

LOOSE LIPS SINK RELATIONSHIPS: APPLYING COMMUNICATION PRIVACY
MANAGEMENT THEORY IN MILITARY FAMILY SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

A Thesis

by

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This thesis meets the standards for scope and quality of
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand the phenomenon of how military spouses who are part of Military Family Support Organizations (MFSO) reveal and conceal Operational Security (OPSEC) between other MFSO members. MFSOs have been used as a social support system for military spouses who carry an abundant amount of stress in their daily lives. Organizational communication focuses largely on peer coworker relationships in the workforce and their impacts on peer coworkers and on the organization itself. MFSO members develop relationships among one another that are similar to peer coworkers. An online survey was distributed through private Facebook groups, a total of 157 military spouses from various military branches partook in the online survey. With the use of communication privacy management (CPM) theory, the results of this thesis revealed that MFSO members' trust was affected by explicit privacy rules, implicit privacy rules, and boundary turbulence. MFSO members' relational satisfaction was affected by implicit privacy rules and boundary turbulence. This quantitative thesis helps communication scholars further understand how OPSEC information affects MFSO members' relationships. These results provide deeper understanding in the dynamic aspect of revealing and concealing of private information between MFSO members, of which little is known. Communication scholars could use the results to further understand the complexity of privacy between organizational members.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“A military spouse has the hardest job in the military,” is a common phrase heard throughout the United States military community. Active duty service members’ daily challenges of working physically and psychologically intense jobs, as well as life-risking jobs, are commonly portrayed in the media; however, the depiction of military spouses’ stressful lives is less common in media today. Being married to a military active duty service member is not an easy life style. Most military spouses experience a range of emotional and physical consequences throughout their spouse’s military career, both during the spouse’s deployment and during downtime. Deployments can be especially difficult, as researchers have discovered.

The separation of spouses from one another due to a deployment can create strains on their communication, and ultimately result in increased levels of loneliness, stress, and anxiety (Houston, Pfefferbaum, Sherman, Melson, & Brand, 2013; Knobloch, Ebata, McGlaughlin, & Theiss, 2013; Mansfield, Kaufman, Marshall, Gaynes, Morrissey, & Engel, 2010). In fact, military spouses report greater levels of anxiety during the post-deployment phase of their marriage (Knobloch et al., 2013), which is when the active duty service member returns home from deployment (Knobloch et al., 2013). Much of the anxiety can be attributed to spouses’ uncertainty about how their conversations will progress upon return from deployment (Knobloch & Theiss, 2012).

The quality of marriage tends to also be affected by the pressures of military life. As Knobloch and Theiss (2012) reported, the pressure military spouses faced with changing their everyday routines becomes stressful for the military spouse. Military spouses tend to experience fluctuation in their marital satisfaction throughout the pre-, during, and post-deployment phases

(Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014b). In some cases, low military marital satisfaction during a deployment has led to negative consequences, such as marital separation and divorce (Newby, McCarroll, Ursano, Fan, Shigemura, & Tucker-Harris, 2005). Military spouses have also reported experiencing a loss of less sleep and weight gain once their active duty service member spouse returned home (Newby et al., 2005). Additionally, military couples experience fluctuations in uncertainty in themselves and their relationship because they avoid discussing certain topics upon reuniting after a deployment (Knobloch et al., 2013). Many of these negative outcomes that affect military spouses' mental and physical health are triggered by being married to an active duty service member (Knobloch et al., 2013). Because of the negative outcomes and consequences associated with military life, military spouse support groups are necessary.

The pressures of military life are enormous. However, families cope with the increased levels of loneliness, stress, and anxiety associated with military life through military family support organizations (MFSO). Merolla (2010) and Rossetto (2015a) reported that spouses felt they had more support when they surrounded themselves in groups that understood what they were experiencing. Military spouses felt the importance of having a group that provides social coping and emotional support in helping reduce their stress (Merolla, 2010; Rossetto, 2015a). MFSO membership is comprised of groups of military spouses who have experienced separation due to deployments or the understanding of military life. These groups are known as the Family Readiness Group (FRG) and the Officer Spouses Club (OSC).

With the intense pressures of being a military spouse, support groups are a necessity because they help military spouses and their families develop a community with members whom are more likely to understand what they are going through, as opposed to a support group outside of the military (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). For some spouses, there is a need for

emotional support from those that have been through a deployment and can give credible advice (Merolla, 2010). When an active duty service member is deployed, military spouses require outside resources to help them with needs that they would normally rely on their significant other to fulfill such as medical emergencies, disaster evacuations, or child care (Fleet and Family, 2015). Lastly, military spouse support groups typically help families feel more connected with one another during deployments through providing helpful information, arranging events, and volunteer opportunities (Merolla, 2010).

Previous researchers have discovered that support, especially when received from fellow military spouses, can be incredibly valuable for military spouses while their significant other is deployed and upon their return stateside after deployment (Sahlstien-Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). The military community provides military spouses opportunities to discuss their problems, which can help military spouses cope (Joseph & Afifi, 2010). Throughout a deployment, military spouses may feel stress from extended family members because they do not understand what the military spouse is experiencing (Maguire & Sahlstein-Parcell, 2015). For example, Rosen and Moghadem (1990) discovered that social support received from fellow military spouses, as opposed to support from civilians or family members, has a greater effect on reducing stress during deployment. Telephone support groups also provide military spouses with the social support necessary for coping with depression and anxiety when their active spouses returned from overseas (Nichols, Martindal-Adams, Graney, Zuber, & Burns, 2013). Military spouses in support groups are able to cope better with deployments (Rossetto, 2015b). Family Readiness Groups help military spouses manage stress, stay informed throughout a deployment, and increase morale of active duty service members by FRG members praising their work (Sahlstein

Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). Spouses that are in an FRG believe that other members understand what they are enduring during a deployment (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a).

Although the effects of social support provided by the military community are valuable to military spouses, there are potential disadvantages of being a member of such support groups. Scholars have theorized about the disadvantages or, problematics, of social support in support groups. For example, many people lack the skills to provide social support and do more harm by producing less supportive messages to a support seeker (MacGeorge, Feng, & Burleson, 2011). Problematic supportive interactions could lead to negative outcomes such as additional stress, an increase in negative emotions, harmful psychological and physical health, and decline in relationship satisfaction and stability (MacGeorge et al., 2011). Similarly, scholars who have studied FRGs have found similar negative outcomes when military spouses sought social support within these organizations. Sahlstein Parcell and Maguire (2014a) discovered that military spouses believed that their support groups were simultaneously a coping resource and a source of stress. In their study, military wives expressed that they believed the support that they received from military spouses experiencing similar circumstances was validating and helpful; however, the constant strain from membership also resulted in additional stress to their already stressful lives. Military spouses that chose to be with family during a deployment cycle, felt like outsiders of the FRG and did not receive social support from members (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a).

Additionally, though the FRG intentions are to be a support group that encourages coping and understanding for members, it may also have an opposite effect. At times, these groups develop cliques based on variety of characteristics, such as active duty spouses rank, children, or if the military spouse works (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). Military spouses

that had careers or were childless felt like outsiders because they believed they had less in common with FRG members who were stay-at-home mothers (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). Though cliques are an unfortunate outcome of groups, the spread of false information or not using the proper chain of command for passing along information extracts heavy tolls on military spouses and their families. FRGs not only stressors for military spouses, but also for their active duty service member spouse. Sahlstein Parcell and Maguire (2014a) reported that active duty service members sometimes received reprimands from their supervisors because their military spouse failed to pass information through the appropriate channel.

MFSO members, especially leaders, often face unwanted demands from the organization's members (Rossetto, 2015b). FRG leaders are members who rise to administrative or supervisory positions who often feel valued and helpful to other members, but face incredible pressure when tasked with maintaining operational security (OPSEC) during wartime (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). Maguire and Sahlstein Parcell (2015) found the provision of support to other military spouses is useful to support group members, but also brings unwanted stress to FRG leaders, because support group members become highly emotional. Sahlstein Parcell and Maguire (2014a) found that FRG leaders take pride in providing their active duty spouses with news and events occurring stateside to improve their work-life balance, but could also feel the demands and stress from FRG members when members request information that the FRG leaders were unwilling or unable to reveal due to concerns about the spread of gossip. Rossetto (2015b) suggested that the FRGs membership may suffer because of the prevalence of rumor-mongering among support group members, which would cause stress to the military spouse, as well as to their active duty spouse. As a result of rumors within FRGs, active duty service members may become distrustful of other FRG members (Rossetto, 2015b).

As researchers suggest, military spouse support groups have distinct cultures and climates that make membership both rewarding and costly. Despite the inherent dialectical tensions and potential disadvantages of MFSOs, communication scholars have yet to investigate them with much frequency (Rossetto, 2015b; Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). Studying the communication that occurs in MFSOs will enrich research about family support in military organizations. Studying communication in these self-help/support groups will advance the communication discipline by providing knowledge about how MFSO members communicate with one another (Schopler & Galinsky, 1993). Understanding the peer relationships between MFSO members could also enlighten support group literature. Members who develop relationships among one another provide emotional support during difficult times by listening and counseling (Kram & Isabella, 1985). With MFSO members needing support during deployments, understanding the peer relationship between members could be a vital phenomenon for communication scholars to discover and understand because it further expands the communication discipline's knowledge of military spouse literature. Additionally, MFSO members could learn the importance of being involved with the organization, and the value of developing relationships between other MFSO members could be deemed as useful knowledge to these organization members. It is for these reasons why the FRG and OSC are worthy support organizations to study for the basis of this thesis.

Military Family Support Organizations

The military has several support organizations that are dedicated to helping military spouses deal with deployment hardships and provide a group for military families with similar experiences an opportunity to socialize and support one another. Two such organizations are the Family Readiness Group and Officer Spouses Club. The first FRG was known as “the

Association” and was created during the Revolutionary War. Wives of soldiers fundraised for supplies, cooked, mended, nursed, and equipped caddying for rations in order to feed their family (Di Nola, 2008). Since the Revolutionary War, the FRG has changed in terms of what spouses do in the support group, as well as the membership demographics. Men, though seldom included, may also be members. According to the U.S. Navy FRG Handbook (2011), the purpose of a 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. FRGs may offer programs or services that complement appropriated-fund or non-appropriated-fund activities on an installation, but they should not compete with such programs (p. 2).

The FRG is meant to help military family members prepare for deployments and homecomings, provide aid during personal or area crisis, as well as mentor newcomers to the military lifestyle (U.S. Navy FRG Handbook, 2011). Participation in FRGs is most active during a deployment and least active while active duty service members are home (U.S. Navy FRG Handbook, 2011). Schopler and Galinsky (1993) stated that participation within an FRG may be low because of the strict hierarchy and control maintained by support group members, which could create stress for members (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). Members report that their FRGs are stressful for them when other members develop cliques, gossip, and create drama with other FRG members (Di Nola, 2008). Schumm, Bell, and Knott (2001) found that rumors are abundant in FRGs because of the rampant stress and uncertainty during deployment. Rumors and gossip are not only problematic for military spouses, but also for active duty service members who may distrust the information that they receive (Rossetto, 2015b).

Some members use the group for its social benefits during a deployment, but others may use it to gain important information during a deployment (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). Though there are a handful of research studies dedicated to the understanding of the FRG (Di Nola, 2008; Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a), there is a branch of the FRG dedicated to the officer spouses chain that has yet to be explored by researchers. The officer FRG is known as the OSC. This organization functions the same as a FRG but, unlike the FRG, the OSC does not include enlisted spouse members.

Publicly available information and research about FRGs and OSCs is limited. Personal communication with a Navy Commanding Officer Wife (COW), has served as the main source of information for describing the basic functions of FRGs and OSCs. The purpose of the OSC is to provide support of the officers in the designated squadron, whether it is by social activities or supporting one another in the military community. All married spouses are deemed members of the organization, and fiancés and boyfriends/girlfriends must submit a request to the squadron Commander Officer (CO) to acquire membership in the organization. Both the CO and Executive Officer (XO) spouses are automatically positioned as leaders and advisors to the OSC. Both spouses must stay in contact with the squadron, the ombudsmen, assigned air wing, and any agencies affiliated with the Navy.

Though FRG leaders are voluntary, the COW is assigned as the OSC leader. The FRG provides information about active duty service member deployment, training, and military exercises (Di Nola, 2008). The FRG leaders distribute information to the other FRG members (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). However, such responsibility is fraught with difficulty, as being a leader of either the FRG or OSC and relaying information to other FRG/OSC members can be difficult and personally challenging. Sahlstein Parcell and Maguire (2014a) relayed the

story of a FRG leader being drilled with questions by an FRG member about a death that happened in their spouses' unit. The constant questioning increased the FRG leader's stress and led the leader to violate OPSEC protocol when she disclosed the information to a neighbor to relieve the burden of possessing such important information. Though a FRG leader broke OPSEC protocol, any member of FRGs or OSCs could leak private information. It is this serious infraction that serves as a foundation for the present study. Members of MFSOs must uphold rigid standards of secrecy, even with their closest confidants, because exposure of sensitive information could cost service members their lives. Although the expression of private information could relieve stress and be cathartic for MFSO members, it is explicitly forbidden. No matter the situation, OPSEC information must never be revealed. Such a phenomenon suggests that MFSO members must carefully manage their conversations and interpersonal communication with one another to ensure that no sensitive information is revealed. However, expression of sensitive information, or the decision to withhold sensitive information could have serious consequences for the relationship that MFSO members have with one another.

“Loose Lips Sink Ships,” a Navy WWII slogan that was designed to help remind sailors not to divulge information that could jeopardize their mission or get someone killed. Military active duty service members and their families have been taught to remember OPSEC, which means not to talk about sensitive or classified information that could jeopardize the military (Fleet & Family Support, 2015). Preventing information from being divulged is more difficult in contemporary society with the prevalence of social communication media, such as Facebook and Twitter. One concerned military spouse wrote to a military spouse advice blog, “I keep seeing other spouses in the unit posting stuff like dates and locations on their Facebook accounts! I know it is a violation of OPSEC and I have tried to talk to them about it, but they just ignore me”

(Worried About OPSEC, 2013, para. 1). With information being leaked, the military depends on FRGs and OSCs to help spouses understand OPSEC. Military support organizations are intricate organizations designed with the explicit purpose of helping spouses cope with the pressures of military life. However, because so little is actually known by researchers about the intricacies of these organizations and their distinct rules, procedures, and structures, they are ripe new areas of theory and research. One distinct aspect of military support organizations that is worthy of increased theory and research is their private nature. In a typical military support organization, members are expected to enforce and reinforce privacy rules that keep sensitive military information out of the hands of nonmembers. This phenomenon creates the potential for many secrets to be contained by members that should remain confidential from members and nonmembers, alike. The tension created between members of the same MFSO could create serious problems for members of military organizations as they strive to uphold the standards of the organization while simultaneously maintaining close bonds with one another.

Communication privacy management theory provides a useful framework to guide a study about the private nature of MFSOs (Petronio, 2002). Therefore, with the understanding of how MFSOs are impacted by the revealing OPSEC information, it is useful to explore how those aspects of communication privacy management affect members' trust and satisfaction with each other for this present study.

Communication Privacy Management Theory

According to Petronio & Durham (2015) communication privacy management (CPM) is a “communication theory based on systematic research designed to develop an evidence-based understanding of the way people regulate revealing and concealing” (p. 336). The basis of CPM theory is that individuals choose with whom they disclose private information, thereby making

them “co-owners” of their private information (Petronio, 2002). Originally named communication boundary management (CBM; Petronio, 1991), with roots in the intellectual tradition of social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), early research focused on studies that dealt with privacy issues in romantic relationships (Petronio, Olson, & Dollar, 1989), boundary management and disclosure between marital couples (Petronio, 1991), and managing privacy when children disclose information about sexual abuse (Petronio, Reeder, Hecht, & Mon’t Ros-Mendoza, 1996).

Petronio credited Altman (1975) with the idea of privacy regulations to solidify the final theoretical framework of privacy regulation, boundaries, and dialectics to surpass what scholars understood about self-disclosure (Morr-Serewicz & Petronio, 2007). At the time, researchers were focusing on self-disclosure, whereas Petronio wanted to explore the conceptual idea of disclosure (Petronio, 1982, 2004). Petronio wanted a theory that focused on the fundamental meaning of disclosure, so she reframed disclosure as the process of revealing private information (Morr-Serewicz & Petronio, 2007; Petronio, 2004). With a new outlook on disclosure, Private information became the center of the theory, rather than self-disclosure (Petronio, 2004). Petronio (2004) found, after examining research between the 1970s-1980s, her views shifted to understanding private information and the process of disclosure. With private information at center of the theoretical framework, Petronio began to examine how private information depends on boundary structure and how rules-based management systems impact boundary regulations (Petronio, 2000). Once information is disclosed, the information goes from individually being owned to collectively owned and managed through boundaries (Petronio, 2002). In her earlier work about examining privacy boundaries, Petronio (1991) noticed that couples in long-term marital relationships still regulated and adjusted privacy boundaries with one another using rules.

This realization was groundbreaking for the creation of CPM. Petronio had three disclosure proposals that communication scholars had not yet researched. According to Petronio (1991) there was significance of co-owners being a confidant of private information, the importance of understanding the relationship between owner and co-owner and how they manage their privacy, and lastly how people regulate their privacy and disclosure through criteria that will be formed through privacy rules (Petronio, 2004). It is through these discoveries that the formation of CPM that has helped advance research in the communication discipline.

Researchers have used CPM to explore the relationship between instructors and students (Hosek & Thompson, 2009; Schrodt, 2013), families (Durham & Braithwaite, 2009; Petronio & Caughlin, 2006), interpersonal friendships (Bello, Brandau-Brown, & Ragsdale, 2014; Kennedy-Lightsey, Martin, Thompson, Himes, & Clingerman, 2012), and in health care (Bute, Petronio, & Torke, 2015; Petronio & Kovach, 1997). Although CPM has been a prominent theory used to explain communication in a variety of other contexts, there is limited research using CPM in organizational communication (e.g., Allen, Coopman, Hart, & Walker, 2007; Smith & Brunner, 2017).

There are three key concepts in CPM: ownership, control, and boundary turbulence. From these key concepts, five core principles of managing private information are formed (Petronio, 2002). The first four principles explain ownership and control, while the fifth explains boundary turbulence. These five principles are: private information ownership, private information control, private information rules, private information co-ownership and guardianship, and private information boundary turbulence (Duggan & Petronio, 2009; Petronio, 2002, 2010). The five principles have evolved into eight axioms to help further understand the behavior, decisions, and changes regarding private information (Petronio, 2013). Axioms one

and two predict privacy ownership, axioms three through seven predict privacy control, and axiom eight predicts privacy turbulence (Petronio, 2013). The eight axioms are:

- (1) people believe they are the sole owners of their private information and they trust they have the right to protect their information or grant access;
- (2) when these “original owners” grant others access to private information, they become “authorized co-owners” and are perceived by the “original owner” to have fiduciary responsibilities for the information;
- (3) because individuals believe they own rights to their private information, they also justifiably feel that they should be the ones controlling their privacy;
- (4) the way people control the flow of private information is through the development and use of privacy rules;
- (5) successful and continued control post-access is achieved through coordinating and negotiating privacy rules with “authorized co-owners” regarding third-party access;
- (6) co-ownership leads to jointly held and operated collective privacy boundaries where contributions of private information may be given by all members;
- (7) collective privacy boundaries are regulated through decisions about who else may become privy, how much others inside and outside the collective boundary may know, and rights to disclose the information;
- (8) privacy regulation is often unpredictable and can range from disruptions in the privacy management system to complete breakdowns (Petronio, 2013, pp. 9-11).

The axioms expand upon the three elements. Ownership is the idea that private information belongs to the owner, protected by a personal boundary, until it is disclosed (Petronio, 2002).

Owners believe they have to manage their private information as they see fit and they have the

choice to select who is authorized to access that private information (Petronio, 2010). The reason the owner feels like they have the right to control their private information is because of the potential of feeling vulnerable if private information is revealed (Petronio & Durham, 2015). Owners could disclose private information to multiple co-owners and specify rules for how long private information should be concealed (Petronio, 2013). Because owners believe they own their private information, they have the right to control that private information (Petronio, 2010). The way owners control their privacy is by creating privacy rules so that the owner has the choice of revealing and concealing to others (Petronio, 2002). These rules dictate when, how, with whom, and in what way co-owners may reveal or conceal the co-owned private information (Petronio, 2010). When rules are established, owners create privacy boundaries for their private information which may be controlled at different levels (Petronio, 2002). High control is refers to a thick boundary wall where access to the private information is limited; moderate control occurs when information may be available to some, but not to others; low control is when the boundary walls are more open and transparent, which may produce loose privacy boundaries.

When owners want their private information to be within their privacy boundaries and, private information is revealed without their permission, they feel violated (Petronio, 2002). Boundary turbulence occurs when a co-owner shares the information that violates the owner's private boundary (Petronio, 2002, 2013). Factors as to why co-owners reveal private information include intentional disclosure, making a mistake trying to follow the boundary rules, miscommunication on boundary rules, having different orientations for privacy, redefining privacy boundaries, or because of privacy dilemmas (Morr-Serewicz & Petronio, 2007). Once boundary turbulence occurs, the original owner of the private information may feel anger, distrust, suspicion, or uncertainty towards the co-owner (Petronio, 2007). The best way to avoid

turbulence is for the negotiated rules to be discussed by the owner and co-owner. Even then, the co-owner may not follow the rules.

There are two ways MFSO members may negotiate privacy rules: explicitly and implicitly. Explicit rules refer to owners giving co-owners disclosure warnings and time parameters about revealing private information (Petronio, 2002). Implicit rules refer to owners not fully communicating the rules of the private information to the co-owner(s), but the co-owner(s) understanding that information should be kept between them (Petronio, 2002). Petronio (2002) noted implicit rules could lead to problems if the co-owner is not aware of the implicit rules or discusses the information that the owner did not want to be shared. If the privacy rules are not fully explained or comprehended to co-owners, the chances of boundary turbulence occurring increase. Privacy rules and boundary turbulence may have an impact on relationships, especially for MFSO members. Explicit rules, implicit rules, and boundary turbulence, could potentially affect trust and satisfaction between MFSO members. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to look at how OPSEC information functions and impacts relationships between members of the same MFSO.

With the understanding of how support groups and OPSEC impact military spouses, the next chapter reviews peer coworker relationship literature and how MFSO members are similar to peer coworker relationships. The chapter begins by explicating the types of peer coworkers, their development, and effects on peer coworkers and the organization. Finally, the independent and dependent variables are stated and discussed followed by proposed hypotheses and research questions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a thorough analysis of peer coworker relationships and how they function in Military Family Support Organizations. Discussion topics will include an in-depth description of what types of peer coworkers are found in an organization, how these relationships develop, and the effects of peer coworker relationships have on organizational members and their organizations. Finally, a thorough explanation of what independent variables will be used from communication privacy management theory and be applied to the dependent variables of interpersonal trust and relational satisfaction.

Military Family Support Organization Members as Peer Coworkers

Peer coworker relationships and the camaraderie that stems from them are the lifeblood of organizations (Ragins & Dutton, 2007). Peer coworkers are defined as organizational members who occupy the same hierarchical level and have no formal authority over one another (Sias, 2009). Therefore, peer coworkers are considered equivalent-status relationships since neither member holds formal authority over one another (Sias, Krone, & Jablin, 2002). Members of Military Family Support Organizations are akin to peer coworkers. The MFSOs are comprised of military spouses that are the same rank as other spouses (U.S. Navy FRG Handbook, 2011), placing them on the same level in the organizational hierarchy. These support organizations are created to help spouses share information that pertains to not only to their active duty service member, but also military life (U.S. Navy FRG Handbook, 2011). MFSO members share information with one another pertaining to a deployment that they may be not be informed of if it were not for being members in the organization (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). Many members of a Family Readiness Groups form a familial connection and use the organization to

cope through difficult times (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). Members often work on projects together during times of deployments (U.S. Navy FRG Handbook, 2011). With the connections, meetings, and projects, these members form relationships that are similar to the information, collegial, and special peer relationships discovered by Kram and Isabella (1985).

Types of peer coworkers. In their seminal study about alternatives to traditional mentoring relationships, Kram and Isabella (1985) discovered that organizational members establish three types of peer coworker relationships that vary based upon social support, trust, and disclosure: information, collegial, and special peer coworker relationships. Information peer coworker relationships are acquaintanceships featuring communication mostly about superficial topics, concerning work, with limited interaction and feedback. Information peers tend to communicate minimal levels of social support, trust, and disclosure. Collegial peer coworker relationships are a combination coworkers and friends featuring communication about moderately intimate topics, including work and familial concerns, with moderate amounts of social support, trust, and disclosure. Special peer coworker relationships are best friends at work featuring communication about intimate topics with high amounts of social support, trust, and disclosure (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias, 2009, 2014).

Researchers have discovered many differences between special and collegial peer coworker relationships and information peer relationships. For example, organizational members with special and collegial peer coworker relationships communicate with greater openness (Myers, Knox, Pawlowski, & Ropog, 1999), express greater trust and solidarity with one another (Myers & Johnson, 2004), and have more cohesion with one another (Odden & Sias, 1997) than organizational members with information peer coworker relationships. Sias (2005) found that collegial and special peers receive higher-quality of information than do information peers.

Additionally, organizational members with a higher proportion of special and collegial peer coworker relationships report greater levels of adjustment to their organizations (Kramer, 1993, 1996), less role ambiguity (Kramer, 1994), greater innovativeness (Kramer, 1996), and higher levels of job satisfaction (Kramer, 1993, 1996) than organizational members with special and collegial peer coworker relationships. Therefore, as Sias et al. (2002) noted, special and collegial peer relationships are considered workplace friendships due to the more intimate and open communication that occurs between them. The more intimate and open communication that they share makes special and collegial peer relationships quantitatively similar, yet qualitatively distinct.

Some scholars have considered the potential communication differences caused by the sex of members in these coworker relationships. Fritz (1997) examined if men and women were different in the types of peer relationships they had in an organization. Fritz found that men with same-sex informational peers were more likely to be involved with outside work activities than women. Women with collegial peer coworker relationships experienced greater levels of emotional support, which made participants feel that they were a better person and had a better work environment. Fritz concludes that men's relationships may progress differently than women's. In addition to exploring the different types of peer relationships, scholars have explored how peer coworker relationships develop.

Development of peer coworkers. Workplace relationships are nonvoluntary relationships because organizational members cannot choose their coworkers; however, they can choose with whom they desire a closer professional relationship (Sias et al., 2002). Individuals tend to have more information peer coworker relationships than collegial and special relationships (Fritz, 1997; Odden & Sias, 1997). Like many relationships in life, workplace

relationships gradually evolve from acquaintances to more intimate friendships. There are different developmental factors that could occur when coworkers start to interact with peer coworkers.

Sias and Cahill (1998) discovered that workplace relationships develop through three phases: acquaintance to friend, friends to close friends, and close friends to “almost best” friends. These relationships could progress due to nine different factors and five communication changes: decreased caution, increased discussion of non-work issues, increased discussion of work-related issues, increased intimacy, and increased frequency. Organizational members who communicate with one another become less cautious in their conversation topics and content. They increase their discussion of non-work issues by discussing their hobbies, current events, and family with their peer coworkers. They increase discussion of work-related issues when they talk about problems occurring at work and share opinions about current work-related issues and events. Organizational members increase their intimacy with each other when they share details and information on personal and work-related issues. They communicate with increased frequency when they interact with their peer coworkers over time.

In the first phase, organizational members progress from acquaintances to friends. Working closely and spending long periods of time training and mentoring one another contributes to the transition. Development factors that contribute to this transition include: proximity, shared tasks, perceived similarity, and extra-organizational socializing. Proximity refers to peer coworkers working along with or during the same shift as another coworker. When peer coworkers work on a shared project or train with another coworker, they are engaging in shared tasks. Perceived similarity occurs when coworkers share similar non work-related interests, lifestyles, or values with each other. Extra-organizational socializing takes place when

peer coworkers start to spend time outside of the workplace with each other. During this transition, most coworkers communicate about personal topics, but are still were cautious about what information to share. Communication changes in this transition include: increased discussion of nonwork-related personal topics, decreased caution, and increased frequency. Women are more likely than men to increase their communication frequency as the friendship starts to establish (Sias, Smith, & Avdeyeva, 2003).

In the second phase, organizational members progress from friends to close friends. The organizational members grow closer through sharing personal and professional problems and events. Development factors that contribute to this transition include: life events, work-related problems, extra-organizational socializing, and perceived similarity. Life events refers to coworkers knowing the other's major life events occurring outside of work. Work-related problems refer to peer coworkers are aware of problems or frustrations another coworker has with the organization or job. Personality occurs when coworkers are drawn to another peer coworker due to personality traits. Communication changes are the same as in the first transition, but also consist of an increase in intimacy and discussion of work-related problems. Coworkers become close friends when problems with supervisors or other coworkers occur. In this transition, coworkers introduce each other to their family members and start spending vacations and holidays with one another.

In the third phase, organizational members progress from close friends to "almost best" friends. Organizational members confide with one another about work problems, understand the hardship in the organization, and begin to have more intimate conversations. Development factors that influence this transition are extra-organizational socializing, life events, work-related problems, time, and perceived similarity. Time occurs when peer coworkers develop a

relationship due to the passage of time. Communication changes in this transition involve decreased caution, increased discussion about work-related problems, and increased intimacy. Coworkers in this transition feel no restriction in discussing their work frustrations and opinions with one another. Overall, organizational members progress through different phases with their peer coworkers and often experience a range of individual and organizational outcomes from forming peer coworker relationships.

Effects of peer coworker relationships. Organizational members report a variety of outcomes of peer coworker relationships. For example, researchers have discovered that developing high quality peer coworker relationships is beneficial for adjusting to a new workplace (Kramer, 1993, 1996), and that actively maintaining peer coworker relationships assists organizational members in their job and communication satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2012). Organizational members that partake in informal communication among their peer coworkers tend to learn about each other personally and professionally (Ploeger-Lyons & Kelly, 2017). This informal communication yields positive organizational outcomes such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, family talk, socializing talk, complain talk, and level of coworker liking (Fay & Kline, 2011). Sollitto and Myers (2015) reported that employees with special and collegial peer relationships express more lateral dissent than employees whom had information peer relationships. This means that coworkers who develop special and collegial bonds are more likely to feel comfortable discussing topics that concern them about the organization and entrust their special and collegial peer coworker with the information (Sollitto & Myers, 2015). Peer coworkers tend to approach one another as opposed to leaders regarding job guidance and enjoy working with peers because they understand the demands of the job and when to take breaks (Omilion-Hodges & Ackerman,

2017). Peer coworkers may provide social support to one another which could lead to reduced stress and uncertainty, managing workload, reduced burnout and anxiety, increased morale, and help managing work-life balance (Ploeger-Lyons & Kelly, 2017). However, peer coworker relationships can, at times, lead to negative workplace experiences.

A possible negative effect of peer coworker relationships is the stress involved with reporting workplace misconduct. For example, peer coworkers could experience stress due to issues or tensions regarding organizational personal and public issues (Waldron, 2000) as well as social undermining which impacts a worker's individual peer coworker relationships, work-related success, and work reputation (Duffy, Ganster, Shaw, Johnson, & Pagon, 2006).

Researchers have studied the types of peers that create a negative workplace. For example, Fritz (2002) reported eight types of troublesome peers. These peers undermine fellow coworkers (independent other), focus on their problems and needs (soap opera star), control the workplace (the bully), are unprofessional (the adolescent), self-promote (the self-protector), serve as the weak link (the mild annoyance), sexually harass other coworkers (the rebellious playboy/playgirl), or harass other coworkers though feared their own job (the abrasive, incompetent harasser). Negative peer coworker communication can affect the workplace environment, hinder coworker collaboration, create stress, or reduce productivity and satisfaction (Ploeger-Lyons & Kelley, 2017). King and Hermodson (2000) studied how communication is affected when peers report other peers' misconduct. The results indicate that peers who reported their peers' wrongdoing did so because they possessed personal ethics, the wrongdoing was severe enough to warrant reporting, and/or because the wrongdoing violated organizational policy.

Much is known to scholars about peer coworker relationships in an organizational setting, but this scholarship could be used to research relationships in support organizations.

Understanding how organizational members make choices about disclosing information and the impact of boundary turbulence on their relationships, could progress scholarly and practical insight about peer coworker relationships. Sias (2014) stated that workplace relationships are worthy of increased scholarly attention, especially in self-help/support organizations (such as MFSOs). Therefore, studying conversations among members of an MFSO could enrich the organizational communication discipline, particularly because peer coworker relationships likely require active management of both private and formal information. In a study guided by CPM theory, Smith and Brunner (2017) explored how coworkers manage private information, and found that organizational members use a variety of strategies to ensure that their private information stayed between themselves and their peer coworker. Given the results of Smith and Brunner's (2017) study, the present study will explore the understanding of how peer members of a MFSO communicate and disclose their private information.

Peer Coworkers and Communication Privacy Management

Scholars have researched privacy management within organizations (Allen et al., 2007), but have yet to study privacy management between peer coworkers. When peer coworkers start to develop a friendship bond and move into the special peers phase, they are less cautious in intimate topics and may discuss personal issues with one another (Sias & Cahill, 1998). As information peers could typically give instrumental support, collegial and special peers provide one another with substantive emotional support due to having a more intimate relationship (Sias, 2014). Peer coworkers commonly give one another emotional and instrumental support because

they have knowledge and understanding about how and what is occurring in the organization (Sias et al., 2002).

Members within the same MFSO could provide one another emotional support and understanding because they can relate to what each other is going through. These MFSO members communicate personal and private information to one another. Other scholars have reported similar findings about how special peers discuss personal topics. Wittenberg and Villagran (2006) researched how organizational members with cancer diagnoses disclose private information to different types of peer coworkers relationships. The authors found that collegial and special peers have higher interpersonal solidarity and mainly discuss treatment and emotional issues. Organizational members with informational peer coworker relationships discover their peers' cancer diagnosis through a third party source and have the least amount of interpersonal solidarity.

When coworkers reveal their cancer diagnosis to an information peer, they mainly exchange treatment information (Wittenberg & Villagran, 2006). When peer coworkers experience difficult and emotional times, they exchange social support with one another. Sahlstein Parcell and Maguire (2014a) suggested that FRG members have an invisible hierarchy within the group; members occupying the same level may develop relationships that are similar to organizational peer coworker relationships. Private disclosures may affect the trust and satisfaction between MFSO members. Members in an MFSO may have different levels of closeness, like employees in an organization. MFSO members must also be cautious when discussing OPSEC information (U.S. Navy FRG Handbook, 2011). The strength of network ties will dictate the amount of control the owners of the private information have over each other

(Petronio, 2000). Therefore, the present study will investigate how explicit and implicit privacy management rules and boundary turbulence affect levels of trust and relational satisfaction.

Privacy management rules. Privacy rules are important to any relationship, especially peer coworker relationships. These rules provide a basis for revealing or concealing private information (Petronio, 2010). It is not only important to understand how owners disclose self-information, but also how co-owners have the potential to disclose private information that belongs to others (Petronio, 2010). Since owners of private information are revealing and yet concealing private information, the way to manage the dialectical tension is by using a rule management system (Petronio & Durham, 2015). These rules are meant to help owners understand when, how, with whom, and in what way co-owners are granted and denied private information (Petronio, 2010). These rule management systems also exist in organizational settings. Often when someone joins an organization, rules are already established and organizations teach members privacy rules and regulations on revealing information (Petronio, 2002). In MFSOs, there are rules and handbooks that are dedicated to helping members understand the protocol for receiving and disclosing OPSEC information (U.S. Navy FRG Handbook, 2011). MFSO members may disclose private information with one another with using explicit or implicit rules.

Explicit rules. Explicit rules are direct and clear about how the co-owner should treat the private information, usually given through disclosure warnings (Petronio, 2002). Disclosure warnings are considered restraint phrases consisting of rules an owner gives to co-owners for disclosing private information. Co-owners are expected to understand not to disclose the owner's private information because of the restrictions given (Petronio & Bantz, 1991). These disclosure warnings are meant to give expectations on discretion to third parties; however, owners may

anticipate that some private information will be shared with others by the co-owners, but with exterior rules in place, most information will be restricted (Petronio & Bantz, 1991). Co-owners usually disclose private information only to trusted friends and family members (Petronio, 2002). Along with disclosure warnings, owners may give time parameters for how long the private information should be kept confidential (Petronio, 2002).

Scholars have researched the outcomes when explicit rules are established in a variety of contexts. In a study about health information, Venetis et al. (2012) found that owners have a greater sense of ownership of their private information and that, if privacy rules are stated, they expect that co-owners will not share private information with a third party. The authors also found that, when information valence was negative, owners used explicit privacy rules so that the co-owner(s) knew how to keep the private information concealed. In a study about explicit rules used in within the workplace, Smith and Brunner (2017) discovered that organizational members communicate explicit rules to guard against unwarranted disclosure of their private information and sought for a verbal agreement to the privacy rules before revealing the private information. Though scholarship about explicit rules has been published, it is relatively rare and has yet to be explored in a MFSO context. Thus, the present study will consider the explicit rules used in MFSOs.

Implicit rules. Implicit rules are more ambiguous and elude to how co-owners should treat private information, usually given through hints or prompts (Petronio, 2002). These rules could be preexisting and indirectly stated or negotiated through the development of new relationships (Petronio, 2002). Though implicit rules are lower in clarity, meaning that they often open to interpretation, co-owners have more autonomy in response to the private information and could interpret the meaning of the private information more positively to themselves than was

intended (Petronio, 1991). Co-owners may seek additional clarity about privacy rules or be content with what they understand the privacy rules are (Petronio, 1991).

Scholars have researched the outcomes of implicit. In Venetis et al.'s (2012) study found that, when owners used implicit privacy rules, the owner is under the impression that the co-owner will not further reveal private information. In a study about implicit rules in the workplace, Smith and Brunner (2017) found that organizational members expect private information to remain concealed through implied meaning and understanding (laws and confidentiality) and use implicit rules with their peer coworkers to limit the possibility of boundary turbulence. Though scholarship regarding the exploration of implicit rules exists, the scholarship is still limited and has yet to be explored in a MFSO context. Therefore, the present study will explore the implicit rules used in MFSOs.

Boundary turbulence. Boundary turbulence occurs when co-owners intentionally violate, misuse, or misunderstand the privacy rules regarding revealing private information (Petronio, 2002). There are several different reasons why a co-owner may reveal private information against the wishes of the owner. Co-owners may reveal private information intentionally, which could automatically result in owners feeling a betrayal of confidence in the co-owner (Petronio, 2010). A co-owner may agree to the owner's privacy rules, but reveal the private information for the benefit of the other person (Petronio, 2002). However, co-owners may mistakenly reveal private information due to misunderstanding rule expectations or irresponsibility with time and topic rules (Petronio, 2002). Boundary turbulence may also occur due to fuzzy boundaries, when owners and co-owners are ambiguous of who owns the private information and who determines the privacy rules. These boundaries may lead to deception or

gossip (Petronio, 2002, 2010). Boundary turbulence may cause some to feel embarrassed, awkward, tricked, unpleasant, unnerved or distressed (Petronio, 2002).

Scholars have researched boundary turbulence in a variety of contexts. In a study about boundary turbulence between married couples, Steuber and Solomon (2012) found that when couples are faced with infertility, wives cope with infertility by revealing the private information more than husbands, which in turn causes boundary turbulence between the couples. In a study about childrens' experiences with boundary turbulence, Afifi (2003) reported that children felt caught when wanting to remain loyal to their parents when parents were experiencing dialectical tensions. Children feared being perceived as disloyal when they were uncertain of what information to reveal or to conceal to other family members. When people experience boundary turbulence, they may experience emotions such as disappointment, sadness, hurt, and anger, which may also lead to relational damage (McLaren & Steuber, 2013; Smith & Brunner, 2017). Similarly, Owlett, Richards, Wilson, DeFreese, and Roberts (2015) reported that children of deployed military parents experience boundary turbulence when their parents are deployed. Children withheld private information because they anticipated negative outcomes and privacy violations when parents disclosed inappropriate information about the deployment and when parents did not maintain the child's privacy expectations. In a study about employees experiencing boundary turbulence within a workplace, Smith and Brunner (2017) found that employees reiterate and reestablish privacy rules and boundaries once a co-owner reveals private information. Employees lose trust in the violator and contact supervisors and Human Resources to report the violator. Though boundary turbulence has been explored in the organizational context and within military families, however, the present study will add to the literature by exploring boundary turbulence in a MFSO context.

Interpersonal trust. Interpersonal trust is defined as the belief of integrity someone has in another person (Larzelere & Huston, 1980). Trust is a critical factor in MFSO members' relationships because they are vulnerable to their peer coworkers and cannot control their actions. Although trust has frequently been explored in romantic relationships (Hoskins, Wozidlo, & Kunkel, 2016; Mikkelson, Hesse, & Pauley, 2016) and workplace romances (Horan & Chory, 2009, 2011, 2013), it is also a crucial component of peer coworker relationships (Kram & Isabella, 1985). The quality of peer coworker relationship (Myers & Johnson, 2004), amount of network closeness (Ferrin, Dirks, & Shah, 2006), and the amount of empowerment, autonomy, meaning, and influence organizational members perceive all affect organizational members' interpersonal trust (Moye, Henkin, & Egle, 2005). Trust is vitally important for the disclosure of private information (Breshears & DiVerniero, 2015), but can be volatile in dyadic relationships. Owners of private information lose trust in co-owners when co-owners reveal the private information (Steuber & McLaren, 2015). It is likely that MFSO members experience similar concerns and outcomes when they share private information with their fellow members. It is probable that MFSO members experience greater trust when they are confident that the co-owners of their private information will retain the private information.

A variety of relational processes affect the level of trust between coworkers, especially their communication. Intimate relationships, such as special and collegial peer relationships, should require less direct forms of communication. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the need to directly and explicitly communicate about what can be revealed and concealed should have a negative effect on trust between MFSO members, and implicit understanding of privacy management rules should have a positive effect on the trust between MFSO members. However, if private information is revealed and boundary turbulence occurs, boundary turbulence should

have a negative effect on any kind of relationship. As Smith and Bruner (2017) discovered, boundary turbulence results in undesirable outcomes for organizational members. Therefore, it is logical to expect similar repercussions when boundary turbulence occurs between MFSSO members. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed for the current study:

H1: MFSSO members' perception of explicit privacy rules will be negatively related to trust.

H2: MFSSO members' perceptions of implicit privacy rules will be positively related to trust.

H3: MFSSO members' perceptions of boundary turbulence will be negatively related to trust.

Although explicit privacy rules, implicit privacy rules, and boundary turbulence should have some effect on trust between MFSSO members, it is useful to ascertain which variables, when considered in combination with one another, predict trust between MFSSO members.

Therefore, the following research question was asked in the current study:

RQ1: Will MFSSO members' perceptions of explicit privacy rules, implicit privacy rules, and boundary turbulence predict trust?

Relational satisfaction. Relational satisfaction is defined as the degree to which an individual experiences contentment with another individual in their relationship (Anderson & Emmons-Sommer, 2006; Hendrick, 1988). Although relational satisfaction has frequently been explored in romantic relationships (Anderson & Emmons-Sommer, 2006; Farrell, DiTunniariello, & Pearson, 2014; Floyd et al., 2009; Millar & Millar, 1988) and family relationships (Kennedy-Lightsey & Dillow, 2011), relational satisfaction is a crucial component of peer coworker relationships. Since collegial and special peer coworker relationships are considered emotionally,

intimate and supportive relationships (Sias & Cahill, 1998; Sias et al., 2002), it is conceivable that they are satisfying relationships (Cole & Bradac, 1996).

An array of relational processes between the individuals affect how content people are, especially communication (Hecht, 1978). Organizational members who have intimate types of relationships, such as special and collegial peer relationships, should require less direct forms of communication. Therefore, it is sensible to suggest that the need to directly and explicitly communicate about what can be revealed and concealed should have a negative effect on relational satisfaction between MFSO members, and implicit understanding of privacy management rules should have a positive effect on the relational satisfaction between MFSO members. However, if private information is revealed and boundary turbulence occurs, it should have a negative effect on the relationship because boundary turbulence is considered a negative aspect of relationships regardless of the type of relationship. Because of previous has shown the negative effects of boundary turbulence, boundary turbulence should negatively affect relational satisfaction between MFSO members. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed for the current study:

H4: MFSO members' perceptions of explicit privacy rules will be negatively related to relational satisfaction.

H5: MFSO members' perceptions of implicit privacy rules will be positively related to relational satisfaction.

H6: MFSO members' perceptions of boundary turbulence will be negatively related to relational satisfaction.

Although explicit privacy rules, implicit privacy rules, and boundary turbulence may have some effect on relational satisfaction between MFSO members, it is useful to determine

which variables, when explored together, predict relational satisfaction between MFSO members. Therefore, the following research question was asked for the current study:

RQ2: Will MFSO members' perceptions of explicit privacy rules, implicit privacy rules, and boundary turbulence predict relational satisfaction?

This chapter reviewed the academic scholarship about peer coworker relationships and made comparisons between peer coworker relationships and MFSO members. To understand these relationships, an overview of research on the types, development, and effect of peer coworkers was composed. An overview of how explicit privacy rules, implicit privacy rules, and boundary turbulence may impact interpersonal trust and relational satisfaction between MFSO members was composed and analyzed. The literature review led to the development of six hypotheses and the creation of two research questions. The following chapter will discuss procedures, participants, and instruments used to answer the hypotheses and research questions.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Participants and Procedures

Data for this study was collected with an online questionnaire. To participate in the present study, individuals needed to meet two criteria: (1) be 18 years of age or older and (2) currently married to a United States of America active duty service member. Members were recruited through the author's personal, Facebook account. First, a scripted post approved by IRB was posted on the author's personal Facebook page. The post read,

“Fellow Military Spouses: I am seeking 250 participants to take my thesis survey on OSC/FRG and how you may communicate about OPSEC topics. You will remain anonymous (even to me) and this shouldn't take more than 15 minutes of your time. Please take it: https://tamucc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5mCyXq9pR4hGjlz and pass it along to other spouses that I may not have on my social media. Thank y'all so much!”

Members were also recruited through private Facebook groups to which a participant had to prove that they were married to an active duty service member. This meant that the researcher had to go through approval of these private groups. Upon the approval of four private military spouse Facebook groups, the same scripted post was made to recruit military spouses. Interested individuals who met the inclusion criteria participated by clicking the link, which took them directly to the explanation of the study and the online questionnaire on qualtrics.com.

Participants included 157 military spouses drawn from different branches of the military. The sample was composed of 154 females (98.1%), one male (.6%), and two unidentified (1.3%). Participants reported being married to an active duty service member for a variety of

lengths ranging from 1 to 29 years ($M = 10.87$, $SD = 7.03$). Ethnicity of participants included Caucasian/White ($n = 145$, 92.4%), Hispanic/Latino ($n = 9$, 5.7%), Asian American/Asian ($n = 1$, .6%), and two unidentified (1.3%). Participants reported their active duty service member serving in a variety of branches, including Navy ($n = 137$, 87.3%), Marines ($n = 9$, 5.7%), Army ($n = 7$, 4.5%), and Air Force ($n = 3$, 1.9%). Participants reported their active duty service member's rank included Officer 1st-3rd ($n = 69$, 43.9%), Enlisted 7th-9th class ($n = 68$, 43.3%), Officer 4th-6th ($n = 11$, 7.0%), and Enlisted 4th-6th class ($n = 3$, 1.9%). On average participants had been a part of 3.18 MFSOs ($SD = 2.16$).

Instrumentation

Explicit privacy rules were assessed using the measure of Explicit Privacy Rules (Venetis et al., 2012), a six-item instrument that asks participants to rate how specifically they discuss the rules for managing private information with their conversational partners. Items were modified to reflect the relationship between members of MFSOs. For example, "I was clear about who this person could tell/not tell the health information" was changed to "I was clear about who this person could tell/not tell the OPSEC information." Responses were sought using a five-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Examples of the items are "I asked this person not to share the OPSEC information with anyone else" and "we never discussed if s/he could share the OPSEC information with others." The previous Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was .90 (Venetis et al., 2012). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the present study was .73 ($M = 3.82$, $SD = .66$).

Implicit privacy rules were assessed with the measure of Implicit Privacy Rules (Venetis et al., 2012), a two-item instrument that asks participants to rate their level of implied privacy management rules that they may express when telling a fellow MFSO member about OPSEC

information. Items were modified to reflect the relationship between members of MFSOs. For example, “although I did not ask this person not to, s/he know not to tell others” was changed to “although I did not ask this person not to, s/he knows not to tell others.” Responses were sought using a five-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Example of the items is “I know that s/he won’t share my OPSEC information even if I didn’t ask him/her to keep the information to him/herself.” The previous Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient was .57 (Venetis et al., 2012). The Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient for the present study was .74 ($M = 4.04$, $SD = .91$).

Boundary turbulence was assessed with a modified version of Anticipation of Boundary Turbulence Scale (Hesse & Rauscher, 2013), an eight-item instrument that ask participants to rate their level of turbulence that they experience when OPSEC information is divulged because of a fellow MFSO member. Hesse and Rauscher (2013) developed a 15-item instrument for their study; however, only eight items were chosen for the present study because they best represented experiences of boundary turbulence that had already occurred. Responses were sought using a five-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Examples of the items are “my fellow MFSO member betrays my trust by disclosing OPSEC information” and “my fellow MFSO member discloses OPSEC to other people.” The Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient for the present study was .87 ($M = 1.83$, $SD = .71$).

Interpersonal trust was assessed with the measure of Dyadic Trust Scale (Lazelere & Huston, 1980), an eight-item instrument that ask participants to rate their level trust in their relationships. Items were modified to reflect the relationship between members of MFSOs. For example, “my partner treats me fairly and justly” was changed to “my fellow MFSO member treats me fairly and justly.” Responses were sought using a five-point Likert scale ranging from

strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Recent Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients have ranged from .89 to .90 (Mikkelsen, Hesse, & Pauley, 2016; Tokunaga, 2016). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the present study was .90 ($M = 3.89, SD = .74$).

Relational satisfaction was assessed with the measure of Relational Satisfaction Measure (Van Lear, 1991), an eight-item instrument that asked participants to rate how content they are with their relationship. Items were modified to reflect the relationship between members of MFOS. For example, "We have a very satisfying relationship" was changed to "my fellow MFOS member and I have a very satisfying relationship." Responses were sought using a five-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)*. Recent Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients have ranged from .92 to .95 (Anderson & Emmers-Soomer, 2006; Kennedy-Lightsey & Dillow, 2011; Malachowski & Dillow, 2011; Van Lear, 1991). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the present study was .94 ($M = 4.04, SD = .72$).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Hypothesis one posited that the perception of explicit privacy rules will be related negatively to trust. Results of Pearson's correlation revealed that explicit privacy rules and trust are statistically unrelated, $r = .08, p = .44$. As a result, the first hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis two posited that perceptions of implicit privacy rules will be related positively to trust. Results of a Pearson's correlation revealed that implicit privacy rules and trust are significantly related, $r = .49, p < .001$. This positive correlation illustrates that when an MFSO member implicitly discusses privacy rules with another member, there is higher trust in the relationship. As a result, the second hypothesis was supported.

Hypothesis three posited that perceptions of boundary turbulence will be related negatively to trust. Results of a Pearson's correlations revealed that boundary turbulence and trust are statistically related, $r = -.64, p < .001$. This negative correlation illustrates that when another MFSO member tells private information to someone outside of MFSO and creates boundary turbulence, there is less trust between the members. As a result, the third hypothesis was supported.

Research question one asked whether explicit privacy rules, implicit privacy rules, and boundary turbulence would collectively be predictors of trust. A multiple regression revealed a significant model $F(3, 97) = 31.65, p < .001$ that explained 50 % of the variance. Explicit privacy rules ($\beta = .15$), implicit privacy rules ($\beta = .30$), and boundary turbulence ($\beta = -.53$) were all significant predictors of trust.

Hypothesis four posited that perceptions of explicit privacy rules will be related negatively to relational satisfaction. Results of a Pearson's correlation revealed that explicit

privacy rules and relational satisfaction are statistically unrelated, $r = -.007$, $p = .95$. As a result, the fourth hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis five posited that the perceptions of implicit privacy rules will be related positively to relational satisfaction. Results of a Pearson's correlation revealed that implicit privacy rules and relational satisfaction are significantly related, $r = .40$, $p < .001$. This positive correlation illustrates that when a MFSO member uses implicit privacy rules with another member, relational satisfaction is higher between the members. As a result, the fifth hypothesis was supported.

Hypothesis six posited that perceptions of boundary turbulence will be related negatively to relational satisfaction. Results of a Pearson's correlation revealed that boundary turbulence and relational satisfaction are statistically related, $r = -.51$, $p < .001$. This negative correlation illustrates that when another MFSO member tells private information to someone outside the MFSO and creates boundary turbulence with the private information originator, relational satisfaction is lower between members. As a result, the sixth hypothesis was supported.

Research question two asked whether explicit privacy rules, implicit privacy rules, and boundary turbulence would collectively be predictors of relational satisfaction. A multiple regression revealed a significant model $F(3, 93) = 13.71$, $p < .001$ that explained 31% of the variance. Implicit privacy rules ($\beta = .26$) and boundary turbulence ($\beta = -.41$) were significant predictors of relational satisfaction. Explicit privacy rules was not a significant predictor of relational satisfaction.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter will further explain what the results mean to the present study, Military Family Support Organizations, communication privacy management theory, peer coworker relationships, and the communication discipline. Limitations and future directions will be explained followed by implications of present study. Lastly, a reasoning will be made as to how this present study further advances the understanding of MFSOs and CPM theory in the communication discipline.

Petronio and Durham (2015) stated that “the greatest strength of CPM theory is its utility and heuristic value in both basic and applied research” (p. 345). Therefore, the purpose of this thesis was to apply that utility and heuristic value to explore privacy disclosures between members of Military Family Support Organizations (MFSOs). Specifically, CPM theory was used to investigate how the disclosure of OPSEC information between MFSO members affects their trust and relational satisfaction with one another. Overall, six hypotheses and two research questions investigated how explicit privacy rules, implicit privacy rules, and boundary turbulence are associated with trust and relational satisfaction between MFSO members.

Interpersonal trust. The first hypothesis predicted that explicit privacy rules would have a negative statistical association with trust. The results revealed that there was no statistical relationship between explicit privacy rules and trust. In summary, when MFSO members use explicit rules they are more than likely treating OPSEC information as task-related rather than personal information. Petronio (2002) noted that people do give explicit rules to trusted friends and family members, so it could be conceivable that when an MFSO member gives explicit rules to another member that there will likely be no bearing on trust in their relationship, perhaps

because their relationship is already established and not in need of explicit privacy rules. The results suggest MFSO member relationships are much like collegial and special peer coworkers, which are predicated on personalism and voluntariness instead of simply organizational information (Sias, Pedersen, Gallagher, & Kopaneva, 2012). It is also likely that MFSO members who have not experienced deployments or missions where OPSEC information is given to military spouses might be given explicit rules from more seasoned MFSO members that desire to be more helpful. If violations of trust do occur, it is likely be the results of the impermissible disclosure of private information.

The second hypothesis predicted that implicit privacy rules would have a positive statistical association with trust. The results revealed that implicit privacy rules are positively associated with trust. In summary, MFSO members with close relationships, much like collegial and special peer coworker relationships, are so intimate that they have an unspoken bond. Because MFSO members can develop close relationships, it is likely that an MFSO member would want to use implicit rules due to their closeness even with highly sensitive private information (Venetis et al., 2012). By virtue of MFSO members spending time together, sharing activities, and knowing each other on a personal level, they can communicate with one another about organizational and personal information without the need to directly state what must remain concealed (Sias & Cahill, 1998; Sias et al., 2012). Other reasons for using implicit rules could be that MFSO members were briefed together on when to reveal/not reveal OPSEC information, and understand that organizational members will conceal OPSEC information because of the rules the MFSO set in place (Smith & Brunner, 2017).

The third hypothesis predicted that boundary turbulence would have a negative statistical association with trust. The results revealed that boundary turbulence was negatively associated

with trust. In summary, boundary turbulence is a violation of information management, so it is reasonable to believe that regardless of the quality of the relationship, improper disclosure will result in loss of trust (Petronio, 2010). This aligns with Smith and Brunner's (2017) discovery that organizational members lose trust in their coworkers commit when boundary turbulence occurs. The results concur with CPM theory's assertions that once boundary turbulence occurs, because of the breach in privacy rules, owners lose most, if not all, trust in the co-owner (Petronio, 2002). According to CPM theory, the instances of boundary turbulence are negative relational occurrences which leads to the undesirable influence on trust. Because MFSO members feel the violation of revealing OPSEC information, they may lose their trust in their fellow members in keeping OPSEC information concealed, which may have negative consequences to military deployments and missions.

The first research question asked whether explicit privacy rules, implicit privacy rules, and boundary turbulence would collectively be predictors of trust. The results revealed that explicit privacy rules, implicit privacy rules, and boundary turbulence were predictors of trust. This result occurs likely because trust, whether high or low, is an essential outcome and/or a perception in any relationship, especially those of peer coworker relationships (Breshears & DiVerniero, 2015). It seems, then, that setting any kind of rule, whether it be explicit or implicit, and boundary turbulence play a major part in MFSO member relationships, which resemble those of peer coworker relationships, because they are all distinctly communicative acts that form the foundation for useful and healthy relationships.

Relational satisfaction. The fourth hypothesis predicted that explicit privacy rules would have a negative statistical association with relational satisfaction. The results revealed that there was no statistical relationship between explicit rules and relational satisfaction. In summary,

MFSO member relationships, like collegial and special peer coworker relationships, exist at a personal level which means that when they explicitly discuss rules for concealing private information it has no bearing on their relational satisfaction. MFSO members could either be satisfied or dissatisfied regardless of explicit rules being used since there are other things that could affect relational satisfaction. Explicit privacy rules may be something that MFSO members use, but it may have more of an effect on a particular situation than on the actual relationship. The use of explicit privacy rules likely only creates a temporary disruption or jolt to the relationship and, thus, has no direct effect on relational satisfaction. These relationships are strong, so it makes sense that direct communication of rules will have no effect on relational satisfaction. For example, an experienced military spouse who has either a collegial or special peer coworker relationship with a less experienced military spouse may give explicit rules when discussing OPSEC information as a form of mentorship or friendship.

The fifth hypothesis predicted that implicit privacy rules would have a positive statistical association with relational satisfaction. The results revealed that implicit privacy rules are positively associated with relational satisfaction. Similar to implicit privacy rules and their positive effect on trust, they also positively affect relational satisfaction. This likely means that peer coworkers who share information together feel an unspoken bond that allows them to feel content with one another. Closeness of peer worker relationships suggests that they develop rapport and symmetry with one another (Gremler & Gwinner, 2000; Lee, Jares, & Heath, 1999) that helps them navigate privacy disclosures without the need to directly lay down rules for them. This unspoken bond between MFSO members probably contributes to their relational satisfaction. Another possibility could be that MFSO members have never had previous

problems with revealing OPSEC information and therefore can continue to use implicit rules with one another.

The sixth hypothesis predicted that boundary turbulence would have a negative statistical association with relational satisfaction. The results revealed that boundary turbulence was negatively associated with relational satisfaction. Boundary turbulence is disruptive for relationships which could ultimately damage a relationship (McLaren & Steuber, 2013; Smith & Brunner, 2017). With damage to a relationship, the relational satisfaction will likely suffer. So it seems that when boundary turbulence occurs in peer coworker relationships, the relationship will be less satisfying for both parties. The same could be said for MFSO members. Boundary turbulence is a disruptive force that can shatter relationships of any types, so it is plausible that MFSO members' relational satisfaction is susceptible to the power of boundary turbulence. Peer coworkers and MFSO members discuss a variety of topics and experiences (Fay, 2011), so when a violation of privacy is breached, the coworkers experience a negative jolt to their relationship. For example, if OPSEC information were to be revealed and a negative consequence such as a death or a delayed homecoming day occurred, there would be less relational satisfaction among MFSO members.

The second research question asked whether explicit privacy rules, implicit privacy rules, and boundary turbulence would collectively be predictors of relational satisfaction. The results revealed that only implicit privacy rules and boundary turbulence were predictors of relational satisfaction. Because implicit privacy rules and boundary turbulence are components of relationships that reflect understanding and personalism between peer coworkers, they are likely going to be content when they know that their co-ownership of information can be managed without the need to directly communicate about it. MFSO members' relational satisfaction may

not be impacted by explicit rules because the explicit rules are given by the organization instead of the MFSO member. However, boundary turbulence maybe one of the most atrocious violations to a relationship, so it is conceivable that even in combination with other communication acts it still affects relational satisfaction.

OPSEC and military spouses. Based on both historical accounts and empirical research findings (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a; U.S. Navy FRG Handbook, 2011), the U.S. Military takes precaution in informing their active duty service members not to reveal OPSEC information. It also seems that the U.S. Military also expects active duty service members' families to adhere to OPSEC privacy rules, as well. As mentioned in the U.S. Navy FRG Handbook (2011), the reason the U.S. Military stresses the concealment of OPSEC information is to ensure that no harm is inflicted on active duty service members during trainings or deployments. FRG leaders are encouraged to instruct MFSO members about what is appropriate when communicating about OPSEC information.

When OPSEC information is revealed and compromised, there are repercussions that could occur. These repercussions could range in severity, such as deployment homecoming dates being postponed due to unfortunate deaths (OPSEC, n.d.). Because of these repercussions, privacy violations potentially would hurt MFSO members' relationships. The present study found that MFSO members would lose trust and relational satisfaction in their fellow MFSO members if OPSEC information was revealed. These fractured relationships could take a heavy toll on the military and MFSOs. Such violations harm an organization because organizations are built and maintained through peer coworker relationships (Sias, 2014). The repercussions within the MFSO could result in the U.S. Military not revealing OPSEC information to members of the violating MFSO.

Not only will a violation of privacy rules result in a fractured relationship, it could also lead to turmoil between MFSO members that could lead to relationship deterioration and termination (Sias & Perry, 2004). Destructive workplace communication between peers has been shown to make the workplace unpleasant (Fritz, 2002). With members having built negative relationships with one another, the organization could be negatively impacted. Since relational satisfaction is negatively impacted by the occurrence of boundary turbulence, violations of privacy may cause a negative shift in an organization.

Social support. Social support is vital for military spouses, and MFSOs play an important role in military spouses' wellbeing (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). However, MFSOs are problematic because of the intricacies within the rules and the MFSO itself. The U.S. Navy FRG Handbook (2011) has details in which leaders explain the rules of OPSEC, deployments, and organization norms. However, military spouses are continuously being uprooted to different MFSO's because of their spouses' relocation, and may not know the rules due to ambiguity and lack of clarity from leaders. Another reoccurrence for MFSO leaders is that their members give one another social support, but also need social support as well. Leaders among these organizations continuously give other spouses social support, but could be worn down or also not receive the social support in return (Salstein-Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). These MFSOs play a vital role in military family communities, but there are also emotional costs to members and leaders.

Communication privacy management theory. CPM theory was developed, and has been dominantly used, as a relational theory (Petronio, 2013). In this thesis, CPM was used to examine how MFSO members, like coworker relationships, are impacted by revealing and concealing private information. I relied on the relational nature of CPM theory to explain how

MFSO members' relationships are affected by communication rules and violations of those rules. Allen et al. (2007) explored privacy management within an organization and Smith and Brunner (2017) explored privacy management between employees from a wide range of organizations, and this thesis expands upon their studies by exploring specific relationships, MFSO members, in an organization that is built on privacy and secrecy. Based on the results of this thesis, the organization, U. S. Military, owns the OPSEC information and disseminates the information to MFSOs. The MFSOs gives the private information to its members who are left to adhere to the rules of concealing the OPSEC information. In the case of MFSOs, violations in privacy rules could harm active duty service members (OPSEC, n. d.). For other organizations, these violations could lead to negative emotional outcomes or law being broken (Smith & Brunner, 2017). The results of this study further supports the notion that CPM theory can be applied to organizations and workplace relationships with preexisting rules of private information disclosure.

Coworkers. Pervious scholars have reported situations where trust and relational satisfaction between coworkers are impacted (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Moye et al., 2005; Myers & Johnson, 2004; Sias & Cahill, 1998; Sias et al., 2002). The results of this thesis further support and expand on the communicative phenomena that affect trust and relational satisfaction between coworkers. A unique aspect of the current study is that it provides understanding of how OPSEC information and rules complicates relationships. Owners are required to use proper communication channels when communicating about OPSEC information and must conceal the information from others that may not use or know how to use proper media channels (U.S. Navy FRG Handbook, 2011). Military spouses may have other military spouse friends who act as their social support system, but may not be a part of the same MFSO which may complicate revealing

or concealing OPSEC information. This may be similar in organizations where coworkers may have to conceal private information due to rules or laws set in place (Smith & Brunner, 2017). In MFSOs, military orders make MFSO members constantly move and change to different MFSOs. New members may become friends with members that are close to exiting the organization. Like MFSOs, organizational members in certain organizations could be transient due to fluctuating memberships which could make it difficult to develop trustworthy and satisfactory relationships within the organization.

Limitations

Privacy management between organizational members and the effects of privacy disclosure is an understudied phenomenon in the organizational communication discipline. This thesis contributes to peer coworker communication research and privacy management research by identifying how members' trust and relational satisfaction are affected by the use of privacy rules and when boundary turbulence occurs. However, limitations do exist and should be acknowledged. First, this thesis used self-report data electronically collected from military spouses about their own privacy disclosures among fellow members in a MFSO. This could be viewed as problematic in that participants may answer in a socially desirable way rather than how MFSO members realistically disclose OPSEC information to one another (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). However, researchers acknowledge that self-report data is useful for gathering information about their internal dispositions, attitudes, or experiences (McCroskey, 1984).

Second, despite many researchers using qualitative research designs to explore military spouses (e.g., Knobloch & Theiss, 2012; Maguire & Sahlstein-Parcell, 2015; Merolla, 2010; Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a; Rossetto, 2015a, 2015b), this thesis was conducted using a quantitative survey method. Researchers have noted that quantitative research designs potentially

limit the amount of depth and description gained from participants. However, previous researchers have suggested the need of using survey methods with military spouses as participants (Rossetto, 2015b; Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). Quantitative research is defensible because it is useful for explaining how variables statistically relate to one another, which was the focus of this current study (Levine, 2009).

Third, the use of online data collection could be considered a limitation; however, by using an online questionnaire, the researcher was able to gather responses of military spouses from different locations of the country. A fourth possible limitation is the homogeneity of the sample. Most of the participants were female and Navy officer military spouses. Previous scholars have suggested that officer military spouses carry a negative connotation among enlisted military spouses (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). More diverse samples, especially between branches (Knobloch et al., 2013) and ranks would be desirable in future research.

Future Research

Future scholarship could build upon and further enrich the results of the present study. Though Sahlstein Parcell and Maguire (2014a) reported on leaders in FRGs giving social support, future studies could explore the advantages and disadvantages of social support between MFSO members. As previously stated, social support can take a toll on leaders when multiple military spouses come to seek social support (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). Military spouses with collegial and special peer coworker relationships may go to one individual throughout the time of stressful moments such as a deployment that may cause additional stress between military spouses. Research on military spouses with collegial and special peer coworker relationships could further advance scholarship on social support among organizational members. Second, because military families are constantly moving and do not stay in the same

MFSO throughout their military career, scholars could consider how privacy management changes because of transient MFSO members. Military spouses are constantly starting over in new MFSOs which means they would have to rebuild relationships among other members. It could be valuable to understand the process of how they build these relationships and how they manage previous relationships whom they used to share OPSEC information with. Third, because some organizations need to maintain a high degree of secrecy with their members, scholars could explore the effects of organizational policies/rules on relationship development and privacy management. Fourth, because some military spouses choose to return home to their families in the event of a deployment (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a), future research could explore how an organization discusses and implements privacy management/rules to their geographically displaced members. With military spouses choosing to live away from their FRG, they may not be in contact with their FRG because of the rules of not telling OPSEC information through certain media channels (U.S. Navy FRG Handbook, 2011). Finally, scholars could explore privacy management within other relationships, such as how military spouses reveal general private information to coworkers, family friends, their in-laws and other members outside of their immediate family. With constant need to conceal private information, some military spouses might have to decide who knows about the private information and trust who will not spread the private information. Understanding how military spouses decide who gets to know private information and if they choose to give full detail or limited detail to others would be beneficial for the communication discipline because it explores how military spouses reveal and conceal private information to nonmilitary affiliates.

Implications

This thesis results provide practical implications for MFSOs and organizational communication. Though the U.S. Navy FRG Handbook (2011) does discuss OPSEC, the issue of violation of OPSEC remains a threat. Leaders of MFSOs should clearly communicate rules and expectations about privacy management to MFSO members and may want to send a reminder email to members about the organization's rules and expectations to ensure all members, especially newcomers, are aware of updated standards. This could help ease privacy violations within the organization and help combat member relation turmoil, frustration, and termination. MFSO members should be aware of the repercussions that could occur when violating OPSEC rules. When MFSO leaders reveal OSPEC information to members, it may be helpful for members to be reminded of the repercussions that could occur if OSPEC information is not kept concealed. To help leaders inform MFSO members about concealing OPSEC, the U.S. Military should provide an easy access database with detailed information about revealing and concealing OPSEC. Currently, the U.S. Navy has an online page dedicated to informing the masses about OPSEC (OPSEC, n.d.). However, improvements could be made in further discussing what media channels could be used when discussing OPSEC information, who to discuss OPSEC information with, encouraging active duty service members to discuss OPSEC rules within their household, and encouraging MFSO members to contact their MFSO leaders if they have any specific questions regarding OPSEC.

MFSOs thrive on participation (U.S. Navy FRG Handbook, 2011), therefore MFSOs members should seek opportunities to meet and bond with other members. With military spouses feeling supported with those in groups that understand what they are going through (Merolla, 2010; Rossetto, 2015a), MFSOs are important for military spouses complicated lifestyles. Though leaders within these MFSOs do become overwhelmed with giving social support

(Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a), peer MFSO members may offer to give each other social support. However, military spouses may not know other spouses that are in their MFSO which gives reason for bonding opportunities to occur. The U.S. Navy FRG Handbook (2011) gives suggestions for events that could help create bonding opportunities, but should also make sure that meetings regularly occur, well as stage small activities, such as coffee dates. Many MFSO newcomers may be the spouses that need the most help in getting to know their peers.

Newcomers can learn and be quickly integrated into an organization by veterans communicating rules or norms that are usually learned through experience and by word of mouth. By integrating newcomers, more involvement in MFSOs could occur. If there is a lack of participation in member activity, a MFSO may experience low membership which can have negative consequences if the MFSO does not keep a basic structure in the event of an unexpected deployment or mission occurring (U.S. Navy FRG Handbook, 2011).

Relationships between MFSO members need to be kept in a satisfactory and trustworthy status to maintain an effective organization. Leaders should encourage members to get to know the other members within the organization. Members tend to find their own cliques within the organization which may push other members into feeling rejected or not fitting in (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014a). By encouraging members to meet other members within the MFSO, new peer relationships can be created and, hopefully, build a sense of trustworthiness when OPSEC information is shared among the group. Members could also ask one another about certain information regarding OPSEC or military life in general. Members could potentially learn from one another, especially from military spouses who have experience. Leaders should also encourage members who are thinking of sharing the private information, but are unsure if it will break rules to contact the leaders and ask if it is permitted. Leaders may inform members that

they could only use certain media channels when sharing the information or inform them that it may not be wise to share the information in order to protect active duty service members. When members share OPSEC information amongst each other, it may be best to discuss boundary rules to best avoid boundary turbulence which could later harm the relationship. To help keep satisfaction between members, leaders should discuss the importance of concealing any information regarding OPSEC information to deployments in order to keep military missions safe. Leaders should discuss how other members may feel if OPSEC information is revealed and how that could impact the entirety of the organization, its members, and their active duty service members.

Conclusion

The results of this thesis extend CPM theory into the relational aspect of organizations, but also help better understand the secrecy of MFSOs. The results revealed that trust and relational satisfaction is affected by implicit privacy rules and boundary turbulence, and explicit rules is a predictor of trust. Though MFSOs may have negative outcomes for members, it is a vital social support system for military spouses and their families. Relations between MFSO members are unique and important to have because when MFSO members experience turmoil within their lives, other MFSO members are mostly likely to understand what they are going through. With the understanding that OPSEC information is important for military families to know, disclosing this OPSEC information could create relational complications. The current study could stimulate interest in exploring peer coworker relationships from a CPM theoretical framework and assisting MFSO members with navigating the revealing and concealing of OPSEC information.

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Appendix A

Information Sheet

CONSENT FORM

[Loose Lips Sink Relationships]

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project about research project about how you manage and disclose Operation Security (OPSEC) information given in a FRG/OSC (a military family support organization; MFSO). The purpose of this study is to explore how members of a Military Support Organization share and create rules and boundaries about shared private information with the fellow members of their MSO. You were selected to be a possible participant because you are 18 years of age or older and have been of your current MSO for at least 6 months.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to report about the organizational characteristics that affect how you manage information and the relational outcomes of that information management. You will be asked to provide your responses to a series of survey questions. Your participation in the study will take approximately 15 minutes of your time.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no risks associated with this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, there is the possible benefit that you will be involved in a study that can contribute greater knowledge about Military Support Organizations and how their members manage private information and the effect that it has on relationships.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi being affected. There will be no points associated with completing this survey.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is anonymous and anonymity will be maintained by ensuring that no survey will ever be linked with you in any way. Also, no identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Catherine Katie Cole and Michael Sollitto will have access to the records.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Catherine Katie Cole @ ccole5@islander.tamucc.edu or Dr. Michael Sollitto, 361-825-2443, Michael.sollitto@tamucc.edu.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Research Compliance Office and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact Caroline Lutz, Research Compliance Officer, at (361) 825-2497 or caroline.lutz@tamucc.edu

Appendix B

Survey

Please provide the following information:

1. Age: _____
2. Sex: _____ Male _____ Female
3. How long (in years) have you been married to an Active Duty Service Member:

4. Your Ethnic Background:
_____ Caucasian/White
_____ African American/Black
_____ Hispanic/Latino
_____ Native American
_____ Asian American/Asian
_____ Other (specify): _____
5. Spouse's Branch of Service
_____ Air Force
_____ Army
_____ Coast Guard
_____ Marines
_____ Navy
6. Spouse's Rank:
_____ E-1 – E-3
_____ E-4 – E-6
_____ E-7 – E-9
_____ O-1 – O3
_____ O-4 – O-6
_____ O-7 – O-11
7. How many FRG/OSC have you been a part of? _____
8. How long (in years) have you been a member of your **current** FRG/OSC? _____

Instructions: Now read the following items and use the response format below and place the appropriate number in the blank beside the item.

Respond to the items about a person in your organization that meets the following description: *This person is a combination of MFSO member and friend. You might not share every detail of your life with this person, but this person is more than merely an acquaintance.*

Place the initials of that person here _____.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

- _____ 1. I asked this person not to share the OPSEC information with anyone else.
- _____ 2. We never discussed if s/he could share the OPSEC information with others (r).
- _____ 3. I was clear about who this person could tell/not tell the OPSEC information.
- _____ 4. Before I shared the OPSEC information with this person, I asked him/her not to share the information with anyone.
- _____ 5. After I shared the OPSEC information with this person, I asked him/her not to share the information with anyone.
- _____ 6. I never asked this person to keep the OPSEC information to him/herself (r).
- _____ 7. Although I did not ask this person not to, s/he knows not to tell others.
- _____ 8. I know that s/he won't share my OPSEC information even if I didn't ask him/her to keep the information to him/herself.
- _____ 9. My fellow MFSO member is primarily interested in his/her own welfare (r).
- _____ 10. There are times when my fellow MFSO member cannot be trusted (r).
- _____ 11. My fellow MFSO member is perfectly honest and truthful with me.
- _____ 12. I feel that I can trust my fellow MFSO member completely.
- _____ 13. My fellow MFSO member is truly sincere in keeping his/her promises.
- _____ 14. I feel that my fellow MFSO member does not show me enough consideration (r).
- _____ 15. My fellow MFSO member treats me fairly and justly.
- _____ 16. I feel that my fellow MFSO member can be counted on to help me.
- _____ 17. My fellow MFSO member and I have a very satisfying relationship.
- _____ 18. My fellow MFSO member and I are very close to each other.
- _____ 19. Our relationship is *not* very stable (r).

- _____ 20. Our relationship makes me happy.
- _____ 21. Our relationship is strong.
- _____ 22. Our relationship is very special and important to me.
- _____ 23. I trust my fellow MFSO member completely.
- _____ 24. My fellow MFSO member and I have a good relationship.
- _____ 25. My fellow MFSO member betrays my trust by disclosing OPSEC information.
- _____ 26. Another person has discovered OPSEC information accidentally.
- _____ 27. My fellow MFSO member does not keep OPSEC confidential.
- _____ 28. My fellow MFSO member discloses OPSEC to other people.
- _____ 29. I have been the victim of gossip as a result of OPSEC information being disclosed.
- _____ 30. People have judged me negatively based upon my OPSEC information.
- _____ 31. The disclosure of my OPSEC information has harmed my relationships with family or friends.
- _____ 32. I have accidentally disclosed OPSEC to people I do not wish to disclose to.

(r) are reversed coded