well studied in the literature. Stressors that are common to the unique experiences of military spouses will be defined in this section. Many common

stressors are broadly generalizable to military spouses. Common stressors will be categorized by their fundamental nature as adaptive, disruptive, emotional, or other.

Adaptive stressors. Adaptive stressors include adversity, obstacles, and challenges that require the military spouse to evolve, grow, or otherwise change as the mechanism to cope with the military spouse lifestyle. There is some agreement that military spouses must have or be able to develop the ability to proactively handle the stress of the military lifestyle and the separation that it demands, and to be able to cope with all of the stressors that are inherent with the lifestyle (Andres et al, 2012; Spera, 2009). Adaptive stressors may include shifts in family roles, workload, and responsibilities when the active duty service member is deployed. These role shifts may be manifested by the spouse as sole burden bearing, which is a shift that occurs when the spouse left behind takes on the sole responsibility for handing the stress of the self, life, and the household. This may also include the sole burden-bearing for child rearing (Aducci et al., 2011; Andres et al., 2012; Blank et al., 2012; Chapin, 2009; Glisson et al. 1980; Lapp et al., 2010; Villagran, Canzona, & Ledford, 2013).

Disruptive stressors. Disruptive stressors are the stressors that interrupt the continuity, stability, or predictability of life. Much of the military includes units that deploy. Deployment is the primary event that disrupts the continuity of family life. Indeed, many military spouses experience regular separations (Villagran et al., 2013). The separation of deployment causes stressful experiences for spouses that require coping and adaptation, and the highly disruptive nature of deployment is assumed. However, deployment is not the only disruptive force that is experienced by military spouses.

Disruptive stressors can occur around the event of deployment, during deployment, and also as forces that are inherent in the nature of the military spouse lifestyle.

Surrounding the disruption of deployment, spouses must reconcile the competition between the needs of the military and the needs of the family unit. Eran-Jona (2011) explored this dynamic though the lens of the military as a greedy institution, meaning that the military claims the priority for the service member's time and emotional commitment, leaving the household and the family as a secondary commitment for the service member. Spouses adapt to the greediness of the institution differently. However, this generally means that most of the responsibility for the household and the family falls to the civilian spouse. The brunt of this responsibility is entirely shifted to the spouse when the service member deploys, and then is renegotiated or readjusted as the service member readapts to home life following deployment. That there cannot be continuity to these roles within the family can be quite disruptive.

Furthermore, since it is expected that the needs of the military supersede all other needs, the disruption of rigorous training schedules can also be a stressor for spouses (Hall, 2011), particularly during pre-deployment. Rigorous training schedules may demand that service members be separated from spouses in ways that may be considered extraordinary in civilian employment. However, many spouses describe life during pre-deployment preparation as on hold. When family life is on hold, the continuity and normalcy of family life is disrupted because spouses are not able to make short term or long term plans (Lapp et al., 2010). Instead, spouses wait for concrete information

regarding the deployment plans that family life and any plans must revolve around. Often, that concrete information comes on short notice.

Other disruptive stressors occur during military family life. Families may be required to move frequently as duty stations are reassigned (Hall, 2011). While frequently moving may offer unique and enriching experiences for military families (Sheppard et al., 2010), frequently moving can often deter military spouses from having a career or pursuing educational opportunities (Dimiceli et al., 2010; Talkington, 2011). Outside of the impact to the spouse, frequently moving may also be disruptive to family life as children must leave familiar friends, schools, and neighborhoods, and adapt to life in new communities.

Disruptive stressors continue to afflict spouses during deployment. For example, the continuity and access of communication during deployment can be heavily disrupted. Spouses describe themselves as being captives of communication technology, meaning that they must wait for phone calls from the deployed spouse, and experience stress when expected phone calls from the service member do not come. Furthermore, communication with deployed service members is often monitored, meaning that there is much that must remain unsaid (Lapp et al., 2010). There is also a dynamic called protective buffering, which is where one spouse withholds information from the other to prevent causing stress or a sense of helplessness. Protective buffering is an attempt by either the spouse or the service member to create balance between disclosure and communicating freely, and sharing information that may cause worry or helplessness (Joseph & Afifi, 2010).

Emotional stressors. Emotional stressors are the stressful emotional dynamics that a spouse may experience because of the military spouse lifestyle. Most of the emotional stressors are affiliated with deployments, and the stressors of the greatest magnitude are often associated with combat deployment. Fear is perhaps the most egregious. Spouses worry during deployment, and while those fears may be associated with the dangers of combat or the dangers associated with the active duty spouse's technical role (Aducci et al., 2011; Andres et al., 2012; Blank et al., 2012; Chapin, 2009; Davis et al., 2011; Padden et al., 2011), they may not necessarily be. Fear and worry can be exacerbated or diminished depending on the spouse's level of working knowledge about the military (Gorbaty, 2009; Lapp et al., 2010). Fear and worry can also revolve around the unknown. The unknown may include a lack of information or knowledge, but it can also include worry about the potential for the military spouse lifestyle to change relationships, and what the nature of those changes might be (Lapp et al., 2010). Fears can also include separation anxiety, and the fear of indefinite separation or the fear of death (Dimiceli et al., 2010).

Aside from fear, spouses experience loss. Loss not only includes the loss associated with family separation, but it also includes the grief associated with all of the things that the spouse gives up during deployment, and all of the things that the spouse gives up as a result of the military spouse lifestyle (Davis et al., 2011). Loss may also include isolation and loneliness, or a loss of social or psychological connection, and it may also include the sense of grief associated with the service member missing key family events (Andres et al., 2012; Blank et al., 2012; Chapin, 2009; Lapp et al., 2010).

Indeed, loss in this sense can border on a feeling of abandonment (Lapp et al., 2010). Spouses often experience ambiguous loss. Ambiguous loss can be a state of grief, but it is defined by a physical presence but psychological absence of a loved one, or vice versa. Ambiguous loss is often characteristic of deployment (Boss, 1999; Riggs & Riggs, 2011).

Other pervasive emotional stressors include ambiguity, powerlessness, boredom, and the need to feel or be understood by others. Ambiguity is uncertainty, and it can be associated with many aspects of military spouse life. However, ambiguity has the most impact as a stressor surrounding and during deployment. Many aspects of life become ambiguous during these periods, which may include uncertainties about the mission, safety, and time frames (Andres et al., 2012). Powerlessness is helplessness, which can occur in the face of stressful news reports or rumors, and also may be experienced related to uncertainties and a lack of control (Andres et al., 2012; Davis et al., 2011). Boredom, in this context, does not refer to a lack of social or intellectual stimulation, but instead refers to the unavailability of the service member as the spouse's primary confidant (Andres et al., 2012). Finally, the need to be understood refers to the need to be able to meaningfully connect with other about military spouse experiences in a way that is useful to the spouse. Vague but good intentions by friends and family that are expressed in an attempt to be empathetic and supportive are not necessarily perceived as useful by military spouses. Many military spouses need to feel understood, particularly by those who share their experiences, and often feel silenced or forgotten when faced with interaction with the civilian community (Davis et al., 2011; Lapp et al., 2010).

Other stressors. Other stressors include stressors that do not fall into any other category. Such stressors may include financial and employment problems, including the how difficult or impossible it may be for the spouse to develop or maintain a career if the family must frequently move. During deployments, these financial or employment problems may take an additional toll on the spouse and the spousal relationship (Chapin, 2009; Knobloch & Theiss, 2012).

Social identity might also be a stressor. Social identity within the military lifestyle is multifaceted and can be complex. The social structure of the military community is influenced by the social characteristics of the general population. It is then further influenced by the military community, from the branch of service all the way down to the individual military unit and the service member's division or job group. The transient nature of belonging to certain social groups as service members transfer in and out of units can make social resilience and maintaining connection with a community a challenge (Cacioppo et al., 2011). The spouse may also experience some level of detachment from mainstream life outside of the military community (Hall, 2011).

Constructions related to cultural and institutional differences. Among the things that the military spouse must adapt to are the cultural and institutional differences that are inherent in the military, but that occur infrequently in traditional occupations. The military is rigid, regimented, demands conformity, and is governed by a rigid authoritarian structure (Hall, 2011). Furthermore, the mission is a non-negotiable priority. The demands and expectations of supporting or performing the mission often well exceed what may be asked of employees in traditional occupations, and may often interfere with

spouse and family needs. This importance of the mission may risk imbalance or misunderstanding in disclosure between the spouse and the service member, including stigma or perceived stigma, breaches of security, losing or saving face, roles, and relationships (Hall, 2011; Joseph & Afifi, 2010).

There are also structured institutional subcultures within the general culture of the military that the spouse must learn about and adapt to. For example, the most predominant subculture is between officers and enlisted service members, who are institutionally forbidden from socializing or fraternizing with each other. Beyond officer or enlisted status, rank is also an institutional subculture. Both officer or enlisted status and service member rank influence the social structure among military spouses (Hall, 2011).

Constructions related to alternative family models. In addition to the internal struggles of social adaptation and creating social realities, the military can often compete with the service member's family and create conflict, particularly when the service member perceives the military unit as a second family (Hall, 2011). However, in many military marriages, the service members and their spouses create a partnership structure that is a wife-husband-military triad rather than a wife-husband dyad. Other spouses experience split loyalties between the spouses, the military role of the service member, and the institution of the military (Aducci et al., 2011).

Constructions related to deployment. Broad generalities aside, there are some specifics about the roots of military family stress that are broadly generalizable to most military spouses. For example, shorter deployments of six months or less tend to be easier

for spouses to cope with than longer ones, as peacetime deployments also tend to be easier to cope with than wartime ones. Anxiety and depression are also common when a spouse experiences multiple deployments, particularly during wartime (Asbury & Martin, 2012).

Of all the varied discussion in the literature, the emotional cycle of deployment, first articulated in 2001 by Pincus et al., and revisited and built upon by others, is a driving construct behind military family service delivery, program and policy development, and research. The emotional cycle of deployment is of course only applicable to deployment, and not necessarily to the totality of the military spouse lifestyle. However, deployment is among the most influential dynamic of the military spouse lifestyle, creating most of the stressors that a spouse may experience, and often meaning that spouses must redefine what normal is at each stage of the cycle (Lapp et al., 2010).

Briefly, the emotional cycle of deployment includes five stages, consisting of pre-deployment, deployment, sustainment, re-deployment, and post deployment (Pincus et al., 2001). The characteristics that may occur at each stage often vary with the individuality of spouses and families, and with the variability of types and lengths of deployments. The emotional cycle of deployment, particularly the post deployment phase may also increase the intensity or frequency of conflict in families (Knobloch & Theiss, 2012).

Pre-deployment begins when the inevitability of deployment becomes known, and the physical and emotional preparation for deployment begins. The levels of stress that

are perceived by the civilian spouse during this stage are often predictive of the presence and intensity of pre-deployment and deployment depression, and of decreased well-being during deployment (Blank et al., 2012). The deployment stage begins when the service member deploys, and continues for about the first month of absence. It is often characterized in the civilian spouse by mixed emotions, disorientation or mental disorganization, forms of grief or sadness, difficulty sleeping, and insecurity. The sustainment period is a time of stabilization for the spouse, where new routines and sources of support become established, the spouse becomes more confident, and has more of a sense of control and independence. The re-deployment phase begins about a month before the anticipated homecoming, and can be characterized by excitement, nesting to prepare the home for the service member's return, apprehension, and difficulties making decisions. Finally, the post-deployment phase begins upon the service member's return home. This phase is often characterized first by a honeymoon period, and then by a period of readjustment. Readjustment during this period includes reintegration and renegotiation to redefine and reestablish the household roles and routines (Pincus et al., 2001).

Military spouses are constructed as needing to be resilient and adaptable. As an individual, the spouse may experience many dynamics within the military spouse lifestyle that mean changes within the individual and relationships. To the service member, the spouse is often the normalizing force (Aducci et al., 2011), which is a role that may not necessarily be present in civilian life. When compared to civilian or more traditional occupations, the military has far more potential to interfere with the family

(Odle-Dusseau, Herleman, Britt, Moore, Castro, & McGurk, 2013). Military spouses may also endure being emotionally or physically drained, or both (Aducci, Baptist, George, Barros & Goff, 2011). Spouses also may experience personal growth, becoming stronger, more self-sufficient, more self-reliant, and more independent as they experience and weather deployment with its adversity, separation, and the dual roles that are thrust upon them. Deployments and associated adversities can also foster greater appreciation for relationships, as well as greater resilience in relationships (Aducci et al., 2011; Andres et al., 2012; Davis et al., 2011; Dimiceli et al., 2010; Gall, 2009 ; Knobloch & Theiss, 2012; Saltzman et al., 2013; Wheeler & Stone, 2010).

Almost all military spouses will experience some magnitude of coping, and with exposure to stressors, they will develop a repertoire of coping skills and strategies. These skills and strategies may include behaviors, rituals, and perspective that can be positive, meaning problem-focused, or negative, meaning avoidant or emotion-focused (Blank, Adams, Kittelson, Connors & Padden, 2012; Davis et al., 2011; Dimiceli et al., 2010; Padden et al., 2011). However, there is a strong positive relationship between the strength of the marriage and the spouse's use of positive coping strategies, followed to a lesser degree by the strength of social support. Likewise, there is also a relationship between the age of the spouse and a greater incidence of negative coping strategies, with younger spouses being more likely to develop avoidant or emotion-focused coping (Huebner et al., 2009; Padden et al., 2011). Furthermore, spouses who have good communication skills are able to manage separations better than spouses who have poor communication

skills (Carroll et al., 2013), and spouses of more experienced service members tend to adjust better to the demands of military life (Joseph & Afifi, 2010).

Part of developing a strong ability to cope well is the ability to craft normalcy. Military spouses must reconcile contradicting realities, an environment that is constantly changing, and a life that is frequently disrupted. Crafting normalcy amid these often powerful dynamics might include purposefully maintaining connections to previous norms, such as continuing with previous activities and maintaining connection to the spouse. Spouses may also create and maintain connections to other spouses of deployed service members as a source of social support. Spouses may fall into a battle rhythm, which is the long-term pattern of deployment, homecoming, and all the associated activities that makes disruption and change more predictable and limits inconsistency. Crafting normalcy may also include rituals during separation, such as marking off the days on the calendar, or watching the deployed service member's favorite television show (Carroll et al., 2013; Villagran et al., 2013). Additionally, human capital assets, such as legal resources, financial resources, and knowing how to navigate community resources, can help military spouses develop a strong ability to cope with and navigate stressors more effectively. This is particularly true for lower income families and the spouses of younger junior personnel (Carroll et al., 2013).

The importance of community is underscored by correlational evidence that suggests community has an impact on individual resilience. The better the perception of support and the better connected the military spouse is to the community, other spouses, and the command, the better the spouse can cope with the military spouse lifestyle.

Furthermore, greater amounts of separation increase the need for the kind of support that enables spouses to adjust to the demands of military spouse lifestyle (Spera, 2009). Community contributes to making military spouses resilient.

Resilience is an important, highly individual, and multifaceted trait of the military spouse and the military community (Cacioppo et al., 2011; Dimiceli et al., 2010; Huebner et al., 2009). Resilience is partially fostered by supportive social relationships among members who are living the same experiences. When shared experiences are the basis for a community, connection to the community can decrease the impact of stress, and increase adaptation and resilience, whereas isolation does the opposite. Social connection is critical to minimizing the distress that can be potentially created by the military spouse lifestyle. Furthermore, the need among individuals to be understood is best served by those who share the lived experiences, as it is poorly served by the good intentions of outsiders (Andres et al., 2012; Blank et al., 2012; Cacioppo et al., 2011; Lapp et al., 2010; Villagran et al., 2013). Other factors can contribute to creating isolation in the military spouse lifestyle, aside from self-exclusion from engaging with the community or its formal structures. For example, the cultural separation between officers and enlisted can contribute to isolation and a sense of distance instead of creating opportunities for supportive relationships (Hall, 2011).

What is Known About How Military Spouses Construct Themselves

The military spouses described the military spouse lifestyle as a metaphorical roller coaster, or as a life that lacks permanency and firm footing (Aducci et al., 2011; Davis, Ward & Storm, 2011). Spouses who experience the chaos of the metaphorical

roller coaster of deployment and the lifestyle tend to find consistency by falling into a battle rhythm. Battle rhythms are patterns and routines that are governed by the demands of the deployment cycle (Villagran et al., 2013).

There is also an archetype associated with the military spouse. It is one of personal sacrifice in the face of adversity, and achieving resilience by maintaining positivity and positive emotions, having strong character, and rejecting or downplaying negative emotions, particularly during deployments. While openly speaking negativity about experiences as a military spouse may be beneficial for fostering resilience or may be otherwise validating for the spouse, such negativity is socially unacceptable in the military spouse community (Villagren, Canzona, & Ledford, 2013). The endurance of adversity with grace, and the denial or oppression of aversive realities is the social norm and social expectation of independence, inner strength, and stoicism (Aducci et al., 2011).

Many wives resist this archetype of the ideal military spouse, particularly if this archetype is or is perceived as constructed by the military, and if it means professional or family sacrifice (Eran-Jona, 2011). In the face of the archetype, military spouses may perceive themselves as voiceless, unrecognized, or constrained because it is socially and archetypally unacceptable to show dependence, worry, vulnerability, or other traits perceived as the opposite of stoicism, independence, strength, and having it together (Aducci et al., 2011).

What is Known About Lifestyle Learning

Learning new skills and adapting to a new social reality also involves fleshing out the cultural and practical boundaries of disclosure between spouses to avoid imbalance and misunderstandings. Stigma or perceived stigma may include the perception that a spouse's actions, activities within the social structure of the community, or the spouse's use of services can negatively or positively affect the service member's reputation or career (Talkington, 2011). Breaches of security can jeopardize the mission and the safety of service members. Maintaining or saving face are cultural values related to the archetype of the ideal military spouse. Furthermore, protective buffering, or withholding information from the service member so as not to cause stress when the service member cannot address the problem, can affect relationships. However, protective buffering may be very beneficial for how well the service member can function within his or her role in the mission, in spite of being detrimental to marital satisfaction and the mental and physical health of the spouse (Aducci et al., 2011; Davis et al., 2011; Joseph & Afifi, 2010;).

On a level beyond the individual, there is a strong sense of social identity among military spouses. This sense of identity is particularly strong around the specific military unit that the active duty service member is assigned to (Cacioppo et al., 2011). This strong sense of community is especially valuable among military spouses who must become resilient within the lifestyle. Strong communities play a powerful role in the delivery of social services and in the exchange of information that creates and sustains the social reality. Therefore, the strongest support system, which may also be the most

effective way to define the social reality, must involve the community (Huebner et al., 2009).

Finally, some spouses might experience stress because they take on some level of responsibility for the community. Some spouses who volunteer for leadership roles report the experience as stressful if they perceive that they are inadequately prepared for the role of community leader (Gorbaty, 2009). Gorbaty's data indicated that the expectation by the spouse-leader for the level of preparedness and active community engagement is that it is supposed to originate from the military, and not from the spouse-leader. However, Gorbaty did not clarify what being prepared refers to. Being prepared could refer to the level of knowledge of the spouse-leader, to the administrative structure of the unit and the community of spouses attached to the unit, to support and resources necessary to lead and administer a community program, or to all of those things.

What is Known About the Nature of the Military Spouse Lifestyle

The consensus of the literature is that the coping dimension of the military spouse lifestyle is a highly individual and multi-faceted, and the need for learning and adaptation are well documented in the literature by a wide variety of studies, using differing frameworks and methodologies. The most common theme was related to deployment and the learning processes that were necessary for the military spouse to cope with the military lifestyle (Padden, Connors & Agazio, 2011; Sheppard et al., 2010; Spera, 2009; Villagran et al., 2013). Other themes about learning and adaptation included learning and understanding a new life (Gall, 2009), a possibly unique, and now very dated, study about the spouses of Trident nuclear submarine sailors and the impacts of job-induced

separation (Glisson et al., 1980), and meta-analysis of the literature painting the big picture of military culture and spouses, and the importance of understanding it (Hall, 2011). Themes also included issues with reintegration following deployment (Gorbaty, 2009; Knobloch & Theiss, 2012), and communication issues and protective buffering (Joseph & Afifi, 2010). These authors all agreed that the complexities of the military spouse lifestyle must be learned, and they explored the sources of that learning from many different perspectives, ranging from social, to personal, to clinical. Furthermore, Gall and Villagran et al. specifically tied the notion that the social reality of the military spouse is socially constructed into their discussions of the literature, learning, and their findings.

The nature of the military spouse lifestyle includes the notions of community and individual resilience, and family readiness. Resilience is defined in the literature, but the concept of family readiness can be nebulous and multifaceted. Orthner and Rose (2003) offered the definition of the military's notion of family readiness as the ability to be strong and resilient under the demands of the military spouse lifestyle, where strength entails a proactive or constructive approach to possible or predictable adversities. While community resilience and family readiness may not necessarily be internal to the individual spouse, they are of great interest to the military. Resilience and family readiness have relationship to spouse well-being, spouse well-being affects the well-being service member, and the well-being of service member directly impacts the mission (Andres et al., 2012). Furthermore, institutionally, the military encompasses the family,

and therefore, the military acknowledges that family support for the team and the mission is critical (Talkington, 2011).

What is Known About Social Construction and Policy Design

There has been great emphasis in the literature on the stressors of the military spouse lifestyle, and on the voices of military spouses from a clinical or coping perspective. Exploring stressors and how they affect military spouses dominates the literature, and it also dominates the approach that policy makers have taken in designing formal support programs for military spouses. That the military spouse community is constructed as subject to unique, unusual, or extreme stressors ignores the fact that these stressors are not a constant in military life, and may not even dominate military life depending on the type of military community. Not all service members are deployed, the tempo of deployment is not always constant, not all deployed service members are away from home for long periods of time, and not all deployed service members are put in harm's way. That the dominant social and political construction of military spouses is of stressors does not consider the lived experience as a whole, and the differences in lived experiences among specialized military communities. Yet, the dominance of stressors in the literature and in the policy approach suggests that this construction of stressors is considered the natural condition of military spouses by policymakers.

However, in social construction and policy design, the messages that policy and policy principals convey are important, and an important message that the military conveys is that it holds its spouses as highly important. In alignment with Pierce et al.'s (2014) observations about feed forward effects, the military makes efforts to learn about

issues or problems, though it is not clear who within the population may be considered a policy elite. Indeed, the military surveys its spouses for feedback regarding themes of stressors and resilience, and formal support programs. Given this direct engagement with military spouses regarding policy and programs, it is possible that spouses are so positively constructed by the military that they have the status of policy elites.

Military communities also include formal support systems to facilitate the flow of information and provide a means for social support. However, many spouses tend to avoid formal support programs because they perceive them as rumor mills or as similarly stigmatized (Blank et al., 2012; Dimiceli et al., 2010; Lapp et al., 2010). This avoidance of formal support networks or programs may interfere with the institutional transmission of knowledge in the social construction dynamic because it can create in groups and out groups. These in groups and out groups can make formal support networks institutions that do not alleviate burdens for military spouses (Rossetto, 2015), or confirm or disconfirm life choices, thus marginalizing potential participants (Parcell & Macguire, 2014). Formal support networks are important to military spouses, and play a role in the formation of new relationships and realities. However, in addition to being stigmatized in some portion of the community, they are not nearly as widely used as informal support networks for coping with stressors, learning to cope with stressors, or other lifestyle learning (Blank et al., 2010; Bowen & Martin, 2011; Davis et al., 2011; Dimicelli et al., 2010; Lapp et al., 2010).

Within the structure of the social reality, formal and informal support networks must share common goals for the community if they are to be the most effective at

fostering resilience (Huebner et al., 2009). However, what social support entails is different for different people; hence the multidimensional and multifaceted nature of resilience and the distinction between perceive and received social support. Furthermore, social support itself is multifaceted, and can consist of instrumental, emotional, information, belonging, and nurturing support (Talkington, 2011).

Changing Social Constructions

Relative to military spouses and the application of social construction to military family policy, Pierce et al.'s (2014) observation that shocks to the policy subsystem can drive change in the social reality can be applied to the military spouse lifestyle. War, terrorist attacks, or other global conflicts are most certainly shocks to population or policy subsystem of military spouses, directly allocating burdens and driving change in the social reality. The military attempts to offset these burdens by allocating numerous benefits that are not available to civilian communities, and socially constructing military spouses as an advantaged group.

What Remains to be Studied

While critical topics, such as the stressors inherent in the military spouse lifestyle and the impact of PTSD on service members and their spouses, have been well studied and continue to be explored, there is much that remains to be studied. It is quite possible that there have been no studies done on any specialized units regarding their specialized lifestyles outside of the unique community of National Guard spouses. It is also quite possible that there has been no consideration in the literature for the family lifestyles of specialized units within the U.S. Navy. Therefore, using social construction and policy

design as the framework to explore the nature of the SMS lifestyle is meaningful. Beginning to identify how spouses do or do not become integrated into the military spouse lifestyle using this framework will help to inform policy decisions and program development. Furthermore, programs often tend to evolve from existing programs and frameworks rather than being introduced as new ideas or unique innovations. This framework allows for a bottom-up approach to more thoroughly inform program development regarding the social support of military spouses.

Ultimately, the greater purpose of understanding lifestyle learning for the military spouse community is to grow individual and community capacity. The role of the military, within its nature as a society or a social system, is a function that is above and beyond its ability to serve the needs of its community. Yet, the military understands that it is in the best interest of the military's mission to develop some mechanism that grows community capacity and family readiness (Clark, Jordan, & Clark, 2013; Westphal & Woodward, 2010).

Summary

There is abundant literature that focuses on military spouses, and on different social and institutional afflictions that military spouses must endure. Of the literature that examines the experiences of military spouses, stressors are an overwhelmingly dominant theme. There is much that is known about stressors. Likewise, US Army spouses are the overwhelmingly dominant population in the literature, as are the experiences of spouses who endure combat-related deployments.

Unique stressors are a major aspect of the military spouse lifestyle that differentiates it from a civilian lifestyle, though they do not describe the totality of the lifestyle or the social reality of the community. Stressors are well explored in the literature, most can be applied to the general population military spouses, and they can be divided into lifestyle phenomena, and things that the military spouse must become. Lifestyle phenomena are stressors that are external to the spouse, and the spouse must respond to them. Things that the military spouse must become are stressors that are internal to the military spouse, and mean that the spouse must grow or transform as a result.

What is not known is how civilian spouses learn to become military spouses. Likewise, the experiences of military branches other than the US Army are underrepresented in the literature, as well as the specific experiences of military spouses who are a part of the communities of specialized military units. Given this gap in the literature, it is unknown whether innovative family support programs, such as the FRG, are meeting the learning needs of spouses as they transition into and participate in the socially constructed realities of the military spouse communities.

With this study, I will fill a gap in the literature by exploring the nature of the military spouse lifestyle of a specialized community of the U.S. Navy. In doing to, how spouses acquire lifestyle capital was explored, as well as the role that the FRG plays in the acquisition of lifestyle capital. In the next chapter, I will outline how this study was conducted, including the research design and rationale, the methodology, and issues of trustworthiness.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In reviewing the literature, I found incomplete knowledge about how military spouses learn about the military spouse lifestyle. In addition, I found little exploration in the literature about the lifestyles of the spouses attached to specialized military units. The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of the lifestyle of the spouses of U.S. Navy submariners (SMSs). I used social construction and policy design (Ingram et al., 2007) as the theoretical framework for my investigation of the current FRG program to explore how it does or does not provide for the lifestyle and lifestyle learning needs of SMS community. The study was a qualitative examination, exploring the learning process surrounding how lifestyle capital was acquired, and contrasting this knowledge with the practical application of the FRG to assess the value of a top-down versus a bottom-up social construction. In this chapter I will discuss the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the methodology, and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

The research objective was to obtain the perceptions of SMSs about their lifestyle. I then used those perceptions to critique the efficacy of a top-down versus a bottom-up social construction, where a top-down construction is one made of the SMSs by policy principals, and a bottom-up contruction is made by the SMSs about themselves.. The research question was, How do SMSs experience or perceive the FRG's role in their social construction and adaptation to the SMS lifestyle? It was essential to understand the nature of that community, its lifestyle, and the needs of the community members within

the lifestyle. This understanding helped me to assess how the FRG program was utilized by the community, and how SMSs regarded and interacted with the FRG program.

The focus of this study was on scrutinizing the efficacy of a formal support program within the lifestyle of a specialized community. The problem was that there appeared to be a disparity between the articulated missions of the FRG and how the SMS community utilized the program, based on my review of the literature. Paralleling this disparity, young and inexperienced military spouses often struggle to learn about and adapt to the military spouse lifestyle, according to researchers (Burton et al., 2009; Padden et al., 2011; Sheppard et al., 2010). This struggle does not contribute to wellness, individual resilience, or community resilience, nor is it supportive of the mission of the military (Burton et al., 2009; Padden et al., 2011; Sheppard et al., 2010). The survey questions were meant to discover details that would show whether the current FRG program is meeting the lifestyle and lifestyle learning needs of the SMS community, or if it is even necessary for lifestyle learning. After assessing the efficacy and necessity of the current FRG program, I appraised the efficacy of a top-down social construction. I used social construction and policy design (Ingram et al., 2007) as the theoretical framework.

The paradigm for the inquiry was qualitative. A qualitative approach to this topic was the most appropriate because it can be used to explore and understand the lifestyle of a community and a specific social problem (Chilisa, 2012; Creswell, 2009; Schwant, 2015). I recruited the sample population from the local community around the naval base using flyers posted in local businesses. An electronic copy of the survey flyer and a Web link to the survey instrument were also posted in SMS-related Facebook groups.

Participants were directed to answer open-ended questions using an online survey platform. I then collected the responses and coded them for themes using qualitative analysis software, with a preliminary coding framework defined by the theoretical framework. The results of the coding were then analyzed for themes, evidence of trustworthiness, findings, recommendations, and implications.

The Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was to observe and collect the data during and after the survey period. Given the mobility of the military community and uncertain longevity in submarine service, the likelihood that a participant would have previously interacted with me was small. Professional, supervisory, instructor, or other kinds of power relationships were also highly unlikely, I concluded.

Study participants self-selected and engaged with the survey site independently, answering open-ended electronic survey questions. I did not interact with the participants during the process in a face-to-face manner. Participants were advised of the purpose of the study prior to answering any survey questions. My own experiences as an SMS may have created conscious or unconscious expectations of the discussion, data collection, and data analysis. Therefore, my role necessitated the use of a survey, as opposed to face-to-face interviews, to better control for my own bias.

To identify potential biases, I engaged in reflexivity, which Patton (2015) described as an in-depth and personal process where researchers question themselves about their thinking processes, their interpretations, and the influences over those processes and interpretations. Patton outlined a reflexive inquiry process that is similar to

the triangulation process used by researchers to establish the validity of research data (Patton, 2015). The parts of this triangulation process are reflexive questions that I answered for myself about the study participants, the audience for the study, and myself. In answering these reflexive questions, I used demographic, cultural, and social considerations for reflexive screens. I accomplished this by answering each of the survey questions, and I examined my answers for possible demographic, cultural, and social biases.

Other ethical issues may have arisen due to the power relationship between the military and its members. There is a perception among military spouses that their behaviors and their choices can reflect upon the service member, and can positively or negatively influence the careers of their active duty spouses (Talkington, 2011). Based on my experience as an SMS, this perception can be true to some degree under a narrow set of circumstances, but the existence of this perception as a broad potentiality may have been chilling to participation. I addressed this potential issue by assuring potential participants that identifying information would not be attached to the survey responses.

Another possible ethical issue may have been that the specific submarines that the participants' sailor-husband were currently or previously assigned to may have been revealed during data collection. While the functions and missions of submarines were completely unrelated to the electronic survey questions, assuring the anonymity of the participant's responses also upheld the military principles of operational and personal security (Navy, n.d.) if information about current assignments arose. It was not necessary to identify specific submarines to create context for data analysis, and submarines may

also have been an identifying piece that compromised anonymity for participants. However, it may have been necessary to know what kind of submarine community the spouse was reflecting upon since there was some variance in lifestyles. Therefore, all participants were asked to talk about all current and former assignments to submarines only in the past tense, particularly if they were speaking of experiences while assigned to the new Seawolf-class fast attacks, which are highly private communities. Participants were asked not to specifically name which submarine and crew communities of which they were sharing experiences, though they may have voluntarily disclosed that information.

Methodology

This study was a qualitative examination of the SMS lifestyle, the learning process by which lifestyle capital was acquired, and the efficacy of the FRG in that learning process from the perspective of SMSs. The sample population for this study was drawn from the community of spouses of U.S. Navy submarine sailors. Ensuring that participants were drawn only from this population had some challenges. First, it is a closed and self-protective community. Members of this community may have been identifiable given that many spouses display the emblems of submarine service on their cars, clothing, and homes. However, there was no available formal way to verify that participants were indeed the spouses and partners of active duty submarine sailors.

Second, the military communities are encouraged to practice personal security (PERSEC) strategies to remain indistinguishable from the civilian community. As an SMS, an ombudsman, and as a former U.S. Marine Corps employee, I received training

and instruction that spouses and service members are encouraged to speak of military service in public as little as possible, and to not display emblems or engage in other identifying behaviors in public. In these trainings, I also received instruction that that radical organizations use social media and other social or community channels to gather intelligence about the U.S. military, its missions, and its families. Therefore, approaching assumed SMSs, interviewing them to attempt to verify their status as SMSs, and inviting them to participate in the study was highly unwise, and could have arouse disturbance and suspicion in the community.

Despite a lack of access to data about the community, I was able to use publicly available internet sources to approximate the size of the general SMS community and its demographic characteristics. According to information obtained from navy.mil (2016), there are the U.S. Navy submarine fleet has a compliment of approximately 10,443 active duty enlisted and commissioned officer crewmembers. The Department of Defense (2014) noted that an average of 55.2% of enlisted and 69.7% of commissioned (officer) service members are married; approximately 5,927 spouses make up the SMS community. I sampled 83 spouses from this population.

Participant Selection Logic and Recruitment and Participation Procedures

To draw a sample population only from the SMS community, I needed to target this population specifically. Since I would not have direct access to members of this population outside of those who are already acquainted with me, and I could not recruit on the local submarine base, I needed to use an informal sampling strategy in the surrounding community.

The communities surrounding the targeted sample submarine base are highly populated with submariners and their spouses who do not reside on the installation. There were many franchised and independent coffee shops in these communities, as well as other businesses, many of which have community bulletin boards. I sought permission from the business managers to post recruitment flyers on their bulletin boards. I focused on businesses in the three cities in the closest proximity to the target city for this study. I also posted an electronic copy of the flyer with a link to the survey instrument in SMS-related social media groups so that I could potentially sample the SMS population outside of the naval base area.

I designed the recruitment literature to briefly describe the purpose of the study, included contact information if a respondent had any questions about the study, a QR code the respondent could scan with a mobile device that linked to the study, and the URL for the respondent to visit to participate (Appendix B). Printed literature also included business-size cards for a respondent to take with them that contained a brief title for the study, my contact information, a QR code that directed a mobile device to the study, and the URL for the electronic survey (Appendix C).

Any SMS who visited the study URL to participate first read a brief introduction to the study, and then was directed to read and print the informed consent form. Clicking the *next* button indicated an understanding of informed consent, and a desire to participate in the study. The informed consent form detailed that there were no anticipated psychological risks to a participant that exceeded the normal stressors of daily

life. There were no relationships, legal, economic, professional, physical, or other risks that could be attributed to participation in this study.

Once the respondent indicated an understanding of the informed consent form, the respondent was then directed to answer questions meant to establish that the respondent met the participation criteria, and to gather some general demographic information. The respondent was specifically asked if he or she is the spouse of an active duty submarine sailor (Survey Question 1), have experienced at least one submarine deployment as a spouse (Survey Questions 2 and 3), and the respondent's age (Survey Questions 4 and 5), which screened out four kinds of respondents who would not meet the selection criteria. First, it excluded respondents who were not part of the sample population because they were not SMSs. Second, it excluded spouses who may be SMSs but have yet to experience deployment. Third, it excluded the spouses of retired submariners. Finally, it excluded spouses who were still minors, because minors are a vulnerable population and were not included in this study. If the respondent indicated that he or she is the spouse of an active duty submariner, had experienced at least one deployment, and was not a minor, then the respondent was directed to demographic questions. These questions included asking the respondents how many of what classes of submarines their spouses have been stationed on, making no distinction between current and former assignments.

In addition to the need to screen out ineligible participants, the need to collect demographic data had a basis in the literature. Notwithstanding the variations among people in personality and leaning, the resilience and adaptability of the spouse to military life is related to the age of the spouse (Huebner et al., 2009; Padden et al., 2011)., the

length of the marriage (Blank et al., 2012), the service member's time in service (Blank et al., 2012), and the service member's rank (Blank et al., 2012). Generally, the younger the spouse, the newer the marriage, and the lower the rank of the service member, the more difficult it is for the spouse to adapt to military life and to weather deployments (Huebner et al, 2009; Padden et al., 2011).

Likewise, adaptability and resilience are also influenced by whether the spouse has prior military service, or has immediate family members, such as parents or siblings, who have served on active duty (Padden et al., 2011) (Survey Questions 10, 12, and 13). Furthermore, there was little literature that explores the role of ethnicity, including the status of the spouse as a foreign national (Blank et al., 2012; Padden et al., 2011), which merits the inclusion of ethnic data in this study (Survey Question 14). While any focus on ethnicity and status as a foreign national is beyond the scope of this study, and this survey did not distinguish spouses who were foreign nationals from spouses who were not, including it in the data may be useful to future research in addition to its use in potentially demonstrating that the sample population of SMSs was representative of the general population of SMSs.

Finally, the demographic questions asked the gender of the respondent (Survey Question 9). It was highly likely that all the respondents would be female spouses. However, it was possible that male spouses would respond. Military policy has shifted toward the legal acknowledgement and inclusion of homosexual male spouses, and the submarine fleet is beginning to incorporate female sailors into submarine service. Male spouses in the submarine fleet are very rare, but they do exist. Very little of the military

spouse literature includes the voices of heterosexual and homosexual male spouses. This absence can be explained because the military is predominantly heterosexual male, and therefore spouses are predominantly female. However, the male spouse's voice was underrepresented in the literature, and therefore merited making gender distinction in this survey even though it was unlikely that any male responses would be collected (Andres, Moelker, & Soeter, 2012; Blank et al., 2012; Carroll et al., 2013).

There were four types of submarines, which was why it was important to collect information about what kinds of submarines the SMS's service member has been assigned to (Survey Question 8). Each type of submarine serves a different kind of mission, and therefore had a different deployment rhythm and community lifestyle. These differences in purpose further specialized the SMS community and its lifestyle around specific kinds of submarines, and having this information created a greater context for approaching and analyzing the data. There were no Virginia or Los Angeles-class submarines at the sample naval base, which may have been problematic in capturing the experiences of SMSs from Los Angeles and Virginia-class communities from any respondents recruited locally. However, there was a chance that sailors who served on more than one submarine while on active duty will also have served on more than one kind of submarine. This meant that the experiences of their spouses would also include experiences from types of submarines not home ported at this particular base. For this reason, it was particularly important to pay close attention to the demographics of the participants. SMSs who are older, and have active duty spouses who have served longer,

were much more likely to have accumulated a variety of experiences in the SMS lifestyle that include more than one kind of submarine.

Regarding vulnerable populations, it was possible that members of certain populations may have responded to the survey. Of the vulnerable populations that may also be SMSs, it was possible that mentally or emotionally disabled individuals responded, as well as victims of crisis. None of the questions asked the respondent to recall traumatic events, nor was the study being conducted within a population where the mentally or emotionally disabled, or victims of crisis were expected to be a significant portion of the population. Furthermore, the electronic survey questions were topics that should not cause stress that was beyond the stressors of daily life. Therefore, the mentally or emotionally disabled and victims of crisis were not significant considering the possibility of including vulnerable populations.

It was not possible for older adult respondents to respond because there were no such individuals serving in the submarine fleet. Few active duty submarine sailors serve beyond 20 years of service, meaning that most who retire after 20 years of active duty are rarely older than their mid 40s. Those who serve well beyond 20 years can do so because they have achieved a rank that assigns them to positions of authority and responsibility that are not aboard submarines. However, it was possible that a spouse who was a minor would respond to the survey. Spouses who are minors are rare in the military, but given the possibility, question four in the demographic section asked for the age of the respondent. Should the respondent have answered that he or she was less than 18 years

old, the respondent would have been exited from the study before any further data is gathered.

Sample Size

Determining the appropriate sample size for a qualitative inquiry depended on many things. Patton (2015) described qualitative sample size as depending on the objective of the inquiry and on the nature of the data, as well as the time and resources that are available to the researcher. If the objective were to obtain a great depth of data, then a smaller sample size with more lengthy and intensive interviewing would be sufficient. If the objective were to obtain a great breadth of data with an inquiry that is shallower, then a larger sample size would be much more appropriate. Patton described in-depth inquiries as having a very small sample, and some large, shallow inquiries as having a sample population in the hundreds. However, a review of qualitative dissertations by Mason (as cited in Patton, 2015) found that the mean and median sample size for qualitative survey samples was about 30 participants.

The objective of my inquiry was to capture a greater breadth and depth of the SMS lifestyle. Furthermore, there was great diversity within the SMS lifestyle. How SMSs experience the lifestyle and adopt its constructed reality depended not only on the individual attributes of an SMS, but also on age, length of time married, how long the service member has been service, and so on (Huebner et al., 2009; Padden et al., 2011). Additionally, there were four distinct types of submarines, each of which having unique communities and may have unique lifestyle aspects that the spouse must learn about and adapt to. Given that depth, breadth, and broad diversity were important considerations,

and that my objective for the data was to reach saturation, I needed to continue to accept responses until saturation was achieved.

Data saturation is where data becomes redundant, and no new information can be gleaned from further inquiry (Patton, 2015). Patton described assessing saturation as a preliminary data analysis process that the researcher undertakes, where data is collected, and a preliminary analysis informs decisions about further collection of data. Patton also cautioned against premature saturation, which can happen if the sampling frame is too narrow, there is a limited or skewed analytical perspective, the discussion does not yield information of enough depth, or the researcher cannot break through surface discussion and facilitate deeper discussion.

Instrumentation

The data collection instrument was an electronic survey using open-ended questions, and it was distributed using a web-based survey instrument. I created the survey questions related to the theoretical framework for this study. The survey protocol was based on interviews, which most closely align with the desired outcome of this study, which was to explore the depth and breadth of the nature of the SMS lifestyle.

The research question was the basis for developing my electronic survey questions. It represented what needs to be discovered within the theoretical framework. The theory then informed the wording of the question. I took care to avoid asking questions that might yield data that already exists. For example, I designed the questions to avoid any further discussion about stressors, which was a theme that dominates the military spouse literature. I also took care to design questions that would be easier to

answer in depth than they would be to answer with short responses, and each component of the theoretical framework was explored with multiple electronic survey questions. Questions 1-14 were screening and demographic questions, and questions 15-21 were for data collection and analysis. The content for the online survey can be found in Appendix D.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection using the online survey platform was planned initially to last for 1 month, and participants exited the study by completing the online survey, or at any time during the survey by leaving the survey webpage. At the end of each week during the collection period, I downloaded the data from completed surveys for analysis. The downloaded data was then exported from the online survey platform into a PDF document, and saved to my hard drive. The hard drive was backed up automatically at least daily. Each set of responses was assigned a unique number by the online survey platform that also served as the code that differentiated responses between participants when the data was coded. The PDF documents were then imported into qualitative analysis software for manual coding by me.

When the data collection period closed, I assessed the number of responses and content to see if saturation of the data had been achieved. As long as it did not appear that saturation was beginning to occur, I left the survey open for more respondents. I extended the open period for gathering responses monthly, until data saturation occurred. The survey was open for approximately three months.

Data Analysis Plan

Data coding was facilitated using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software. I electronically coded the data for themes, with major themes as the labels for the categories or nodes within the software. Themes were further developed through directed content analysis, with major themes defined prior to coding according to the theoretical and framework (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Saldaña, 2013). More specific themes emerged using directed content analysis of the data, and more in-depth analysis was conducted using descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2013).

Coding began with repeatedly reading the data, coding it for major themes according to the theoretical framework (see Table 1). Coding was a continuous iterative process, coding a document, and then coding it again as I progressed through other documents and nodes developed. As I repeatedly read the data and subthemes emerged, more focused coding was conducted using emergent subthemes and more highly refined themes. The themes and subthemes were monitored for saturation during the analysis, identifying which themes achieved saturation, and which themes were less common and did not. The results of coding were then applied to exploring possible answers to the research question in terms of the theoretical framework (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2015).

Table 1

Preliminary Coding Framework With Code Abbreviations

Major theme and code	Subtheme and code
Policy sends a message to target populations about how government will behave toward them and how they can expect to be treated. (SC1)	Target populations are treated in a specific way by government. (SC1a)
	Government behaves in a specific way toward target populations. (SC1b)
	Policy design structures and messages affect the political orientation of the target population, and the target population's participation in government. (SC1c)
	Messages convey what is important, including whose voice is included in the formulation of the social construction and its policy. (SC1d)
	Interpretive effects are associated with the social construction of target populations. (SC1e)
How benefits and burdens are allocated depends on the political power and the positive of negative social construction of the target population. Power and construction fall along a spectrum, and generally categorize groups as advantaged, contenders, dependents, or deviants. (SC2)	How SMSs perceive that principals socially construct them:
	Advantaged Positive Construction/High Power (SC2a)
	Contenders Negative Construction/High Power (SC2b)
	Dependents Positive Construction/Little Power (SC2c)
	Deviants Negative Construction/Little Power (SC2d)

(*table continues*)

Major theme and code	Subtheme and code
	How SMSs socially construct themselves or the SMS community:
	Advantaged Positive Construction/High Power (SC2e)
	Contenders Negative Construction/High Power (SC2f)
	Dependents Positive Construction/Little Power (SC2g)
	Deviants Negative Construction/Little Power (SC2h)
The power and social construction of target populations affects policy design. (SC3)	Any themes reflecting science and reason rather than social construction. (SC3a)
Policy principals, especially elected policymakers, are motivated by public approval or approbation to help socially construct target groups. (SC4)	Examples of policy creating and/or perpetuating a social construction. (SC4a)
	Policy feed back/forward, reinforcing power relationships. (SC4b)
	Policy feed back/forward, reinforcing institutional cultures (institutionalization). (SC4c)
	Encouraging participation in government. (SC4d)
	Discouraging participation in government. (SC4e)
	Prevailing social construction debated. (SC4f)
Social constructions can change, and policy design can create change. (SC5)	Examples of changing social constructions by policy design. (SC5a)
	Examples of changing social constructions by the attempts of the target groups to change them. (SC5b)

(*table continues*)

Major theme and code	Subtheme and code
	Examples of changing social constructions because science or reason has impacted policy change. (SC5c)
In the context of degenerative policymaking, different patterns of change are related to different policy designs. (SC6)	Evidence of competitive or oppositional factions within the policy space. (SC6a)

Note. SC = social construction and policy design. I used Ingram et al.'s (2007) typology in composing the themes and codes.

Discrepant cases may have included data that was unique, inappropriate responses, or responses from participants who were not members of the SMS community. Data that was unique was considered for its context to determine whether it was a unique theme that merited inclusion in the overall analysis, or should have been excluded from the analysis. Inappropriate responses were not coded, and responses from participants who were not members of the community were not anticipated.

Issues of Trustworthiness

I established the trustworthiness of the findings with the research design. To establish trustworthiness, the findings were credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. I established the credibility of the findings by taking measures to show internal validity. I established internal validity by reflexivity, content validity, and achieving saturation. Reflexivity was a process of self-reflection, where I identified my experiences as a longtime member of the SMS community and biases that were potentially present. Reflexivity and what I produced as part of the reflexive process was particularly important because I am a longtime member of the SMS community. Content validity was established by determining whether the content of the answers to electronic

survey questions measured what they were intended to measure (Creswell 2009). This was evaluated by comparing the results of the survey questions with the literature. Some themes and content that emerged from the survey results were comparable to existing themes and content in the literature, meaning that content validity was established by correlating the survey data with other results. Finally, the sample size was sufficient to achieve saturation of the data, which is a state of data collection where collecting further data does not produce any new information (Patton, 2015).

Like credibility, transferability was also established. Transferability is external validity, which is about the extent to which the research can be generalized to other populations, settings, or measurement variables. I achieved transferability through thick description, which was a way of describing the data that created concrete definitions of the experiences of people in rich detail. I also achieved transferability with variation in participant selection, with the goal of recruiting a sample population that was proportionately representative of the breadth of experience among the different kinds of submarines in addition to the demographics of the community (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2015).

The concept of dependability was more difficult to establish because little outside data was available to use for triangulation. With this study, I did not address most aspects of the SMS lifestyle that were available in the literature, and similar data from military sources was inaccessible. However, I established dependability using audit trails to carefully, logically, and traceably document the process of data collection and analysis by keeping detailed records of the process. Furthermore, I was able to compare some general

themes that emerged from the data to the current body of literature to see how well they did or did not align with what is currently known.

Confirmability was the final component to establish trustworthiness. It refers to whether the results can be confirmed by others, and to what degree. Along with dependability, I established confirmability by establishing an audit trail to document the procedures that enabled me to check and recheck the data. If any themes or instances emerged that were contradictory to prior observation, then those themes or instances would be described in the findings (Patton, 2015).

Ethical Procedures

Any study that involves people must be designed with the highest ethical standard in mind, and it must also be granted approval by an institutional review board (IRB). Because I was using an informal sampling strategy, I only needed to seek IRB approval from the university. I did not need to seek IRB approval from the Navy. Ethical considerations at all phases of the study had to do no harm to the participants, protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants, and keep all responses confidential. Research subjects also had to understand and accept informed consent before participation in the study (Lichtman, 2010).

I placed recruitment flyers in businesses in three cities surrounding the sample target city, which is the homeport for several submarines and their crews. An electronic version of the study flyer was also posted in SMS-related social media groups, with a web link directly to the survey. The text of the recruitment flyer defined what the study was about, why it was needed, and assured anonymity and confidentiality (Appendix B).

Furthermore, recruitment materials included a statement clarifying that the participants would not be asked about current submarine missions or movement, which was in keeping with the military principles of operational and personal security (OPSEC and PERSEC). Operational security, or OPSEC, helps to ensure the safety of the submarine and its mission, and personal security, or PERSEC, helps to ensure the personal safety of service members and their families.

Data was collected using open-ended qualitative questions using the web-based survey platform. Questions were developed so participants were not asked to recall traumatic or emotional events, though participants may have experienced some level of stress while recalling past hardships that were inherent with military life.

In my disclosure, I assured participants prior to responding to any questions that all responses were anonymous and confidential. I also asked participants to refer to all submarines, deployment experiences, or specific commands in the past tense as a further measure to protect anonymity and privacy, as well as OPSEC and PERSEC. This extra measure to protect anonymity may have also helped to ease any inhibition created by the social perception that the actions of the spouse, including participation in this study, could have a direct impact on the career of the service member.

The data provided by the participants were not expected to contain any information that was highly personal. The nature of the questions was about individual experiences, and the questions were not of a personal or privileged nature. Anonymity was assured all the same, and the names of participants were not attached to the data when the data was recovered from the survey website. I stored the data on my personal

computer, and ownership of and access to the data that is available on the survey website after the study was concluded remains with me. Logging in with a password is the only means to access my personal computer. Data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years on my personal computer or storage device, which is also password-protected, as required by the university.

Summary

With this study, I began to fill the gap in our knowledge about how spouses learn to live the military spouse lifestyle. The military provides formal support networks with the intention to facilitate this learning, and this study examined the efficacy of one such program, the FRG, within the whole context of the entire lifestyle that is lived by the spouses of U.S. Navy submariners (SMSs). In doing so, I was also able to begin to explore the nature of the SMS lifestyle, framed around Ingram et al.'s (2007) social construction and policy design.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to define how the spouses of U.S. Navy submarine sailors (SMSs) perceive the SMS lifestyle and the acquisition of lifestyle-specific knowledge in relation to their role as an SMS. To explore perceptions of the SMS lifestyle, I examined narratives of specific aspects of participants' lived experiences. Data collection focused on participants' perceptions of the FRG's role in the social construction of SMSs, the SMS lifestyle, and the spouse's adaptation to the SMS lifestyle. The research question centered on how SMSs experience or perceive the FRG's role in their social construction and adaptation to the SMS lifestyle. Chapter 4 will include details about the study setting, demographics of participants, an overview of the data collection and analysis processes, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results of the study.

Setting

Participants completed an online survey, at the time and physical setting of their choosing. I had no direct interaction with survey respondents. It is plausible that some of the respondents were experiencing the deployment of their sailor-husband when they took the survey, and deployment status may have had some influence on the nature of the responses. However, the nature of possible influences or other conditions from the respondents' environments was unknown. I also avoided the possibility of undue influence to complete my survey by not offering any incentives or rewards for participation.

Demographics

There were 87 responses to the survey, of which 83 were valid responses. Four of the respondents indicated that they were not members of the target population and were exited from the study. All of the respondents indicated that they were female, and ranged in age from 20 to 50 years old, with a mean age of 32 years. The length of marriage for the respondents ranged from less than one year to 21 years, with a mean of 8 years, and the number of submarine deployments experienced during marriage ranged from one to 20, with an average of six. The enlisted ranks of the active duty service members assigned to submarines range from E2 to E9[1], and officer ranks from O1 to O5[2]. Of these ranks, E1 was not represented as this is the service member's rank in basic training. The ranks of E3, O1, O2, and O5 were also not represented among the spouses in the study. Finally, all classes of submarines were represented among the participating spouses as having been assigned to during their marriage. Additional details regarding the demographics of the respondents will be presented later in this chapter and in Chapter 5.

Data Collection

There were a total of 83 valid responses, but the number of participants per question varied. The first 14 questions were screening and demographic questions, and open-ended data collection related to the research question began with Question 15.

---

[1] U.S. Navy enlisted ranks: E2 – Seaman Apprentice, E3 – Seaman, E4 – Petty Officer Third Class, E5 – Petty Officer Second Class, E6 – Petty Officer First Class, E7 – Chief Petty Officer, E8 – Senior Chief Petty Officer, E9 – Master Chief Petty Officer.

[2] U.S. Navy officer ranks: O1 – Ensign, O2 – Lieutenant Junior Grade, O3 – Lieutenant, O4 – Lieutenant Commander, O5 – Commander.

Question 15 had 74 responses; Question 16, 74 responses; Question 17, 69 responses; Question 18, 69 responses; Question 19, 68 responses; Question 20 68 responses; and Question 21, 65 responses. I collected the data online using an online survey platform. The first recruitment flyer was placed June 26, 2018, postings with the link to the study were made to Navy submariner spouse social media groups on July 30, 2018, and the survey was closed September 24, 2018. Participants self-selected and engaged with the survey online at the time and place of their choosing, completing the survey at their own pace. The data were recorded using an online survey platform as participants answered questions. There were no apparent variations or unusual circumstances in data collection.

Data Analysis

I retrieved the raw data from the online survey platform and analyzed it by manually coding the responses for themes. I had developed preliminary themes prior to data collection that were directly based on the elements of the theoretic framework (Ingram et al., 2007). However, I designed the survey to directly capture a narrative of the lived experiences of the sample population and to indirectly capture themes related to the theoretical framework. The data from this narrative would be then analyzed for themes within the narrative, and then later for themes applicable to the theoretical framework.

Once the raw data were collected, I sorted it by survey question and read through the responses without categorizing any data for broad themes related to the topic of the question. Using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, I created nodes for each individual theme that was identified by this first reading of the data, and I repeated

this process for each question. Once the broad themes were identified and nodes were created, I carefully reviewed the data again in-depth, coding responses into broad themes using the software, and creating nodes for additional themes and subthemes as they emerged. I reviewed the data for each question a third time before moving on to the next set of data, and coded into more themes as appropriate.

After coding all of the data for each question and developing themes and subthemes of the narrative, I produced a report using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software of all of the data that had been coded under each node. The purpose of the report was to review the organized data and then further code it for themes related to the theoretical framework. Viewing the narrative by theme and seeing trends and commonalities among the responses enabled me to more efficiently apply the narratives to themes and subthemes of the theoretical framework.

Coding the data produced rich and descriptive results, with many codes emerging from the data analysis. A complete table of codes with their frequencies may be found in Appendix E. The overarching themes fell into one of two categories. There were themes related to the lived experiences of SMSs and themes related to social construction and policy design.

I divided themes related to the lived experience of SMSs into categories, themes, and subthemes related to the nature of the SMS lifestyle, lifestyle learning, and the FRG program. Themes related to social construction and policy design were also divided into parent and child codes. I designated codes for themes related to the theoretical framework before data were collected. Additional codes were then added during data analysis to

supplement the original codes and to better frame the statements of the respondents around the theoretical framework.

The data did not fit well into the codes created strictly from the theoretical framework, so most of those codes have no frequency values. However, data could still be applied to the framework more indirectly. For example, the allocation of benefits and burdens may be a perceived or circumstantial allocation rather than identifiable as an allocation enumerated by policy and program design. Given that the perceived or circumstantial allocation of benefit or burden was related within the context of the FRG program, I considered it applicable to the theoretical framework.

Some themes emerged from the data that may also be found in the literature. For example, archetypes emerged (Villagran et al., 2013), as well as themes related to adaptability (Andres et al., 2012; Bowen & Martin, 2011; Hall, 2011; Sheppard et al, 2010), isolation (Andres et al., 2012; Burton et al., 2009; Gorbaty, 2009; Hall, 2011), shifting roles (Aducci et al., 2011; Sheppard et al, 2010), the emotional cycle of deployment (Spera, 2009), mental toughness (Aducci et al., 2011; Spera, 2009), and the importance of social support (Andres et al., 2012; Asbury & Martin, 2012). Such themes occurred with low frequencies, which is not unexpected by me given the different approach to the topic of military spouse life. However, themes applicable to archetypes and themes applicable to stressors, such as isolation, adversity, the need for social support, and uncertainty, emerged from the data analysis.

None of the cases seemed remarkable. There were a small number of age outliers on the upper end of the age range of respondents, but none that may have been obviously

discrepent cases. Discrepant cases from respondents who did not belong to the target population were exited form the study in early qualifying questions, and no data were collected for these cases.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The entire research process was designed to be as objective as possible, and to produce credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable data and results. Given that I am a former member of this population and have years of experience with the SMS lifestyle, designing objectivity into the process was crucial.

Credibility

I established credibility by taking measures to show internal validity using reflexivity, content validity, and achieving saturation. I engaged in reflexivity, or the process of self-reflection (Patton, 2015), by answering all of the long-answer questions from the online survey myself, independently of the online survey so that my answers were not included in the data. While I reflected on my own experiences and wrote my answers to the questions, I was purposefully mindful that my thoughts and experiences were my own, and would not necessarily be shared by other respondents. My experiences as and SMS would have had no impact on the respondents since I had no interaction with them, however, my experiences had the potential to bias how I approached and interpreted the data. By engaging in reflexivity prior to analyzing the data, I was able to specifically identify my own thoughts and experiences, and to separate them from my thoughts about the data.

I established content validity by determining whether the content of the answers to electronic survey questions measured what they were intended to measure (Creswell 2009). The responses to the questions did not produce any data that was misaligned with themes in the literature, or was otherwise completely unique or surprising. The military spouse population has not been previously studied in this manner, and this particular population has not been studied directly for decades, so there is no literature or known data that may be used for direct comparison. However, there were enough similarities in themes between the responses and the existing literature to establish content validity.

Finally, the sample size was sufficient to achieve saturation in broad themes, but not in subthemes related to the individuality of the SMS experience. Saturation is a state of data collection where collecting further data does not produce any new information (Patton, 2015). Broad themes related to generally positive or negative constructions of the SMS community and the FRG program reached saturation. Subthemes related to the uniqueness of individuals and their experiences did not reach saturation, even after the large number of responses. This is not unexpected, however. There is support in the existing literature regarding the uniqueness of the military spouse experience for each individual, and none of the themes of the responses were misaligned with the existing literature. Therefore, a lack of saturation in subthemes related to individuality is not remarkable.

Transferability

The methodology applied to this study may be adapted and applied to any specialized population that has a formal support program or network for its community,

though the findings may be very different. It may also be applied to variations in participant selection to target specific areas to better explore the breadth of experience in the SMS community. However, study of other specialized military populations may be necessary to identify variations in the nature of the lifestyle, and the nature of engagement with the FRG. For example, the distribution of spouse age and the rank of the service member may be comparable military-wide. However, the nature of the FRG, its role in the community, the community's engagement with it, and the social constructions from the population perspective may have relevant variation among different sizes and types of military commands, and commands that have different deployment lengths and tempos.

Dependability and Confirmability

Data from military sources was unavailable to use for triangulation, so I relied on audit trails to establish dependability and confirmability. The entire data collection and analysis process is auditable and reproduceable. I noted on my calendar when I placed flyers in local businesses in my community, I noted in a maps application on my smart phone where those flyers were placed, and the posts for Facebook groups related to the target population can be retrieved. The online survey platform documents all data collection on the website, and the raw data can be retrieved at any time. My completed reflexive exercise with the survey questions is available, and reports from the final iteration of coding the data may be generated from computer assisted qualitative data analysis software. Finally, general themes of the SMS lifestyle that emerged from the data are comparable to themes in the existing literature regarding the general military

spouse lifestyle. No themes emerged that were contradictory to prior literature (Patton, 2015), however, different themes emerged as dominant. Maintaining practices throughout data collection and analysis that facilitated dependability did not require any adjustments to consistency strategies.

Results

I broke the research question down into components before the outcomes of data analysis were applied it. The research question asked how SMSs experience or perceive the FRG's role in their social construction and adaptation to the SMS lifestyle. The components that data themes were applied to are how the SMS population was socially constructed, and what was the role of the FRG in lifestyle learning or acquiring lifestyle capital. In breaking down the research question into the components that lead into it, the data could then be meaningfully applied to begin to consider the answer. The full results of data coding are presented in a frequency table (Appendix E), and the results that applied to the research question are presented in the following sections.

Social Construction

There have been two distinct social constructions that have applied to the population of SMSs. The first construction was a top-down construction, or how SMSs are constructed by principals in the policy universe. This has been the basis for how formal support programs are created and evaluated. The second construction was a bottom-up construction, or how SMS's construct themselves and the SMS community. This second, bottom-up social construction was the basis for this inquiry. It is important to note that in analyzing the data, the SMS community is defined not as the whole

community of all SMSs, but as the portion of the community that the respondent gained lived experiences with.

As previously noted in Chapter 2, stressors, hardships, and deployment dominate the military spouse literature. In the most recent literature, the long-term implications of past deployment and combat dominate the literature. To a lesser degree, archetypes and identity are also addressed in the literature, as well as the military emphasis on family readiness and resilience. The sum of the literature and the articulated mission of the FRG program indicates that principals broadly construct military spouses as stressed and in need of support.

In contrast, SMSs did not construct themselves as stressed. SMSs acknowledged that the hardships inherent to the SMS lifestyle exist, but instead, they constructed themselves as needing to be adaptable (f = 24) and self-reliant (f = 13). SMSs also indicated across all survey questions that they benefitted from, or that there is a real benefit to being able to engage with a supportive SMS community, though not all indicated that engagement with a supportive community meant engagement through the FRG.

Common expressions of adaptability (f = 24) by respondents included, “always write in pencil on the calendar”, “go with the flow”, “everything changes”, “expect the unexpected”, and to not count on the sailor’s schedule when making family plans. Indeed, this expression is typified by the response from a 36-year-old SMS, who is the wife of an Chief Petty Officer (rank of E7), and would be considered a senior spouse in the SMS community. In response to how she might advise her former, pre-SMS self, she wrote:

> Always write in pencil on the calendar. Make friends fast because they will be there when family is not and they become family. Stay busy when [your sailor is] deployed and also allow for a down day to just be sad but get up the next day and move forward. It goes fast but can be lonely. Know that there is a community of ladies or fellas going through the same thing and lean on them. You will need them.

Likewise, common expressions of self-reliance (*f* = 13) included, "you are your greatest asset", and "don't rely on your spouse" for decision making or handling household business. A common self-reliance theme was also "deployments are what you make of them", meaning that while deployments can be lonely, they can also be an opportunity for travel, for personal, professional, or academic growth, or for focusing on hobbies or other personal interests. One 30-year-old SMS wrote about the opportunities that deployments can present, and also about being open-minded about the nature of reintegration:

> Deployments are what you make of them. Deployment can be a chance for travel, for personal growth, for goal meeting, and you will discover just how capable you are. But it also will have an impact on your relationship when he gets back. I used to think the "reintegration" lectures were silly - we were solid, and I didn't need the advice. It took him coming back from his first deployment and me having to yell "I'm not one of your sailors and you can't treat me like I am" for me to realize that advice holds water. You'll be fine, and if you put in the work, you both will come out on the other side, but don't think that your relationship is

> different or special from everyone else. All of that advice is there because it comes from people who have experienced it. Use it and appreciate it.

How SMSs constructed the community was quite a departure from how they constructed themselves. There was a dichotomy to how the respondents constructed the community, and the dichotomy was often indicated within the respondent's whole lived experience as an SMS. These themes were consistent across all survey questions. The responses strongly indicated either a construction of the community that was close and supportive, or a construction of a community where SMSs were marginalized or disenfranchised, primarily by the behaviors of other SMSs. *Drama* (*f* = 20), *cliques* (*f* = 12), and *high school* (*f* = 7) were common descriptives of a community that disenfranchised or marginalized the SMS, indicating frustration with the behaviors of other spouses. In some responses, marginalization or disenfranchisement behaviors included the perception that other spouses inappropriately claimed social standing and authority within the community. The response of one 33-year-old SMS illustrates this dichotomy well:

> The [fast-attack submarine] frg [*sic*] experience didnt [*sic*] prove to accomplish much. We had 2 [fast-attack submarine] tours and both times the wives were catty and formed cliques. It made it hard for anyone else to want to participate. The [Trident submarine] tour the frg [*sic*] was amazing and supportive. They become the extended family that the frg [*sic*] should be.

Several responses indicated the perception that other SMSs behaved as though they were "wearing their husband's rank" (*f* = 6), presuming the social authority and standing that

is inherent with the military rank of the service member, but is not transferable to family members. Wrote one spouse:

> The spouses often try to carry the rank of the military family member and it's very off-putting, and that's coming from a Master Chiefs [*sic*] wife. I have never and would never take his rank and wear it as my own.

Therefore, the social authority and standing of spouses perceived to "wear their husband's rank" was illegitimate and undesirable, further disenfranchising some respondents.

It is important to note that the statements made about the nature of the SMS community are the perceptions of the individual SMSs, and may not reflect the formal structure and the institutionalized norms within the military organization. There was also no distinction made in the responses about the preferences or the level of need for social engagement and support by the individual SMSs. Some SMSs prefer to become invested in the community, while others prefer to remain solitary and distanced from the community. This observation is noted in the data as well as the existing literature. Based on the literature, I assumed that the preference and need for social engagement and support are as variable as individual personalities and the characteristics of resilience. It is possible that the FRG indirectly facilitates relationships that are key to lifestyle learning even if the SMS prefers to be solitary or is disenfranchised. Therefore, assigning value to the responses regarding the relevance of engagement, marginalization, or disenfranchisement relative to the FRG and its role in lifestyle learning is premature without further inquiry.

Aside from the differences between how SMSs are constructed by principals and how they construct themselves, there were some elements in the data that indicated that social construction plays a role in the design of this program. For example, there was an indication of the treatment of the target population by the government (*f* = 1). In this occurrence, SMSs were prescribed by government to be an exclusive community:

> Significant others who are not officially dependents get shafted. They are left to experience all the aspects of military life alone unless they have another inside connection. I would open up the FRG to all significant others regardless of their status. Security and safety is always a top priority but that does not mean these individuals should be excluded. I would change the exclusivity and barriers of entry…

Likewise, the policy message is intended to convey what's important. However, the data reflects that the policy message is ambiguous, inequitable, or inconsistently delivered by the FRG program (*f* = 13). SMSs indicated a lack of inclusion of all spouses, or the inability to include all spouses. For example, typical responses in this category about inclusion were, "I would want the FRG to be more inclusive. For more people to understand that it is not high school but a place where people can come and be together and have fun." and "I would make it more friendly to the families and spouses that have a harder time getting out and being social and help make it a more welcoming group…". SMSs also indicated inconsistency that dilutes the policy message, typified by this response:

> I wouldn't change much with the actual program, expect maybe help make it a more universal framework that can easily be applied throughout. Right now they are all so varied in how they are run. It helps breed discord between the boat's FRG's and they can't really lean on one another for help outside of the small frg [*sic*]. I would keep the mission the same. It's a worthy one.

There is indication that power relationships are reinforced by this program ($f = 1$), as well as the institutionalization of organizational culture ($f = 1$). One respondent said, "Don't worry about trying to fit into the common tropes of a military spouse. Also, your service member can be held accountable for your actions. Be mindful of what you say and do." What may appear to be the prevailing construction of the spouse is also opposed or change to the prevailing construction is attempted ($f = 1$), "You dont [*sic*] need this huge submarine support system to be happy. If you stop identifying as a 'sub spouse' and think of yourself as an individual deployments and life in general is [*sic*] easier." Data relevant to power relationships and prevailing constructions was rare in the responses and may be better explored through more focused inquiry.

One particular comment in the data informed the topic of social construction in several ways. The questionnaire question was, "If you could look back at who you were when you first became a part of the submarine community and you could give yourself advice, what would you say to your former self about submarine life, and why?". Respondent number 86, who was a 32-year-old spouse of four years to an E5 (Petty Officer, Second Class) enlisted sailor replied, "Don't worry about trying to fit into the common tropes of a military spouse. Also, your service member can be held accountable

for your actions. Be mindful of what you say and do." This response not only indicates reinforced power relationships and an institutionalized culture, but also indicates interpretive effects, or how policy principals perceive the target population. The indication is that there may be a perception of archetypes or what an ideal or typical SMS is expected to be, and that there are consequences for deviant behavior. That a spouse is aware that behaviors may have implications to the service member's career indicates that principals may interpret spouses as an asset or a detriment to the function of the service member. Furthermore, this response purposefully sheds the notion that there should be an institutionalized or socially expected way of being an SMS, which establishes independence and individuality from the prevailing construction. Don't worry about conforming to an expected construction but learn what the boundaries of the lifestyle.

The Role of the FRG in Acquiring Lifestyle Capital

It was clear from the data that there were a wide variety of sources of lifestyle capital for the respondents, and many respondents indicated that there was more than one key person or source for lifestyle learning. By far, the most common source of lifestyle learning was *other spouses* (*f* = 27). However, how those relationships originated is unknown. The second most common source of lifestyle learning was the SMS's sailor husband (*f* = 17). *Gaining experience* (*f* = 12) was the third most commonly occurring source of lifestyle learning. Responses unique to this category lacked specificity, and are typified by the SMS who responded, "I don't have a specific person who helped me adapt to submarine life. I learned along the way." The next two most frequent responses were the ombudsman (*f* = 11), and senior or command spouses (*f* = 10). Like "other spouses",

how these relationships originated is unknown. The FRG specifically as a source of lifestyle capital only had three occurrences in the data.

From the data, it was unclear that the FRG has a role as a source of lifestyle learning. However, the FRG's connection to lifestyle learning needs further exploration. It is plausible to say that some portion of the relationships with "other spouses" originated from opportunities facilitated by the FRG. Likewise, access to the ombudsman, or senior or command spouses, may also be facilitated by the FRG during meetings or social gatherings, though initiating these relationships outside of the FRG is likely as well. The question is whether the FRG has a direct role in lifestyle learning. Even with so few direct indications that the FRG was the source of lifestyle learning, the FRG still cannot be ruled out as influential without exploring the origins of key relationships. Given the data, the FRG may have an indirect role in lifestyle learning by facilitating key relationships, rather than a direct role as articulated in the FRG program mission statement. However, saying that an indirect role exists or is a key portal to access sources lifestyle capital is premature without further study.

Summary

Few respondents drew a direct connection to lifestyle capital and FRG. There is disconnect between how SMSs are constructed by principals, and how SMSs construct themselves. Furthermore, there is nothing institutionalized within the program to mitigate disenfranchisement or marginalization, either in program documents or as indicated by respondents. "Less drama" (f = 13) was a recurring theme when respondents were asked about what they would change about the FRG program. One SMS wrote, "Drama. Every

single FRG I have been a part of has drama. Drama amongst board members for one reason or another. Spouses not agreeing with the FRG, therefor [*sic*] creating drama. I don't know how you change that when 99% of submarine FRGs are women, but it's unattractive."

Support and community were commonly expressed by respondents as features of the SMS lifestyle. However, the split between community connectedness and disenfranchisement or marginalization may be evidence that the FRG program does not accomplish institutionalizing the value of support and community during the regular, recurring periods of stress, ambiguity, and loss that is the submarine cycle of deployment. Furthermore, SMSs indicate that the program is inconsistently applied, indicating variable leadership, variable by-laws, and inconsistent application of community support. As one respondent summarized, "I wouldn't change the organization of the FRG, I would just hope that not all of them are the same and some families actually get the help and support they need."

The common ground between how principals construct SMSs and how SMSs construct themselves is the desire for principals to provide community support, and the desire by SMSs to have community support, and the FRG sits on that common ground. Given the volume of responses that were ambiguous about the source of lifestyle capital, and the instability in how SMSs construct their FRG community, it would seem that the FRG is highly influential in how SMSs construct the FRG, but not in how SMSs construct themselves or construct the larger SMS community. Key relationships emerged as critical to gaining lifestyle capital. However, how SMSs adapt to the SMS lifestyle and

gain lifestyle capital would be better understood by identifying where and how key relationships originated rather than on how to better engage a formal support program created with stressors and readiness in mind. In Chapter 5, I will further interpret the findings relative to the literature and the theoretical framework, as well as explore the limitations to the study in more depth. In Chapter 5, I will also make recommendations for future research and discuss the implications for social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Much is known about military spouses and the general military spouse lifestyle, but little is known about specialized populations of military spouses, or of how military spouses learn about and adapt to the lifestyle, according to my review of the literature. The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of the SMS lifestyle, how SMSs learn to live that lifestyle, and the efficacy of the FRG in supporting spouses' ability to learn to live the lifestyle. Based on survey data collected from SMSs, the FRG does not play a direct role in lifestyle learning. Instead, lifestyle learning is facilitated by key relationships, but how those relationships originate requires further inquiry. It is possible that the FRG plays an indirect role in lifestyle learning by facilitating the formation of key relationships or facilitating access to community mentors and role models, but this conclusion cannot be drawn from these data.

Interpretation of the Findings

I divided findings from the literature into several categories. Categories included how military spouses are constructed by outsiders and principals versus how they construct themselves, what is known about lifestyle learning, and what is known about the nature of the military spouse lifestyle. Many of the findings of the literature were beyond the scope of this inquiry and did not appear in the data, but much of the existing knowledge may be confirmed or extended.

Emerged Constructions From the Literature Versus the Data

Most of the themes in the data were consistent with themes in the literature related to the nature of the general military spouse lifestyle. However, unlike the literature, the data were not gathered by inquiring about stressors, the nature of the adversities of military spouse life, or need to cope that is inherent with the military spouse lifestyle. Instead, when asked about what they would tell their before-marriage former selves about SMS life, most SMSs in the study spoke about adaptability, opportunity, and general advice rather than what to expect about adversities, stressors, or the things that would be difficult. That stressors did not appear frequently in the responses suggests that they do not primarily drive the nature and needs of the SMS lifestyle from the perspective of the SMS participants. To say that this finding may be disconfirming of the literature is premature. It is known from the literature that stressors do exist and are highly influential in shaping the nature of the military spouse lifestyle (Blank, Adams, Kittelson, Connors, & Padden, 2012, 2012, Burton et al., 2009). The nature of the need for formal and community support must be explored more from the SMS perspective and from the whole lived experience. In this way, program principals may better understand the desire for community support beyond specific needs arising from stressors and adversity.

Stressors in the literature can be divided into two types. The first is adaptive stressors (Andres et al., 2012; Spera, 2009), or stressors that challenge the military spouse to grow, evolve, or otherwise change. The second is disruptive stressors (Dimiceli et al., 2010; Eran-Jona, 2011; Hall, 2011; Talkington, 2011; Villagran et al., 2013), or stressors that require the spouse to reconcile the competition between the needs of the military and

the needs of the family unit. Data gathered from SMSs confirmed that stressors are indeed part of how SMSs construct the SMS lifestyle. Specifically, the emergence of self-reliance and loneliness in the data confirms the disruptive stressors in literature. However, stressors do not dominate that construction the way that stressors dominate in the literature. Instead, SMS participants spoke in general terms about how the SMS lifestyle can be difficult and lonely, and that they would advise their former selves to be adaptable and self-reliant. The study data confirm that stressors in general are an influential force in the SMS lifestyle. However, the data indicated that stressors as they are presented in the literature do not dominate the entire lived experience of the lifestyle.

Similarly, none of the SMSs in the study specifically articulated a desire to have a sense of belonging, but many articulated a desire to have a sense of community and community support, which Talkington (2011) related to a sense of belonging. There are many ways to explore what constitutes a sense of community, and certainly the FRG makes a significant contribution as shown in participant responses. However, the respondents were almost evenly split on their positive or negative construction of the FRG. Many respondents expressed a desire to have a sense of community through the FRG. The data expand on the literature by highlighting the level of disenfranchisement and marginalization in the community and why it is happening, thus diminishing the sense of community among many SMSs. If the causes of the negative constructions of the FRG are able to be mitigated formally through program structure, then it may be possible to change negative constructions to neutral or positive, and thereby increase the overall sense of community. Facilitating a greater sense of community may then create a greater

sense of belonging and support by not causing disenfranchisement or marginalization in the first place. In this way, the responses confirm the findings from the literature that there is a general desire for a sense of community (Gall, 2009; Talkington, 2011), though the level of engagement with that community may be quite variable.

What the data disconfirm in the literature is the lesser construction of military spouses as resilient and adaptable. Resilience and adaptability as a construction is certainly present in the literature (Villagran et al., 2013), but it is far overshadowed by the predominance of stressors. The data gathered from SMSs is a stark contrast to the literature, where themes specific to adaptability and self-reliance are common, and themes specific to stressors are rare.

What is Known About Lifestyle Learning

Some researchers have explored social, personal, and clinical learning sources for how spouses acquire lifestyle capital. The literature includes themes related to lifestyle learning (Gall, 2009; Gorbaty, 2009; Hall, 2011; Knobloch & Theiss, 2012; Sheppard et al., 2010), but there is little exploration of the learning mechanism specifically, according to my review of the literature. This study extended knowledge by exposing the sources and the key relationships that facilitated lifestyle learning for SMSs.

What was uncovered in the data is that there were two primary sources of lifestyle learning within the SMS. The sources with the highest frequencies were other spouses (f = 27) and the SMS's sailor-husband (f = 17). Other sources of lifestyle learning with higher frequencies in the data included "gaining experience" and the ombudsman. Sources of lifestyle learning with the lowest frequencies were formal support programs,

including the FRG. What remains unknown is how the relationships with the learning source other than the SMS's sailor were initiated. The data indicate that the FRG is not a direct source for key relationships. However, further inquiry may reveal whether the FRG is an indirect source of key relationships by facilitating access to the relevant people.

What is Known About the Nature of the Military Spouse Lifestyle

Military spouse life is constructed in the literature as the need for spouses to be able to cope (Spera, 2009), the need for spouses to be able to adapt (Spera, 2009), and as being a complex lifestyle (Gall, 2009; Gorbaty, 2009; Knobloch & Theiss, 2012; Padden et al, 2011; Sheppard et al., 2010; Spera, 2009). There is also an emphasis in the literature on community and individual resilience, and the military's notion of family readiness (Cacioppo et al., 2011; Carroll et al., 2013; Meadows et al., 2016; Riggs & Riggs, 2011; Saltzman et al., 2011). The data confirmed adaptability directly, and the broad spectrum of responses may have been illustrative of the complexity and individuality of military spouse life and of the SMS lifestyle. However, the data extended the knowledge of the specialized lifestyle of the submariner spouse community. Specifically, SMSs described the SMS lifestyle as ever-changing with the inability to have hard expectations, as occasionally lonely, the need to be adaptable to shifting roles, and the necessity for self-reliance. SMSs also described a range of connection and disconnect with the SMS community through the FRG, and a frustration with inconsistency of the quality of FRGs and FRG leadership over the course of their lived experience. That stressors and coping did not emerge as a dominant construction from the perspective of the SMSs indicated

that the coping dimension of the SMS lifestyle is not what defines how SMSs construct themselves.

Theoretical Framework: Social Construction and Policy Design

The SMS lifestyle has consistent constructions in some areas, and variable constructions in others that are dependent on context, experience and perspective. The data yielded some of those dependent constructions, but more research is needed to explore them in more detail. The dominate construction of military spouses in the literature is that they are a stressed population in need of support, and the policy outcomes, like the FRG program, reflect this construction. However, this is a top-down construction of the population. I added a bottom-up perspective to the application of policy outcomes with this study, and highlighted the importance of the dependent constructions that emerged from the data.

To some degree, all populations will have variations in self-construction that are dependent on perspective. However, some of the variations that emerged from the SMS data were a very different than themes found in the literature that are related to the theoretical framework. These differences most frequently were related in the data to a positive construction of the self, a positive or negative construction of the community as it relates to the FRG, and SMS perceptions regarding the allocation of benefits and burdens. The data did not include indications of political power of either the self or of the SMS community in general. Less frequent data applications to the theoretical framework included feedback effects that reinforce cultural institutionalization, and data related to the policy message (Ingram et al., 2007).

What was reinforced by the data, however, was the importance of military needs, and the prioritization of those needs above all others (Gall, 2009). What was interesting about the sum of data and the literature was that the policy message prioritizes the needs of the Navy, and that government acknowledges and emphasizes the stress that these priorities cause to spouses. However, the inconsistency in FRG program implementation that was voiced by SMSs, the starkly polar construction of FRGs and its influence on individuals in the SMS community, and the lack of formal, institutional efforts to mitigate negative constructions suggests that there is much that can be improved on the program level. A policy message that community support and resilience are priorities to principals, but a program structure that splits the community between marginalized/disenfranchised and contented puts the policy outcomes at odds with the policy message. If feed back and feed forward effects reinforce institutionalization and culture, and the purpose of formal support programs is to facilitate readiness and resilience, then it appears likely that the wrong feed back effects have been the focus of program evaluation.

The allocation of benefits and burdens (Ingram et al., 2007) is more difficult to identify from the perspective of the SMSs. There is no indication of what the political power may be of SMSs or military families in the data or in the literature. However, it is clear that military spouses are constructed positively by principals, and that the construction of a stressed population in need of support is secondary to the positive construction. Formal social support programs are one benefit allocated to the population. However, along with their polar construction of formal social support programs, SMSs

also perceive benefits and burdens as allocated within that environment. For example, the rejection of the FRG community for its "drama" is a common cause of disenfranchisement, and a lack of mechanisms to mitigate the negative construction may be an indirect allocation of burden. Indeed, themes related to disenfranchisement relative to the perceived allocation of burdens in the data were common (f = 33). Likewise, the perception or experience that social cliques (f = 12) within the FRG program inequitably influence the distribution of social support may be an indirect allocation of burden, and may indicate the presence of influential of sub-constructions where there is a power vacuum or void space within gaps in the program structure. This is also illustrated in the data as an inequitable or artificial perception of power within the community (f = 6) as a perceived allocation of burden.

Like political power, there is little in the data that may indicate changing social constructions or dynamics in the environment that may facilitate change in social constructions (Ingram et al., 2007). However, from the SMS perspective, there was some mention of how an SMS can proactively "be the change" (f = 1), referring to the things that disenfranchise other community members, through individual leadership and role modeling to mitigate the negative construction of the FRG and its social influence on the community. There is no indication in the data of the desire to change the general social construction of the SMS community, or of a desire to be viewed differently by principals or outsiders.

Social construction and policy design highlights the interaction between how populations are perceived by principals, and the influence that perception has on policies

intended for those populations (Ingram et al., 2007). It is likely that to varying degrees, every population constructs itself differently than how it is constructed by principals. However, there is a common goal between the SMS community and its principals, and that goal is resilience in whatever form is most useful to the SMS. The differences in the top-down and bottom-up social constructions are important in this case because it highlights a possible source of the apparent disparity or inconsistency between the program mission and an outcome that is split between alienation and belonging. This disparity is present even though the bottom-up and top-down constructions are both positive and share the goal of effective social support. What feed back effects (Ingram et al., 2007), such as military family surveys, are available are decidedly biased in favor of the top-down construction because they emphasize stressors and deployment. The lack of political power (Ingram et al., 2007) is perhaps the reason that some SMSs advocate for community responsibility in mitigating marginalization and disenfranchisement rather than change through policy or program solutions. Nonetheless, the acquisition of lifestyle capital through some sort of social support is likely the primary way that SMS resilience is achieved given the findings in the literature and the self-construction of adaptability and self-reliance. Though more research is needed to explore the role of the FRG in facilitating informal support networks, lifestyle capital may be largely achieved outside of program efforts.

Limitations of the Study

Like the literature, the voices of male spouses were absent from the data. The distribution of age and rank for the study respondents is also not representative of the

general population military spouses. There was a disproportionately large response by SMSs married to a sailor of the rank "E7", which is a senior enlisted rank. While this may not have been a limitation in terms of the breadth of experience that E7 SMSs contributed to the data, it also means that the voices of junior-enlisted SMSs were underrepresented. Officer's wives of any rank were also underrepresented, with only three respondents indicating an officer's rank for their active duty sailor.

The electronic survey format was also a limitation in that the detail of the data was often limited, and the environment that the respondents completed the survey in was unknown. Many responses needed more context to be better analyzed and understood, and structured interviews rather than an electronic survey may have been able to produce that context. For example, the origins of relationships with "other spouses" is unknown, and descriptive detail about what is meant by "gaining experience" is absent. Structured interviews may also have allowed for a consistent or comparable environment for all respondents. Furthermore, not all categories of data reached saturation, even with the large sample size. These design limitations with the instrument emerged during data analysis, but the scope of the instrument was broad enough to produce credible data that addressed the research question. Where the instrument produced data with insufficient context indicated possible areas of future research.

Recommendations

The findings of this study indicated that there is a possible disconnect between the articulated mission of the FRG program, which is to provide family support, social connection, prepare spouses for deployment, and mentor spouses (Navy, 2007), and its

impact on the lifestyle learning and lifestyle capital for SMSs. Like the literature, recommendations for future research are to include the male voice, though at present, that may be difficult for the SMS population. Male spouses in this population are rare, which may not ensure their anonymity. However, as the submarine service includes more women and homosexual male sailors, there may be a larger population of male spouses. Furthermore, the data indicated topics that require more detailed inquiry. For example, where SMSs indicated "other spouses", "the ombudsman", and senior and command spouses as key relationships in lifestyle learning, there was no indication of how those relationships originated. In the context of the role of the FRG in lifestyle learning, exploring the origins of key relationships will help to clarify a direct or indirect role by the FRG in facilitating those relationships, or no role at all. Even an indirect role in originating key relationships contributes to the mission of the FRG regardless of social constructions. Finally, "gaining experience" was a frequent source of lifestyle capital among SMSs. However, this answer lacks detail or context, and may or may not be related to learning opportunities facilitated by the FRG.

Implications

I began to identify the extent of alienation as an artifact of the inconsistent implementation of the FRG with this study. The implications are twofold. First, a shift in thinking from stressors, resilience, and family readiness, to adaptability and self-reliance may create an institutional shift from a positively constructed community afflicted by negatives to one capable of adaptably meeting challenges of SMS life. While the shift is subtle, it reflects how SMS construct themselves rather than how they are constructed by

others, and may help guide policy and research design as programs and their impacts are evaluated. Second, program changes designed to mitigate the inconsistencies in implementation and leadership may help to reduce the "drama" and other socially-alienating dynamics that disconnect many SMSs from the FRG community. Findings in the literature support that this implication is directly applicable to other military communities because "drama" is a very common theme in FRGs military-wide. Combined with future research about how key relationships originate, a lower level of disconnect by alienation may facilitate relationships that are key to acquiring lifestyle capital, thus increasing the factors that contribute to adaptability, self-reliance, and ultimately, resilience.

Outside of the SMS community, there is not enough literature to be able to compare this study to others that focus on the lifestyles of other specialized military units. Other specialized units may construct themselves differently given the differing nature of the demands of that lifestyle. Exploring how specialized communities construct themselves, construct their own communities, and learn to live the lifestyles provides key information for policy and program design. The implications are applicable beyond military spouse communities. There are specialized civilian populations with unique needs as well. The spouses of the incarcerated may be such a community, as well as spouses of professionals whose jobs require them to be frequently absent and at risk, such as wildland firefighters and their support staff, and other communities with unique support and social needs. The implications for the individual are that in the end, individuals and families will have more and better-tailored opportunity to acquire the

lifestyle capital necessary to adapt and become more resilient. Organizationally, principals will better understand the needs of the population in program and policy design.

There were gaps in the data regarding the social construction of this target population by policy principals, and those gaps merit further research. Such gaps include the categorization of how the population is constructed, the political power of military spouses, the allocation of actual versus perceived benefits and burdens, and how policy affects the target population's participation and interaction with government. However, it was clear when compared to the existing literature that this particular community of military spouses constructs themselves differently than how they are generally constructed by principals. The overriding implication of this study was that the voices of the target population highlight different policy needs when asked questions about the whole SMS lifestyle and how they perceive the role of the FRG. When asked questions by principals about specific aspects of the SMS lifestyle, like stressors, services, and readiness, a different construction emerged that may not highlight policy and program needs relevant to the whole lived experience. In this regard, policy makers may consider changing their approach to military families in defining their lifestyle needs by the whole lived experience rather than certain aspects of it, and in crafting policies and programs to support those needs.

Conclusions

With this study, I explored the nature of the SMS lifestyle from the perspective of SMSs. The purpose was to not only explore the lifestyle of a specialized military

population, but also to capture how the community constructs itself in comparison to how the community is constructed by principals. Those constructions, how SMSs learn to live the SMS lifestyle, and how SMSs construct the FRG community all have implications for the FRG program, its feedback mechanisms, and its principals. Themes emerged from the data indicating that SMSs construct themselves differently than they are constructed by principals and as military spouses in the literature, and that SMSs have polar positive and negative constructions of the FRG and its community. Negative constructions of the FRG community explained why SMSs were disenfranchised or marginalized and disengaged from the FRG. This study was also a preliminary exploration of what the key relationships were that facilitated lifestyle learning. How the key relationships, other than the SMSs' sailor-spouse, were initiated remains unknown and requires further research. It is possible that those relationships had origins connected with the FRGs.

The results were framed by the theory of social construction and policy design to explore the dynamics between social constructs, policy, and the outcomes. To this end, there appears to be a disparity between the articulated mission of the FRG, how it is utilized by SMSs, and the effects of the FRG on how SMSs connect with social support and acquire lifestyle capital. More research is needed in this area. However, changing feedback mechanisms to prioritize how SMSs and military families construct themselves, rather than reinforcing how they are constructed by principals and others, and customizing program design accordingly, may create opportunities for more engagement and less alienation. The end goal is always more resilient military spouses. However, giving voice to how the spouses construct themselves, community and individual support,

and the many facets of resilience, and applying that voice to programs and policy may improve lifestyle learning and support opportunities. It may be applied to specialized civilian communities with unique support needs as well.

References

Aducci, C. J., Baptist, J. A., George, J., Barros, P. M., & Goff, B. S. N. (2011). The recipe for being a good military wife: How military wives managed OIF/OEF deployment. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 23*(3-4), 231-249. doi:10.1080/08952833.2011.604526

American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Military Deployment Services for Youth, Families and Service Members. (2007). *The psychological needs of U.S. military service members and their families: A preliminary report.* Retrieved from https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/psychological-needs-us-military-service-members-their-families-preliminary-report

Andres, M., Moelker, R., & Soeters, J. (2012). A longitudinal study of partners of deployed personnel from the Netherlands' armed forces. *Military Psychology*, *24*(3), 270-288. doi:10.1080/08995605.2012.678237

Asbury, E., & Martin, D. (2012). Military deployment and the spouse left behind. *The Family Journal*, *20*(1), 45-50. doi:10.1177/1066480711429433

Balderrama-Durbin, C., Cigrang, J. A., Osborne, L. J., Snyder, D. K., Talcott, G. W., Slep, A. S., . . . Sonnek, S. (2015). Coming home: A prospective study of family reintegration following deployment to a war zone. *Psychological Services*, *12*(3), 213-221. doi:10.1037/ser0000020

Bauer, T. N., & Erdogan, B. (2014). Delineating and reviewing the role of newcomer capital in organizational socialization. *Annual Review of Organizational*

Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 1, 439-457. doi:10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091251

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (2011). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge* [Kindle Reader edition]. Retrieved from http://www.amazon.com (Original work published in 1966)

Blank, C., Adams, L. A., Kittelson, B., Connors, R. A., & Padden, D. L. (2012). Coping behaviors used by army wives during deployment separation and their perceived effectiveness. *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, 24*(11), 660-668. doi:10.1111/j.1745-7599.2012.00766.x

Boss, P. (1999). *Ambigous loss: Learning to live with unresolved grief.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). New York, NY: Greenwood.

Bowen, G. L., & Martin, J. A. (2011). The resiliency model of role performance for service members, veterans, and their families: A focus on social connections and individual assets. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *21*(2), 162-178. doi:10.1080/10911359.2011.546198

Burton, T., Farley, D., & Rhea, A. (2009). Stress-induced somatization in spouses of deployed and nondeployed servicemen. *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners*, *21*(6), 332-339. doi:10.1111/j.1745-7599.2009.00411.x

Cacioppo, J. T., Reis, H. T., & Zautra, A. J. (2011). Social resilience: The value of social fitness with an application to the military. *The American Psychologist, 66*(1), 43. doi:10.1037/a0021419

Carroll, E. B., Orthner, D. K., Behnke, A., Smith, C. M., Day, S., & Raburn, M. (2013). Integrating life skills into relationship and marriage education: The essential life skills for military families program. *Family Relations*, *62*(4), 559-570. doi:10.1111/fare.12027

Cartwright, D., & Zander, A. (1968). Pressures to uniformity in groups: Introduction. In D. Cartwright & A. Zander (Eds.) *Group dynamics* (pp. 139-151). New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Chan, C. S. (2015). Introduction to the special section: Research on psychological issues and interventions for military personnel, veterans, and their families, part II. *Professional Psychology: Research & Practice*, *46*(2), 81-82. doi:10.1037/a0039132

Chapin, M. (2009). Deployment and families: Hero stories and horror stories. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, *79*(3-4), 263-282. doi:10.1080/00377310903130316

Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Clark, M. G., Jordan, J. D., & Clark, K. L. (2013). Motivating military families to thrive. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, *42*(2), 110-123. doi:10.1111/fcsr.12046

Commander Navy Installations. (2018). *Family readiness groups handbook*. Retrieved July 26, 2019 from https://www.cnic.navy.mil/content/dam/cnic/hq/pdfs/n91_fleet_and_family_support_program/deployment_readiness/U.S.-Navy-FRG-Handbook-2018.pdf

Creech, S. K., Hadley, W., & Borsari, B. (2014). The impact of military deployment and reintegration on children and parenting: A systematic review. *Professional Psychology: Research And Practice*, *45*(6), 452-464. doi:10.1037/a0035055

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Davis, J., Ward, D. B., & Storm, C. (2011). The unsilencing of military wives: Wartime deployment experiences and citizen responsibility. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 37*(1), 51-63. doi: 10.1111/j.1752-0606.2009.00154.x

Demers, A. (2009). The war at home: Consequences of loving a veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. *Internet Journal of Mental Health*, *6*(1), 1-12. Retrieved from http://ispub.com/IJMH/6/1/4479

Department of the Navy. (2007). *OPNAVINST 1750.1F Navy Family Ombudsman Program*. Retrieved from http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nhcne/NHCNE/downloads/files/OPNAVINST_1750.1F_Navy_Family_Ombudsman_Program_30_MAR_07.pdf

Di Nola, G. M. (2008). Stressors afflicting families during military deployment. *Military Medicine*, *173*(5), 411. Retrieved from http://militarymedicine.amsus.org

Dimiceli, E. E., Steinhardt, M. A., & Smith, S. E. (2010). Stressful experiences, coping strategies, and predictors of health-related outcomes among wives of deployed military servicemen. *Armed Forces & Society (0095327X)*, *36*(2), 351-373. doi: 10.1177/0095327X08324765

Eran-Jona, M. (2011). Married to the military: Military-family relations in the Israel defense forces. *Armed Forces & Society (0095327X)*, *37*(1), 19-41. doi:10.1177/0095327X10379729

Faber, A., Willerton, E., Clymer, S., Macdermid, S., & Weiss, H. (2008). Ambiguous absence, ambiguous presence: A qualitative study of military reserve families in wartime. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *22*(2), 222-230. doi:10.1037/0893-3200.22.2.222

Gall, J. A. (2009). *The army family team building program: Facilitating a transformative learning process: An intrinsic case study.* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3366280)

Glisson, C. A., Melton, S. C., & Roggow, L. (1980). The effect of separation on marital satisfaction, depression, and self esteem. *Journal of Social Service Research*, *4*(1), 61-76. doi:10.1300/J079v04n01_05

Gorbaty, L. R. (2009). *Family reintegration of reserve service members following a wartime deployment: A qualitative exploration of wives' experience.* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3322252).

Hall, L. K. (2011). The importance of understanding military culture. *Social Work in Health Care*, *50*(1), 4-18. doi:10.1080/00981389.2010.513914

Harrell, M. C. (2001). Army officers' spouses: Have the white gloves been mothballed? *Armed Forces & Society (0095327X)*, *28*(1), 55-75. doi:10.1177/0095327x0102800104

Hoshmand, L., & Hoshmand, A. L. (2007). Support for military families and communities. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *35*(2), 171-180. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20141

Huebner, A. J., Mancini, J. A., Bowen, G. L., & Orthner, D. K. (2009). Shadowed by war: Building community capacity to support military families. *Family Relations*, *58*(2), 216-228. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2008.00548.x

Hsieh, F. & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*, 1277-1288. doi: 10.1177/1049732305276687

Ingram, H., Schneider, A. L., & DeLeon, P. (2007). Social construction and policy design. In P. A. Sabatier (Ed.), *Theories of the Policy Process* (pp. 223-260)

Jennings-Kelsall, V., Aloia, L. S., Solomon, D. H., Marshall, A. D., & Leifker, F. R. (2012). Stressors experienced by women within Marine Corps families: A qualitative study of discourse within an online forum. *Military Psychology, 24*(4), 363. doi:10.1080/08995605.2012.695255

Joseph, A. L., & Afifi, T. D. (2010). Military wives' stressful disclosures to their deployed husbands: The role of protective buffering. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *38*(4), 412-434. doi:10.1080/00909882.2010.513997

Kane, T. (2006). Global U.S. troop deployment, 1950-2005. Retrieved from http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2006/05/global-us-troop-deployment-1950-2005

Kees, M., & Rosenblum, K. (2015). Evaluation of a psychological health and resilience intervention for military spouses: A pilot study. *Psychological Services*, *12*(3), 222-230. doi:10.1037/ser0000035

Knobloch, L. K., & Theiss, J. A. (2012). Experiences of U.S. military couples during the post-deployment transition: Applying the relational turbulence model. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 29*(4), 423-450. doi:10.1177/0265407511431186

Lapp, C., Taft, L. B., Tollefson, T., Hoepner, A., Moore, K., & Divyak, K. (2010). Stress and coping on the home front: Guard and reserve spouses searching for a new normal. *Journal of Family Nursing*, *16*(1), 45-67. doi:10.1177/1074840709357347

Larsen, J. L., Clauss-Ehlers, C. S., & Cosden, M. A. (2015). An exploration of army wives' responses to spousal deployment: Stressors and protective factors. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice, 4*(4), 212-228. doi:10.1037/cfp0000049

Lester, P., Mogil, C., Saltzman, W., Woodward, K., Nash, W., Leskin, G., & Beardslee, W. (2011). Families overcoming under stress: Implementing family-centered prevention for military families facing wartime deployments and combat

operational stress. *Military Medicine*, *176*(1), 19-25. doi:10.7205/milmed-d-10-00122

Lichtman, M. (2010). Ethical issues in qualitative research. In *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide* (pp. 51-67). Retrieved from http://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/27011_4.pdf

Lindblom, C. E. (2004). The science of "muddling through". In J. M. Shafritz, K.S. Layne, & C. P. Borick (Eds.), *Classics of public policy*. (pp. 26-40). Boston, MA: Pearson Longman. (Reprinted from *Public administration review*, Spring 1959. Indianapolis, IN: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.)

Marek, L. I., Brock, D., D'Aniello, C., Hickey, K. A., Hollingsworth, W. G., Mendes, A. , . . . O'Rourke, K. (2013). *Coming home: The experiences and implications of reintegration*. Retrieved from http://georgia4h.org/military/resources/non%20curriculum%20resources/Reintegration%20Survey%20Report.pdf

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 11*(3). Retrieved from http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1428/3027#g12

Meadows, S. O., Beckett, M. K., Bowling, K., Golinelli, D., Fisher, M. P., Martin, L. T., , . . . Osilla, K. C. (2016). Family resilience in the military: Definitions, models, and policies. *Rand Health Quarterly, 5*(3), 1-26. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5158214/

Mehta, M. S. (2012). *Work, self, and military life: The experiences of U.S. Air Force wives.* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3502622)

Morse, J. (2006). The new emotional cycles of deployment. Retrieved February 1, 2010 from http://www.hooah4health.com/deployment/familymatters/Emotional_Cycle_Support.pdf

Navy. (n.d.). *OPSEC operations security*. Retrieved from https://www.navy.mil/ah_online/OPSEC/

Navy Recruiting Command. (2016). *Life on a sub.* Retrieved from https://www.navy.com/navy-life/life-on-a-sub.html#sub-life-underway

Nowlin, M. C., (2011). Theories of the policy process: State of the research and emerging trends. *The Policy Studies Journal. 39*(1), 41-60. doi:10.1111/j.1541-0072.2010.00389_4.x

Odle-Dusseau, H. N., Herleman, H. A., Britt, T. W., Moore, D. D., Castro, C. A., & McGurk, D. (2013). Family-supportive work environments and psychological strain: A longitudinal test of two theories. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *18*(1), 27-36. doi:10.1037/a0030803

Ohye, B. Y., Brendel, R. W., Fredman, S. J., Bui, E., Rauch, P. K., Allard, M. D. , . . . Simon, N. M. (2015). Three-generation model: A family systems framework for the assessment and treatment of veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder and

related conditions. *Professional Psychology: Research And Practice*, *46*(2), 97-106. doi:10.1037/a0037735

Orthner, D. K., & Rose, R. (2003). Dealing with the effects of absence: Deployment and adjustment to separation among military families. *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences*, *95*(1), 33-37. Retrieved from http://www.aafcs.org/Resources/Journal.asp

Padden, D. L., Connors, R. A., & Agazio, J. G. (2011). Stress, coping, and well-being in military spouses during deployment separation. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, *33*(2), 247-267. doi:10.1177/0193945910371319

Parcell, E. S., & Macguire, K. C., (2014). Comfort, cliques, and clashes: Family readiness groups as dilemmatic sites of relating during wartime. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, (31)*4, 497-515. doi:10.1177/0265407514521766

Park, N. (2011). Military children and families: Strengths and challenges during peace and war. *American Psychologist*, *66*(1), 65-72. doi:10.1037/a0021249

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Pierce, J. J., Siddiki, S., Jones, M. D., Schumacher, K., Pattison, A., & Peterson, H. (2014). Social construction and policy design: A review of past applications. *The Policy Studies Journal*, *42*(1), 1-29. doi: 10.1111/psj.12040

Pincus, S. H., House, R., Christensen, J., & Adler, L. E. (2001). The emotional cycle of deployment: A military family perspective. *Journal of the Army Medical Department,* 4/5/6, 615-613. Retrieved from

http://clfmilitary.uurgl.com/moodle3/file.php/1/CLF_Military_Ministry_Resource_Base/Military_Family_Resources/emotional_cycle_of_deployments_1_.doc

Putnam, R. D. (2000*). Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Riggs, S. A., & Riggs, D. S. (2011). Risk and resilience in military families experiencing deployment: The role of the family attachment network. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *25*(5), 675-687. doi:10.1037/a0025286

Rodriguez, A. J., & Margolin, G. (2015). Military service absences and family members' mental health: A timeline followback assessment. *Journal Of Family Psychology*, *29*(4), 642-648. doi:10.1037/fam0000102

Rossetto, K. R., (2015). Evaluations of supportive and unsupportive responses during spousal deployment. *Communication Monographs, 82*(3), 291-314. doi:10.1080/03637751.2014.978344

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

Saltzman, W., Lester, P., Beardslee, W., Layne, C., Woodward, K., & Nash, W. (2011). Mechanisms of risk and resilience in military families: Theoretical and empirical basis of a family-focused resilience enhancement program. *Clinical Child & Family Psychology Review*, *14*(3), 213-230. doi:10.1007/s10567-011-0096-1

Saltzman, W., Pynoos, R., Lester, P., Layne, C., & Beardslee, W. (2013). Enhancing family resilience through family narrative co-construction. *Clinical Child & Family Psychology Review*, *16*(3), 294-310. doi:10.1007/s10567-013-0142-2

Schneider, A. L., & Ingram, H. (1997). *Policy Design for Democracy*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

Schwandt, T.A. (2015). *The sage dictionary of qualitative inquiry*. (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Shanahan, E. A., Jones, M. D., McBeth, M. K., & Radaelli, C. M. (2014). The narrative policy framework. In C. M. Weibel & P. A. Sabatier (Eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process* (4th ed.). (pp. 173-212). New York, NY: Westview Press

Sheppard, S. C., Malatras, J., & Israel, A. C. (2010). The impact of deployment on U.S. military families. *American Psychologist*, *65*(6), 599-609. doi:10.1037/a0020332

Spera, C. (2009). Spouses' ability to cope with deployment and adjust to Air Force family demands. *Armed Forces & Society (0095327X)*, *35*(2), 286-306. doi: 10.1177/0095327X08316150

Talkington, B. (2011). *Communicating support: Where and how army spouses seek community.* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://etd.ohiolink.edu/rws_etd/document/get/bgsu1302051327/inline

Theiss, J. A., Knobloch, L. K., (2014). Relational turbulence and the post-deployment transition: Self, partner, and relationship focused turbulence. *Communication Research, 41*(1), 27-51. doi:10.1177/0093650211429285

Tollefson, T. (2008). Supporting spouses during a military deployment. *Family & Community Health*, *31*(4), 281-286. doi: 10.1097/01.FCH.0000336091.31442.44

Varcoe, K. P., Lees, N. B., & Emper, N. (2003). Military deployment: Preparing soldiers and their families. *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences*, *95*(3), 40-44. Retrieved from http://www.aafcs.org/Resources/Journal.asp

Vaughn-Coaxum, R., Smith, B. N., Iverson, K. M., & Vogt, D. (2015). Family stressors and postdeployment mental health in single versus partnered parents deployed in support of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. *Psychological Services*, *12*(3), 241-249. doi:10.1037/ser0000026

Villagran, M., Canzona, M., & Ledford, C. W. (2013). The milspouse battle rhythm: Communicating resilience throughout the deployment cycle. *Health Communication*, *28*(8), 778-788. doi:10.1080/10410236.2013.800441

Wang, M., Nyutu, P. N., Tran, K. K., and Spears, A., (2015). Finding resilience: The mediation effect of sense of community on the psychological well-being of military spouses. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 37(*2), 164-174. doi:10.17744/mehc.37.2.07054x614489204m

Westphal, R. J., & Convoy, S. P. (2015). Military culture implications for mental health and nursing care. *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, *20*(1), 1. doi:10.3912/OJIN.Vol20No01Man04

Westphal, R. J., & Woodward, K. R. (2010). Family fitness. *Military Medicine*, 97-102. doi:10.7205/MILMED-D-10-00238

Wheeler, A. R., & Stone, R. (2010). Exploring stress and coping strategies among National Guard spouses during times of deployment: A research note. *Armed Forces & Society (0095327X)*, *36*(3), 545-557. doi: 10.1177/0095327X09344066

Appendix A: Literature Search Strategy

Topic	Keywords	Keywords Excluded	Databases
Military Families	Military family, military families, military spouses, subject: military spouses, military husbands, Navy spouses, Navy families, male military spouses, social construction military, socially constructed military, and socially constructed military family	Health, violence, ptsd, child, combat, veteran, veterans, children, youth, abuse, violence, divorce, suicide, traumatic, assault, tax, education, immigrant	Academic Search Complete, Military and Government Collection, Political Science Complete, PsychInfo, SocIndex with full text, ProQuest, Google Scholar
SMSs	Submarine OR submarines AND family OR families OR spouse OR spouses	None	Academic Search Complete, Military and Government Collection, Political Science Complete, PsychInfo, SocIndex with full text, ProQuest, Google Scholar
Application of social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 2011, Ingram, Schneider, & DeLeon, 2007)	Social construction, social construction AND community capacity OR community capacity programs OR resilience OR community resilience OR military OR military families OR ecological systems theory	None	Academic Search Complete, Military and Government Collection, Political Science Complete, PsychInfo, SocIndex with full text, ProQuest, Google Scholar

Appendix B: Study Flyer

Study participants needed!

Are you the spouse of an active duty submarine sailor?

Have you experienced at least one submarine deployment during your marraige to your sailor?

You may be eligible to participate in a research study about the submarine family lifestyle.

What is the study about?

We know a lot about military families, the military-family lifestyle, its stressors, and deployment in general. Current family support programs have been developed based on that knowledge. However, we don't know what influences spouses the most in learning how to live and weather the experiences of military life. We also don't know much about the experiences that are specific to specialized military units, like submarines, and how those differences influence broadly-designed programs meant to support military families.

This study will explore the submarine-family lifestyle that the spouses of submarine sailors live, how spouses learn to live that lifestyle and who they learn it from, and what role the Family Readiness Group (FRG) might play in that learning process.

For more information, contact Linda Tsubaki at [redacted] (call or text), by email at [redacted], or go to www.surveymonkey.com/[redacted] to participate.

All questionnaire responses will be anonymous. No questions will require discussion of specific submarines, current submarine missions, or submarine movements.

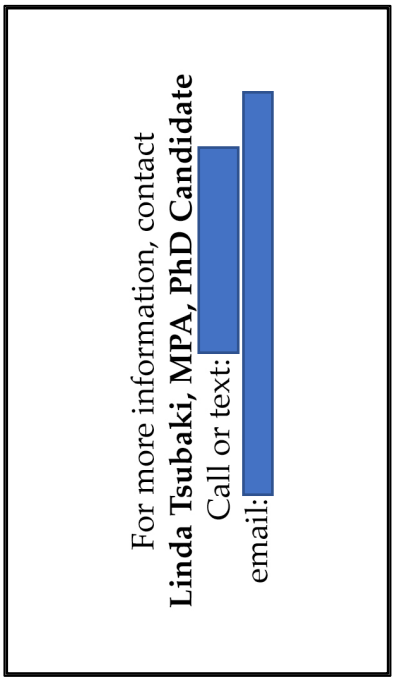
Linda M. Tsubaki, MPA, PhD Candidate is the daughter of a Vietnam-era career Air Force pilot, and has been a part of the Navy submarine-family community since 1992. She has been the spouse of a submarine sailor for 13 years, and has served as an FRG board member and a command ombudsman. She is currently pursuing a Doctorate of Philosophy in Public Policy and Administration at Walden University, with a specialty in policy analysis.

Scan here with your QR reader to go to the survey.

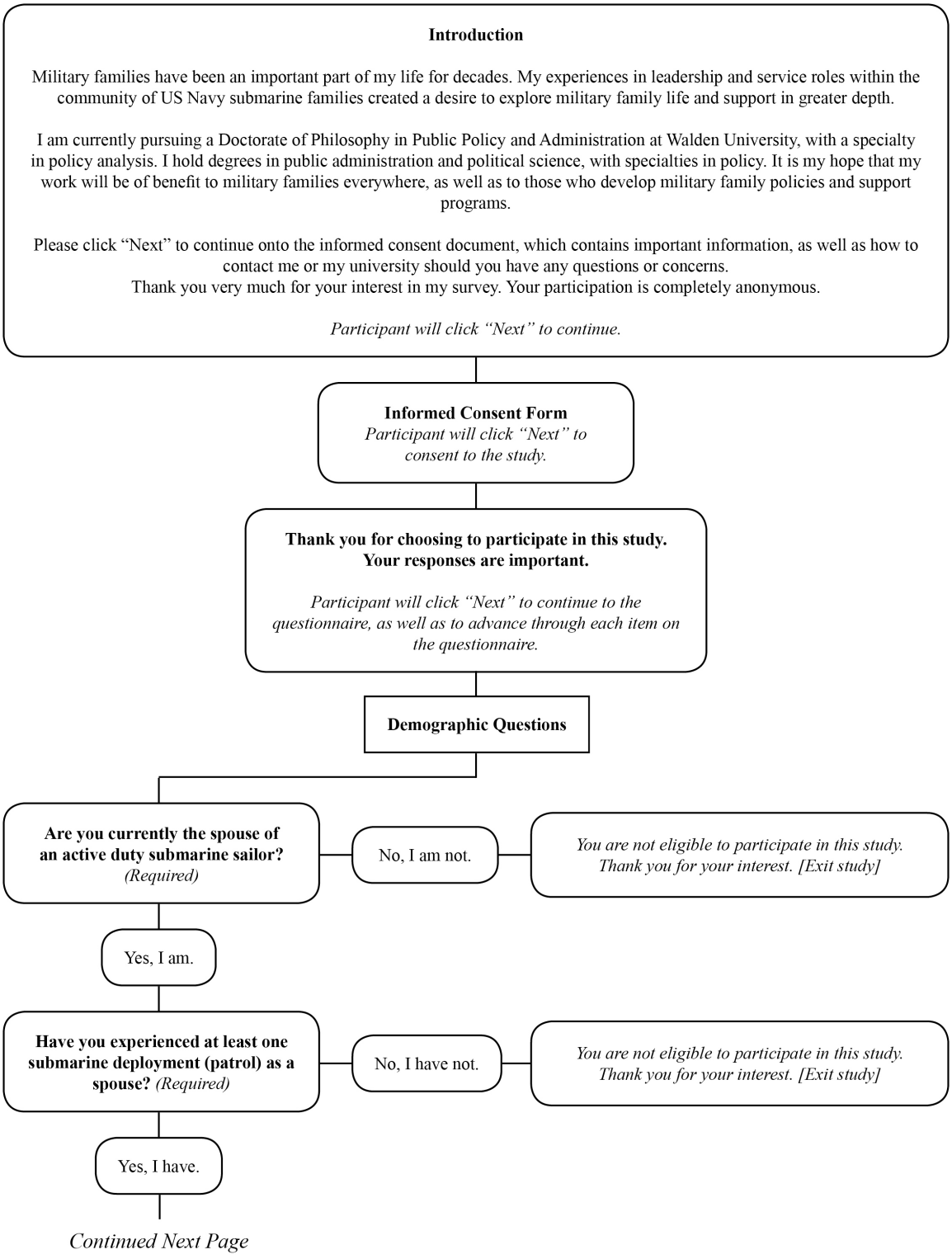
Appendix C: Study Business-Size Cards for Participants

Front

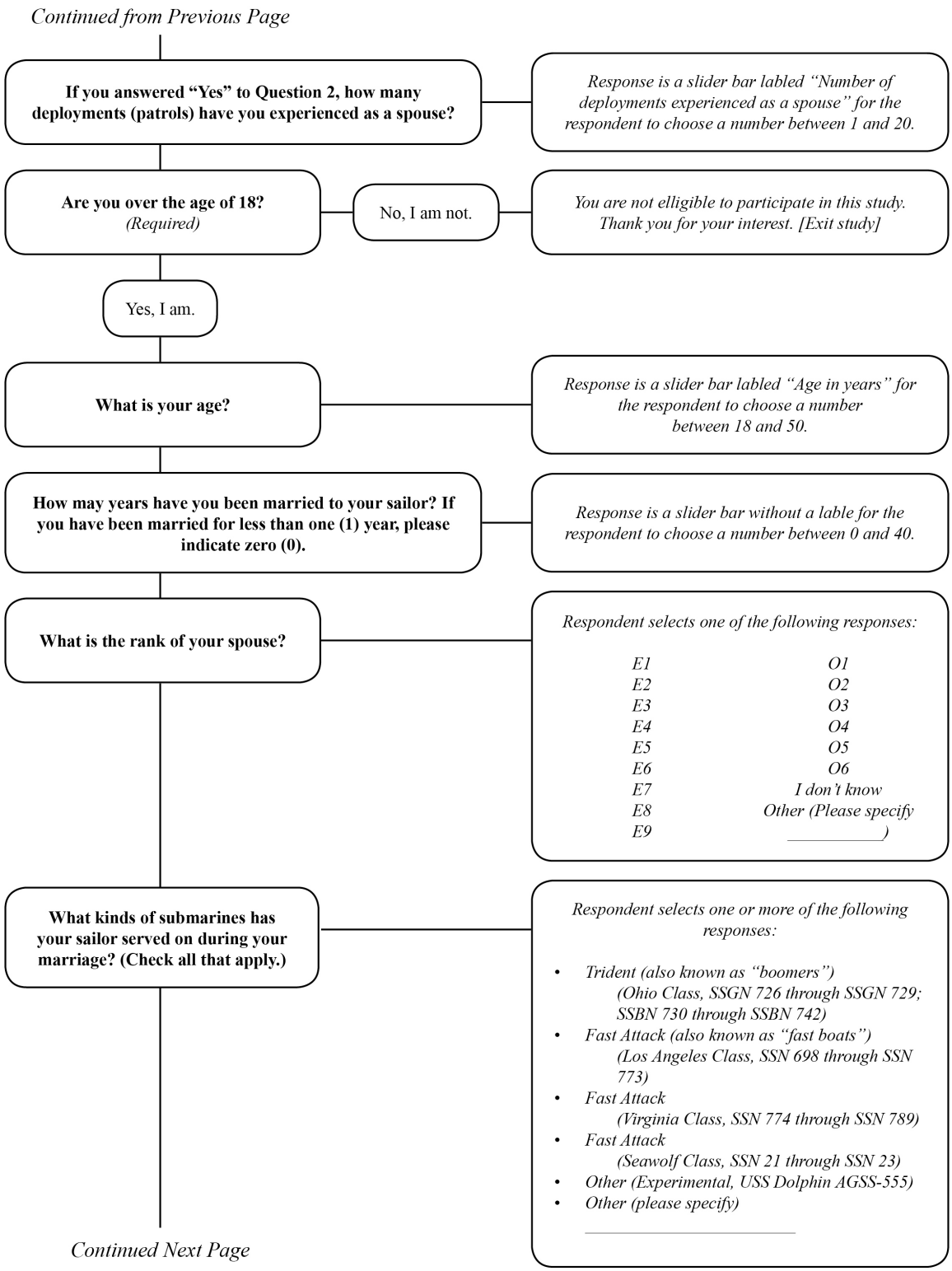
Back

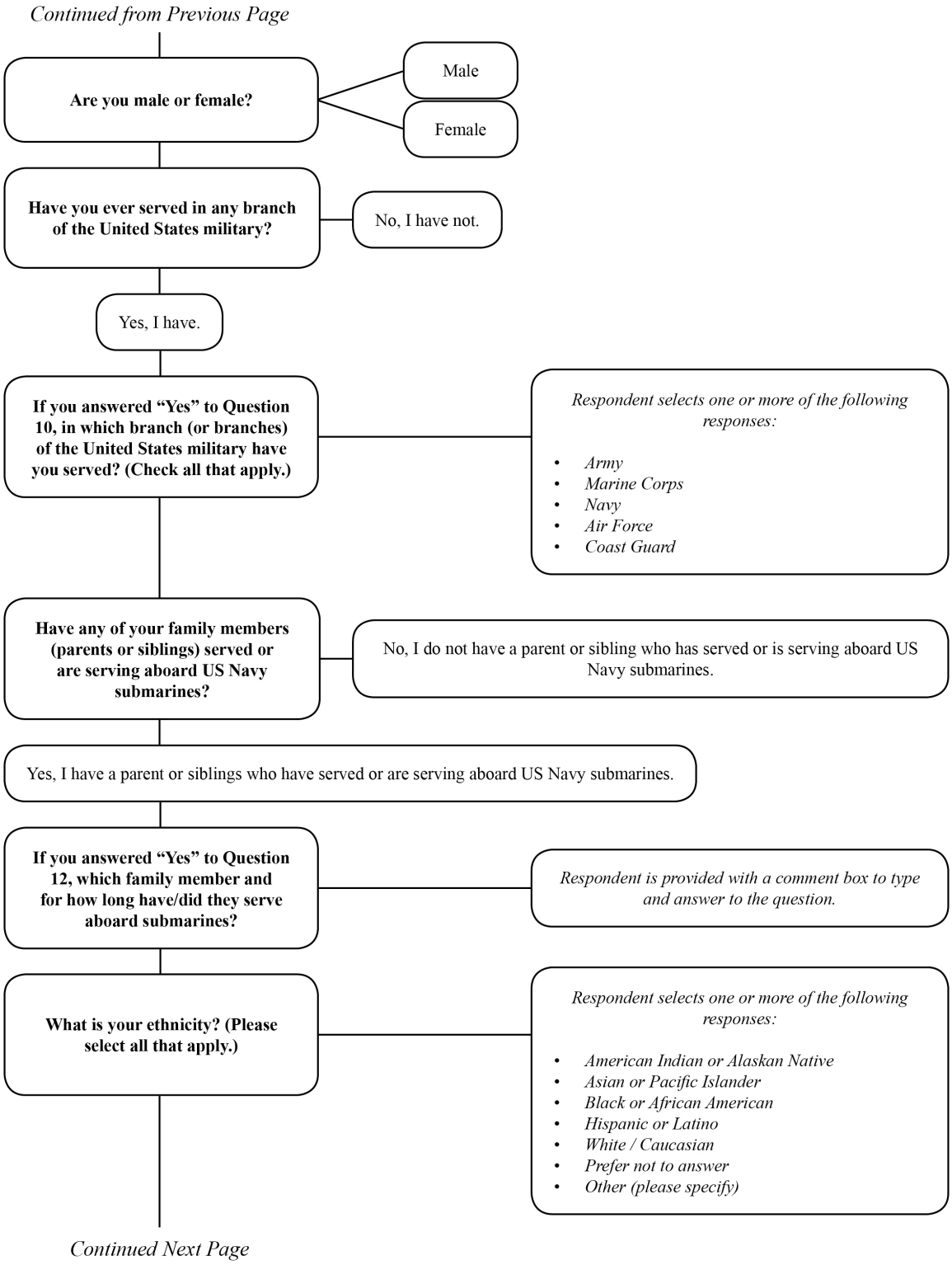


Appendix D: Survey Decision Tree



Continued Next Page


Continued from Previous Page
If you answered "Yes" to Question 2, how many deployments (patrols) have you experienced as a spouse?
Response is a slider bar labled "Number of deployments experienced as a spouse" for the respondent to choose a number between 1 and 20.
Are you over the age of 18? (Required)
No, I am not.
You are not elligible to participate in this study. Thank you for your interest. [Exit study]
Yes, I am.
What is your age?
Response is a slider bar labled "Age in years" for the respondent to choose a number between 18 and 50.
How may years have you been married to your sailor? If you have been married for less than one (1) year, please indicate zero (0).
Response is a slider bar without a lable for the respondent to choose a number between 0 and 40.
What is the rank of your spouse?
Respondent selects one of the following responses:
E1
E2
E3
E4
E5
E6
E7
E8
E9
O1
O2
O3
O4
O5
O6
I don't know
Other (Please specify _____)
What kinds of submarines has your sailor served on during your marriage? (Check all that apply.)
Respondent selects one or more of the following responses:
Trident (also known as "boomers") (Ohio Class, SSGN 726 through SSGN 729; SSBN 730 through SSBN 742)
Fast Attack (also known as "fast boats") (Los Angeles Class, SSN 698 through SSN 773)
Fast Attack (Virginia Class, SSN 774 through SSN 789)
Fast Attack (Seawolf Class, SSN 21 through SSN 23)
Other (Experimental, USS Dolphin AGSS-555)
Other (please specify) _____
Continued Next Page


Continued from Previous Page
Are you male or female?
Male
Female
Have you ever served in any branch of the United States military?
No, I have not.
Yes, I have.
If you answered "Yes" to Question 10, in which branch (or branches) of the United States military have you served? (Check all that apply.)
Respondent selects one or more of the following responses:
Army
Marine Corps
Navy
Air Force
Coast Guard
Have any of your family members (parents or siblings) served or are serving aboard US Navy submarines?
No, I do not have a parent or sibling who has served or is serving aboard US Navy submarines.
Yes, I have a parent or siblings who have served or are serving aboard US Navy submarines.
If you answered "Yes" to Question 12, which family member and for how long have/did they serve aboard submarines?
Respondent is provided with a comment box to type and answer to the question.
What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)
Respondent selects one or more of the following responses:
American Indian or Alaskan Native
Asian or Pacific Islander
Black or African American
Hispanic or Latino
White / Caucasian
Prefer not to answer
Other (please specify)
Continued Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

Survey Questions

Please answer the following eight (8) questions as descriptively as possible.
Although responses to this survey are completely anonymous, and no identifying information will be asked for, please do not name submarines, and please refer all experiences with submarines in the past tense, even if your sailor is currently assigned to that submarine. Do not offer any information about ship's movement or schedule, even if it is in the past.
This will further protect your identity and the operational security (OPSEC) of submarines.
This section will take between (15) and (30) minutes to complete.

Respondents will answer each of the following questions using a comment box that allows for an unlimited answer length.

If you could look back at who you were when you first became a part of the submarine community and you could give yourself advice, what would you say to your former self about submarine life, and why?

If your sailor has been assigned to different classes of submarines during your relationship and marriage, would you say there are differences in the communities and lifestyles of the different submarines? If yes, please describe.

Who or what has been the greatest influence over how you have learned about and adapted to the submarine lifestyle?
Please describe the role of this person or influence and why this influence stands out in your memory.
You may describe more than one.

In your own words and your own experience, what is the purpose of the Family Readiness Group (FRG)?

In your experience, what has the FRG program accomplished for the submarine family community as a whole?
For individuals? For you?

Do you participate in the FRG? Why or why not?

What would you change about the Family Readiness Group and why? What would you keep the same about it and why?

Thank you for your participation!
[Exit study]

Appendix E: Codes and Frequency Table

Category	Theme	Subtheme A	Subtheme B	Frequency
Keyword frequencies	Drama			20
	Clique			12
	High School			7
	Wearing rank			6
	Be the Change			1
Themes of Lived Experiences	Archetypes			2
		Reject archetypes		2
		Identify with archetypes		1
		Don't worry about archetypes		1
		Embrace archetypes		0
	FRGs			4
		Change what about FRG's		0
			less drama	13
			Not sure	11
			change nothing	9
			better group or program stability	8
			leadership	8
			administrative	7
			Indeterminate comments that need context	7
			be more inclusive	5
			change negative stigma	3
			More Events	3
			Better or more attendance	2
			Better or more engagement	2
			Make it more personal	2
			split up cliques at meetings	2

(*table continues*)

Category	Theme	Subtheme A	Subtheme B	Frequency
			be more informative re navy life and resources	1
			Better discretion about events	1
			change fundraising	1
			command have tighter reins	1
			Greater impact	1
			have a welcoming committee instead	1
			I could live without it altogether	1
			make it online	1
			meetings less social and more informational	1
			more command support or command collaboration	1
			Smaller events	1
			Better communication about the mission and purpose	0
		Do participate		33
			leadership role or ombudsman	12
			Helping Others	9
			Be involved	5
			It's a lifeline	4
			Meet new people	3
			Network	3
			Support the program's mission	2
			Enjoy events and meetings	1
			Get information	1
		Don't Participate		35
			Avoid Drama	17
			Incompatible relationships	4
			Incompatible Schedules	4
			On shore duty	3

(*table continues*)

Category	Theme	Subtheme A	Subtheme B	Frequency
			Too busy	3
			Didn't know about it	2
			Don't need information connection	2
			repetitive or boring	2
			No response about requests to get involved	1
		FRG evolved		2
		FRGs negative		16
			Drama	14
			Cliques	6
			Didn't Know about it	1
		FRGs Positive		4
			Accomplishments for SMS	29
			Accomplishments for Others	16
			Accomplishments for Community	12
			Unclear Community or Individual Implication	6
			Positive FRG experiences are infrequent	0
		Have no impact		1
		Purpose from the spouse perspective		3
			Support	30
			Support Spouses	20
			Community	14
			Be Informative	13
			Lift Morale	9
			Preparation for Deployment	9
			Stay busy or have things to do	9
			Entertainment	6
			Social Outlet	6
			Resource	5
			Help spouses adapt to a new lifestyle	4

(*table continues*)

Category	Theme	Subtheme A	Subtheme B	Frequency
			Kids	1
			Manage families (OPSEC, etc)	1
			Mentor Other Spouses	1
			Pass the time	1
			Welcome other spouses	0
		Tried to Participate		3
			Cliques	2
			Wives wearing sailors' rank	2
			Judgmental	1
	Identity			1
	Indeterminate comments			7
	Learning			1
		Source		0
			Other Spouses	27
			Spouse's Sailor	17
			Gaining experience	12
			Ombudsman	11
			Senior or Command Spouses	10
			No one	6
			family	5
			COMPASS	3
			FRG	3
			Job	2
			Influences that motivate	1
			Internet	1
			Military Community	1
			Military OneSource	1
			NMCR Society	1
			Prior Service	1
			Social Media	1
	Lifestyle Elements			13
		Adaptability, no hard expectations		24
		Gained institutional or lifestyle knowledge		21
			Unique to SMS life	14

(*table continues*)

Category	Theme	Subtheme A	Subtheme B	Frequency
		Social network or support network		19
		Lifestyle expectations as a wife		16
		maintain a positive outlook or perspective		15
		Supportive Community		14
		Self reliance		13
		Isolation		11
		Stay busy		11
		Expectations of others		5
		Negatives about SMS community		4
		Themes about preparation		4
		Shifting roles		3
		Toughen up		3
		Financial		2
		Lifestyle expectations as a wife\Be prepared for the negative impact of sublife on sailors		2
		Leadership		1
		Pre-understanding, no preliminary misconceptions		1
	Variations in lifestyle			0
		Fast boats		15
		Tridents		13
		Special boats		3
		Other		0
Social Construction and Policy Design	FRG CONSTRUCTIONS Accomplishments			0
		Negative		18
			Constructed as Drama	11
			Constructed as exclusive	2
		Neutral or Unidentifiable		8
		Positive		51
			Constructed as supportive	42
			Constructed as Informative	8

(*table continues*)

Category	Theme	Subtheme A	Subtheme B	Frequency
	FRG CONSTRUCTIONS Change about FRG			0
		Negative Community		14
			Constructed as drama	9
			Constructed as insufficient community engagement	1
		Negative Program		16
			Constructed as administratively difficult	9
			Constructed as poor leadership	1
		Neutral or Unidentifiable		30
		Positive Community		1
			Constructed as social support	1
		Positive Program		17
			Constructed as social support	2
	FRG CONSTRUCTIONS Yes No Participate Why			0
		Yes		34
		No		38
			Why Negative	26
			Why Neutral or Unidentifiable	19
			Why Positive	22
	Policy message			7
		Constructed as stressed by policy principals		0
		Treatment by gov\SMS is an exclusive community no outsiders		1
		Messages convey what's important\Inequitable or inconsistent application of policy message		13
	Allocation of benefits and burdens			43
		Perceive frg neg constr only		22
		Perceive frg pos constr only		7

(*table continues*)

Category	Theme	Subtheme A	Subtheme B	Frequency
		Percieve community neg constr only		3
		No indication of power		2
		Self Pos Constr only		1
		Perceive community pos constr only		1
		Self Neg Constr only		0
		Princ perceived pos constr only		0
		Princ perceived neg constr only		0
		Perceived allocation of benefits		0
			Benefit of social or community support and connection	26
			Benefit of information access	12
			Benefit of gaining lifestyle capital	7
			Benefit of opportunity	3
			Benefits focused on families with kids	2
			Benefits focused on young families	1
			Benefit focued on spouses only	0
		Perceived allocation of burdens		0
			Disenfranchisement or marginalization	33
			Burden of Non-Support	6
			Inequitable or artificial perception of power	6
		Power comes from within the self to influence change no political		2
	approval motivates principals			3
	gov behave toward target population			2
	gov treatment of target population			2

(*table continues*)

Category	Theme	Subtheme A	Subtheme B	Frequency
	affects on policy design			1
	Changing constructions and policy designs			1
	feed back forward reinforce power relationships			1
	feed back forward reinforces culture			1
	Interpretive effects			1
	Messages about importance and whose voice counts			1
	Prevailing social construction debated			1
	Target groups change constructions			1
	contenders neg constr_hi power			0
	Degenerative policymaking patterns of change			0
	dependents pos constr low power			0
	Deviants neg constr low power			0
	Discouraging participation in government			0
	Encouraging participation in government.			0
	factions in the policy space			0
	Policy design makes change			0
	policy affects participation in government			0
	policy perpetuating construction			0

(*table continues*)

Category	Theme	Subtheme A	Subtheme B	Frequency
	principal advantaged pos construct_hi power			0
	science instead of construction			0
	Science or reason changes constructions			0
	self advantaged pos hi			0
	self contender neg hi			0
	self dependent pos low			0
	self deviant neg low			0