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UNDERSTANDING EFFECTS OF OPERATIONS SECURITY (OPSEC) AWARENESS LEVELS OF MILITARY SPOUSES THROUGH THE LENSES OF TRAINING AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

By

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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

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Abstract

Social networking has become an increasing popular means of 21st century communication. With increases in deployment tempo and access to social media, military families have been more apt to utilizing social media for communication. There are potential security dangers to military personnel associated with this increased use of social media, leading the military services to implement processes to better inform the families of service members about these dangers. This Dissertation in Practice (DIP) utilized a qualitative study in an effort to analyze current Operations Security (OPSEC) awareness levels of Air Force Key Spouses. Findings could be used in an effort to develop an updated OPSEC program management model for military spouses. The qualitative study analyzed how OPSEC Program Managers can better train Air Force spouses on OPSEC awareness. Root causes of the professional practice problem included lack of training opportunities as well as lack of availability of published training materials. The study also found ways in which the professional practice problem could be addressed with effective leadership and program management. The study concluded that previous training and program management examples could be benchmarked in an effort to further the greater good of military family OPSEC training.

Keywords: OPSEC, Key Spouse, Department of Defense, Military, Air Force
Dedication

This dissertation in practice is dedicated to my amazing wife, Sarah Louise Lees, and our children David Fowler Lees and Isaac William Lees, who have taught me more than they will ever know. This dissertation is also dedicated to my deceased mom, Candice Lee Lees, a true example of perseverance, who has always been my number one supporter. I also dedicate this dissertation to my father-in-law, mentor, and role-model, Kevin Michael Fowler and my mother-in-law Bridget Harris Fowler. Without your support, and your beautiful daughter by my side, this would not have been possible.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Background

The exploitation of human intelligence is as old as human conflict, and modern times have brought a new urgency to securing critical information. This qualitative study looks at the professional practice problem regarding military families and their access to sensitive information. Critical information is a term used to describe unclassified friendly intentions, capabilities, and activities that are capable of being used by adversaries in a way where the adversary could gain an advantage over mission accomplishment.

Operations Security (OPSEC) involves securing information regarding military plans, operations, and procedures. Combining this information with the availability of social media can lead to leaks of critical information. Without effective Air Force spouse OPSEC training, critical information can be lethal in the hands of the wrong organizations. Military spouses have access to critical information, and historical examples of lapses in OPSEC judgment discussions note the importance of sound OPSEC training for military members and their families (Bejar, 2010).

Security planning, awareness, and training can help reduce the risk of exploitation, but OPSEC trainers must understand how the foreign intelligence threat is an ever-evolving challenge. The Islamic State of Iraq and as-Sham (ISIS) is known for its gathering and exploiting information utilizing social media (Farwell, 2014). A sound OPSEC understanding is a requirement for both military members and their families. A breakdown in OPSEC education at home could lead to significant harm for military personnel in the field. This Dissertation in Practice (DIP) explored a significant and
complex real-world problem based on the researcher’s professional practice setting. Further, the researcher looked to design an evidence-based solution incorporating leadership theories, reflective practice, and an interdisciplinary focus to contribute to the greater good of the OPSEC training field. The researcher utilized previous experience as a military installation OPSEC Program Manager to study current military family OPSEC training at a military installation.

**Statement of the Problem**

The day-to-day activities of military members and their families have them exposed to critical information. Without effective Air Force spouse OPSEC training, this information can be lethal in the hands of the wrong organizations. This grounded theory, qualitative study stems from a professional practice problem stemming from OPSEC and military families. Social networking websites, blogs, and media sharing technology are commonplace in the 21st century. Combined with the advancements in handheld technology, the information in 2016 can quickly reach a significant audience, which could have potentially dangerous outcomes. Historical examples of lapses in OPSEC judgment discussions note the importance of sound OPSEC training for military members and their families (Bejar, 2010).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this grounded theory dissertation in practice study was to capture levels of OPSEC awareness of Air Force Key Spouses at a Midwestern U.S. military installation. Military families have access to a significant amount of critical information, and training is essential for properly safeguarding this information. The study solicited Key Spouse program members from a Midwest U.S. military installation to represent the
military spouse community as a whole. The study could possibly assist with updating
Department of Defense (DoD), and specifically Air Force Family Operations Security
OPSEC training procedures.

Research Question

OPSEC (Operations Security) defines and identifies critical information regarding
sensitive, but unclassified military activities and determines how foreign government
agents and other adversaries can capture and exploit this information. A sound
understanding of the awareness levels of Key Spouses could assist in the mentoring and
training of other military families, as well as provide information regarding OPSEC
awareness levels to military leadership. Little research exists as to what current levels of
military member family OPSEC awareness are.

The following research question guided this qualitative study: What is the current
level of Air Force Key Spouse OPSEC awareness?

Aim of the Study

The aim of this qualitative study was to design/create an evidence-based solution
to the identified problem. This analysis of current OPSEC awareness levels of Air Force
Key Spouses could assist in the development of an updated OPSEC program
management model for Air Force spouses.

Methodology Overview

The researcher utilized grounded theory, qualitative research for the study.
Grounded theory “is a design of inquiry from sociology in which the researcher derives a
general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of
participants” (Creswell, 2014 p. 14). Grounded theory was chosen in an effort to collect
information regarding Key Spouse OPSEC awareness levels and training efficacy. Using an information rich sampling of Key Spouses, the researcher conducted open-ended interviews to surface spousal awareness of OPSEC issues and the Key Spouse responsibility of passing this education and awareness on to other military spouses.

To ensure the information rich sampling of research participants includes an accurate representation of the research population, the Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) also asked Squadron Commanders for potential research participants. Further, the A&FRC also reached out to Key Spouses from previous training classes. The researcher took field notes while the current Base OPSEC Program Manager administered the Key Spouse Training. Triangulation, field notes, a literature review, and interviews were utilized during the research process.

**Definition of Relevant Terms**

This qualitative study took place within a military environment, and readers may be unfamiliar with some terms. These are defined here:

**Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC):** Air Force support agency charged with enhancing mission readiness and ease of family adaptation to the Air Force way of life.

**Commander:** Senior-ranking Commissioned Officer in charge (command) of a military unit.

**Counterintelligence:** Gathered data and activities in an effort to minimize intelligence activities of foreign governments.

**Countermeasures:** Procedures that effectively negate or mitigate the ability for an adversary to exploit vulnerabilities.
Critical Information: Specific facts involving friendly intentions, capabilities, or activities vitally needed by adversaries for them to plan and act effectively to guarantee failure or unacceptable consequences for friendly mission accomplishment.

Critical Information List: Listing of organizational areas thought to be of OPSEC concern.

Headquarters, Air Force (HAF): An integrated staff comprised of the offices of the Secretariat and the Air Staff.

Heartlink: Air Force Aid Society spousal orientation program.

Indicator: “Data derived from friendly detectable actions and open-source information that adversaries can interpret and piece together to reach conclusions or estimates of critical or classified information concerning friendly intentions, capabilities, or activities” (Wisdom, 2015).

Key Spouse: A military spouse charged with providing peer-to-peer support, caring for military families on the home front, allowing the war fighter to focus on their mission at home and downrange (Key, 2015).

Major Command (MAJCOM): Large formations of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Noncommissioned Officer: A military officer who has not earned a commission.

Operations Security (OPSEC): The overall process of identifying and controlling critical information.

OPSEC Assessment: “An evaluative process, conducted annually of an organization, operation, activity, exercise, or support function to determine if sufficient protection
measures are in place to protect critical information. An OPSEC program review may include self-generated program reviews, Inspector General Inspections, or higher headquarters reviews that specifically address OPSEC” (Wisdom, 2015).

OPSEC Program Manager: Point of contact for addressing organizational OPSEC concerns.

OPSEC Planner: OPSEC point of contact who has training in OPSEC planning and execution.

Social Networking: The use of select websites and applications for interaction with other online users.

Assumptions

Assumptions are the beliefs researchers bring to a study that are accepted as valid (Roberts, 2010, p. 56). With previous experience as an OPSEC Trainer and Program Manager, the researcher brings some assumptions to his research. Specifically, the researcher understands limitations of OPSEC training to include time and funding. The researcher also understands how Key Spouse Training is just one part of being an OPSEC Program Manager.

Delimitations and Limitations

The researcher systematically introduced delimitations to the study. One example delimitation included this study involving Key Spouses at a Midwest CONUS military installation. While the spouses at this location were married to military members in a wide range of ranks and specialties, they were all stationed at the same location. The researcher worked with the Base Airman and Family Readiness Center to attend a Key
Spouse training session in an observer role. Prior to the session, the Key Spouse Director within the Airman and Family Readiness Center solicited Key Spouses as research participants. These Key Spouses represented the culmination of military spouses as survey participants (Babbie, 2014).

A limitation of a study is a systematic bias, which the researcher cannot control. Limitations could affect study results. One limitation of this study included keeping information at the unclassified level. The researcher coordinated with Security Managers in an effort to ensure no classified information is contained in the dissertation. Further, the researcher solicited Creighton students and faculty for peer review. Specifically, the researcher solicited and received feedback on the amount of military jargon in the study. Additionally, the desire for conducting face-to-face interviews did allow for personal interaction, and achieved data saturation while using 7 research participants (Creswell, 2014).

**Personal Bias**

The researcher had previous experience as the OPSEC Program Manager at this Midwest Continental United States (CONUS) military installation, where he had developed some of his own perceptions about family OPSEC training. Further, the researcher had previously expanded upon the OPSEC training materials developed by his predecessor. The training plan for the incoming OPSEC Program Manager involved the same model of taking current training materials and adapting them to a new training style and current training needs.

In an effort to control this bias, the researcher ensured the questions asked to participants were free from suggestive bias (Prince & Murnan, 2004). The spouse of the
researcher is also a Key Spouse. Utilizing the Airman and Family Research center, who provides Key Spouse training, allowed the researcher to obtain an information rich sampling of qualitative research participants. The researcher was mindful of how the focus of this study was to further the greater good of military family OPSEC. An audit trail included field notes, and dissertation committee members conducted an audit check of the dissertation in practice. Due to the potential for bias, the researcher employed bracketing as a way of consciously being aware of preconceived ideas (Creswell, 2014).

Leaders’ Role and Responsibility in Relation to the Problem

The researcher previously spent two years as the OPSEC Program Manager at the military installation used as part of this study. Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1 (2004), Leadership and Force Development defines leadership as the art and science of motivating, influencing, and directing people to accomplish an assigned mission. Leadership is interdisciplinary in nature, and (Eisenbeiss, 2012) explained how “four essential normative reference points of ethical leadership: humane orientation, justice orientation, responsibility and sustainability orientation, and moderation orientation” (p. 12). The Eisenbeiss (2012) research set out to identify current issues with conceptual vagueness associated with ethical leadership and develop an interdisciplinary integrative approach for ethical leadership.

Air Force Instruction 10-701 (2011) noted how “Air Force organizations must develop and integrate OPSEC into their mission planning to ensure critical information and indicators are identified” (Bolton, 2011, p. 5). This is applicable to military members and stakeholders, to include the military family. Additionally, the Air Force position of the A3/5 Officer is charged with publishing “unclassified advisory tips and best practices
aimed at educating service members and their families about the official and personal use of social networking sites and potential vulnerabilities exposed by posting military service-related information online” (p. 6).

Dressler, Bronk, and Wallach (2015) studied the ease of use associated with the connectivity options of social media in an effort to bridge the gap between personal needs of military families and military operational security. This ease of use could lead to social media users not paying as much attention to what they are posting to social media, which could potentially lead to lapses in OPSEC. Therefore, as viewed through a leadership lens, military members and their families must be trained on identification and protection of OPSEC indicators and identification of critical information. Leadership theories and practices can be applied to OPSEC planning, training, and program management from an interdisciplinary perspective. This application could allow for Key Spouse OPSEC training to be looked at from multiple lenses, and could contribute to the greater good of OPSEC program management.

**Significance of the Study**

As of the end of fiscal year 2015, Air Combat Command lost its billet for a Command OPSEC Program Manager. As depicted in Figure One, this caused there to be no middle management between the Headquarters, Air Force OPSEC Program Manager and Air Combat Command Air Force Bases. The Air Force OPSEC Program Director resides with Headquarters Air Force (HAF). There are 10 Major Commands (MAJCOMs) below the Headquarters Air Force level. This study fell under the Air Combat Command (ACC) MAJCOM. OPSEC Program Managers must be Senior Noncommissioned Officer, Officer of the grade O-3 or above, or General Schedule (GS)
Federal Employee. Each Air Force base has a primary and alternate OPSEC Program Manager. OPSEC Program Managers are appointed by the Wing Commander, and are mandated to serve at least two years in the position. Figure one is a depiction of the Air Force functional OPSEC structure (Bolton, 2011).

Figure 1. Air Force Functional OPSEC Structure (Bolton, 2011)

With previous experience as an OPSEC Program Manager at an ACC base, the researcher noted the lack of ACC OPSEC program management at the Command-level. Martin (2015) explained how “the 2013 government shutdown cost the government $2 billion in lost productivity from furloughed workers” (p. 2). The absence of command-level OPSEC oversight could lead to a lack of family OPSEC training and other possible devastating effects. Military families already have enough stressors, and OPSEC training could help reduce unnecessary stress caused by OPSEC issues. The researcher saw this
as an opportunity to conduct this interdisciplinary Dissertation in Practice as a way of furthering the greater good of military families and filling a gap in lack of current research.

Summary

Effective OPSEC training and program management are becoming increasingly important with technological advancements and access of social media. This Dissertation in Practice looked at OPSEC training and program management from the perspective of a former OPSEC Program Manager. Further, this Dissertation in Practice will allow the researcher to use this opportunity to help further the greater good of the organization by taking a professional practice problem and looking for ways to improve the organizational effectiveness.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This preliminary review section provides background information of past and present Operational Security (OPSEC) training concerns in various settings throughout the United States Air Force. Discussions will include the professional practice problem of lack of OPSEC training for the military spouse. The initial subsection looks at the history and definition of OPSEC. The second subsection defines and provides a brief review of family OPSEC concerns. The third section looks at a leadership theory applicable to OPSEC training for Air Force Spouses. The researcher will accomplish this literature review from the perspective of his professional practice setting, stemming from previous experience as OPSEC Program Manager at an Air Force base in the Continental United States. The literature review presents a review of the literature about OPSEC and theory of training, and finally provides an analysis of adult education and interdisciplinary program management.

The History and Definition of OPSEC

President Ronald Regan signed the National Security Decision Directive 298 (NSDD 298) in 1988. NSDD 298 created the National Operations Security (OPSEC) Program, charged with identifying, controlling, and protecting sensitive, but unclassified information. NSDD 298 also defined and called for implementation of the five step OPSEC process. The Director, National Security Agency (DIRNSA), who is the senior ranking official of the National Security Agency (NSA) was charged as the Executive agent for interagency OPSEC training.
Through NSDD 298 and the DIRNSA, the Interagency OPSEC Support Staff (IOSS) was developed. Since the inception of the IOSS, the OPSEC process has been comprised of five basic planning and program management steps: threat analysis, vulnerability analysis, risk assessment, application of countermeasures, and identification of critical information. The OPSEC process is an interdisciplinary tool for identification and protection of critical information (U.S. Interagency OPSEC Support Staff, n.d.).

Looking at the home page for the IOSS, users will see the following welcome message:

The primary responsibility of the Interagency OPSEC Support Staff (IOSS) is to act as a consultant to other U.S. government departments or agencies by providing technical guidance and assistance that will result in self-sufficient OPSEC Programs for the protection of U.S. operations. Members of the IOSS staff assess OPSEC programs, assist in OPSEC program development, conduct surveys, assessments and provide OPSEC training. The IOSS further supports the National OPSEC Program by providing multimedia products and presenting events that attract attendees from the security, intelligence, research and development, acquisition, and law enforcement communities. These events include the National OPSEC Conference and Exhibition, the National Threat Symposium, and regional training symposia (IOSS, 2016).

The IOSS vision is to ensure “secure and effective operations for all National Security mission activities.” Their mission is to “promote and maintain OPSEC principles worldwide by assisting our customers in establishing OPSEC programs, providing OPSEC training and conducting OPSEC surveys.” Finally, the IOSS goal is
“to be recognized as the leader and preferred provider of value-added OPSEC products and services” (U.S., nd).

Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 5205.2, DoD Operations Security Program Manual, “was recently updated as of 2008 to reemphasize NSDD 298 directives” (Bejar, 2010, p. 5). This update provided direction for web based OPSEC applications. Dressler, Bronk, and Wallach, (2015) studied the current state of the DoD with regard to social networking and OPSEC. Their study of open source information made available by military members and their families discovered over 11,000 possible intelligence targets. This study of LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook patterns associated with military families resulted in recommendations of increases in OPSEC training and program management (Dressler, Bronk, & Wallach, 2015).

Lawson (2014) noted how “the revolution in information and communication technologies (ICTs) has had a profound impact on military affairs” (p. 1). Lawson (2014) further went on to explain how “the controversy over social media is one indicator that the dominant discourse of information-age conflict is neither stable nor total” (p. 1). Another example Lawson (2014) provided regarding OPSEC and social media included how “only two months after the creation of US Cyber Command, its parent organization, STRATCOM (United States Strategic Command), sent out a ‘warning order’ proposing to ban access to all social media sites on all DoD computers” (p. 233).

OPSEC is not simply for military activities. Whether a military concept or civilization in general, OPSEC can also be defined as information warfare. This new term describes how to protect critical information in the new, emerging environment in this information age. The recent information “big bang” allows for the exploitation of
information in the expanding universe of knowledge (Cameron, 1996). Hutchinson and Warren (2012) noted how the main target and weapon of information warfare is information. Adversaries can manipulate information in a way to gain a competitive information advantage. Data, information, and knowledge interpretation can influence perceptions of critical information (p. 1).

**Air Force OPSEC Program Management Guidance**

Air Force Instruction (AFI) 10-701 provides OPSEC Program Management guidance from Headquarters, Air Force (HAF). Each Air Force Major Command (MAJCOM) has its own respective supplement to the Air Force OPSEC AFI. The military installation used for this research falls under the Air Combat Command Supplement. This 84 page document includes sections on signature management, OPSEC planning, the OPSEC process, OPSEC education and training, OPSEC assessments, requirements within contracts, and OPSEC information collections, records, and forms (Bolton, 2011).

OPSEC assessments are defined as “an evaluative process, conducted annually of an organization, operation, activity, exercise, or support function to determine if sufficient protection measures are in place to protect critical information” (Wisdom, 2015, p. 26). These assessments are geared towards evaluating vulnerabilities and program management. The Air Force Inspector General (IG) team is responsible for evaluating Air Force OPSEC Program Management through the Management Internal Control Toolset (MICT) online inspections, as well as in-person inspections (Bolton, 2015).
Air Force Instruction 10-701 (2011) noted how “Air Force organizations must develop and integrate OPSEC into their mission planning to ensure critical information and indicators are identified” (Bolton, 2011, p. 5). The Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans, and Requirements is charged with various functions, to include implementation of OPSEC guidance. The Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans, and Requirements also must “ensure appropriate levels of standardized OPSEC training and education are established and provided to all Air Force personnel” (p. 6). Further, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans, and Requirements is also charged with publishing “unclassified advisory tips and best practices aimed at educating service members and their families about the official and personal use of social networking sites and potential vulnerabilities exposed by posting military service-related information online” (p. 6).

Air Force Instruction 1-1, Air Force Standards, provided guidance on how military members should conduct themselves both on and off duty. The current version was last updated in August 2012, and included a section on how Air Force members should conduct themselves while using social media. Of note, military members were reminded how compliance with military standards is not dependent on the method of communication being used (p. 20). Air Force Instruction 1-1 further noted how each military member is “personally responsible for what you say and post on social networking services and any other medium” (p. 21). Whether enlisted, officer, or civilian, Air Force Instruction 1-1 noted how “Your obligation to maintain appropriate communication and conduct with officer and enlisted personnel, peers, superiors, and
subordinates is applicable whether you communicate via a social networking service or other forms of communication, such as e-mail, instant messaging, or texting” (p. 21).

Air Force Instruction 1-1 also noted how vital OPSEC planning can be when considering mission planning and accomplishment. Classified, FOUO, and other official DoD information and documents are prohibited from being posted on social networking services or transmitted via non-DoD e-mail accounts without proper authority. Further, AFI 1-1 also noted how “the use of social media and other forms of communication that allow you to communicate with a large number of people brings with it the increased risk of magnifying operational security lapses” (p. 21). The AFI also stated how for official use only (FOUO), classified, and official Department of Defense (DoD) information is prohibited from being posted on social networking sites as well as prohibited from being transmitted by non-DoD email accounts (p. 21).

**Family OPSEC Considerations**

Technology has increased the ability to spread critical information for military members and their families. Wisdom (2015) noted how recent advancements in Internet access and capabilities, Global Positioning System (GPS), and personal electronic devices have resulted in increases in the amount of critical information made available for adversaries. Wisdom (2015) further noted the importance of leadership making firm, deliberate decisions “concerning the safety of Air Force members and their families along with protecting sensitive information our adversaries need to act against our interests” (p. 2).

Bittner (2014) noted how approximately 54 percent of service members are married, and 44 percent of active duty military members have children. Bittner (2014)
further explained the challenges of the military members, to include increases in
deployment tempo and the rate of military members not living together for reasons other
than deployments. Additionally, Bittner (2014) noted “endured effects of repeated and
extended deployments, as well as the positive and negative effects associated with the
utilization of social media to maintain contact with one another during periods of
absence” (Bittner, 2014, p. 1).

Rea, Behnke, Huff, and Allen (2015) noted the increasing use of social media by
military families as a coping tool before, during, and after deployments. More than 2.5
million United States military members have deployed to combat zones in support of the
Global War on Terrorism since September 11, 2001 (Kees, Nerenberg, Bachrach, &
Sommer, 2015). As of a 2015 Blue Star Families Report, 68% of officers and 49% of
enlisted military members were married. These same survey participants noted high
operational tempo while stateside, as well as high deployment tempo. Since September
11, 2001, 37% of the Blue Star Survey respondents were deployed for more than two
cumulative years (Blue, 2015).

A study by Bittner (2014) set out to “examine the various means, and extent in
which social media is utilized to maintain connectedness and communication among
family members during periods of wartime deployment” (p. 2). Findings included 67
percent of respondents noting being satisfied with how social media assisted with
resolving family issues during deployments. Respondents also noted a tendency for
social media communication to be subject to miscommunication. Further, this stress and
confusion could lead to sharing information on social media that would normally be kept
private (Bittner, 2014).
OPSEC is an ongoing, interdisciplinary process. OPSEC defines and identifies critical information regarding sensitive, but unclassified, military activities and determines how foreign government agents and other adversaries can capture and exploit this information. Security planning, awareness, and training are all considerations that can help reduce the risk of exploitation. However, OPSEC trainers must understand how the foreign intelligence threat is an ever-evolving challenge. The Islamic State of Iraq and as-Sham (ISIS) is known for their gathering and exploiting information utilizing social media. Critical information, to include personnel status reports, schedules, exercise information, and equipment status can be lethal when in the wrong hands (Farwell, 2014).

Military spouses training on the dangers of making critical information available to adversaries is instrumental for ensuring critical information is safe. Military families are very connected with social media, and relevant literature is available detailing the potential dangers of social media (Cline, 2014). Social media is changing the way information flows around the world. Military families are already subject to many stressors, and social media, when not used safely, can add to the stress. The military family members who post about military related activities can be putting more than just their spouse in danger with compromises of critical information (Di Nola, 2008).

Extremist groups, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have been known to target military families, specifically on social media (Bejar, 2010). Military members and their families must understand the possible consequences of the information they make available on social media. Telling military families not to utilize social media is not the answer. Training military families on security settings and
explaining why they need to be safe on social media is imperative in the 21st century (Bejar, 2010). Sharing images on social media can reveal patterns associated with the location of those associated with the photo. A Liu, Quan, Gao, and Dong (2014) study highlighted the ability to geo locate based upon images uploaded to social media. These images can be dangerous, if not lethal, when in the wrong hands.

Communication between the military member and their family members is instrumental in ensuring military families understand the roles and responsibilities involving day-to-day OPSEC related issues. OPSEC Program Managers must carefully consider spouses and children when developing OPSEC training materials. Values, behaviors, and social environments affecting family dynamics have significantly changed with the many technological advances of recent years. Military families must understand the possible ramifications of making critical information available to outside threats. While family communication is becoming increasingly important, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) noted the lack of published theories focusing on family communication.

OPSEC Program Managers must demonstrate the ability to stay ahead of present and future threats and technology. The days of simply updating appointment letters and paper continuity books have evolved to requirements focused on creation and implementation of training based on identifying and protecting critical information. Threat identification is vital to developing training programs designed in a way that combats leaks of critical information and facilitate effective spousal OPSEC training. OPSEC leadership must understand current threats and provide training for both current and future OPSEC threats (Michnowicz, 2006).
A 2015 study by Rea, Behnke, Huff, and Allen questioned military spouses about their perceptions of OPSEC and social media. One spouse noted how their family addressed OPSEC with the guideline that “individuals should not even talk about the deployment, [and] withhold from sharing personal information; especially the location of the deployed service member, for their safety” (Rea, Behnke, Huff, & Allen, 2015, p. 333). Another spouse added the following simple OPSEC guideline of “use good judgment prior to posting or updating your status” (p. 333). The Rea, Behnke, Huff, and Allen (2015) study noted a strong passion for military families to learn more about OPSEC, and protect their families while utilizing social media.

The Emergence of Social Media

The first group-based social media site appeared in 1997 with SixDegrees.com (Deng, Bispo, & Zeng, 2014). Next came Friendster in 2002. Friendster was set up as a social networking and potential match-making tool. After 2002, social media grew with LinkedIn and MySpace (2003), Facebook (2004), and even YouTube (2005) (Deng, Bispo, & Zeng, 2014). The military is no stranger to following social media. For example, in 2011, less than three years after joining Facebook, the Army National Guard was the first military organization to reach one million Facebook “likes” on the social networking site (Deng, Bispo, & Zeng, 2014).

A 2012 study by Nadkarni and Hoffman analyzed why people use social media platforms like Facebook. The study set out to research what consumers are looking to get from social media platforms. Their research proposed a model suggesting how Facebook usage is motivated by the need to belong and the need for self-presentation (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). A 2015 study revealed how social support before, during, and after
military deployments can aid in post-deployment adjustment of active duty military personnel and their families. Of note, families who stayed in contact via social media took less time to integrate back to family life after deployments (Welsh, Olson, Perkins, Travis, & Ormsby, 2015).

According to their 2014 Annual Report, Facebook had 9,199 full-time employees as of the end of 2014. With that, Facebook also had grown to have 1.19 billion mobile monthly active users in December 2014. Facebook is available in over 80 languages, and has data centers in more than 25 countries. From 2013 to 2014, Facebook daily average usage rose from 757 to 890 million users (Facebook, 2014). The 2014 Report stated that Facebook was the most popular social networking site, using 170,000 servers in 102 countries to keep up with demand (Farahbakhsh, Cuevas, Ortiz, Han, & Crespi, 2015).

Military members initially began using social media in the form of Internet blogging. Blogs, YouTube, and MySpace initiated a widespread debate regarding how leadership could restrict or ban this type of social networking (Lawson, 2014). Pei, Muchnik, Tang, Zheng, and Makse (2015) obtained and analyzed roughly 56 million social networking posts covering a span of 21 months. This was done in an effort to explore information diffusion. After gathering the posts, Pei, Muchnik, Tang, Zheng, and Makse (2015) studied the data which reached over 188 million social links. The researchers concluded that the original social networking posts were referenced by approximately 3.5 million other social media users (Pei, Muchnik, Tang, Zheng, & Makse, 2015).
A 2003 DoD report referenced an Al Qaeda training manual claiming 80 percent of their intelligence was obtained from social media and other open source material (Bejar, 2010, p. 5). Then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld noted the threat by releasing a message titled Web Site OPSEC Discrepancies. This message helped shape the DoD posture on unclassified government networks, and stopped short of banning social media from government computer networks. The degree of risk associated with allowing stateside and deployed military members to exchange information on social media via government computer networks has been an ongoing debate for senior military leaders (Bejar, 2010, p. 6).

Air Force Instruction (AFI) 10-701 explains how “OPSEC must be fully integrated into the execution of all Air Force operations and supporting activities” (Bolton, 2011, p. 13). Military families who do not know which information is critical to their organization are unable to reasonably conclude that sharing information will not result in unauthorized disclosure or OPSEC violations (Bolton, 2011). Air Force guidance noted how when “posting or publishing work-related information that potentially contains critical or sensitive information airmen are encouraged to solicit the advice of their immediate supervisor, security office and/or OPSEC PM/SM/coordinator. This will aid in preventing disclosure of critical and/or sensitive information” (Bolton, 2011, p. 13).

**Key Spouse Program**

Jans (1989) studied the phenomenon of a military spouse and their psychological identification to the career of their spouse. The study looked at the possible military spouse perception of holding the same rank as their currently serving spouse. Data were
collected from spouses of Officers in the rank of O-6 (Colonel) and below in the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The Jans (1989) study showed how identification of the spouse’s career was a function of the military spouse perception of their quality of family life. The family-career results from the Jans (1989) study show how oftentimes the military spouse can assume they carry the same rank and responsibilities as their military spouse (Jans, 1989).

While Jans (1989) noted how being a military spouse is a job in itself, it was not until 1997 when a formal program for training military spouses was developed. The Key Spouse program was initiated as a Quality of Life Initiative. Initial implementation occurred in 1997 with select test bed bases, aimed at helping military family members work through stressors associated with the transition to life as a military spouse. This volunteer-based program continues to consist of appointed individuals providing support and stability to military families of various experience levels. Commanders interview, select, appoint, and regularly meet with their Key Spouses (Key, 2015).

The First Sergeant is a senior enlisted member of a military unit, and focuses on quality of life for military members and their families. The First Sergeant monitors and supports the Commander with regard to the Key Spouse program. The Key Spouse Monitor is integral as the lead unit Key Spouse, appointed by unit leadership. This position mentors junior spouses and advocates concerns to unit leadership. The Base Airman and Family Readiness Center oversees the Key Spouse Program, and is responsible for training and evaluation of Key Spouses (Key, 2015).

The Key Spouse program is based on training and both formal and informal peer mentoring. Peer mentoring is a way of sharing and creating knowledge within groups
and organizations. With Key Spouse mentoring scenarios, experienced spouses are focused on mentoring new and inexperienced military spouses. A Bryant (2005) study suggested how the addition of a peer mentor training course increased levels of mentor and mentee skills and knowledge. Further, the study also associated higher levels of knowledge sharing and creation with both formal and informal mentoring programs (Bryant, 2005).

The Key Spouse Reference Guide (2010) noted both formal and informal resources available to assist military families. Formal resources include on base resources such as mental health, family advocacy, Chaplains, and the Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC). Examples of informal resources include friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, and publications. The A&FRC is charged as the primary base agency for educating and training Key Spouses. Key Spouses are also encouraged to use the other methods of staying current, to include base newspapers, town hall meetings, and other networking opportunities (Key, 2015).

**Evaluation of Training and Adult Education Theory**

Wisdom (2015) noted how “a key capability to evaluate the OPSEC program is the use of OPSEC External Assessments” (p. 2). An OPSEC External Assessment is defined as the “application of the OPSEC process by a team of subject matter experts (SME) to conduct a detailed analysis of activities associated with specific organization, operation, activities, exercise, or support function by employing the known collection capabilities of potential adversaries” (p. 2). The external assessments are specifically tailored to allow for the evaluation of day to day organizational missions, with an end
goal of uncovering operational indicators, exploitable weaknesses, and vulnerabilities (Wisdom, 2015).

The 2015 Air Force Key Spouse Reference Guide (Key, 2015) identified six training modules for Key Spouses. While some military installations have added their own personal touches to Key Spouse training, there is no enforced standardized method of OPSEC training. The reference guide training modules include making connections, building the team, resources, responding to the call, supporting families during deployments, and implementation (Key, 2015). Many aspects of training theory could be utilized for Key Spouse Training from an interdisciplinary standpoint.

Education and learning development can come in the forms of cognitive, social, physical, and spiritual development. Reflective practices can also increase the utilization of training theories (Reigeluth, 2013). Saks and Burke (2012) studied relationships between transfer of training and training evaluations. Study results showed how training evaluation frequency has a positive relationship with training transfer. These results show how evaluation of training is a critical aspect of the training process. Further, training evaluation can increase both personal, professional and organizational efficiency, quality of training, and can even help save time and money (Lee-Kelley & Blackman, 2012).

Goal-based evaluation, goal-free evaluation, responsive evaluation, systems evaluation, professional review, and quasi-legal are the six general approaches to educational evaluation. Effective evaluation techniques can lead to advancements in both personal and professional development. The most basic measure of training effectiveness is measuring student-training satisfaction. Follow-up is a key aspect of training feedback
and effectiveness. Subject satisfaction can be an effective way to measure training effectiveness, but oftentimes it is necessary to evaluate the practical application of those being trained (Eseryel, 2002).

Reigeluth (2013) defined an instructional design theory as “a theory that offers explicit guidance on how to better help people learn and develop” (p. 5). Instructional design theories are generally design or goal oriented. Being design or goal oriented makes instructional design theory different from the cause and effect relationships or processes that generally come to mind when working with theory. An example includes information-processing theory, which looks at information from the aspects of short and long-term memory. Information processing theory does not go as far as to explain how to facilitate learning, but can facilitate predictions or explanations from what has been learned (p. 7).

Mezirow (1981) studied problems associated with adult learning, including the application of adult learning in becoming a more effective leader. Technical, practical, and emancipatory were the three cognitive interests used in the study, and “imply three different functions for adult education concerned with facilitating such learning” (p. 4). According to the Mezirow (1981) study, each learning domain suggested different personal learning modes and needs, which are all instrumental in the understanding of both learning and education theory.

Tagg (2010) noted how “single-loop learning leads to first-order change and innovation. Double-loop learning leads to second-order change and transformation.” Further, double-loop learning leads to a paradigm shift, to a change in the fundamental governing values that define the institution” (p. 54). Tagg (2010) also noted how
espoused theories are “the consciously held beliefs that people express to explain, justify, or predict actions” (p. 52). Tagg further noted how students and employees do not necessarily follow these consciously held beliefs by doing what they believe they should do. Further, “people’s behavior is generally governed by a coherent set of rules with explanatory and predictive value, a theory-in-use” (p. 52). Human behavior is generally not governed by espoused theories, rather theory-in-use (Tagg, 2010).

**OPSEC and Social Media**

A 2015 study by Rea, Behnke, Huff, and Allen “suggests that the use of online communication during a military deployment is a positive influence and support for military spouses” (p. 1), and can be the most conveniently form of communication for separated military families. The study also noted tendencies of military spouses to utilize social media as a tool for recreational maintenance and improving overall well-being. Understanding online communication and the function of social networking for military spouses could provide for potential training programs to increase military family OPSEC awareness.

Deng, Bispo, and Zeng (2014) noted how “social networking service provides a virtual platform for users to realize their personal/professional purposes. Users have a great motivation to share their personal updates in social media in order to maintain their contacts” (p. 1). Social Media, users must understand how putting this readily available information on social media increases their susceptibility to fraud and invasion of privacy. The 2015 study by Rea, Behnke, Huff, and Allen looked at reported communication practices for 10 military families during extended separations. Of the 10 participants, all 10 noted using Facebook during deployments. Next were six survey
respondents using Skype and three utilizing Apple Facetime for deployment communication (p. 333).

Bittner (2014) cited various reasons for post 9/11 military families increasingly relying on social media as a way to stay connected during extended family separations. These reasons included how social media is a preferred method of modern day communication, increases in social media accessibility, and ease of use. Bittner (2014) noted how “little research exists evaluating the extent and use of social media communication by family members and service members during periods of deployment related absence” (p. 2).

Social media can be extremely difficult to contain. Mayfield (2011) noted the example of Neda Agha-Soltan, who was on her way to protest the outcome of the 2009 Iranian presidential election. After experiencing some car troubles, Neda pulled her car over and planned to walk to the protest. While walking, a member of the Basij, the pro-government Iranian militia, shot Neda in the chest. News of the event was on Twitter, a social networking website, before the media reported the story. Millions of Twitter followers saw the gruesome shooting death on Twitter. Iranian students used Twitter to encourage more protesting. This shooting case is only one example of how difficult it can be to contain information once the material is available on social media. Simply put, once information is made available on social media, it cannot be taken back (Mayfield, 2011).

Identification is the first step in the DoD (2012) OPSEC process. The DoD guidance takes OPSEC stakeholders through the stages of OPSEC planning and execution. Once individuals identify critical information, the rest of the OPSEC process
can focus on protection of vital information. This can save time when individuals are not spending their efforts attempting to protect every piece of unclassified information as they progress through the process of identification of critical information, threat analysis, vulnerability analysis, risk assessment, and application of OPSEC countermeasures (DoD, 2012).

**OPSEC and Proprietary Information**

Business leaders must ensure they protect their organizational accounts, assets, and staff. Proprietary company information can require the same levels of handling as critical information. Information can be one of the most important assets a company possesses. In the current information age, Iannarelli and O’Shaughnessy (2014) questioned how effectively businesses were protecting their most important resources, their client and company data. Iannarelli and O’Shaughnessy (2014) noted how information governance “is a set of established policies and procedures you and your employees implement and follow in order to manage sensitive and proprietary information” (p. 2).

Kim, Kim, and Chung (2015) studied security risks associated with data stored on company networks. Their study provided a model of quantitative analysis for security profiles of organizational information technology environments at work as well as home networks used by telecommuting employees. Etsebeth (2011) noted how patents, trade secrets, and simple “know how” are all business assets. Further, unauthorized access and malicious code are considered forms of cyber-attack, intended at highlighting potential corporate vulnerabilities. These attacks, along with the threat of potential attacks, force
companies to consider legal directives and security training pertaining to security breaches (Etsebeth 2011).

Critical information is not just part of protection of military information. “OPSEC is also applicable to security, intelligence, counterintelligence, acquisition, logistics, law enforcement, administration, public affairs, budget, finance, and any competitive situation where the control and protection of sensitive information is important” (Cameron, 1996, p. 4). Trade secret theft is becoming increasingly common, and was estimated as responsible for causing over $300 billion in 2012 corporate losses (Samuels & Weber, 2013). Samuels and Weber (2013) further noted how trade secret theft rates are rising “due to, among other things, industry competition, financial incentive, and the susceptibility of trade secrets to computer hacking” (p. 86). Trade secret regulation dates back to when “the Uniform Trade Secrets Act (UTSA) was completed by the uniform law commissioners in 1979 to codify and make uniform the law regarding theft of trade secrets. Prior to UTSA, litigants relied on common law claims to enforce rights and pursue remedies related to the theft of trade secrets” (Samuels & Weber, 2013, p. 86).

**Air Force OPSEC Training**

All active duty, guard, and reservist, and civilian employees of the Department of Defense (DoD) Air Force personnel are required to successfully complete the annual computer based training Advanced Distributed Learning System (ADLS) OPSEC Awareness course. There are no mandatory OPSEC training courses for spouses, other than OPSEC training for the spouses of those selected to be a Commander. The OPSEC awareness course was developed by the Center of Development of Security Excellence,
and provides training for military members, DoD employees, and contractors. The course provides information on the need to protect unclassified information regarding personal information and operations, to educate members on safe and successful personal and operations security. Course objectives include:

1. Recognize the five-step OPSEC Process
2. Recognize that unclassified indicators may lead an adversary to discover classified and unclassified critical information
3. Recognize vulnerabilities
4. Take reasonable precautions to protect critical information (Bolton, 2011, p. 23).

Military members must complete standardized annual OPSEC training at a minimum. Training requirements are tracked by base leadership. While there are no OPSEC training requirements for military families, the base subject to this research offers quarterly OPSEC training for Key Spouses. These two or more day training seminars cover a variety of subjects, and a one hour block of instruction is reserved for the base OPSEC Program Manager to educate spouses on critical information and OPSEC concerns. The training is completed under the Air Force Heartlink Program. The Heartlink program, which falls under the Air Force Services Command, noted how each military installation has different personnel with different needs. Heartlink teaches essential items to help Air Force spouses get accustomed to their surroundings and adjust to military life. Each Air Force Base is required to cover the following in Heartlink: (Heartlink, n.d.).
Base OPSEC Program Managers are required to attend the OPSEC Program Management Training course within 60 days of their appointment date (Bolton, 2011). This study focuses on the Air Combat Command (ACC) Major Command (MAJCOM). As previously noted there is currently no ACC OPSEC Program Manager due to workforce and funding requirements. The Base OPSEC Program Manager of the base under study is responsible for 64 Squadron OPSEC Program Managers. The base under study utilizes SharePoint for storage and dissemination of pertinent OPSEC information (Bolton, 2011).

OPSEC training can be evaluated through many venues, including the use of OPSEC External Assessments. Guidance noted how these assessments should not be done simply because they are required by leadership, but because it allows for taking better care of resources, to include personnel (Wisdom, 2015). Wisdom (2015) also noted how looking at available information “through the eyes of the adversary and employing known collection capabilities of these potential adversaries provides decision makers with an assessment as to the risk available information could have on their operations” (p. 25).
In January 2016 the Interagency OPSEC Support Staff announced an update to the previous OPSE 2500 OPSEC Analysis and Program Management training. Feedback and analysis had shown the need to split the course into separate modules. This resulted in the creation of OPSE 2380: OPSEC Analysis, and OPSC 2390: OPSEC and Program Management. The target audience for the OPSE 2380 training is all OPSEC practitioners, and gives a thorough explanation of the five-step OPSEC process. The target audience for OPSE 2390 includes OPSEC leadership professionals, such as coordinators and program managers. The course was designed to train upcoming OPSEC leadership on program management, training, and collaboration. Additions to the course include modules on OPSEC budgets and OPSEC briefing skills. The course is also available to seasoned OPSEC professionals who were previously unable to receive the training (Atkinson, 2016).

Summary

The literature review analyzed various aspects of OPSEC for military families. Initial discussions included defining OPSEC, Air Force OPSEC policy and program management guidance, and the history of OPSEC. Next were discussions of interdisciplinary family OPSEC considerations. Evolution of training theory was then discussed in an effort to look at OPSEC training from an interdisciplinary perspective. Next were discussions of OPSEC and social media, followed by an overview of the Air Force Key Spouse program. Finally, there were discussions of various levels of Air Force OPSEC Training.

Strengths of the literature review as it relates to the study include the interdisciplinary nature and scholarly materials available regarding evaluation of training
theory and program management and evaluation. While OPSEC is a sensitive topic, there was ample scholarly material available regarding interdisciplinary OPSEC and proprietary information. Weaknesses of the literature review as it relates to the study include the limited availability of peer-reviewed studies on the Air Force Key Spouse Program and Air Force Instructions which have not been updated with advancements technology. Inconsistencies or gaps that emerged with the literature review include the absence of a program similar to the Key Spouse Program in other military branches, as well as a limited amount of scholarly information available pertaining to the Key Spouse Program. Following this discussion on the literature review associated with this study, the next chapter will discuss research methodology.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In an effort to capture the efficacy of OPSEC awareness education of military spouses, the researcher utilized grounded theory, qualitative research to capture levels of OPSEC awareness of military spouses. With previous experience as an OPSEC Program Manager, the researcher took broad assumptions regarding OPSEC training efficacy levels. The researcher then collected and analyzed data regarding to the real-world professional practice problem. Grounded theory research was selected in an effort to “derive a general, abstract theory of a process” grounded in the views of participants (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). Qualitative research was selected as a way to approach the exploration and understanding of “the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 14). Military families routinely have access to a significant amount of critical information, which suggests that training the family members might enhance safeguarding this information. This study could possibly assist with updating Department of Defense (DoD), and specifically Air Force family OPSEC training procedures.

Research Question

The following research question guided this qualitative study: What is the current level of Air Force Key Spouse OPSEC awareness?

Research Design

This Dissertation in Practice examined current OPSEC awareness and training levels of military Key Spouses. Key Spouses represent and mentor military families on a wide variety of subjects. Helping families first understand how much critical information
they receive daily, along with the potential effects of not protecting the information could assist with reducing family OPSEC violations.

The researcher reflected upon literature review data in an effort to develop a research methodology plan. OPSEC can be a broad, sensitive topic, so the researcher narrowed the research demographic to military Key Spouses from a Midwest military installation. James, Smith, and Radford (2014) noted experiences of peer mentors as a common supportive relationship in modern society. Peer mentoring is one of the main roles of Key Spouses (Key, 2015). The researcher looked to analyze what Key Spouses already knew about OPSEC and what could be done by Key Spouses and Air Force Program Managers to better educate military families on OPSEC fundamentals via qualitative research. The researcher combined field notes from auditing the Airman and Family Readiness Center Winter 2016 Key Spouse OPSEC training with interview data from research participants.

**Participants/Data Sources**

In an effort to capture the efficacy of OPSEC awareness education of military spouses, the researcher utilized grounded theory, qualitative research to capture levels of OPSEC awareness of military spouses. Grounded theory “is a design of inquiry from sociology in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants” (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). The Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) at this military installation conducts quarterly Key Spouse training workshops. The current A&FRC Key Spouse director provided a sampling of Key Spouses for the researcher to interview utilizing purposeful sampling using a master list of Key Spouse members. These interviews were conducted after the
researcher met with the participant group and explained the research methodology. The semi structured interviews were scheduled through and conducted after a 2016 Airman and Family Readiness Center Key Spouse training and mentoring session.

**Data Collection Tools**

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to gather experiences and narratives of Key Spouses from an unnamed military installation located in the Midwest Continental United States. In an effort to capture the true interdisciplinary nature of OPSEC training and awareness, the researcher also studied historical events and Air Force Inspector General OPSEC metrics. Planned, semi-structured interviews occurred after a Key Spouse training event at the Airman and Family Readiness Center. Interview data were recorded using an Apple iPhone, and were transcribed utilizing qualitative transcription software.

The researcher analyzed the culmination of interview data and interdisciplinary OPSEC literature in an effort to get a thorough understanding of OPSEC awareness levels of military spouses. The study also included OPSEC inspection data available through the Air Force Inspector General (IG) as well as background information contained in the literature review section. Saturation was reached after interviewing a total of seven Key Spouses. Demographics of the research participants are available in Chapter 4.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher contacted the potential research participants as a Creighton Doctor of Education in Interdisciplinary Leadership Candidate, not as a military member. Study subjects were freely able to choose to accept or decline the invitation to participate in the
study. The researcher ensured subjects understood the purpose of this Dissertation in Practice, and stressed the anonymity of their interview answers. The researcher also made it clear that participation in this study was voluntary, and could be terminated by the participant at any time. All participants had access to the research solicitation materials.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the study sample size consisted of seven research participants. All survey participants were Key Spouses. The Key Spouse demographic were selected as research participants due to their experience and role in mentoring other military spouses (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). This qualitative sample was large enough to allow for accurate representation of military spouses without repetitive or even superfluous data. The A&FRC ensured there was representation of spouses consisting of families of enlisted, officer, aviator, and non-aviator military members (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston (2013).

The researcher chose a CONUS military installation in the Midwest for the information rich sampling of this study. The A&FRC of this installation facilitates OPSEC training for multiple military branches, with a variety of military specialties. The current A&FRC director agreed to provide a sampling of Key Spouses for the researcher to interview. The interviews were conducted after the researcher met with the participant group and explained the research methodology. The semi-structured interviews were scheduled through and conducted in a private office within the A&FRC office. The initial interview was given to the group of seven research participants, and then the individual interviews took place as one-on-one interviews. The final interview was conducted via telephone due to scheduling conflicts.
The Base Airman and Family Readiness Center selected research participants by soliciting volunteers after a Key Spouse training session consisting of 23 spouses. An information rich sample was achieved after selecting the first seven to volunteer to be a research participant. Personal interviews of Air Force Key Spouses acted as the primary method of data collection. After an initial meeting with the participants choosing to participate in the study, a semi-structured interview was scheduled and occurred for each research participant. The researcher conducted interviews at the Airman and Family Readiness Center as well as via telephone when one schedule would not allow for face-to-face interviews. The structure for each interview was set up to cover approximately 15-25 minutes of pre-formulated questions that took up the 30-minute interview timeframe, with the conclusion based upon saturation of data. One goal of the interview sessions was to assess current OPSEC awareness of Key Spouses in an effort to address the research question guiding the study. The following research question guided this qualitative study: What is the current level of Air Force Key Spouse OPSEC awareness?

To aide in research saturation, the researcher also set up a contingency plan of interviewing additional Key Spouses. Purposeful selection of Key Spouses was a way for the researcher to better understand aspects of the problem and research question. If the Key Spouse interviews had not met saturation requirements, the Airman and Family Readiness Center would have utilized their distribution list of Squadron Commanders and Base Key Spouses to help fill additional Key Spouse demographics.

The researcher audio recorded the interviews and later verbatim transcribed the interviews via Rev.com transcription software. While the interview recordings will not be shared with base OPSEC personnel, a contingency plan was developed so that if
pertinent information surfaced, that information will be passed on to current base OPSEC Program Managers via masked summary data. Validity was established via member checks, where the researcher focused on understanding and assessing intentions of research participants through follow-up and open-ended research questions. Research efforts were peer reviewed by the dissertation committee. A Creighton doctoral student also conducted a peer review and audit check before the first entire rough draft of the study was sent to the dissertation committee. This was done in an effort to take an unbiased look at the research efforts of the researcher.

Tufford and Newman (2012) noted how “bracketing is a method used in qualitative research to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions that may taint the research process” (p. 80). In the scope of this Dissertation in Practice, the researcher utilized bracketing as a way of freeing the researcher from the culminating effects of his experience as an Air Combat Command OPSEC Program Manager. Specifically, the researcher utilized bracketing as a way to reach deeper levels of reflective practice throughout the proposal, interviews, and dissertation defense. This reflection was done in an effort for the researcher to recognize any preconceived bias or opinions regarding OPSEC training and program management.

Triangulation is another common method used in qualitative research. Babbie (2014) defined triangulation as “the use of several different research methods to test the same finding” (p. 121). The researcher used triangulation in an effort to analyze the research question from multiple perspectives. Further, the researcher took field notes while observing the current OPSEC Program Manager delivering the Key Spouse OPSEC training. The researcher and A&FRC ensured the study included a sampling of
career fields, time associated with the military and rank of military spouses. Doing so aided in looking at the research question of: what is the current level of Air Force Key Spouse OPSEC awareness? The researcher initially set out to complete five to eight interviews, and the researcher conducted seven interviews before saturation was reached. Both open and closed ended questions were utilized in an effort to add depth and breadth to the journey towards saturation. Three of the interviewees were married to Enlisted Members, and the remaining four were married to Officers. Figures 2 and 3 are depictions of the Air Force Officer and Enlisted rank structures.

**Figure 2.** Air Force Officer Ranks.

**Figure 3.** Air Force Enlisted Ranks.

Initial interview questions looked to gain demographical information concerning how long the research participant had been a military spouse, the rank of the military spouse, amount of time as a Key Spouse, and amount of Key Spouse formal training events attended. Subsequent qualitative questions looked to gather data regarding OPSEC and Key Spouse training. These questions included:
- Please describe your experience with Key Spouse training.
- What do you see as the main roles of Key Spouses?
- How would you define OPSEC?
- How would you define Critical Information?
- Can you give me an example of Critical Information?
- Is there anything you would like to add regarding Key Spouse or OPSEC training?

Institutional Review Board approval was achieved on January 13, 2016. Institutional Review Board documents can be found in Appendix A. Data collection began during a Key Spouse training session in February 2016. Research participants were provided with the research consent and research participant bill of rights forms available in Appendix A. By February 19, 2016 a total of seven research participants were interviewed via face-to-face or telephone audio recorded interviews, which ranged from 15-22 minutes in length.

Sources for data analysis included field notes, a literature review, and triangulation. Interviews were the primary avenue for data collection and analysis. Standard case study research was utilized, as outlined by Babbie (2014). The researcher began by securing a source to seek out a information rich sampling of research participants. Next, the researcher reached out to the selected participants to inquire as to their participation willingness and availability. The researcher then scheduled interviews with each selected participant. Interviews were conducted via six audio recorded face-to-face and one telephone interview session.

The researcher transcribed and analyzed interview data, specifically looking at
trends in Key Spouse OPSEC understanding data. Qualitative analysis utilized the NVivo qualitative data analysis tool. This software imported and exported interview data with specific codes as a means for locating and storing qualitative interview data. Systematic, grounded theory research was then be used to analyze coded data. Trustworthiness was addressed via triangulation, member check, and external audit by the dissertation research committee members.

**Leadership Roles/Implications as it Relates to Data Collection**

The researcher searched for strengths, weaknesses, areas for improvement, and best practices regarding OPSEC training and program management within the Key Spouse community. Additionally, the researcher looked at ways of benchmarking programs, and training management best practices from an interdisciplinary perspective. Key Spouses were the chosen interview subjects to ensure this study consisted of an accurate representation of military spouses. The researcher used their working relationship with the current OPSEC Program Manager at the military installation selected as the host for this study in an effort to give suggestions for training and program management improvement based upon interview responses and research observations.

Training is not consistent and uniform across all bases. In order to facilitate inferences from the base chosen as part of this study to other bases and military services, more standardized training efforts would be required.

**Ethical Considerations**

Safeguarding identifiable information was a priority for this study. Protection of personally identifiable information (PII) is critical in all research studies, but is paramount when considering military families. The names for the spouses interviewed
were not be part of the recorded interviews. During the interviews and during the transcription process, the researcher did not refer to the spouses by name. The role of the interviewer was that of a military member who is a Creighton doctoral student. Discussions queried Enlisted or Officer status, but did not include rank or specialty code in an effort to ensure there was no bias due to military status. The researcher did provide special consideration to PII in data collection, analysis, and the final Dissertation in Practice. The researcher will keep interview audio transcripts in a password protected location for one year before destroying the audio files.

Due to the previous experience of the researcher as an OPSEC Program Manager and the spouse of the researcher being a Key Spouse, the researcher had experienced prolonged engagement within the OPSEC and Key Spouse programs. While bias cannot be eliminated, the researcher kept this in mind while ensuring this experience added minimal bias to the research. The researcher utilized rich data in an effort to uncover complexities associated with military families and efficacy of family OPSEC training. Research participants were solicited by an external agency, the Airman and Family Readiness Center. Additionally, the researcher utilized previous position and experience to reflect upon the thick description, or account of experiences from research observations.

**Financial and Legal Considerations**

The research had minimal associated costs. Face-to-face and telephone interviews were recorded and verbatim transcribed using a paid transcription service. The researcher assumed the associated costs of transcription services and NVivo 11 qualitative research analysis software. Legal considerations associated with this study
included research participant confidentiality, specifically safeguarding personal
identification information (PII), security classification concerns, and anonymity.
Informed consent and peer review were used to protect research participants. The
researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)
Responsible Conduct of Research, and Human Research, Financial Conflict of Interest
Training. The researcher had also completed and acknowledged the Creighton University
Research and Compliance Office Institutional Review Board (IRB) Acknowledgement of
Access to the IRB’s Policies and Procedures and the Creighton University Research and
Sponsored Programs Compliance Plan.

**Summary**

The purpose for this Dissertation in Practice was to understand the level of
OPSEC awareness of military spouses. The researcher utilized grounded theory,
qualitative research for the study. Grounded theory “is a design of inquiry from
sociology in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action,
or interaction grounded in the views of participants” (Creswell, 2014 p. 14). Grounded
theory was chosen in an effort to collect information regarding Key Spouse OPSEC
awareness levels and training efficacy. Using a purposeful sample of Key Spouses, the
researcher conducted open-ended interviews to surface spousal awareness of OPSEC
issues and the Key Spouse responsibility of passing this education and awareness on to
other military spouses.

This qualitative case study addressed the research question: what is the current
level of Air Force Key Spouse OPSEC awareness? Military Key Spouse interviews were
used as a means of determining the level of military family OPSEC awareness.
Improvements will be proposed through the Airman and Family Readiness Center at the base within the study. The researcher will also make the research findings available to the Air Force OPSEC Program Director. Findings of this study could increase Key Spouse OPSEC training effectiveness. Best practices could contribute to improvements in interdisciplinary program management. The next chapter will address findings and an evidence-based solution.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND THE EVIDENCE-BASED SOLUTION

Introduction

The purpose of this grounded theory dissertation in practice study was to capture levels of OPSEC awareness of Air Force Key Spouses at a Midwestern U.S. military installation. Military families have access to a significant amount of critical information, and training is essential for properly safeguarding this information. The study solicited Key Spouse program members from a Midwest U.S. military installation to represent the military spouse community as a whole. The study could possibly assist with updating Department of Defense, and specifically Air Force Family Operations Security OPSEC training procedures.

As stated in Chapter 1, the 2015 Blue Star Families Report found that 68% of military officers and 49% of enlisted military members were married. These survey participants noted high operational tempo while stateside, as well as high deployment tempo. Since September 11, 2001, 37% of the Blue Star Survey respondents had deployed for more than two cumulative years (Blue Star Families, 2015). These statistics painted a picture of the military families of 2016 being busier and equipped with more critical information than in the past. Further, standardized training could provide for more effective training for these busy military families. Based upon the data collected as part of this research, increased family OPSEC training could help reduce family-related OPSEC related incidents.

Presentation of the Findings

Chapter 4 presents results from qualitative interviews with research participants at a Midwestern U.S. military installation. This chapter presents research results in a
narrative form, and is supplemented with figures. Seven Key Military Spouses were selected to represent military spouses as a whole. The following research question guided this qualitative study: What is the current level of Air Force Key Spouse OPSEC awareness? Qualitative analysis findings of research interview data are presented in Chapter 4 and Appendix B.

Methodology Review

The purpose of this dissertation in practice study was to capture and analyze levels of OPSEC awareness of Key Spouses at a Midwestern U.S. military installation. The aim of this qualitative study was to design/create an evidence-based solution to the identified problem. This grounded theory, qualitative study stemmed from a professional practice problem stemming from OPSEC knowledge levels of military families. Military families have access to a significant amount of critical information, and training is essential for properly safeguarding this information. The study could possibly assist with updating Department of Defense (DoD) family OPSEC procedures, and specifically Air Force family OPSEC training procedures.

Data Analysis Procedures

Sources for data analysis included field notes, a literature review, and triangulation. Interviews were the primary avenue for data collection and analysis. Standard case study research was utilized, as outlined by Babbie (2014). The researcher began by securing a source to seek out an information rich sampling of research participants. Next, the researcher reached out to the selected participants to inquire as to their participation willingness and availability. The researcher then scheduled interviews with each selected participant. Interviews were conducted via audio recorded face-to-
face in six cases and telephone communications in one case where there was a scheduling conflict. A qualitative thematic analysis was performed on interviews and the literature review.

The researcher verbatim transcribed and analyzed interview data utilizing transcription software, specifically looking at trends in Key Spouse OPSEC understanding data. Qualitative analysis utilized the NVivo 11 qualitative data analysis software. This software imported and exported interview data with specific codes as a means for locating and storing qualitative interview data. Systematic, grounded theory research was then used to analyze coded data. Trustworthiness was addressed via triangulation, member check, and external audit by the dissertation research committee members.

Results
Description of the Sample Survey Question Results

Key Spouse demographics were collected during the initial interview questions. There were six females and one male interviewed. These questions acted as an ice breaker in getting research participants to open up to the upcoming open ended questions. The researcher initially queried as to how many years the survey participant had as a military spouse. Figure four shows how long the survey respondents had been a military spouse. One participant had been a military spouse for less than seven years. The remaining six interviewed spouses had been a military spouse for seven to 22 years. The mean experience as a military spouse was ten years, and the median was nine years.
After determining the amount of years as a military spouse for survey respondents, the researcher continued with demographical information on research participants. Here the researcher looked at whether the military member was an Enlisted member or Officer. Figure five shows how three of the respondents were married to Enlisted members and the remaining four were married to Officers.
Figure six shows the amount of years of experience the research participants had as a Key Spouse. Of note, the mean amount of time as a military spouse was ten years, and the mean amount of years as a Key Spouse was seven years. The median time as a military spouse was nine years, and the median time as a Key Spouse was eight years. This data could indicate how military spouses are taking time to adjust to the role of a military spouse before taking on the increased responsibilities associated with being a Key Spouse.

![Years as Key Spouse](chart)

*Figure 6. Years of Experience as Key Spouse.*

Figure seven depicts the number of Key Spouse training sessions the interviewee had attended. Of note, only one of the seven respondents had attended fewer than four sessions. These training sessions could have been from any base, and could come in the form of initial or recurring training from the Airman and Family Readiness Center or the unit of assignment for the military spouse.
Figure 7. Number of Key Spouse Training Sessions Attended.

Key Spouse Training Survey Question Results

Question five (Please describe your experience with Key Spouse training), was utilized to set the tone for getting interviewees to open up and reflect upon their experiences with Key Spouse training. This ice breaker solicited various differing opinions regarding Key Spouse experiences. One code from the responses was how interviewees overall shared positive experiences associated with the Key Spouse program. Initial codes, as discussed in the data analysis results section, included: positive, enjoy, learn, structure, and family.

Participant One noted a high motivation level after her initial Key Spouse training session but recalled how she “had not learned much since” the initial training. Participant Two cited an overall positive experience with the training, but noted how there “could be a better line between events geared towards training and events for us to get together and socialize.” Upon further questioning, this participant suggested that social events and Key Spouse training events could be combined, but should have “more of a focus on
training.” Participant Three noted how she always left training sessions eager to help others. Similar to Participant Three, Participant Four noted “always learning something new, and come away with information to share with other military spouses.” Participant Five shared the same opinion by addressing how she “thought the new and experienced spouses take something away from each session.” Participant Six took this opportunity to share her experiences regarding the initial Key Spouse training. She shared how “I had the initial training. During that training they talked about how to counsel to other spouses. We also had a few base programs come and speak briefly about services they offer.” As a new Key Spouse, participant Seven noted how she had only “met with squadron leadership and Military Family Readiness personnel to discuss duties and responsibilities.”

Question six (What do you see as the main roles of Key Spouses?) was a way to encourage interviewees to reflect upon what it means to be a Key Spouse. Specifically, respondents looked at roles and responsibilities of Key Spouses. Codes, as discussed in the data analysis results section, include: help, family, mentor, and nurture. Overall, participants believed main roles of the Key Spouse centered on training and helping other military spouses.

Participant One keyed in on mentoring and taking care of military families as what it means to be a Key Spouse. Participant Two addressed the same, with helping and mentoring as roles and responsibilities of Key Spouses. Participant Three reiterated how “helping military families help each other and mentoring” are Key Spouse roles. Keeping the codes of helping and mentoring, participant four thought the main roles of the Key Spouse were “mentoring and helping to educate new and experienced spouses.”
Participant Five also noted training and mentoring as main Key Spouse roles, and also noted the importance of building rapport with new military spouses who “do not know any better” with many roles associated with being a military spouse. Participant Six explained the structure of the Squadron Key Spouse Program, and cited how “the key spouse job is to help mentor other spouses by being available for questions and involved in the activities of the squadron. Participant Seven had the perspective that the Key Spouse is the “liaison between squadron leadership and family members.”

Question seven (How would you define OPSEC) was a way to encourage interview participants to reflect upon their personal definition of OPSEC. The reasoning behind using this question was to address the purpose of this grounded theory dissertation in practice study, which was to capture levels of OPSEC awareness of military spouses at a Midwestern U.S. military installation. Codes associated with this question included: protect, military, care, and critical.

Participant One admitted having “no idea” what OPSEC was before the training, and now she “sees it as a way of life.” Participant Two also noted her OPSEC knowledge before and after the training, and claimed she “used to think of it as a headache, now I understand the importance.” Next, Participant Three was very succinct in defining OPSEC as “protecting sensitive or critical information.” Participant Four correlated OPSEC with being a military family with her description covering “being safe with how we take care of information we know as a military spouse.” Participant Five had another succinct definition of “protecting critical information.” Participant Six defined OPSEC as “protecting the operations of the military,” while Participant Seven associated OPSEC with “not posting unnecessary information on Facebook.”
With question eight (How would you define Critical Information?), the researcher encouraged interview participants to provide their own definition of Critical Information. One code was associated with participants noting how Critical Information is a culmination of information, much like puzzle pieces, which can be put together and used by adversaries. Overall, codes associated with the definition of Critical Information included: puzzle, piece, enemy, and harm.

The examples given by Participant One were “deployment information and even mentioning lines at the gate.” Participant Two explained how “my family knows critical information when we know the schedule my husband works when he’s deployed or even in exercises here.” Participant Three noted the “puzzle pieces or information that can be put together and cause harm if used by enemies.” Next was participant Four explaining the severity of critical information when in the wrong hands. Participant Five was able to recall how Critical Information is a “culmination of non-classified information.” Participants Six and Seven also referenced Critical Information as puzzle pieces.

Building upon question eight, with question nine, interview participants were asked for an example of Critical Information. Codes associated with question eight included many of the examples covered in the Key Spouse OPSEC training. Example codes included: deployment, enemy, location, and manpower.

Participant One cited “deployment information and even mentioning lines at gate” as examples of Critical Information. Asking this question facilitated the following reflection on family OPSEC from Participant Two: “my family knows critical information when we know the schedule my husband works when he’s deployed or even in exercises here.” Participant Three was able to give several examples of critical
information, to include “recall rosters, work schedules, deployment times or locations, manpower levels.” Participants Four, Five, and Seven described deployment information as an example of critical information, with participant Five also mentioning manpower levels. Following the same code, participant Six noted “deployment, aircraft, and personnel data” as examples of critical information.

Finally, with question ten, I simply questioned whether interview participants had anything to add regarding Key Spouse or OPSEC training. Codes included the need for increased structure and standardization of Key Spouse training. Of note, family OPSEC training is not currently offered at all military installations. Research participants noted many benefits associated with OPSEC being included in initial and recurring Key Spouse training. Codes associated with question ten included: experience, new, think, structure, and standardize.

Participant One noted how she believed “it would be nice if there were a more structured, standardized training program for all of us spouses.” Participant Two added how “every time I am at one of the training sessions here at ______ Base I think we all learn something new. Participant Three pointed out how she “thinks the training needs to be standardized for all bases in order for the knowledge to be able to make it to more military families.” This was also noted by Participant Four, when she noted “This training is great, and should be at more bases.”

When questioned about their previous training experience, it was revealed that participant Four was previously at a base which offered OPSEC training with their Key Spouse sessions. It was then determined that this participant was not a Key Spouse while at their previous base, resulting in not knowing about available training options.
Participant Five then discussed how “not all bases provide this kind of training, and I think it’s great for military spouses and families.” Participant Six mentioned the spousal network and noted how “there needs to be information about safeguarding information that we give to others or post to social media. Key spouse training needs to have more tools for how to share information with other spouses and support them with a strong spousal network.” This participant was then questioned if she was aware of the “Smart Cards” available via the Base SharePoint, and noted how her spouse had not shared this information. Participant Seven started a productive conversation regarding how to get this information to military spouses, and explained how “some of the responsibility is on the military member” for getting available resources to their family members.

One research participant identified as a spouse of a current Commander, and noted how she received “several hours” worth of OPSEC training and a mandatory conference for new Squadron Commanders and their spouses. The participant noted the importance of this training, and also highlighted how “the 30-minute training session given to the research participants could help save lives.”

Data Coding

Seven research participants were interviewed for the study through purposeful sampling. The sampling was enabled from the Airman and Family Readiness Center at the military installation selected as part of the study. The Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) at this military installation conducts quarterly Key Spouse training workshops. On average, the A&FRC at this installation provides training to over 100 Key Spouses per year. The current A&FRC Key Spouse director provided a sampling on Key Spouses for the researcher to interview utilizing purposeful sampling. These
interviews were conducted after the researcher met with the participant group and explained the research methodology. The semi-structured interviews were scheduled through and conducted after the winter 2016 Airman and Family Readiness Center Key Spouse training and mentoring session.

Open coding began when the researcher reviewed interview data and summarized the results based upon what emerged from the data. Axial coding occurred when the researcher identified relationships resulting from the open codes. Finally, selective coding allowed the researcher to establish relationships from interview data.

**Data Analysis Results**

The following data were collected from the five qualitative research questions. Interview data were analyzed and the following word counts in figures 8-15 resulted from the axial coding process:

1. Please describe your experience with Key Spouse training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airman</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 8. Key Spouse Experience Open Coding.*

This initial open-ended interview question was chosen to set the tone for personal reflection regarding the overall Key Spouse training experiences. A wide variety of answers were given. Patterns associated with words such as positive, enjoy, and learn were noted by the researcher. A pattern with respondents noting the structure of the Key
Spouse program was also noted. An overall trend or theme of genuine happiness and positive experiences with Key Spouse training was noted as a pattern with interviewees.

2. What do you see as the main roles of the Key Spouse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
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<td>Learn</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Airman</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 9. Key Spouse Main Role Open Coding.*

The 2015 Key Spouse Guide noted how the Key Spouse program is based on training and both formal and informal peer mentoring. Peer mentoring is a way of sharing and creating knowledge within groups and organizations (Key, 2015). This aligned with the coding from interviewees being questioned about the key role of a Key Spouse. Trends with usage of words such as help, family, mentor, and nurture show the amount of emphasis placed upon the peer mentoring process.

3. How would you define OPSEC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protect</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classified</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 10. OPSEC Definition Open Coding.*
Figure 11 depicts the OPSEC definition from the training PowerPoint slide. Interviews regarding defining OPSEC produced patterns with words such as protect, military, care, critical, and details. The OPSEC definition was covered after the title slide of the Key Spouse Family OPSEC Training. Results of this open coding could suggest that Key Spouses who attended the training have adequate levels of OPSEC understanding. Of note, the word protect was not used in the slide, but was used multiple times by the instructor. Interviewees used the word protect 13 times in relation to protecting families and protecting information. This suggests the research participants understood the information on the training slides and combined information from the training slides with what the trainer covered.

**OPSEC Definition**: the process of identifying critical information and subsequently analyzing friendly actions and executing measures that eliminate or reduce to an acceptable level the vulnerabilities of friendly actions to adversary exploitation.

*Figure 11. Key Spouse Training OPSEC Definition Slide*

4. How would you define Critical Information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puzzle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Piece</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemy</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harm</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culmination</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Together</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 12. Critical Information Definition Open Coding*

As shown in Figure 12, six of the seven respondents used the term “puzzle piece” in their description when questioned for a definition of critical information. Overall, the
term was used 15 times in the seven interviews. Figure 13 shows the slide where the instructor covered the definition of critical information. Although it was the second word in the definition of Critical Information, the word “facts” only appeared twice throughout the interview process. Of note, the presenter held up a piece of a puzzle while explaining how critical information could be thought of as information which makes up the pieces of the puzzle that can give adversaries an advantage. This suggests the research participant memory recall of what they saw and heard from the instructor was more significant than what was on the PowerPoint slide.

**Critical Information:** specific facts about friendly intentions, capabilities, and activities vitally needed by adversaries for them to plan and act effectively, so as to guarantee failure or unacceptable consequences for friendly mission accomplishment

*Figure 13.* Key Spouse Training Critical Information Definition Slide

5. Can you give me an example of Critical Information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
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<td>Schedule</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 14.* Critical Information Example Open Coding.

Many interviewees associated critical information with deployments. While deployment information is definitely part of critical information, other trends associated with critical information examples included locations, manpower levels, various schedules, times, dates, and even information associated with military exercises. The
trainer did focus on highlighting the importance of OPSEC with exercises and real-world scenarios.

6. Is there anything you would like to add regarding Key Spouse or OPSEC training?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Others</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airman</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 15. Key Spouse Training Experience.*

Answers to the question regarding training experiences were generally positive. Of note, Figure 15 shows how there were patterns associated with ensuring there were opportunities for socializing as well as for structured training. Discussions also included spouses’ understanding how many bases have OPSEC training materials readily available. Spouses appeared surprised when the trainer noted how all military members must attend a Base Right Start initial orientation training seminar. OPSEC is briefed at these training seminars, and at the base under study, military members are shown where and how to access OPSEC training information for their families. Three of the seven interviewees had been shown this information, and two received the information from their spouse, while the other interviewee saw the training slides available on the official base Facebook page.

Of note, one spouse noted how they had experience at an Air Force Commander’s Conference event. This training is provided upon selection as an Air Force Squadron
Commander. The spouse noted how the training was several hours long, and noted it as an eye-opening experience. The spouse further noted how valuable this training can be, and expressed support for OPSEC Program Managers to increase training opportunities for military spouses.

Themes Surfaced in Interviews

After identifying codes associated with interview data, a selective data coding process identified themes in a comprehensive, summarized form. These themes include: lack of organization, need for structure, inadequate availability of training materials, eye-opening consequences, and a general desire for military spouses to help one another.

To help with the perceived lack of organization, Participant One noted how they believe “it would be nice if there were a more structured, standardized training program for all of us spouses.” As far as the lack of structure, Participant Three pointed out how they “think the training needs to be standardized for all bases in order for the knowledge to be able to make it to more military families.” Structure was also noted by Participant Four, when they noted “This training is great, and should be at more bases.” With the inadequate resources/availability of training materials code, Participant Six mentioned the spousal network and noted how “there needs to be information about safeguarding information that we give to others or post to social media. Key spouse training needs to have more tools for how to share information with other spouses and support them with a strong spousal network.” This participant was then questioned if she was aware of the “Smart Cards” available via the Base SharePoint, and noted how her spouse had not shared this information.
Participant Seven started a productive conversation regarding how to get this information to military spouses, and noted how “some of the responsibility is on the military member” for getting available resources to their family members. Eye opening consequences were discussed during the training session, and participants noted the importance of understanding the consequences of lapses in OPSEC. One research participant identified as a spouse of a current Commander, and noted how they received “several hours” worth of OPSEC training and a mandatory conference for new Squadron Commanders and their spouses. The participant noted the importance of this training, and also highlighted how “the 30-minute training session given to the research participants could help save lives.” Finally, there was a theme of military spouses wanting to help one another. All seven participants used the word help at some point in the interview process. Participant Two addressed eye opening consequences and the general desire to help other spouses when she explained how “the training showed us how dangerous this information can be in the wrong hands. We need to help each other to keep everyone safe.”

Summary

Chapter four presented findings from qualitative interviews of Key Spouses from a Midwest U.S. military installation. This was done in an effort to address the research question regarding the current level of Air Force Key Spouse OPSEC awareness. The researcher uncovered various themes associated with the OPSEC awareness levels of the Key Spouses in this study. Root cause analysis, conclusions, and recommendations will be discussed in the following chapter using the research framework developed from this
qualitative study. Chapter five will also address conclusions and recommendations associated with themes discussed in this chapter.
FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter five presents further discussion of the findings from chapter four, as well as recommendations stemming from research findings and the professional experience of the researcher. Relative to the scope of this study, Operations Security (OPSEC) training and program management were studied from the perspective of the Key Spouse demographic at a Midwest U.S military installation. This chapter presents a proposed solution, implications for implementation, practical research and leadership implications, and final conclusions regarding understanding OPSEC awareness levels of Air Force Key Spouses through the lenses of training and program management.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this grounded theory dissertation in practice study was to capture levels of OPSEC awareness of Air Force Key Spouses at a Midwestern U.S. military installation. Military families have access to a significant amount of critical information, and training is essential for properly safeguarding this information. The study solicited Key Spouse program members from the Midwest U.S. military installation to represent the military spouse community as a whole. The study could possibly assist with updating Department of Defense (DoD), and specifically Air Force Family Operations Security OPSEC training procedures.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this qualitative study was to design/create an evidence-based solution to the identified problem. Based upon literature review and interview data, this analysis
of current OPSEC awareness levels of Air Force spouses could assist in the development of an updated OPSEC program management model for Air Force spouses.

**Proposed Solution**

As noted in Chapter Four, themes which surfaced throughout the interview process included:

1. Lack of organization
2. Need for structure
3. Inadequate availability of training materials
4. Eye-opening consequences
5. General desire for spouses to help

This section expands upon the data from the previous chapter by reflecting upon interview themes and using the data to recommend a proposed solution. Research findings could design or create an evidence-based solution to problems associated with understanding OPSEC awareness levels of military spouses through the lenses of training and program management. Based on interview data, to include training inconsistencies, the proposed solution associated with increasing OPSEC levels of military spouses could benefit from a tiered approach. Research interview data showed a lack of structure, standardization, and program management. Therefore, the proposed solution follows an implementation model of a previously implemented OPSEC training and program management initiative, and proposes military OPSEC to be combined with already funded resiliency and Key Spouse programs. This section will identify and describe new proposed framework, design, recommendations, new plan, training course, and curriculum associated with a tiered approach to inform the chosen solution.
Factors leading to the proposed solution include previous experience of the researcher, interview data, and information gathered in the literature review. Discussions will also include factors leading to why the culmination of data led the researcher to make their determination. The proposed solution mirrors the implementation and evaluation phases of the OPSEC SharePoint training tool first used by the organization selected as part of this study. While this tool was used Air Force-wide, military spouses had to rely on their military identification card holding spouse for access. The proposed solution will enable the family OPSEC training materials to be available on already existing Key Spouse and resiliency websites. Change theory relates to this dissertation in practice and proposed solution. Kotter (2012) referenced the following eight steps to transforming an organization:

- Establishing a Sense of Urgency
- Forming a Powerful Guiding Coalition
- Creating a Vision
- Communicating the Vision
- Empowering Others to Act on the Vision
- Planning for and Creating Short-Term Wins
- Consolidating Improvements and Producing Still More Change

Further, Kotter (2012) noted how oftentimes failed transformations are a result of lack of vision. Data gathered from research participants noted the absence of structure and organization with previous Key Spouse training. One participant went to describe how her “husband is always learning of different problem solving processes,” and questioned “why couldn’t there be an OPSEC problem solving process?”
The abovementioned eight steps could allow for trainers and program managers to understand the need for training improvements by first addressing the sense of urgency associated with effective Key Spouse OPSEC training. Forming a powerful guiding coalition, creating, communicating, and empowering others to act on this new vision would address the frustrations with current training. Creating short term wins can be established and monitored with evaluating military family OPSEC as a whole. Consolidating improvements and sharing best practices could create an ongoing feedback loop, geared towards continual analysis and improvement.

Establishing a sense of urgency will not be difficult with the proposed solution. OPSEC statistics from the literature review will be used in conjunction with data on current threats and family OPSEC awareness. Forming a powerful guiding coalition will be done as organizational buy-in is obtained. Referencing Headquarters Air Force (HAF) OPSEC trainers who routinely use the base under study as a best practice will be a major step in achieving buy-in. Creating a vision will be done with referencing the SharePoint OPSEC initiative, and explaining how a similar implementation method will be used with the family OPSEC initiative. Communicating the vision will begin with HAF leadership, and trickle down to the Major Command (MAJCOM) and organizational levels.

Empowering others to act on the vision will also follow an implementation model similar to that of the previous OPSEC SharePoint of the organization selected for this study. HAF and then MAJCOM directors demonstrated effective oversight and leadership with implementation of the SharePoint. This was done in part by explaining the benefits of the new way of program management, and then providing a SharePoint template for all organizations to use. After giving a reasonable implementation deadline,
all organizations were up and running with the new SharePoint framework within the six month deadline. Organizations expressed satisfaction with the newly implemented SharePoint, and referenced many positive aspects of the new program. Specifically, organizations enjoyed their information being accessible anywhere on a government network or with an identification card reader. The proposed solution also addresses interview data, such as when a participant shared how “the military is always pushing new programs, and needs to enable spouses who want to help to actually save time and resources by helping.”

Organizations also enjoyed not being required to update continuity books with the new virtual system. Costs were cut with inspectors and those looking for help from other organizations being able to access information via the SharePoint. This short and long-term win helped achieve organizational buy-in, and the virtual training is continually being used for management of key programs.

Support for the Solution

Chapter 4 showed how military spouses can possess an adequate understanding of OPSEC procedures when their personal experiences are combined with a 30 minute training session. Further, three of the seven members interviewed were aware of the “Wingman Toolkit,” available as part of the Key Spouse Resilience Tools to Maintain a Balanced Lifestyle, available at http://www.wingmantoolkit.org/key-spouse. The Wingman Toolkit was made available in early 2015, and could be utilized as a way for passing OPSEC and other useful information to military families by means of the website and web based application. Figure 16 shows an OPSEC training slide from the Wingman Toolkit.
The military installation used as part of this study was previously recognized for their Virtual OPSEC File System. This SharePoint file depository links base members to instructional and training materials. Upon successful implementation, this program management model was made the new standard by Command OPSEC Program Managers. A similar model could be used for making OPSEC information readily available for military families.

While family OPSEC information is currently stored on base SharePoint websites, the information can only be accessed by military members by using their Geneva Conventions Identification “Smart” Card. Interview data revealed that only two of the seven interviewees were aware of information made available on the OPSEC SharePoint. Figure 17 shows some of the resources available on the Base OPSEC SharePoint. None
of the information is classified or For Official Use Only (FOUO), and could be made available from a link not requiring a military identification card.

Figure 17. Resources Available on Base SharePoint.

Figure 18 was taken from the Key Spouse Wingman Toolkit Training slide.

OPSEC was defined in Chapter 1 as the overall process of identifying and controlling critical information. While this a great start to standardized OPSEC training, the base selected by this study already has a training PowerPoint available for upload.

Figure 18. Wingman Toolkit OPSEC and Social Media Slide (Wingman, 2015).

The base under study has been recognized as a winner of Major Command or Air Force OPSEC Program or Program Manager of the year award from 2012-2014. With
this recognition, Air Combat Command and the Air Force OPSEC Program Management Training Course began to reference the SharePoint this military installation utilized for sharing and disseminating training and program management materials. This benchmarking allowed other installations to take what has worked for other bases and tailor the information to aide in the training for the members at their installation.

Factors and Stakeholders Related to the Solution

Military OPSEC involves many stakeholders. Examples of these stakeholders include military members, their immediate and extended families, federal employees, contractors, and even adversaries. With respect to training and program management, stakeholders also include taxpayers and officials responsible for funding and budgeting concerns associated with the proposed solution. Department of Defense (DoD) budget and manpower issues exist with funding proposed solutions associated with the professional practice problem. With that there are ways to obtain support and resources to aid in a solution with current budget constraints.

Previous experience in this professional practice setting allowed the researcher to work with leadership on possible ways to a practical solution to the problem. The researcher routinely utilized the OPSEC planning process depicted in Figure 19 throughout their previous professional setting. Interview data revealed themes of Key Spouse frustration concerning standardization of Key Spouse OPSEC training. This OPSEC planning process could be utilized as a way of addressing Key Spouse Training and Program Management in the proposed solution. Budget and manpower level reductions have decreased the amount of resources available for OPSEC and Key Spouse program management. The base under study has family OPSEC material readily
available on a SharePoint, but the resources are currently only available to military members. Interview data showed how the Base OPSEC Program Manager makes contact with each base member at monthly Base Newcomer briefings, and shows attendees where the family OPSEC training materials are located. Only one of the seven research participants had been shown this information by their military spouse. Making this training information more readily available for military spouses in a start for educating OPSEC stakeholders.

**Figure 19.** OPSEC Planning Process.

**Policies Influenced/Influencing the Proposed Solution**

Interview data suggest updating and enforcement of new policies could influence the proposed solution. Seven Key Spouses were interviewed, with one to 12 years of experience as a Key Spouse. Six of the seven interviewees had previously attended four or more Key Spouse training sessions. Interviews suggested that the research participants were motivated to help after volunteering to be a Key Spouse, but many shared similar opinions with the interviewee who “had not learned much since” their initial Key Spouse
training event. Another participant expressed the same frustration when they noted how there “could be a better line between events geared towards training and events for us to get together and socialize.” Standardization of training and policy updates were common requests from interviewees, who appeared frustrated with a lack of direction in previous Key Spouse events.

Every organization has a policy structure that guides the leadership of the organization. As a solution is presented for the problem identified in this study, some policies will be affected by implementation of the solution. New policies will need to be created in order to implement the solution. Just as important as creating new policies, the solution will also require continual analysis and evaluation of training and program management. Before moving forward with the solution, leadership must consider various factors within the professional practice setting. Leadership must also ensure all official policies and guidance match the proposed solution. The below listed policies govern Air Force and Department of Defense (DoD) OPSEC, and would need to be updated to reflect any updates:


June 30, 1998

August 19, 2005
Air Force Instruction 10-204, “Readiness Exercise and After-Action Reporting Program,” July 12, 2002
Air Force Instruction 10-601, “Capabilities-Based Requirements Development,” July 31, 2006
Air Force Instruction 10-712, “Telecommunications Monitoring and Assessment Program (TMAP),” May 18, 2011

- **Potential Barriers and Obstacles to Proposed Solution** - The evidence-based solution may not occur without some resistance. Resistance could originate from various areas. Other barriers are embedded within the professional practice
setting that may deter implementation of the solution proposed in this Dissertation in Practice. These barriers or obstacles could include cost and resistance to change. The cost of implementing a standardized training program for military families will be minimal, and leadership will have to be transparent when presenting estimated costs to higher levels of leadership. Interviews revealed how Key Spouses were frustrated with the lack of structure and standardization with OPSEC training and the Key Spouse Program. Resistance to change is inevitable, and could mimic the resistance brought when the military installation chosen for this study implemented their SharePoint file depository for OPSEC Program Management. With the SharePoint change, Headquarters Air Force and Major Command (MAJCOM) implementation was done after thoroughly explaining why the change was necessary. A similar model will be utilized with the implementation of this proposed solution.

- **Financial/Budget Issues Related to Proposed Solution** – The evidence-based solution heavily relies on keeping implementation and upkeep costs at a reasonable level. Leadership must find ways to creatively address manpower and budget concerns regarding Key Spouse OPSEC training. Specifically, the model of creating and implementing a virtual training concept similar to the previous OPSEC SharePoint model would require minimal funding, and could be combined with a program with large amounts of funding, such as the resiliency program.

- **Legal Issues Related to Proposed Solution** – The proposed solution also has legal ramifications or implications before implementation can occur. Current
military instructions govern how OPSEC and Key Spouse programs are operated. The Base Legal Office at the base under study completes regular audits and inspections on programs such as OPSEC, which would uncover any legal issues with the proposed solution.

- **Other Issues or Stakeholders Related to Proposed Solution** – Leadership must think about the broader world beyond the immediate context of the Dissertation in Practice. Other issues may interfere with implementation of the solution. Leadership must also be keenly aware of other issues in order to move into implementing the proposed solution from an interdisciplinary leadership perspective. As a leader, there are many factors to consider before implementing the solution, and careful consideration must be taken with these factors.

- **Change Theory** – Burke (2013) noted how “organizations change all the time, each and every day. The change that occurs in organizations is, for the most part, unplanned and gradual. Planned organizational change, especially on a large scale, affecting the entire system, is unusual.”

The upcoming implementation section will discuss how organizational change will be implemented with the proposed solution.

**Implementation of the Proposed Solution**

This section discusses how a leader would implement the solution presented in this Dissertation in Practice. For this professional practice problem, the researcher looked to further the greater good of the organization and the Department of Defense as a whole by providing their predecessor with leadership and guidance for improving military family OPSEC training and program management. Implementation will follow a
tiered approach and build upon previous best practices and lessons learned from implementation of previous OPSEC and other program and project management initiatives. Figure 20 depicts stakeholders associated with implementation of the proposed solution.

**Figure 20.** Implementation Stakeholders.

**Factors and Stakeholders Related to the Implementation of the Solution**

Leadership must consider the integral factors and stakeholders necessary to implement the proposed solution designed in this Dissertation in Practice. Stakeholders play many different roles and hold various responsibilities. Specifically, stakeholders of this study include military families as a whole. Buy-in from all stakeholders will be a key aspect of implementing a sustainable solution, and leadership must facilitate ongoing feedback regarding implementation of the solution. The buy-in and sustainability aspects were referenced when an interviewee explained how “there are wives who want to help, and would be more than happy to share experiences on a structured, ongoing basis.”

- **Leaders’ Role in Implementing Proposed Solution** – Different levels of leadership will play various roles in implementing the proposed solution. Many
considerations will need to be taken into account before, during, and after implementation? From The Headquarters level, to the Major Command, to the installation used as part of this study, leadership must be transparent and flexible in their leadership roles.

- **Building Support for the Proposed Solution** - Implementing an evidence-based solution cannot be done single-handedly. Leaders must have buy-in from their stakeholders or other interested groups. Leaders can best convince those in their organizations to support implementation of the proposed solution with transparency and effective implementation of the proposed solution. Potential obstacles can be overcome by achieving buy-in at the organizational level, then implementing the proposed solution to other organizations using the tiered analysis and evaluation approach. Leaders must be ready to combat resistance by demonstrating effective implementation at the organization chosen as part of this study.

- **Global / External Implications for the Organization** - Thinking about the bigger picture of the setting studied in this Dissertation in Practice brings to mind many additional applications. Other implications could include increased focus on training and program management. Leadership could potentially use the cost effective methods in this study to improve other training programs from an interdisciplinary standpoint.

**Evaluation and Timeline for Implementation and Assessment**

Every proposed solution must have an implementation plan and assessment plan. That is, what is a feasible timeline to implement the solution you propose? Should
implementation occur in phases, stages, or some other timed release? Why or why not? Then, after implementation, how will you (or the leader) assess whether it solved the identified problem (or changed it at all)? Design a thorough assessment or evaluation plan that you or the implementing leader can utilize after putting your proposed solution into action.

**Implications**

**Practical Implications**

Roberts (2010) wrote that you should consider “who will likely benefit from your study, what they will learn from it, and why they will gain that knowledge” (p. 181) when writing the “Significance of the Study” section for Chapter One. By revisiting this idea, the results of the study lead to several practical implications. In particular, this Dissertation in Practice contributes to the greater good of the studied professional practice setting by uncovering possible training deficiencies. Implications and practical applications identify new insights derived from this dissertation to solve real problems. Interview data showed the importance of making training materials easily accessible for those which they would benefit.

**Implications for Future Research**

Future studies could be conducted to build upon these findings, further clarifying or updating results. Specifically, future research could answer the question of whether Key Spouse OPSEC training and understanding transfers to a higher degree of OPSEC understanding for all military spouses. This research could help guide future training by analyzing and evaluating current training. New questions have emerged as a result of this research. One question could ask if family OPSEC and Key Spouse Programs could be
part of the new, high visibility family resiliency program. There could also be questions regarding whether or not the Airman and Family Readiness Center is becoming too task saturated to truly focus on maintaining the Key Spouse Program. With the current mandate requiring active duty OPSEC Program Managers to serve two years, one could research the added continuity of a federal employee providing for better training and program management.

These implications for future research could come up throughout continuous analysis and evaluation of how OPSEC training and program management can keep up with changing times. Because trainers and program managers have many different priorities, military spouse OPSEC training must be evaluated on a continuous basis. Future interdisciplinary research could pave the way for the protection and safekeeping of sensitive information.

Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice

Chapter Five addressed the role of the leader in implementing the proposed solution. This section addressed the findings in a more global way. Findings related back to leadership theory and best practices, as noted in the literature review in Chapter Two. Reflecting back to the literature review, implications of OPSEC training and program management are truly interdisciplinary in nature. These findings can be used in a variety of professional practice settings in addition to the military installation in this study.

Summary of the Study

This dissertation in practice sought out to determine levels of OPSEC awareness of military spouses. Key Spouses were surveyed in an effort to identify their awareness
of OPSEC fundamentals after going through an OPSEC training session. Based on analysis of qualitative interviews of seven Key Spouse research participants, the researcher concluded that the Key Spouse training seminar did increase OPSEC awareness. This dissertation in practice found that military members were not receiving available training materials from their spouses. Making OPSEC training materials more readily available for military families could facilitate increased levels of OPSEC awareness levels for military families. Further follow-up research is recommended to ensure military families are receiving adequate OPSEC training.
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doi:10.1007/s10464-015-9726-y

Appendix A – Internal Review Board (IRB) Documents

IRB Social Behavioral Training Certification

Dear IRB Training Certification:

IRB certification requires three (3) years from the date the CITI Basic or Refresher course is completed.

Three (3) years prior to expiration, you may renew your training certification by completing the CITI Refresher course.

Mary C. Ritterbush
Research and Compliance Education Coordinator
Creighton University
Crist, Room 123
2500 California Plaza
Omaha, NE 68178
402-280-3560 (office)
402-740-0341 (cell)

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Research Report

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI)
RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT
Printed on 10/14/2014

LEARNER NAME: David Lees (ID: 4463488)
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PHONE: 402-280-2700
EMAIL: dave7942@creighton.edu
INSTITUTION: Creighton University
EXPIRATION DATE: 10/13/2017

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH COURSE

COURSE/STAGE: Basic Course/1
PASSED ON: 10/14/2014
REFERENCE ID: 14311975

REQUISITE MODULES | DATE COMPLETED | SCORE
--- | --- | ---
Research Misconduct (RCR-6SE) | 10/14/14 | No Quiz
Data Management (RCR-5BE) | 10/14/14 | 5/5 (100%)
Auditing (RCR-3BE) | 10/14/14 | 5/5 (100%)
Peer Review (RCR-3BE) | 10/14/14 | 3/5 (60%)
Research Misconduct (RCR-3BE) | 10/14/14 | 5/5 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest (RCR-5BE) | 10/14/14 | 3/5 (60%)
Collaborative Research (RCR-5BE) | 10/14/14 | 5/5 (100%)
Responsibility Conduct of Research (RCR) Course Conclusion | 10/14/14 | No Quiz

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI Program participating institution or be a paid independent learner. Other unaffiliated use of the CITI Program course site is unethical, and may be considered research misconduct by your institution.

Paul Brunscheidt, Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director, Office of Research Education
CITI Program Course Coordinator
IRB Acknowledgement

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ACCESS TO THE IRB’S POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AND THE CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS COMPLIANCE PLAN

I acknowledge that I:

1. Have access to the Creighton University IRB’s Policies and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research available on the website: IRB Policies and Procedures and the Creighton University Research and Sponsored Programs Compliance Plan available on the website: www.creighton.edu/researchcompliance/rcc/complianceplan, and I agree to read both.

2. Will comply fully with the standards contained in the IRB’s Policies and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research and the Plan and any other compliance policies/procedures applicable with my responsibilities to Creighton University.

3. Will maintain the confidentiality of sponsor proprietary information, Creighton proprietary information, human subject information, and any other confidential information to which I am given access.

4. Will report any conduct that I believe to be illegal or to violate the Creighton University IRB’s Policies and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research and the Creighton University Research and Sponsored Programs Compliance Plan or any research compliance policy/procedures to my supervisor or the Research Compliance Officer (402-280-2360) or the University Research Compliance Hotline (402-280-3200).

5. Will seek advice from my supervisor or the Research and Compliance Office and/or the IRB Office regarding any actions required to comply with the IRB’s Policies and Procedures and the Plan or any research compliance policy/procedure.

6. Understand that Acknowledgement does not, in any way, constitute an employment contract or an assurance of continued employment.

The Creighton University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Creighton University Research Compliance Committee reserves the right to occasionally amend, modify, or update the Policies and Procedures and the Plan.

Understand and agree that if I submit this electronically with a typed signature, this will be considered my legally binding signature.

David W. Lees
Name Printed
EdD Leadership
Department
Office Phone
Date

Signature
Student
Position
Email

93
UNDERSTANDING OPSEC AWARENESS LEVELS
Appendix B – Data Gathering Materials

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
   a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.
   b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.
Research Consent Letter

Dear Participant,

My name is Dave Lees, and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Doctor of Education in the Interdisciplinary Leadership program at Creighton University. My topic, Understanding Effects of Operations Security (OPSEC) Awareness Levels of Military Spouses through the Lenses of Training and Program Management-A Qualitative Study, would greatly benefit from your experience as a Key Spouse. This research could lead to improvements in Key Spouse OPSEC training. Your experience with being a Key Spouse makes you an ideal research candidate for my Dissertation in Practice.

Participation is voluntary, and can be withdrawn at any time.

Your 20-40 minute interview will be audio recorded in an effort to ensure participant remarks are saved for possible future analysis. Identifiable information will be withheld from our interviews. I assure that your identifiable information will not be included in the study. A numerical identifier will be used during interview transcription to ensure your personally identifiable information is kept private, and the transcribed data will be kept for one year and then destroyed. There is no risk associated with this anonymous study. You will receive no compensation for this interview.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions regarding research subject rights, your contact is the Institutional Review Board at 402-280-2126. If you have any further questions, you can feel free to reach out to me by email at DavidLees1@Creighton.edu or by phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Best,

David W. Lees
Data Collection Questions

1. How long have you been a military spouse?

2. What is the rank of your spouse?

3. How long have you been a Key Spouse?

4. How many formal Key Spouse training sessions have you taken part in?

5. Please describe your experience with Key Spouse training.

6. What do you see as the main roles of Key Spouses?

7. How would you define OPSEC?

8. How would you define Critical Information?

9. Can you give me an example of Critical Information?

10. Is there anything you would like to add regarding Key Spouse or OPSEC training?
Critical Information List

1. The following information needs to be protected in the same manner as “For Official Use Only” with measures such as secured telephone or radio transmissions and encrypted emails. Commanders and supervisors will ensure CILs are posted near work centers. Units may develop tailored CILs for use in conjunction with the CIL.
   a. Mobilization/deployment manning/equipment levels, shortfalls and limiting factors
   b. Information that can be used to determine deployment locations (immunizations, cold/hot weather gear, weather data, NOTAMs for deployment locations, routes of flight, etc.)
   c. Personnel status reports (locations, type, number)
   d. Recall rosters and personal data (home phone numbers, addresses, social security numbers)
   e. Duress Words and gate/door or alarm combinations
   f. Status of unit training, combat readiness or combat efficiency
   g. Mission deployment/employment dates/times or locations, number/type of aircraft, deployment/employment routes, altitudes, call signs, communication frequencies, cargo/troop data
   h. Generated personnel and equipment to include wing reaction times to crisis/contingency situations
   i. Exercise/contingency plans resembling any current or recent real world situation or event
   j. Key personnel or VIP schedules and travel itineraries, movement in anticipation of, or as a result of, an exercise or contingency
   k. Aircraft and equipment status (Mission Capable vs. Non-Mission Capable)
   l. Stock levels and location of critical supplies (POL, MRES, chemical gear, medical supplies, etc.)
   m. Position of equipment, supplies, weapons or manpower in preparation for deployment operations
   n. Location of deployed or dispersed contingency operations force
   o. Unit, asset or infrastructure capabilities, vulnerabilities, degradation or outages
## Interview Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>17-Feb-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>16 Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Type</td>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Please describe your experience with Key Spouse training.</strong></td>
<td>Attended initial training and have not learned much since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What do you see as the main roles of Key Spouses?</strong></td>
<td>Mentoring and taking care of military families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How would you define OPSEC?</strong></td>
<td>No idea before this training. Now I see it as a way of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How would you define Critical Information?</strong></td>
<td>Puzzle pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can you give me an example of Critical Information?</strong></td>
<td>Deployment information and even mentioning lines at gate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is there anything you would like to add regarding Key Spouse or OPSEC training?</strong></td>
<td>I think it would be nice if there were a more structured, standardized training program for all of us spouses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview Type</td>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Please describe your experience with Key Spouse training.</strong></td>
<td>Positive, some has been more structured than others, could be a better line between events geared towards training and events for us to get together and socialize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What do you see as the main roles of Key Spouses?</strong></td>
<td>Help and mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How would you define OPSEC?</strong></td>
<td>Use to think of it as a headache, now I understand the importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How would you define Critical Information?</strong></td>
<td>Information, like puzzle pieces, that enemies can use against us when they put it all together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can you give me an example of Critical Information?</strong></td>
<td>My family knows critical information when we know the schedule my husband works when he’s deployed or even in exercises here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is there anything you would like to add regarding Key Spouse or OPSEC training?</strong></td>
<td>Every time I am at one of the training sessions here at ______ Base I think we all learn something new.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### UNDERSTANDING OPSEC AWARENESS LEVELS

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<thead>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>18 Minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview Type</td>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please describe your experience with Key Spouse training</td>
<td>I always leave the training sessions eager to help others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you see as the main roles of Key Spouses?</td>
<td>Helping military families help each other and mentoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you define OPSEC?</td>
<td>Protecting sensitive or critical information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you define Critical Information?</td>
<td>Puzzle pieces or information that can be put together and cause harm if used by enemies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you give me an example of Critical Information?</td>
<td>Recall rosters, work schedules, deployment times or locations, manpower levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything you would like to add regarding Key Spouse or OPSEC training?</td>
<td>I think the training needs to be standardized for all bases in order for the knowledge to be able to make it to more military families.</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>16 Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Type</td>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please describe your experience with Key Spouse training</td>
<td>My experience has been positive. I always learn something new, and come away with information to share with other military spouses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you see as the main roles of Key Spouses?</td>
<td>Mentoring and helping to educate new and experienced spouses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you define OPSEC?</td>
<td>Being safe with how we take care of information we know as a military spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you define Critical Information?</td>
<td>Pieces of information that could be harmful if put together and in the wrong hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you give me an example of Critical Information?</td>
<td>Deployment information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything you would like to add regarding Key Spouse or OPSEC training?</td>
<td>This training is great, and should be at more bases</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>19 Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Type</td>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please describe your experience with Key Spouse training</td>
<td>It seems like we all learn something new at every session. I think the new and experienced spouses take something away from each session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you see as the main roles of Key Spouses?</td>
<td>Training and mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you define OPSEC?</td>
<td>Protecting critical information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you define Critical Information?</td>
<td>The culmination of non-classified information that could be harmful if gathered by enemies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you give me an example of Critical Information?</td>
<td>Deployment schedules and manpower levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything you would like to add regarding Key Spouse or OPSEC training?</td>
<td>Not all bases provide this kind of training, and I think it’s great for military spouses and families</td>
</tr>
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<td>Research Participant</td>
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<td>Duration</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please describe your experience with Key Spouse training.</td>
<td>I had the initial training. During that training they talked about how to counsel to other spouses. We also had a few base programs come and speak briefly about services they offer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you see as the main roles of Key Spouses?</td>
<td>The key spouse job is to help mentor other spouses by being available for questions and involved in the activities of the squadron.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you define OPSEC?</td>
<td>Protecting the operations of the military.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you define Critical Information?</td>
<td>Information that can be useful to the enemy. These can be defined as puzzle pieces or bits of information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you give me an example of Critical Information?</td>
<td>Deployment, aircraft, and personnel data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything you would like to add regarding Key Spouse or OPSEC training?</td>
<td>Training needs to give more structure to the program. There needs to be information about safeguarding information that we give to others or post to social media. Key spouse training needs to have more tools for how to share information with other spouses and support them with a strong spouses network.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Duration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview Type</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please describe your experience with Key Spouse training.</td>
<td>Met with squadron leadership and Military Family Readiness personnel to discuss duties and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you see as the main roles of Key Spouses?</td>
<td>Liaison between squadron leadership and family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you define OPSEC?</td>
<td>Not posting unnecessary information on Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you define Critical Information?</td>
<td>Information that could do harm if it got put into the wrong hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you give me an example of Critical Information?</td>
<td>Deployment information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything you would like to add regarding Key Spouse or OPSEC training?</td>
<td>Have this presentation to all new spouses when they PCS to a new base. Heartlink classes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>