MILITARY COMMAND AUTHORITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HOW U.S.

ARMY COMPANY-GRADE LEADERS EXPERIENCE INSUBORDINATION

By

Thomas W. Stone

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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APPROVED BY:

David T. Vacchi, PhD, Committee Chair

Nathan Street, EdD, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology is to explore the experiences of U.S. Army company commanders regarding insubordinate acts aimed at undermining their legitimate command authority. The theory guiding this dissertation is French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power, which states that power is divided into five unique forms that leaders use in exercising their will to accomplish tasks. This study particularly considers the legitimate power base, a form of social power often asserted by virtue of holding an office or formal organizational position. The setting is an Army post in western United States; the study sample comprises three groups of Army leaders: company commanders, squad leaders, and senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs). Data collection methods include interviews and letter writing. Besides uniquely investigating Army company-level commands, I discovered many Army leaders display a penchant for identifying and mitigating potential insubordination rather than allowing it to fester in the ranks. Stated as themes, soldiers want commanders who offer clear vision-casting efforts directed at mission accomplishment; authentic first-line supervisors strive to bridge the gap between the commander and the soldiers; and senior NCOs care enough to develop their subordinates, promoting a command climate that, in turn, improves military culture long term. Future research opportunities exist in exploring insubordination in other military services and components. Additionally recommended research opportunities include case studies and narrative research about leadership traits, development, and styles exhibited in contemporary military leaders.

Keywords: insubordination, leadership, company command, social power, organizational leadership

Copyright Page

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my earthly father, Francis L. "Frank" Stone, a man of great worth in God's eyes who led me to the Lord and encouraged me to always seek God, honor the truth, and search out knowledge (Proverbs 25:2; Ecclesiastes 7:25; Isaiah 48:6, New International Version, 1984). Although he did not enjoy all the advantages necessary to complete his education, he always remained curious, serving as my role model and inspiration for a life of discovery and learning.

Acknowledgments

First, let me acknowledge my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to whom all glory and honor are due. I began this process with King Jesus' authority in mind, and I dedicate the remainder of my life to bringing him glory.

Also, I want to thank my wife, Linda, for her support in allowing me to pursue my educational goals. Her constant encouragement and confidence in my ability to travel this road are a testament of how much she demonstrates her love to me each day. I love you, Linda. Likewise, I appreciate the sacrifices my entire family made on my behalf for me to do this work.

I would like to thank Dr. David Vacchi, who served as my committee chair and mentor, as well as Dr. Nathan Street, who also served on my committee. These men believed in my ability to do the work and provided invaluable wisdom and guidance as I conducted the research and wrote my dissertation, giving me the confidence to persist.

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List of Abbreviations

Army Regulation (AR)

Captain (CPT – Grade of O3)

Code of Laws of the United States of America (U.S. Code, U.S.C.)

Colonel (COL – Grade of O6)

Command Sergeant Major (CSM – Grade of E9 in a leadership position)

Corporal (CPL – Grade of E4 in a leadership position)

Defense Health Agency (DHA)

Department of Defense (DoD)

Department of the Army (DA)

Executive Officer (XO)

Field Manual (FM)

First Lieutenant (1LT – Grade of O2)

First Sergeant (1SG – Grade of E8 in a leadership position)

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC – Grade of O5)

Major (MAJ – Grade of O4)

Master Sergeant (MSG – Grade of E8)

New International Version (NIV)

Noncommissioned Officer (NCO)

Office of the Law Revision Counsel (OLRC)

Private (PVT – Grade of E1)

Private (PV2 – Grade of E2)

Private First Class (PFC – Grade of E3)

Second Lieutenant (2LT – Grade of O1)

Sergeant (SGT – Grade of E5)

Sergeant First Class (SFC – Grade of E7)

Sergeant Major (SGM – Grade of E9)

Specialist (SPC – Grade of E4)

Staff Sergeant (SSG – Grade of E6)

Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)

United States Air Force (U.S. Air Force)

United States Armed Forces (U.S. Armed Forces)

United States Army (U.S. Army)

United States Coast Guard (U.S. Coast Guard)

United States Code (U.S. Code; U.S.C.)

United States Constitution (U.S. Constitution; U.S. Const.)

United States Marine Corps (U.S. Marine Corps; USMC)

United States Navy (U.S. Navy)

United States Space Force (U.S. Space Force)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This study examines the characteristics of insubordinate conduct within the context of small unit leadership in the U.S. Army. The research design employs a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach; it explores the nuanced and rich experiences of officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) who have led soldiers at the company-grade level of command and who have experienced challenges to their authority. At first glance, authority may appear to be a vague subject people rarely consider, yet they still may feel that some nebulous force perpetually inhibits them. When asked to define that force, many of these same people speak of *the Man*, a pseudo-force that seemingly is responsible for most of their woes or that invisibly imposes unreasonable rules upon them. Jeynes (2019) argues that much of society is ill-equipped to grapple with the idea of vague forces. In everyday parlance, frustrated people seek to fight against *the boss* or challenge *the Law*. The plan for this chapter is to provide the context for the proposal by offering historical, social, and theoretical backgrounds for the study. The next order of business is to overtly declare the problem and purpose statements, to explicate the significance of the study, and to frame the relevant research questions and definitions of terms used in the study. The final section serves to summarize the chapter.

Background

In order to link the following background section of the study to the proposed research, I offer that the constructs of authority and obedience are biblically based (Acts 1:7-8; Matthew 28:18; Romans 13:1) and maintain direct ties to the military (Finucane, 2020; Konieczny & Bertossi, 2017; O'Brien, 2019; Price, 2021). There are many instances in American history that demonstrate the need to establish legitimate authorities. Additionally, the study relies on the

theory of social power (French & Raven, 1959), also called the power taxonomy, which states that power is divided into five unique forms that leaders use to exercise their will in accomplishing tasks. The power taxonomy serves as a window for exploring insubordination within a military setting.

Historical Context

As an example of someone who understood the dynamic of accountability to authority, consider the case of the Roman centurion stationed in Capernaum, who asked Jesus to heal his dying servant (Luke 7:1-10; Matthew 8:5-13, NIV, 1984). The centurion understood that, although he was in charge of the people who reported to him, he also answered to his superiors who were above him, based on their various stations of life. The centurion described himself as a man under authority who also had soldiers who reported to him (Matthew 8:9). When the centurion spoke his soldiers and servants obeyed; he gained credibility in large part because he demonstrated that he, too, obeyed his superiors. The centurion's example demonstrates the gravitas of providing a vibrant example for subordinates to follow; his obedience to superiors justified his expectation that his subordinates should obey him as well.

The American Revolution certainly is an example when authority was challenged. At one level, the right for colonists to express their religious freedom in regard to a spiritual context was an important value in the 18th century (Salvucci, 2020). Many of the settlers who made their way to the New World were fleeing religious persecution and the tyranny of restriction to worship in ways their consciences dictated. However, there were also political and economic considerations that posed a significant challenge to the British crown (Gardbaum, 2017). Gardbaum's very point was that this desire for the freedom to live according to the way the local populations saw fit was not a uniquely American ideal. Gardbaum cited the efforts of people in South Africa, the Middle

East, and South America to throw off their masters' heavy yokes and forge new constitutions to fit their own times.

Closer to the present era in America, we have seen numerous situations when authority in general has been under attack. Within the government, there have been attempts to cripple committees, such as California Representative George Brown's efforts to protect his chairmanship for the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee (Hamilton, 1991). Catlaw (2006) argued that the present millennium has become the era during which governmental and institutional past practices have ceased to serve as authoritative bastions of thought or action. In the education sector, the authority of school boards has come under attack (Wynia, 1973), as well as documented instances in which the authority of teachers has eroded (Rosenow, 1993). Currently on the nightly news, parents have again been accused of challenging the authority of school boards regarding who has the right to establish the content of school curricula (King et al., 2021). Even members of the medical field have experienced this phenomenon. Efforts to undermine the professionalism of physicians who have been characterized as developing a corner on medical knowledge (Haug, 1988) have cast shadows of doubt on their perceived authority, and the charge of cornering the market implies that only the doctors believe they know enough to provide adequate care. Wilson (2000) also noted that medical authorities are increasingly coming under scrutiny in the age of an online-granted "doctorate" from Google.

Social Context

In their article about the social context of healthcare delivery, Osei-Frimpong et al. (2020) framed their understanding of *social context* as a series of social interactions allowing individuals to gain access to their healthcare information. I extend that definition of social cues

to the interactions and setting in which my study occurs, which is a military post. Bolman and Deal (2017) wrote that people thrive when expectations, roles, and lines of authority are clearly demarcated; they also argued that proper divisions of labor, through differentiation and integration, are key elements of a healthy organizational structure. The military is a venerable institution based on good order and discipline and the power of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Formal military authority for command derives from three sources: the U.S. Constitution, the U.S. Code, and the UCMJ. The authority to commit funds, control property, and make legally-binding decisions rests squarely within public law. The U.S. Code, formally known as the Code of Laws of the United States of America, extends authority to each armed service—the U.S. Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Space Force, and in time of war the Coast Guard—and their major subordinate commands, which, in turn, delegate command authority to duly-appointed officers.

Commanders derive their command authority by virtue of having received congressional commission to hold office, and by means of official orders assigning them to a command position. Army commanders officially begin their command when their first order is read aloud at their change of command ceremonies. The order cites Army Regulation 600–20, *Army Command Policy*, as the authority by which they assume their command (U.S. Army, 2014a). This written statement, which is also conveyed orally, formally transfers command authority and responsibility to the commissioned officer, who then wields enormous powers supported by the Constitution. Commanders maintain formal reporting structures through military channels up and down the formal chain of command. The legal UCMJ authority flows up and down that chain, as does the military-orders process: These processes are the mechanism by which service members are assigned to their units and how they receive their pay, leave, awards, and other administrative

actions.

Theoretical Context

In their seminal work on the bases of power, French and Raven (1959) sought to identify and define the primary types of power that exist within the dyadic pair of agents who exert power and agents who are affected by such an exertion of power. Their classic identification of the five bases of social power included: reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert power. In a later study, Raven (1965) identified an additional base of power, the information power base, which over approximately the past 40 years has effectively eroded the force of the original five power bases (Kellerman, 2012). As a consequence of the exponential ease of access to information throughout the world, due primarily to the advent of the internet and the 24-hour news cycle, followers have been able to diffuse the influences of the traditional bases of leaders' power.

Northouse (2019) characterized the perceived decline of respect for leaders' legitimate power as a result of the empowerment followers have gained through increased availability of information power. Although French and Raven had been able to successfully articulate a plausible theory to explain 20th century leadership styles, their theory must again be reconsidered in the light of 21st century leadership challenges. This study seeks to explore insubordinate conduct within company-level units of the U.S. Army. As a result, this study should provide new and currently-serving company commanders with a better understanding of the nature of legitimate power; it also ought to empower them to adopt functional expectations and response mechanisms regarding the likelihood of insubordination.

Problem Statement

The problem is that U.S. Army company-grade commanding officers are experiencing greater levels of insubordination in their ranks than did their predecessors (Estevez, 2019; Hundman & Parkinson, 2019; Jeynes, 2019; Maurer, 2013). Authority has been challenged in America for some time, from the wide-ranging fields of academics (Rosenow, 1993) to medicine (Wilson, 2000). The U.S. military is not exempt; as a bedrock institution, the military uniquely exists to protect American freedoms. Yet, military leaders continue to experience challenges to their legitimate authority that often manifest as disobedience among subordinates. Estevez (2019) interviewed ROTC cadets regarding their conceptions of authority. In contrast, Hundman and Parkinson (2019) conducted case studies regarding senior military officers who chose to deliberately disobey orders issued by their superiors based on their estimation that those specific orders clashed with the officers' moral convictions. Steffens et al. (2018) suggested further study of how people perceive trust. No longer is truth viewed by the majority as objective, an idea that seriously affects military culture: Too often, soldiers regard orders as less necessary to obey, and many soldiers tend to perceive orders as more suggestion than requirement (Maurer, 2013).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of U.S. Army company-grade leaders regarding insubordinate acts aimed at undermining their legitimate command authority. Acts of insubordination are generally defined as the attempts by soldiers, civil servants, or federal contractors to thwart military good order and discipline (Borgnino, 2016; Maurer, 2013). The primary theory guiding this study is French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power, which states that power is divided into five unique forms that leaders use to exercise their wills and accomplish tasks. Of particular interest in this study are

two of the bases of social power: legitimate power, exercised by virtue of holding office or formal position within an organization; and informational power, which in the 21st century is a power potentially available to anyone who uses a television, computer, or smart phone.

<div align="center">**Significance of the Study**</div>

This study has significance because it seeks to fill a gap in the literature regarding the lived experiences of junior military officers in the U.S. Army who have commanded company-level units and dealt with disobedience to their lawful orders. The study adds several components to the literature that are currently absent, to include the perceptions of junior officers regarding the experience of wielding authority, as well as their responses to instances of subordinate disobedience. This section considers the empirical, theoretical, and practical significance of the study.

Empirical Significance

First, the study seeks to discover instances in which junior leaders have experienced their authority actively being undermined (Bourgoin et al., 2020; Vila-Chã, 2020), a concept that has been sparsely considered in the literature. Second, it documents the way junior military leaders who have encountered past insubordination have processed their experiences (Karazi-Presler et al., 2018). Currently, there are studies in the literature that focus on the expectations of cadets who have yet to become officers (Estevez, 2019), and other studies that highlight the experiences of senior officers (Hundman & Parkinson, 2019). There is a deficit of research regarding the experiences of young commanders in the military, especially regarding their experiences in wielding legitimate authority.

Theoretical Significance

From a theoretical perspective, this study is significant because it attempts to validate the role of legitimate power, as characterized in French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power, for U.S. Army company commanders in executing their official duties as small unit leaders. Because they are installed in formal organizational roles that maintain explicit legal and moral authority associated with them, these officers should be aware of how all of French and Raven's power bases affect their performance of duties. This is especially true of the legitimate power base.

Practical Significance

From a practical stance, the study serves as a touch stone to encourage junior military leaders that their efforts to command are both validated and appreciated. In order for young leaders to feel empowered to persist in command, others outside of their spheres of influence must stand in their stead to inspire them to endure difficulties (Koenane & Madise, 2019). Another practical point of consideration is that the gap in the literature regarding the experiences of junior military officers is finally being addressed: Officers at the company-level echelon of command finally have representation within the literature and their experiences have been appropriately documented. A final practical result of this study is that it strives to provide currently-serving and future company commanders with tools to better understand the nature of legitimate power; it should empower them to adopt functional expectations and response mechanisms regarding the likelihood of subordinate disobedience.

Research Questions

The following central and subordinate research questions serve as the basis for this study. Many other areas of inquiry are possible regarding acts of insubordination, especially regarding

the role of legitimate authority, one of the five original bases of power in the French and Raven

(1959) power taxonomy. However, the central research question and sub-questions in this study

have been designed to elucidate how junior military officers and noncommissioned officers

exercise their legitimate authority despite the deliberate acts of insubordinate followers.

Central Research Question

How do U.S. Army company commanders use their legitimate power when confronting

insubordinate conduct? This question speaks directly to the meaning of military command; that

is, it is critically important to determine whether small unit Army leaders feel they have the

confidence to lead their soldiers, and upon what basis their confidence rests (Bourgoin et al.,

2020). The role of legitimate authority, which French and Raven (1959) described in their power

taxonomy, allows commanders at all echelons and their subordinate leaders to exercise their

authority.

Sub Question One

How does insubordination affect company commanders as they seek to exercise their

right to lead? This question is similar to the central research question, regarding the leader's

confidence to lead others. Junior military officers commanding for the first time may not be

aware of the dynamics of the legitimate power base in French and Raven's power taxonomy.

However, although the central question focuses more on the essence of authority and

insubordination as constructs, this first sub-question seeks to draw out the depth of practical

understanding and experience of the officers participating in the study regarding the use

authority (Bourgoin et al., 2020). Of special interest is whether officers attempt to command

based solely on their legitimate power associated with the title of commander, or if they are

perhaps willing, or even able, to use the other bases of power as well (French & Raven, 1959).

Sub Question Two

How do squad leaders, as first-line supervisors, support command legitimacy in the face of insubordinate conduct? For commanders to be successful, they need to cultivate a functional working climate based on their ability to maintain good order and discipline within the unit (French & Raven, 1959; Maurer, 2013; Weber, 2017). Noncommissioned officers, often referred to by soldiers as the backbone of the Army, are the key to keeping the command climate functional (Perry III, 2018; Shin & Kim, 2019). Squad leaders are the lowest level of formal leaders within the chain of command, serving in a capacity similar to foremen on a construction site. They serve as leaders within the military unit setting who are directly in contact with soldiers; often they are the first leaders to identify and correct infractions and misbehavior (Shin & Kim, 2019). When necessary, squad leaders refer serious problems up through the chain of command, sometimes leading to judicial or non-judicial consequences. This research sub-question centers on the experience of squad leaders as the direct supervisors of soldiers and the ways they assist commanders in the face of insubordination.

Sub Question Three

What types of advice do senior noncommissioned officers offer to small unit leaders regarding insubordinate conduct? Senior noncommissioned officers are the repository of wisdom and sage advice within the military, serving as trusted advisors to commanders up and down the chain of command. They have served in multiple leadership roles as supervisors of troops at the squad, platoon, company, and higher echelons, and they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to bear whenever they offer their advice. This research sub-question focuses on the shift from merely being in charge because external authorities assigned someone

to a duty position to the more personal power that comes with experience, knowledge, and well-crafted relationships (French & Raven, 1959; Karazi-Presler et al., 2018; Weber, 2017).

Definitions

The following definitions are offered as a means of understanding some of the pertinent terms related to this study. Although not an exhaustive list of military terms, these definitions are intended to aid the reader in navigating through the study. Every attempt to express the understanding of each term has been vetted through the implementation of external sources who have sought to explain those terms.

1. *Article 15* – Within the bounds of the numerous articles contained within the UCMJ, the Article 15 is a term for non-judicial punishment used to monetarily fine, physically detain, or organizationally demote service members. It is a lesser form of discipline than courts-martial and can be administered by commanders at the company and battalion levels. Company commanders administer company-grade Article 15s, which impose less severe consequences than the more robust field-grade Article 15s managed at the battalion level (Borgnino, 2016; Maurer, 2013).

2. *Article 32* – Within the bounds of the UCMJ, the Article 32 hearing is an investigation to determine whether probable cause exists regarding a potential violation of the statutes of the UCMJ (Goewert & Torres, 2015).

3. *Authority* – Authority is the power of influence over the thoughts or behavior of other people (Terry, 2018). Farneth (2019) suggested that people who wield authority actually have rightful claims to exercise their legitimate power.

4. *Battery* – The U.S. Army battery is the primary artillery unit of command, roughly equivalent to a company-sized element, and directly subordinate to a battalion (U.S. Army, 2021a).

5. *Commander* – A military commander is the leader of a military unit at every echelon of military structure, from company, battalion, and brigade to division, corps, and theater army. American military unit commanders wield UCMJ authority and are charged with maintaining the good order and discipline of their units to promote effective performance of their wartime and peacetime missions (Maurer, 2013; U.S. Army, 2021a).

6. *Company* – The U.S. Army company is the primary maneuver unit of command for the U.S. Army, comprising two to five platoons, and directly subordinate to a battalion. It is the first echelon of command in which commanders are authorized to exert UCMJ authority (U.S. Army, 2021a).

7. *Insubordination* – Attempts by soldiers, and sometimes by civilian federal workers, to thwart military good order and discipline within a military organization. The distinguishing factor in using this phrase is determined by the way an action can be seen to potentially impact the military command structure (Maurer, 2013).

8. *Power taxonomy* – Another term for the *theory of social power* (Raven, 1993).

9. *Squad leader* – A junior NCO in the U.S. Army, usually a staff sergeant. Squad leaders are the lowest level of formal leaders within the chain of command, serving in a capacity similar to foremen on a construction site. They serve as leaders within the military unit setting who are directly in contact with soldiers; often they are the first leaders to identify and correct infractions and misbehavior (U.S. Army, 2021a).

10. *Theory of social power* – The theory that power is divided into five unique forms that leaders use to exercise their will and accomplish tasks (French & Raven, 1959).

11. *Troop* – The U.S. Army troop is the primary cavalry unit of command, roughly equivalent to a company-sized element, and directly subordinate to a squadron, the cavalry term for a battalion (U.S. Army, 2021a).

12. *Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)* – The legal framework establishing the authority to maintain the good order and discipline of the military (Maurer, 2013; Borgnino, 2016).

Summary

The problem highlighted in this study is that U.S. Army company-grade leaders are experiencing greater levels of insubordination in the ranks than did their predecessors (Estevez, 2019; Hundman & Parkinson, 2019; Jeynes, 2019; Maurer, 2013). The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of U.S. Army company-grade leaders regarding insubordinate acts aimed at undermining their legitimate command authority. The Roman centurion from Capernaum would likely have been aghast to see the conditions in which young leaders in the American military are expected to command. The general attitude regarding authority in America's military in the early 21st century is one of indifference at best and outright hostility at worst. The very lives of America's sons and daughters rest upon strict adherence to lawful orders given by legitimate commanders and other leaders in the military. Our country depends on a strong military to defend the way of American life against all enemies, foreign and domestic. The philosophical construct of the breakdown of authority, as manifested in acts of insubordination, represents the presence of a domestic enemy.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The theoretical framework of this study is constructed based upon the work of French and Raven's (1959) power taxonomy. The plan for the chapter, after discussing the theoretical framework, is to consider the related literature within the field of study to review the various topics that support the notions of authority and the use of power, narrowing that focus to authority within the military setting, particularly in small units of the U.S. Army. This chapter addresses five areas of concentration, beginning broadly and becoming more refined: selected elements that comprise authority in general; the exercise of authority as reflected in the literature; the extent authority has been experienced in daily life; some effects of using authority in a military setting, to include a discussion about hierarchy, chain of command, and the value of command at the lowest levels; and the times when it may be considered acceptable to undermine authority. Finally, the chapter provides a brief summary to bring the sections of the chapter together, pointing toward the promising areas in which further study promotes filling gaps in the literature.

Theoretical Framework

Supervisors expect subordinate compliance by virtue of exercising their decision-making roles; however, insubordination can sometimes be necessary in given situations. The centurion who asked Jesus to heal his dying servant (Luke 7:1-10; Matthew 8:5-13) understood this dynamic, characterizing himself as a man under authority who became a role model because he obeyed his superiors. French and Raven's (1959) power taxonomy is the centerpiece of this theoretical discussion, and this study relies on the power taxonomy framework for its theoretical underpinnings. This section includes a brief description of the theory of social power; some

effects the theory has produced within the fields of sociology, psychology, and education; and the anticipated ways this current study can add to the literature to further the understanding of social power theory.

French and Raven's Theory of Social Power

In their seminal work on power dynamics, French and Raven (1959) identified and defined the primary types of power existing within dyadic pairs: agents who exert power and agents affected by such exertion. The classical types of social power included reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert power. Later, Raven (1965) proposed *information* as an additional power base. For more than 40 years the information power base has effectively eroded the force of the original five power bases as they were originally presented (Kellerman, 2012). Increased access to information through the internet and the 24-hour news cycle has lessened the strength of the original five bases of power. Although French and Raven successfully articulated a plausible theory regarding 20th century leadership styles, the theory needs to reflect 21st century leadership challenges.

Impacts of Social Power Theory

French and Raven (1959), and later Raven (1965/1993), profoundly influenced the literature of the social sciences by introducing practical concepts that addressed the sources of personal power. Northouse (2019) claimed college students cite French and Raven on social power more often than any other scholar. Fischer and Vauclair (2011) described French and Raven in terms of inspiring an organizational renaissance. More recent scholarship invokes the power taxonomy to describe how computer software companies depend upon and influence each other (Valença & Alves, 2017). However, even before their groundbreaking study in 1959, Raven and French (1958) asserted that in hierarchical organizations the validity of legitimate

power centers more on the office rather than the person; in other words, they believed legitimate power vested in positions supersedes personal power inherent in people.

Related Literature

Most organizational leaders work diligently to secure their legitimate positions within their chosen fields of endeavor. However, some people who work under the supervision of these leaders seek to question their leaders' decisions and actions. To address these concepts, this literature review will feature applicable theory and related studies intended to underscore the nuances of leadership and authority. In particular, five areas of special focus within this section are addressed: foundational considerations for the study, to include a brief discussion of important national documents that create the basis and justification for military authority; selected elements comprising the notion of authority; the extent authority can be experienced in daily life; the exercise of authority as reflected in the literature; and a cursory examination of some effects of exercising authority, especially within a military setting. The related literature, while addressing many walks of life, has been selected to provide a proper context for the study as it relates to the American military as a subset of American society. Beginning with a broader view of authority as a social and cultural concept, the intent of this section regarding the related literature is hone the view from generalities about authority to a more focused discussion about the nature of military culture, culminating with considerations about the effects of authority at the small unit level within the U.S. Army.

Although commanders generally wield authority and social influence, they are not the true focus of the theory of social power because it expressly centers on the experience of the follower (French & Raven, 1959). The experience of leaders who wield social power is just as important in the taxonomy of power as studying the effects on recipients, which is an area that

French and Raven intended for further study. Indeed, Raven (1993) showed that the social power theory had many applications, from hospital management to political personalities, explaining why in Raven's summary he advocated for further research in multiple areas regarding the theory. Of particular interest in this study is the base of legitimate power, the form of social power asserted by way of holding an office or formal position within an organization. Specifically because of the important nature of the legitimate power base for commanders to exercise their authority, the central research question addresses the perceptions and responses of U.S. Army company commanders who have experienced undermining attacks on their legitimate command authority. As a result, this study aims to discover tools commanders can use to understand the nature of legitimate power and empower them to command more effectively.

Elements of Authority

Although there are potentially dozens of concepts comprising authority as a construct, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to innumerate and to examine each element. This section focuses on four elements in particular that provide a brief synopsis of characteristics about authority: the origins of authority, the dynamic of power differential, the ever-elusive concern about control issues, and the inherent obligation to obey those in positions of authority. The overarching idea about these elements is that authority permits certain people to determine the actions of others, whether those decision-makers secure their authority by brute force or by means of social contract.

Origins of Authority

Although the Bible ascribes all authority as originating from God the Father (Acts 1:7; Romans 13:1), the majority of authors of the recent literature regarding authority place little emphasis on the origins of human authority. Plant (2019) came closest in the literature to

considering the truly original beginnings of authority and to whom one owes allegiance. Plant argued that Luther's understanding of papal and church authority conflicted with Protestant ideals of personal relationship with God and the individual priesthood of believers. Ungureanu (2018) argued that the realms of science and religion have been in grand conflict since the 17th century primarily because groups within liberal Protestant heritage longed to be free from perceived ecclesiastical authorities and thought the appeal to scientific authority would free them from the religious. Since the 19th century the fight against the theory of evolution has pitted more conservative religious groups against the scientific world. Brummett (2019) connected the concept of rituals to both secular and religious contexts, focusing specifically on the value of pilgrimage in both social arenas. Barnes and Oldham (2019) posited that the tradition of apparent authority also developed in America in the 1800s. This concept was important because it illuminated the American law of agency which stated that corporate agents can autonomously act on behalf their corporate headquarters' without expressly receiving official authority, yet third parties can safely assume the agent has authority to act. For example, the public can feel a sense of confidence that lending officers have the right to obligate their banks' funds by means of the loan process. Another example occurs when stock market traders are empowered to buy and sell stocks in the name of their parent organizations. These are clear marks of delegated authority. Although soldiers are not required to devote their allegiance to ecclesiastical or scientific authorities, they do have a constitutional obligation to obey their superiors.

Power Differential

In a basic understanding about authority, one must eventually confront the issue of one's position on the continuum of power. The polar extremes encompass total control and power on one side, and on the other side is the complete powerlessness characteristic of the lowest classes

of society. All people are positioned somewhere on that continuum. Duarte and Lopes (2016) argued that people strive to attain as much power as possible to maximize their own advantage. This affects the ways people react to perceived authorities, and additionally implies that people seek to climb the ladder of authority if they possess the necessary power. Although the ladder-climbing perspective may appeal to a certain segment of society, the view that most seek advancement may be overstated and somewhat cynical; it may be more likely that most are intent on performing their best in life and strive to get along within their social circles.

Further, the power distance between individuals can be measured on grand, sweeping scales as well as on small, intimate scales. Gao et al. (2016) stated that power distance belief affects the ways people in a superior social power status treat others who are in a lower status. This type of activity furthers the acceptance of perceived inequalities in society and control over various resources by the powerfully dominant becomes a societal assumption (Han et al., 2017; Page-Winterich et al., 2018). Similarly, Qureshi et al. (2019) posited that servant leadership models have the ability to address deficiencies in power relationships, but also found that such leadership approaches are more difficult to negotiate in cultures that have developed high power distance orientation. The stratification of military culture and its restrictive fraternization rules makes it a contender for inclusion in this list of high power distance cultures, implying that soldiers and officers should be aware of this dynamic.

Control Issues

It is quite possible to incorrectly evaluate where one stands regarding relative power. Left untested, people tend to feel they have much more power than may be the reality. Sloof and von Siemens (2017) discovered that in many situations people are willing to pay handsomely for the right to exercise their own decisions, even if those decisions prove fruitless; such actions are

attempts to purchase the perception of power, even though they may not prove efficacious. The illusion of control is a strong motivator until people experience the prospect of their power is seriously challenged. Martínez-Ávila (2016) extrapolated from the illusion-of-control concept that power brokers were tested when they attempted to exercise their perceived rights in everything from executing naming conventions in mapping terminology to insisting on the spoken language of choice, when confronted with the all-important question, *who gets to decide?* Martínez-Ávila posited that cultures vary in the way they measure and count items, and no other culture maintains the right to tell them their unique ways are wrong. Regarding controls on creativity in the workplace, managers can learn much about the concerns that employees voice when asked about the level of control needed to maintain productivity (Du et al., 2018).

Similarly, Camarda et al. (2018) explored the relationship between creativity and inhibitory control, which they found to have been inadequately addressed in the literature. Davila and Ditillo (2017) concluded that management control systems were deeply rooted in creative team environments. Yet, from those very controls, there has always been the possibility to define and negotiate opportunities to make those teams feel that they had a say in the process. The key point regarding issues of control is recognizing the tensions that exist between leaders who emphasize task orientation versus those who rely heavily on relationship orientation (Camarda et al., 2018; Davila & Ditillo, 2017; Du et al., 2018; Martínez-Ávila, 2016; Sloof & von Siemens, 2017). The wise leader will manage such tensions.

Obligation to Obey

Citizens not only possess rights within society, they also incur the distinct obligation to obey the law of the land (Dagger, 2018; Hughes, 2019; Neely, 2018). Numerous studies consider the idea that there is a social obligation to obey, based on inherent membership in society

(Hunter, 2020; Renzo, 2019; Scheffler, 2018; Walton, 2018; Weinstock, 2019). At the very least, it is important to recognize that everyone, even the self-employed, must cooperate with others. Whether it is bosses, boards of directors, or even customers, every person is beholden to others in terms of accountability. Even according to the concept of divine right, history's monarchs ultimately answered to God whether they knew it or not.

Exercise of Authority

Although literature about the elements and extent of authority present the richness of hierarchy, there is also a more practical sense of explanation about authority, one that operates at the level of everyday people. At some point, discussions must be applicable to daily life for people to consider them valuable. There are numerous examples of real people who exercise or are influenced by authority in common scenarios, whether work, worship, or the wonder of play.

God's Authority

Jesus the Messiah, the chosen and Anointed One who is also called the Christ, came to earth in quiet humility with only angelic hints to his royal pedigree (Luke 2:8-14; Matthew 1:20). He matured in Nazareth of Galilee (John 1:45-46), a non-descript and out-of-the-way location in a tiny country on the fringes of the Roman Empire (Luke 2:39; 4:14-24). When he began his ministry of preaching and healing, Jesus also proclaimed the coming of the heavenly kingdom (Matthew 4:17, 23). It was a message of hope to the faithful (Matthew 5:3-12), a misunderstood call of hoped-for uprising to Jewish zealots (Mark 14:48), and a cautious warning to the Roman powers (John 18:36-38). Madigan (2017) pointed out that there were significant questions about the right of Jesus to speak authoritatively, especially in Jerusalem, because of his upbringing in the perceived backwoods of Galilee. Lee (2018) made a similar argument, but noted that Jesus portrayed his own identity as the beloved Son of God. Yet, Jesus came to earth with the full

authority of the Father to be the Savior of the world. Over the three-year period of his earthly ministry, Jesus demonstrated many examples of his authority, from teaching and healing with authority (Matthew 9:6), to dominion over nature (Matthew 8:23-27) and evil spirits (Mark 5:1-20), to specifically-claimed authority to judge and forgive sins (Matthew 9:1-7), to ultimate authority over his own body in life and death (John 10:17-18) as well as over even death (John 11:25, 43-44) and taxes (Matthew 17:24-27). He performed all these actions as he tenderly modeled his own teaching and showed God's love.

Jesus did not foment political rebellion, but neither was he shy about confronting Jewish religious leaders who had abdicated their responsibilities to guide the people to know and serve God (Ezekiel 34:2-3; Isaiah 56:10-12; Jeremiah 23:2; 50:6; John 3:10; Zechariah 10:2; 11:17). His overt claims of authority continued to publicly increase as he progressed from the inauguration year of his earthly mission (Luke 4:14-21) through the year of his popularity (John 5:36) to the final year of opposition against him (John 8:58). Even while directly facing death before Pilate, Jesus acknowledged that he is a king, just not a king of this world (John 18:36), and Pilate became truly afraid. Kayayan (2019) offered a four-fold explanation of Jesus' authority, connecting it exclusively to the kingdom of God. When he rose from the dead, Jesus proclaimed to his disciples that all authority in heaven and on earth was now firmly under his control (Matthew 28:18).

Delegating Authority

It is not sufficient to theoretically discuss authority, but it is imperative to make it real and purposeful. Lin et al. (2019) found that employees were more willing to express themselves when they sensed the leader exhibited humility. This is a strong argument for the moral application of power and position. Deimen and Szalay (2019) showed that decision makers tend

to seek expert opinions to gain information needed to make good decisions. However, the question remains whether power should be centralized or decentralized.

Dwyer (2017) argued that management theories have encouraged the concept of *empowerment* since the 1980s. Such theories suggest that managers are able to empower their employees through delegation of authority to complete jobs independently. Dwyer also proposed that delegation as a management tool ought to be tangibly practiced, not just hand-waived, further suggesting that tasks such as managing the manager's in-box could give those employees an appreciation and sense of the work and responsibility required of the manager.

Riahi et al. (2016) found a similar need and answer in the context of a state-facilitated hospital in Iran which outpaced some private hospitals regarding trust in subordinates. They suggested that managers in the state-facilitated hospital empowered their subordinates to assume greater levels of responsibility and responsiveness to duties. Conversely, Rees and Porter (2015) discovered there can be a downside to delegation, especially when delegation failures can lead to catastrophe. However, Rees and Porter also discovered evidence to support the optimism that inspired managers to still practice delegation activities.

Shared Authority

Pritchard (2018) studied the effects of nurse-authorized prescribing in English hospitals, a secondary way for patients to obtain their needed prescriptions, discovering that little research had been conducted to explore the relationship between nurses and doctors considering the fairly new practice. Pritchard found that doctors were experiencing difficulty adjusting to the new arrangement; they sensed their power had been undermined by the introduction of the nurse prescriber. Yet, this shared-authority arrangement, although not yet fully embraced, was still a possibility because doctors were willing to maintain an open dialogue about the new practice.

Obembe et al. (2018) conducted a similar study, concluding that the doctor-nurse relationship in Nigerian hospitals had been historically strained, and only deliberate steps to counteract those strains might show promise to fix the situation. Kosuge and Shiu (2019) found that Japanese automobile companies thrived when the corporate structures shared some of their power with the retail dealerships who better knew their clientele. In the sphere of the Church, Tuppurainen (2016) argued that Jesus empowered his disciples to assume a role similar to the Spirit's role as a *Paraclete*, the Greek term for one called alongside to help. Tuppurainen outlined the shared authority that Jesus gave to the Church, which he argued was shared with the Spirit. According to Tuppurainen, the Spirit empowers the Church to essentially be Jesus' representative on earth.

Sincerity in Handling Authority

Not often are scientists noted for their inspirational influences on others. Yet Goddard (2018) wrote just such a touching biographical account of Dr. Max Perutz, illustrating that people are influenced by their surrounding environment, and often, they are inspired by strong managers who exude an aura of charisma such as Perutz displayed. Perutz, a brilliant Nobel-prize-winning biologist from the early 20th century, was equally renowned for the way he conducted his research laboratory and inspired his research scientists to always exert their best efforts. Perutz displayed his unusual gift to give of himself, not only as a scientist but also as a mentor. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was another such person (Plant, 2019). Bonhoeffer's legacy focused on the Christian's obligation to follow worldly authorities even if the authorities are illegitimate: The telling test was whether a Christian could ultimately acknowledge Jesus as Lord of all even when threatened with danger. Plant, an English citizen, hypothesized that the Christian is obliged to honor the sovereign of the country given that such royal authority is granted by the grace of

God, and concluded that it was proper to swear an oath to obey the queen as required by the Anglican Church.

Extent of Authority

Turning from the origins and other elements of authority, the next topic to consider is an examination of the extent or limits of authority as reflected in the literature. When expressed in terms of French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power, authority can be viewed from both private and public expressions of power. Although public expressions can emanate from people, groups, organizations, or even cultural norms, private perspectives on authority are expressed by means of individuals.

Public Views of Authority

There exists a connection between the concept of public authority and the French and Raven (1959) bases of legitimate, reward, and coercive power. Each of these bases of power extends the authority of the public sphere upon which civilizations are established. The question of the extent of the public officials' authority is the subject of this section.

State Legitimacy. The most obvious expressions of the display of public authority are, of course, the actions and activities of the government, whether at the national, state, intermediary, or local level. Recent studies of international examples about the limits of national authority have included the ways the Ottoman Empire dealt with tribal entities (Çiçek, 2016), the tensions of navigating around Islamic Sharia Law in Banda Aceh after the 2004 tsunami (Birchok, 2016), the expectations of New Zealanders regarding the limits on covert governmental spying (Mullineux & Brown, 2018), and even the jurisdictional considerations in Colonial America regarding the freedom of movement in contested regions of national sovereignty (Kaja, 2016). Within the United States, issues of the separation of powers within the government (Makogon et

al., 2018; Shaub, 2020) have strained the understanding of authoritarian limits of government.

Finally, even local municipalities must deal with governmental limits to their authority, whether

in policy about recreational cannabis (Hoehn, 2019), inclusionary attempts to share budgeting

vision and responsibility between government and the governed (Baiocchi & Summers, 2017), or

the line of demarcation a housing developer maintains over neighborhood housing covenants

(Cheshire, 2019).

      Healthcare Claims to Authority. Although often viewed as a personal matter,

healthcare agencies that make collective decisions about the ways they will provide care can

have extensively influence individuals (Kislov et al., 2016). From an organizational perspective,

healthcare policies can impose wide-ranging effects sometimes beneficial to the individual and

sometimes detrimental, as in the case of the parents of Charlie Gard (Caplan & Folkers, 2017),

who lost their parental rights to decide what was best for their child in favor of the expert power

of doctors. At other times, the perceived expert power of medical field professionals has

outweighed the rights of citizens to freely determine how they believe they should stay healthy,

as can be attested to in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic debate (Lavazza & Farina, 2020)in

relation to masking, social distancing, school closures, and personal decisions about accepting

the provisionally-approved vaccines.

      Religious Authority. Religious expressions of authority throughout history have been

dramatic and often life-changing, considering how such views have affected individuals

(Birchok, 2016). Tietje (2020) argued that during World War I, the decision to extend a level of

military authority to U.S. Army chaplains by allowing them to wear traditional officer ranks

actually undermined their more robust reliance on their religious authority. The literature also

includes an argument that corporate expressions of religious authority affects larger groups and even cultures (Walkowiak, 2017), but that is beyond the scope of this literature review.

Private Views of Authority

There is also a connection between the concept of private authority and the French and Raven (1959) bases of referent and expert power. Individuals, whether they occupy official positions or act on their own, possess and exercise both of these bases of power to varying degrees. Referent power can be displayed in the personality of individuals and the way others are drawn to them; it is essentially a measure of likeability (French & Raven, 1959). Expert power expresses the competency of an individual, and it is a measure of confidence others place in the individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities (French & Raven, 1959). Anter (2020) connected the construct of power to the fundamental work of Max Weber, fixating specifically on Weber's notion that individuals exert their strength of will against forces of resistance as a viable measurement of power. Thus, viewing referent and expert power from the lens of exercising the personal will, it is possible to conceptualize that the private exercise of power and authority is an individualistic pursuit.

Moral Authority. Perhaps nothing is as personal to individuals as their morality, which is an important aspect of the person that directly influences the conscience. Associated with morality is the strong sense of personal reputation (Berkey, 2017; Sticker, 2017). Lockwood's (2019) ethnographic work about how the poor reputation of a Kenyan governor eventually cost him his office provides an interesting window into the morality of an apparently-corrupt politician who disregarded the true value of his reputation, all while thinking that the voters would not notice. Lockwood's work highlights the association between the individual reputations and the application of referent and expert power toward important relationships. Also connected

directly to the concept of moral authority within the literature is the notion of the social contract (Conway, 2016), which addresses the worth of agreement among parties who are attempting to work together.

      Personal Authority. Similar to moral authority, personal authority addresses the free exercise of volition and the personal sovereignty of the individual (Švec, 2020). Nowhere is this concept more decidedly clear than in the exercise of one's religion. The current pope emeritus, Joseph Ratzinger, formerly known as Benedict XVI while he served in the office as pope, opined about the concerns of individuals and how their personal religious lives ought to be synchronized with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church (Biliniewicz, 2019). Nearly as important to citizens of free nations is the notion of political freedom and the ability to express oneself in the public discourse while maintaining the luxury of a private life. Marshall (2019) provided an excellent summation of the thoughts of Richard Steele, a man who often stood in the shadows of more eloquent men of 18th-century England, but who also adeptly voiced the concerns of the common man. Steele's legacy was the antithesis of Thomas Hobbes' defense of the English monarchy a century prior. Although Hobbes strongly favored a sovereign king to rule in the name of the people (Bağci, 2018; Boyle, 2018; Bradley, 2018), Steele offered a valid counterpoint to the concept of the divine right of kings to rule by fiat; he presented difficult challenges to the English crown in the name of the common man, primarily because of his personal authority to convey such a message.

Effects of Authority

      To properly appreciate this study, it is helpful to describe some fundamental concepts about the American military structure and its unique culture. This first section of the literature review is intended to introduce key thoughts about the military to audiences who may not be

familiar with the military lifestyle. The section is presented in three parts: American military hierarchy that facilitates the delegation of authority to the lowest levels of command; the Army officer's legitimate authority to command within the chain of command; and the role soldiers play in recognizing legitimate orders and thoughtfully resisting unlawful orders.

People and entities, such as businesses and even governments, seek authority as a justification to exercise their personal power and enact their own vision for the future (Lopes, 2020). Whether one considers the actions of government officials, religious leaders, academicians, healthcare providers, or military officers, any of these leaders who seek to bring their various visions to fruition need a justifying basis for action. Securing sufficient authority to execute leaders' power is the primary means their vision becomes reality (Kennedy et al., 2016). Seeking the practical value of desiring authority to its most obvious conclusion, it is self-evident that leaders need to experience clear and obvious effects of their power at work; otherwise, no one would logically pursue the acquisition of power and authority. Three typical markers are offered to measure the effects of authority: compliance with directives, gauging the efficacy of orders, and stating whether unit goals and missions are being accomplished.

Hierarchical Nature of the Military

Hierarchy exists in many spheres of work; understanding the basics about military hierarchy illustrates grasping the military chain of command. Of note within military hierarchy is the association between rank, command authority, and appropriate delegation of that authority (Konieczny & Bertossi, 2017). To formulate the context of this study, the following section examines the origin of command authority from founding national documents down through the various echelons of the military chain of command to the officers and noncommissioned officers in the field. These are the military leaders who actually issue orders to their soldiers to conduct

the day-to-day training to prepare for battle and to execute battle plans when in engaged in a combat environment.

U.S. Armed Forces. Although command authority can be traced to each service branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, this study will focus chiefly on authority as it exists within the U.S. Army. The trail of military authority begins with national command authority vested in the president, also known as the commander-in-chief, as the senior civilian authority over the military. The president's command authority passes to U.S. Army combatant commanders down through commanders at multiple echelons of combat and combat support units (U.S. Army, 2014b), finally resting at the company level of command, the Army's smallest self-contained maneuver units (Weissmann & Ahlström, 2019; U.S. Army, 2021b). Company commanders have been entrusted with special legal authority to compel soldiers to obey orders, provided those orders are legal (U.S. Army, 2019).

Listed by order of their inception, the six service branches of the U.S. Armed Forces are: the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, and Space Force. The Coast Guard is only considered a part of the Department of Defense in wartime; at all other times it is governed by the Department of Homeland Security (U.S. Coast Guard, 2021). The service branches of the military operate in unison because they are all included in the civilian leadership of the executive branch with the president functioning as the commander-in-chief of the U.S. Armed Forces (Finucane, 2020; O'Brien, 2019; Price, 2021). The commander-in-chief is responsible to delegate authority to the service branch secretaries, each of whom serves in a civilian capacity nominated by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. The service secretaries answer directly to the president and provide civilian oversight of the military as they initiate military goals tailored to their respective service missions on behalf of the nation (Rose, 1946; 10 U.S.C.

§ 161, 2018). The service chiefs, in turn, empower their generals and admirals to direct military actions, develop plans, and carry out directives and orders (Price, 2021; 10 U.S.C. § 164, 1986). Each service branch is composed of multiple echelons of command with higher-level units and echelons of command directing and resourcing military action in contrast with lower levels of command that execute those orders by conducting training preparation and combat operations with specific objectives. Tactics at the lowest levels support higher-level strategic objectives.

Each service branch of the U.S. Armed Forces maintains a unique signature mission for which it is best known. The U.S. Army (Mechergui & Jayakumar, 2020; Metz, 2016; Sarantakes, 2016; U.S. Army, 2021c), and, to a lesser degree, the U.S. Marine Corps (Blount & Bergeron, 2019; Sarantakes, 2016; U.S. Marine Corps, 2021), seizes, secures, and maintains ground to support viable land operations and achieve national objectives. The U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard protect sovereign national borders and keep sea lanes of transportation and communication open, as well as providing ground forces with naval gun fire to supplement their missions (Cozzo & Cozzo, 2019; Deloughrey, 2019; Dismukes, 2020; Khan, 2021; U.S. Coast Guard, 2021; U.S. Navy, 2021). The U.S. Air Force dominates the skies of the battlefield to protect ground forces, conduct offensive actions on selected high-value enemy targets, and prevent the enemy from gaining air superiority in given areas of operations (Frandsen, 2017; McLain & Dalman, 2018; U.S. Air Force, 2021); and the U.S. Space Force, the newest armed service (10 U.S.C. § 161, 2018), executes the mission of maintaining operational security of space, especially to protect satellite operations and interdict enemy long-range armaments (Hoffmann, 2020; Titus, 2020; Whitney et al., 2019; U.S. Space Force, 2021).

Uniqueness of U.S. Military Authority. Not all nations' militaries operate the same way. Authoritarianism is not the same as legitimate authority, and such a distinction is crucial to

understanding the American Army. American servicemen and women originate from a free society, and while they are subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) while on active duty, they still expect and deserve the decent humane treatment, respect, and dignity afforded to all American citizens. Unlike feudal systems of the Middle Ages that demanded fealty, or organized crime cartels and syndicates that thrive on fear and violence, the American military is reasoned in its approach to giving orders and insisting orders are obeyed; the rule of law is vital (U.S. Army, 2017; 2019). American soldiers fight to preserve the rights guaranteed to all Americans by the U.S. Constitution. Thus, the source of authority requiring military members to obey orders also provides Americans their rights, leading to a discussion about the origins and means by which military officers gain their right to give orders.

The American military is effective because military authority derives from the people (Barnett, 2019; Hatzenbuehler, 2020) through national documents, such as the U.S. Constitution and the U.S. Code, and promotes robust delegation of authority to commanders at all echelons. Unlike most European militaries that selected their officers chiefly from aristocratic families through birthright (Didouan, 2020; Margreiter, 2019), the American founding fathers rejected even the notion of titles of nobility (U.S. Const., art. I, § 9). Halvorson (2010) maintained that the founding fathers feared the idea of large standing armies within the borders of the newly-founded country, opting to create the separation of governmental powers to keep the military from gaining too much power. In the desire to avoid any association with the idea of a national monarchy, the early architects of the American government and military sought answers of the philosophers of the Enlightenment (Colón-Ríos, 2016; Conway, 2010); the founders' analysis of those answers is reflected in the U.S. Constitution through bold pronouncement.

Constitutional Authority of Officers

The previous discussion about military hierarchy serves as a convenient starting place to understanding the military chain of command. However, Army officers are charged with leading soldiers; therefore, it is necessary to understand the legitimacy these leaders possess by virtue of their office in requiring obedience to their legal orders, as well as the concept of the military chain of command. The authority of the American military officer derives from the founding documents of the nation: the U.S. Constitution (U.S. Const., 1787) and the U.S. Code (Office of the Law Revision Counsel [OLRC], 2021a). The U.S. Constitution is the foundational document that all service members, officer or enlisted, swear to uphold when they enter the armed forces. Within the U.S. Constitution are the essential bases for all governmental authority in the United States government (Price, 2021), extending to military officers as well. The U.S. Code is an organized list of Congressional laws, updated and arranged around selected topics and continuously maintained by Office of the Law Revision Counsel, which is a component of the U.S. House of Representatives (Office of the Law Revision Counsel [OLRC], 2021b).

Foundational Documents. In establishing the formal governmental structure of the United States, the U.S. Constitution enumerates unique powers for each of the three branches of government (Price, 2021). Although the judicial branch does not directly affect the U.S. Armed Forces (Williams, 2014), the legislative and executive branches do (Pearcy, 2018; U.S. Const., art. I and II). Uniquely, justice in the U.S. Armed Forces is the purview of Congress by virtue of its responsibilities to establish and oversee the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), a set of laws that govern military personnel in a separate manner than civilians subject to common law (Cromley, 2019; Williams, 2014).

Congress is also responsible to fund, regulate, and empower the military to provide for the common defense (U.S. Const., art. I, § 8; U.S. Const., preamble), while the president, in his role as the commander-in-chief of the military (U.S. Const., art. II, § 2), delegates his constitutional authority through the secretaries of the Defense Department and its various services. In particular, Article 1, Section 8, of the Constitution specifies the powers of Congress to provide for the common defense (U.S. Const., art. I, § 8, cl. 1), a phrase further enumerated and enlarged within the balance of Section 8. Included among Congress' powers are the ability and responsibility to: (a) declare war; (b) raise and support armies and a navy; (c) regulate land and naval forces; (d) raise and provide for a militia; (e) appropriate funds to create military infrastructure; and (f) make laws to direct and support the authority vested in the officers of the United States government, including military officers (U.S. Const., art. I, § 8). Additionally, Sections 9 and 10 of Article 1 specifically prohibit Congress or the various states from granting titles of nobility, which was a key difference between the views of Americans and Europeans regarding the origins of authority for military officers (Didouan, 2020; Margreiter, 2019).

Finally, the U.S. Code serves as the primary mechanism for Congress to fulfill its constitutional responsibilities to provide for the common defense (10 U.S.C. § 7062, 2019; U.S. Const., art. I, § 8; U.S. Const., preamble). It is the official codification of all laws as they pertain to various topics (OLRC, 2021a). The focus of the present study will concentrate primarily on command authority as described in Title 10 (10 U.S.C. § 164, 1986), and particularly as command authority is exercised within the U.S. Army (10 U.S.C. § 7062, 2019).

Chain of Command. The chain of command within the military context serves as a conduit for directives and orders from the highest levels of strategic planning to the practical on-the-ground level of execution (Halvorson, 2010). U.S. Army field manuals describe the chain of

command as an unbroken series of commanders from the commander-in-chief at the top to the company commander, platoon leader, and squad leader at the lowest levels through whom command is exercised (U.S. Army, 2021a). Konieczny and Bertossi (2017) emphasized that the chain of command has parallels in many walks of life, but the concept is illustrated in the most straightforward manner within the military. They also pointed out that informal chains of power or influence exist alongside the chain of command to aid in decision-making and execution of the more formal orders process.

Commanders at all echelons of the U.S. Army take charge of their units (U.S. Army, 2014b); these commanders exercise authority to equip, train, and maintain good order and discipline of their soldiers at all times. Their purpose is to prepare their units to fight the nation's wars. Commanders down to the battalion level also maintain staffs (U.S. Army, 2014c) to assist them in planning and executing routine and tactical operations. Six distinct echelons of command exist in the Army: theater army, corps, division, brigade, battalion, and company, although there is now more fluidity in the echelon structure than in previous decades (U.S. Army, 2014b), matching resources to tailored missions. However, commanders at each level hold the amount of delegated authority commensurate to their spans of control, responsibility, and influence. Army, corps, and division commanders are always general officers, and their units reflect a broad spectrum of combat and combat support units working together to accomplish strategic military goals and objectives. Brigades are the primary unit of combat for the Army (U.S. Army, 2021b); usually three to five brigades comprise a combat division (U.S. Army, 2014b). For example, a typical armor division comprises two armor brigades, an infantry brigade, a combat aviation brigade, and a sustainment brigade. Units at the brigade and battalion levels are most often commanded by colonels and lieutenant colonels, respectively (U.S. Army, 2021b).

Finally, company-level commands are most often managed by captains; although, in some cases, majors or lieutenants are able to command. Companies consist of platoons which, in turn, comprise squads (U.S. Army, 2021b). Platoon leaders, normally at the rank of lieutenant, do not command by title, but do wield delegated authority as commissioned officers to lead their platoons and issue legal orders. Squad leaders, who are the only noncommissioned officers in the formal chain of command, directly supervise soldiers, and these leaders constitute the lowest level of the chain. Squad leaders receive orders from their higher-level officers in the chain of command, and they execute the orders by ensuring the soldiers in their charge obey legal orders and comply in executing those orders. Grasping the construct of this chain of delegation allows the proper perspective for understanding the role of the commander. Junior leaders in the chain, such as platoon leaders and squad leaders, provide the care and training of soldiers to prepare them for combat (U.S. Army, 2021b); this concept connects the officer's right to expect obedience from subordinates to the officer's responsibility to care for subordinates.

Delegation of Military Authority

Following directly from the concept of the military chain of command is the actual mechanism that allows orders to flow from top to bottom in the military (Konieczny & Bertossi, 2017; Pearcy, 2018). The mechanism ensuring the free flow of orders is the delegation of authority (Price, 2021). Moreover, the requirement for military commanders to delegate their authority efficaciously (King, 2020; U.S. Army, 2014c) furthers the notion that orders must pass through the various levels of the chain of command. This delegation of authority for officers to issue orders complements the concept of transferring the right to command soldiers from one echelon to the next. Appreciating the basis for transmitting orders, one can then conceptualize the need for conducting the planning and orders processes in the Army. Plans designed by

organizational staffs at higher levels become official orders in the name of the commander that must be conveyed to subordinate units who conduct their own mission analysis and construct their own orders at their respective levels of command.

U.S. Military's Superior Design. Part of the genius of the American military is that all American citizens derive great benefit from the military's strength, even though the vast majority of those citizens will never don a uniform to defend their country. America's sons and daughters risk their lives to protect the U.S. Constitution they have sworn an oath to uphold which, in turn, guarantees the rights of the nation. The uniqueness of the American military intimated that Army soldiers do not swear allegiance to any person; rather, they support and defend the Constitution (Estevez, 2019). Such an arrangement segregates inherent personal authority and power from the authority vested solely in the offices of commanders, as French and Raven (1959) noted in their study on social power. Understanding the commander's intent for an order promotes confident execution of orders rooted in the power of duly-held offices, critical factors that set the American military apart from militaries of other countries.

Small Unit Leadership. Officers and enlisted personnel are the soldiers who comprise all Army units. The officers provide leadership and issue orders for the enlisted ranks to execute (Rose, 1946) to accomplish unit goals assigned by senior commanders and other comprehensive missions. Bishop and Ross (2018) characterized military leadership as an absolute form of authority. Among the enlisted ranks, the senior enlisted are called noncommissioned officers, or NCOs, and provide oversight of their soldiers in a similar way that construction foremen oversee their workers (Perry III, 2018; Shin & Kim, 2019); although, unlike foremen, NCOs care for soldiers and their families both on- and off-duty every day of the year. The primary division among military officers is their status as either supporting staff officers or commanders of

military units (King, 2020; Nenninger, 1994; U.S. Army, 2014c). Philpott's (2011) thoughtful review of a book about military chiefs of staff, the senior officers who control the subordinate staff officers at the various echelons of command, offered an interesting perspective regarding the efficacy of staff officers who supported their more famous commanders. Philpott maintained that the relationship between an effective chief of staff and their commander is based in understanding and developing trust of one another also noting that this dynamic has been inadequately studied by scholars.

Platoons and squads are the building blocks of all units in the Army (U.S. Army, 2021b); therefore, it is very important that they are actively engaged in the planning process. The officers who are platoon leaders are often new to the Army and inexperienced, so their role is similar that of interns. Platoon leaders are usually paired with seasoned platoon sergeants who have substantial years of experience caring for and leading soldiers. Platoon leaders can be thought of as new officers who are learning the logistics of giving commands (Estevez, 2019). Squad leaders, although junior to their platoon sergeants, usually have acquired several years of experience in their jobs, and they are familiar with receiving orders. They care for and train soldiers to prepare them for the rigors of combat and to become technically and tactically proficient in their jobs.

Entrusting Subordinates With Authority. Pion-Berlin (2020) stressed the voluntary nature of authority transfer as a vital component of delegation. Transmitting orders from one echelon to the next requires clear and distinct levels of authority; this is especially important to ensure units at all levels are performing at their peak capability and within their assigned areas of responsibility. Such clear understanding of these roles and assignments works to prevent missed opportunities and enhances the overlap in coordination. As a good example of this dynamic in

the military environment, consider the conduct of a combat operation called a passage of lines

(U.S. Army, 2013), a specific place on the battlefield where one commander assumes authority

and responsibility from another commander for that specific area of operations in a combat

environment. If the two commands do not coordinate properly, one or both units risk dangerous

loss of life; if they do coordinate properly, units are made safe and combat operations proceed

smoothly. In the small unit context, one commander assumes a mission or set of orders from a

higher command, fully taking charge of all coordination associated with that particular

delegation of authority.

Acceptable Undermining of Authority

Although much of the literature implies a value related to complying with orders of

leaders in positions of authority, there is a legitimate time and place when follower disobedience

can make sense. Many leaders invoke a sense of confidence in their leadership abilities, but some

so-called leaders evoke the opposite response leading to a crisis of confidence for followers

(Hundman & Parkinson, 2019). Because leaders differ in the caliber of their abilities, training,

and experience, it stands to reason that the followers of weak leaders may become concerned

about orders that appear to be unclear, unwise, or unsafe. The final section of this literature

review is intended to address ways that followers can recognize and distinguish the orders of

good leaders from the orders of inept leaders, resulting in the ability for followers to formulate

right judgments between legitimate orders and orders that could be considered unethical or

illegitimate. Understanding the range of possible options and obligations for both leaders and

followers is necessary to appreciating the methodology in the following chapter.

Compliance

Chiu and Hung (2020) discovered a strong correlation between leaders exhibiting high humility along with demonstrated trustworthiness, yet strong authority, evoked the highest levels of conformity to their visions and goals. Granted, their study occurred in China, long known for its social norms of conformity; however, they were able to show that when leaders were deficient in both trustworthiness and authority, the results produced the lowest levels of conformity. In a starkly contrasting study in Scotland, Weaver et al. (2021) examined the social and personal elements that contributed to people who exhibited non-compliant behavior. They found that offenders were most affected by three dynamics: trust and legitimacy issues, motivational concerns, and systemic influences. At the heart of the Weaver study are individual concerns about the trustworthiness of those in authority, along with psychosocial concerns that dominate the minds of the non-conformists. Lopes (2020), in discussing the business implications of authority versus power, distinguished *authority* as the right to expect accomplishments as contrasted with *power*, which is the ability to impose one's will even against opposition. Based on this distinction, it is understandable that the two other studies in this paragraph focused on how personality and social dynamics intersect when leaders assert their authority to accomplish goals.

Efficacy

Turning to possible responses available to leaders under attack, Maltzman (1960) expressed the theory of originality, strongly connecting the behavioral trait of original thought to creativity. This is informative because it may provide insight into possible responses of those in authority that experience undermining attacks to their positions and decisions. Letrud and Hernes (2016) demonstrated in their study that people must always be on guard, even in the vaunted

environs of academia, against accepting ideas just because some consider those ideas to be intuitive in some way. One potential hypothesis is that people in authority who seem to thrive in their positions may respond in more original ways than people who do not thrive, suggesting possible survival tactics associated with creative responses. Such concepts as chunking and the capacity of memory, contained in information processing theory (Miller, 1956/1994), are techniques likely employed to combat negative feelings by way of compartmentalizing attacks from other more positive thoughts. Many times, undermining attacks can cause ethical issues as well as potential crises of conscience against which leaders must constantly guard. Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) suggested that an understanding about cognitive dissonance can help leaders to manage or alleviate such concerns.

Klapper and Reitzig (2018) explored how corporations such as Wikipedia, Zappos, and Valve, with highly-motivated employees could exercise their authority without becoming socially indebted to others. These scholars were concerned with trying to understand the most appropriate times and events when managers should or should not intervene in problems that employees were likely to solve through their own initiative. The researchers wanted to determine the price of intervention from managers in terms of credibility and cooperation that could influence the level of motivation for self-directed employees. Some studies, such as Schøyen (2021), demonstrated that the state use of coercion to accomplish its goals produced counterproductive affect, often fomenting groups of individuals to resent the perceived heavy hand of government, which produced the effect of diminishing the governmental authority's designs. Other studies have tended to illustrate and confirm the conventional wisdom that too much leniency can spoil subordinates (Zitek & Krause, 2019).

Mission Focus

As it pertains to indicating goal has been successfully completed, there must be a balance between expectations and reality. Nowhere is such coordination more important than when logistical experts from multinational military forces must cooperate in a combat environment (Gamez, 2016). Similarly, Prescott (2020) pointed out that for multinational forces to successfully cooperate, their policies ought to match. Balian and Gasparyan (2017) stated that personal motivations of local politicians, such as achieving goals for local communities, can be perceived as a greater compensation than money since many foreign countries view the act of caring for the community as a high honor resulting in local hero status for the politician. Finally, the prospect of being a hero can motivate military officers and soldiers to endure hardship for the sake of unit and personal pride. The concept of a culture of organizational grit, which is closely related to the idea of individual grit, is a measure of the ability to endure and overcome adversity for the sake of completing the mission (Luning et al., 2021). The motive to endure becomes a shared vision that, when accomplished, is a badge of honor for the officers, individual soldiers, and the unit as a whole.

Insubordination

Among the results in the literature on *military insubordination* are many articles that discuss insurrections and military coups (Albrecht, 2019; Fajardo, 2020; Hamby, 2002; Koehler et al., 2016; Lundgren, 2018). However, the topics of insurrections and coups advance beyond the scope of my study, which focuses more on the interpersonal dynamics in which individual instances of insubordination and undermining occur. Supporting the notion of interpersonal dynamics, Bessner and Lorber (2012) confronted the issue of military insubordination to civilian authorities, particularly the commander-in-chief, and where the line may be drawn in disciplining

military leaders who dare to challenge the president's authority. Similarly, Bick (2007) examined the same dynamic within the setting of Israeli military and political leadership, concluding that religious leaders also help fashion policy.

Using social exchange theory as their starting point, Mackey et al. (2021) argued that insubordination chiefly occurs in the context of perceived abusive supervision; that is, Mackey and colleagues maintained that people who portray acts construed as insubordinate are most often responding to the view that their supervisors act in unethical manners. This perspective has merit regarding the study of insubordination within the military context; however, Mackey et al. were interested primarily in the business context, so many of their ideas must be weighed against that particular dynamic. Because U.S. Army soldiers operate within the constraints of the UCMJ, soldiers live under an additional level of social control that applies legal and often punitive consequences to military members who are held guilty of insubordination.

Discussing the act of insubordination as a form of protest in scientific and academic circles, Penders and Shaw (2020) argued that inequities based on discriminatory practices in academia have disadvantaged certain groups, effectively granting greater prestige to those who have developed a reputation more valued by their leaders. Penders and Shaw noted that on occasion scientific authors who commit acts of rule-breaking, such as publishing their work using a pseudonym, are justified in the name of civil disobedience by calling attention to or protesting unjust prevailing attitudes. Their article is narrowly focused on the issue of credit in authoring academic work, but it speaks to greater issues in society about rules skewed to advantage some groups over others.

Mumby et al. (2017) posited that scholarly work regarding the topic of resistance has resurfaced as a topic of academic interest after nearly 20 years of neglect. The authors expressed

their worldview as sympathetic to critical studies and Marxist philosophy; the timing of their article also comports with national expressions of resistance to the Trump administration, which Mumby and colleagues specifically admitted. Of particular interest to this study, Mumby et al. provided an excellent contrast between individual expressions of resistance, which they referred to as insubordination, and corporate expressions of resistance they considered insurrection. Additionally, they distinguish between clandestine and public actions and attitudes of resistance. Such comparisons between individual versus collective and public versus private actions are helpful in understanding resistance attitudes within the military context, especially regarding the frustrations of subordinates toward their superiors.

Challenging Illegitimate Authority

The code of conduct and laws of land warfare require soldiers to obey lawful orders (U.S. Army, 2014a; 2019). Conversely, in combat zones soldiers are expected to refuse unlawful orders that may lead to war crimes or unethical treatment of combatants or noncombatants (Estevez, 2019; U.S. Army, 2019); however, even in training and administrative environments soldiers must be attuned to recognize and resist unlawful orders. In distinguishing between proper and improper orders, soldiers can be assured they will be protected in the execution of their duties. Although soldiers are required to thoughtfully challenge unlawful orders at every echelon of the Army (Hundman & Parkinson, 2019), the small unit context is the final opportunity to catch illegal orders before they are enacted.

Summary

Authority issues are as old as civilization. Certainly, the 21st century is not the only time in history when people who wield authority have experienced challenges to their leadership. Starting with the premise that French and Raven's (1959) power taxonomy posited several bases

of power available to leaders, chief among them for this study is the base of legitimate power, this literature review described the influence of French and Raven's work regarding social power upon the fields of sociology, psychology, and education.

The literature review was organized into five main sections: selected elements comprising authority in a more general nature; the exercise of authority as it exists in the literature; the extent that the common man experiences authority in daily life; the effects of exercising authority in a military setting; and a discussion about the conditions in which authority can acceptably be questioned or undermined. The storyline about authority in the literature transitions from an overarching theme of workplace control to an understanding of the mechanisms established to channel such control: Leaders tell followers what to do, and followers either accept direction or register a challenge to that direction. Finally, the literature review closed with some thoughts about the effects of authority within the military setting, especially regarding obedience, efficacy, insubordination, and mission accomplishment.

That which can currently be learned from the existing literature is that the power taxonomy of French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power delineates several distinct and unique forms of power, among which, legitimate power is especially helpful in understanding the concerns and lived experience of young military officers who are in formal command positions. The literature also provides information about the elements comprising authority, the extent that authority can be experienced in real life, and tangible ways authority can be exercised. However, the unknown information that this study aims to discover relates to the lived experiences of company commanders who deal with instances of insubordination in their units whether deserved or not. Within the literature there are virtually no studies about junior military officers fulfilling their duties as commanders, and there is scant information about the issue of

disobedience of orders, lawful or unlawful. This proposed study is intended to specifically address gaps in the knowledge about both of these issues.

The plan and motive for this literature review was to provide a backdrop for further examination of how American military leaders deal with attacks on their authority. However, within America in general, attacks on authority have intensified to a point in which chaos has become commonplace in both print and broadcast news media. Those who would desire to lead within any number of fields of endeavor are becoming increasingly frustrated as their decisions, actions, and motives are continuously questioned (Catlaw, 2006; Estevez, 2019; Hundman & Parkinson, 2019; Jeynes, 2019; Maurer, 2013; McLaughlin, 2018; Wynia, 1973). This study seeks to address this phenomenon especially as small unit commanders in the U.S. Army exercise their legitimate authority.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to explore insubordinate conduct within company-level units of the U.S. Army. The problem is that authority in general has been under attack in the United States since at least the 1970s (Catlaw, 2006; Hamilton, 1991; Haug, 1988; McLaughlin, 2018; Wynia, 1973) and insubordinate behavior can be readily observed within the military context (Bessner & Lorber, 2012; Sulea, 2013). Relying on the perspectives of company-grade officers and other leaders, this study seeks to discover themes pertaining to insubordinate conduct and how it affects small units within the Army. Chapter Three of this study includes sections that address the design of the study, as well as the research questions that guide the study. Readers will find sections in this chapter that describe the research design, the central and subordinate research questions guiding the study, information about the study's setting and participants, the researcher's positionality, and the procedures for obtaining the data for the study. Next, a section regarding data collection details specific types of collection, to include interviews and letter writing, also, extensive question lists from the perspective of three distinct groups of participants are included in this section to support the interviews. Finally, Chapter Three concludes with sections related to data analysis and synthesis, trustworthiness, and how ethical concerns are handled.

Research Design

This study is a hermeneutic phenomenological research design. The design's approach is ideal at all three levels: The method is qualitative; the design approach is phenomenological; and the design type is hermeneutic. The following information will illustrate the argument that all three parts are necessary for this study. The qualitative research method addresses the nuanced

experiences of U.S. Army officers who have commanded at the company level and have endured acts of insubordinate conduct. This study's participants also include subordinate leaders at the company level, particularly squad leaders, who are first-line supervisors of soldiers and have oftentimes witnessed such insubordinate acts. The social constructivist worldview is applied in this study as a way of understanding the military small unit environment. There is a sense of practicality in realizing that human experiences throughout the world are valid, tangible, and impactful. The social constructivist worldview permits people to create explanations for their own actions, but also helps them gain understanding about their unique perceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The phenomenological research design is appropriate for this study because participants who participate lend their unique perceptions to the study as a way of documenting a fresh perspective. Moustakas (1994), relying on Husserl, viewed phenomenology as an attempt to describe an experience without adding one's own biases to the discussion. Conversely, van Manen (2014) described the phenomenological process as a form of practical inquiry through which the researcher's experiences are also valued, albeit in a conservative and insulated manner. Again, van Manen viewed the quest for documenting the lived experience as an issue of practicality from which all humans can potentially experience and gain. The phenomenon focuses on leaders who have experienced or witnessed insubordination perpetrated by soldiers. The notion of obedience to lawful orders centers on the right and responsibility of U.S. Army commissioned officers to issue orders. Subordinates are legally bound and obligated to obey the lawful orders of officers and other leaders appointed over them. The problem becomes apparent when soldiers deliberately choose to disobey such orders.

The hermeneutic approach is useful for interpreting the lived experiences of each officer and to seek common themes among their stories. Moustakas (1994) described this approach as the ability to ascertain the deeper meaning underlying the outward manifestation of an action or experience. Narrowing the design from holistic to the granular, this study aims to illuminate the specific instances in which the participants experienced direct challenges to their authority as military commanders because of insubordinate conduct. The expectation is that all participants will clarify their experiences in order to develop general themes about insubordination. Hermeneutic phenomenological study also deliberately and systematically examines the human experience. Bynum and Varpio (2018) characterized the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology as the effort to advance beyond mere description of a phenomenon and to add the context of daily life as a means of enhancing the phenomenon's description. The notion of insubordination, or disobeying legitimate orders, appropriately calls for a phenomenological examination, as it involves the question of how military officers who exercise command have experienced the phenomenon. The military context, and particularly the conditions in which lawful orders are given, is crucial to understanding those experiences. The nature of the unit's military mission and unit composition also are factors to consider. The hermeneutic lens is also helpful for examining the phenomenon of military insubordination because many Americans are unfamiliar with the idea of obligated obedience within the UCMJ's unique set of laws that can impose severe punishment for disobedience. The best way to explicate such experiences is to employ a research design that emphasizes interpretive models as the means to describe the human condition (van Manen, 2016).

Regarding the nature of hermeneutic phenomenology, van Manen (2016) posited that people are not objects, so it would be inappropriate to study them the way one would study

nature. People act in unique, dynamic, and ever-changing ways, implying that to characterize them in a static, predictable manner is also inappropriate. Words have meaning, and meanings have consequences. To define rationality in a monolithic manner is to espouse an uninformed yet nascent academic position; it is academically irresponsible and irrational to do so. Natural scientists show themselves to be haughty and narrow-minded when they impose a singular definition of rationality upon all other types of science and learning. For this reason, some of the influential names associated with hermeneutic phenomenology, such as Dilthey, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, van Manen, and others have insisted that hermeneutic phenomenology is the human science study of human beings in their natural habitat (Guillen, 2019). Unlike the field of natural science, human science focuses on the activities of people rather than observing objects from afar. This activity speaks of the essence of a particular phenomenon and how that essential notion maintains meaning for studied human beings (van Manen, 2016).

Research Questions

The central and subordinate research questions for this study seek to determine the effects of insubordination on commanders' legitimate powers during the times they lead U.S. Army company-sized units. Legitimate power is one of the five original bases of power in the French and Raven (1959) power taxonomy; this particular form of power is based in cultural norms and commonly-accepted social structures (French & Raven, 1959). As company-level leaders exercise their legitimate power and authority while conducting their daily duties, they often experientially discover their authority derives initially by virtue of occupying formal offices or leadership roles. The central research question specifically addresses ways in which insubordinate acts potentially undermine the ability of junior military officers to lead effectively in small unit situations. In particular, this ontological question explores the meaning associated

with the right of commanders to lead their units, especially as they experience insubordination. The three sub-questions are designed to discover diverse perspectives regarding this phenomenon especially as they relate to the power taxonomy.

Central Research Question

How do U.S. Army company commanders use their legitimate power when confronting insubordinate conduct?

Sub Question One

How does insubordination affect company commanders as they seek to exercise their right to lead?

Sub Question Two

How do squad leaders, as first-line supervisors, support command legitimacy in the face of insubordinate conduct?

Sub Question Three

What types of advice do senior noncommissioned officers offer to small unit leaders regarding insubordinate conduct?

Setting and Participants

This section describes the setting in which this study occurs: a military post located in the United States. For the purposes of anonymity, I have re-designated the post as Fort Tesla, a whimsical pseudonym, giving a nod to progress and innovation in honor of the scientist, Nicola Tesla, rather than the automobile company. Because I work at Fort Tesla and have established many connections it makes sense to seek participants here, whom I also describe in this section, as well as their military roles and criteria I established for choosing them for my study.

Setting

Fort Tesla originally was constructed as Camp Tesla at the beginning of the 20th century in support of the war efforts during World War I; over time it has expanded to become an economic catalyst and important influence in the region. Fort Tesla is surrounded by more than 10 cities, towns, and villages. These communities provide housing and other services for the military population, which is in excess of 45,000 servicemen and women and their families, in addition to thousands of civil servants and contractors who support the post. A wide variety of religious affiliations within the chapel system on the post and places of worship off post are testament to the religious diversity among the troops and families. In keeping with the demographic makeup of the nation, Fort Tesla boasts many ethnicities and racial backgrounds. The fort was also one of the first military bases nationwide to acknowledge transgender soldiers among the ranks.

There are a number of brigade-sized units on Fort Tesla, to include several combat maneuver brigades, such as armor, infantry, artillery, aviation; combat support brigades, such as logistics, intelligence, engineers; and even special-purpose brigades, such as foreign-support training. Fort Tesla also hosts several tenant units that are subject to their own chains of command to conduct independent military missions but use the fort as a base of operations. These units, such as a Special Forces group, Ranger regiment, ROTC headquarters, and even the military hospital, receive services from the garrison, to include building, office, and motor pool space, materiel support, maintenance support, medical, housing, and other similar assistance. Within the region are also upwards of 100,000 retirees who chose to settle in the area to continue receiving their medical and other retiree benefits from the post.

Additionally, the bases of other armed services, which are all renamed with pseudonyms,

also maintain a presence in the region. The Air Force operates from Edison Air Force Base, which is situated adjacent to Fort Tesla. The base's mission is to provide transport for Army operations, as well as to supply military logistical transport worldwide. The Navy maintains operations on several bases in the region, to include Naval Base Oppenheimer and Da Vinci Island Air Station. The primary role of the Navy is to secure, protect, and maintain open sea lanes of shipping and communication, and to provide naval gunfire support in offensive operations and coastal protection of the nation in defensive operations. Neither the Marine Corps nor the Space Force maintains any large presence in the region. Finally, Camp Nicola is the nearby National Guard base headquarters supporting the state's numerous guard and reserve units throughout the state, and in time of declared war supporting the national war effort.

Every effort will be made to ensure participants are interviewed in their workplace. Many military personnel with multiple years of experience display their affiliations with previous units on their work or home office so-called *I love me* walls. These decorations are a typical military tradition through which soldiers proudly display their company colors, which are flags and banners representing commands of various units, mementos, photos, coin collections, and other memorabilia indicating their past interests, loyalties, and service.

Participants

This study focuses on three groups of participants: former company commanders, squad leaders, and senior noncommissioned officers working on battalion or higher echelon staffs. The former company commanders, designated Group 1, are commissioned U.S. Army officers who have successfully completed a company command, preferably culminating in the past five years, making it very likely that they will be either senior captains or majors by the time they are interviewed. Typically the Group 1 commanders range in age from mid-20s to mid-30s.

The squad leaders in this study, designated as Group 2, are current or former first-line supervisors of troops in the squad setting within a company-sized unit. Squad leaders are typically Army staff sergeants, although they may occasionally be sergeants or even corporals. Most staff sergeants have between six and eight years in service; they often range in age from mid-20s to early-30s.

Finally, the senior noncommissioned officers in Group 3 are usually sergeants first class, master sergeants, and sergeants major; they typically range in age from mid-30s to their mid-to-late-40s. They are very experienced in the Army and have served or are currently serving in multiple leadership roles as supervisors of troops at the squad, platoon, company, and higher echelons. Senior noncommissioned officers also bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to bear whenever they offer advice.

I have deliberately made a distinction among the participant groups to require the officers to have already completed their command time. Unlike the enlisted leaders in Groups 2 or 3, the officers in Group 1 have been empowered with UCMJ authority by virtue of the role they held as unit commanders. The ideal participant roster will include men and women, as well as minorities, depending on the actual population set at the military base during the interview process. Although both van Manen (2014) and Patton (2015) maintained that there is no one specifically-appropriate sample size for qualitative studies, van Manen focuses on the end results: Continue to collect data until saturation occurs and uniqueness from experiential life has become evident. I anticipate recruiting between 12 and 15 participants. I expect to recruit about five to six former commanders as Group 1 participants; four to five squad leaders to populate Group 2; and three to four senior leaders to take part as members of Group 3.

The participants for this study all share in common their leadership experience at the

company, troop, or battery level. Companies are the military units that are directly subject to the hierarchical and organizational level of an Army battalion or squadron. A company generally has between 40 and 130 officers and soldiers, depending on the type of unit it is (U.S. Army, 2021b). For example, a typical U.S. Army tank company is authorized five officers and 57 soldiers who operate 14 main battle tanks (U.S. Army, 2016), while a dismounted infantry company can have five officers and upwards of 130 soldiers because its mission and equipment vastly differ from the tank company's.

Choosing of participants will be conducted primarily through purposeful sampling of initial known contacts on the post and relying on snowball sampling and referral recruitment to round out the cohort of participants. As an example of purposeful sampling, after receiving IRB approval, I will initiate the recruitment process by making face-to-face contact with several former commanders I know, and will explain the purpose of the study, attempting to enlist their support with the goal of developing further contacts and prospective participants. At a minimum, I intend to get recommendations and email addresses for potential participants. Recruiting efforts will cease if the limit of 15 participants is obtained as it would be beyond the manageable range for my topic and networking capabilities.

Researcher Positionality

My motivation for conducting a study about insubordination stems from philosophical assumptions that I bring to this research project. In the paragraphs below I will illustrate my assumptions to illustrate my motives. As a retired U.S. Army officer, I have dealt with the phenomenon of insubordinate behavior in both command and staff leadership roles. Small unit leaders have important insights to glean regarding insubordination and the exercise of legitimate authority within the military setting.

Interpretive Framework

Because relationships are critical to maintaining meaningful discourse, my interpretive framework is based on a constructivist paradigm as a helpful view and explanation of events in this world, serving as a guide to inform the way forward in the study. Social constructivism is a worldview in which researchers seek to discover meaning in events in their environments and to negotiate further meaning with participants regarding those events (Patton, 2002). The cornerstone of social constructivism as a paradigm is that people work together to find and make meaning of the world (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2016). In short, people who practice social constructivism do not passively wait for their environment to define them. As a final note of self-disclosure, because I believe the Scriptures are inerrant my worldview is primarily biblical. Patton (2002) particularly emphasized the words *social constructivism* and *social constructionism* (pp. 96-102), distinguishing between constructivism's individual perspective in determining personal meaning and the more collective approach of social constructionism that is applicable for delineating when shared meaning is emphasized. The distinction serves most applicably in this study as data collection focuses on the participants' individual and personal understandings about insubordination. Conversely, the data analysis and synthesizing processes focus more on the collective understanding and communication about insubordination by the participants.

Philosophical Assumptions

Philosophical assumptions comprise three categories: ontological assumptions, essentially what one believes about reality; epistemological assumptions, which describe understanding about what is considered knowledge and how one can know that; and axiological assumptions that highlight critical values of both researchers and of participants. These

perspectives, considered holistically, shape the way I see the world; they also inform my views regarding both authority and insubordination within the context of the military.

Ontological Assumption

My ontological assumptions center on the premise that God alone created the universe, and He sovereignly rules and maintains control of all. Therefore, I hold dear the idea that there is only one universal reality, and that reality can only be known through the lens of God's revealed truth. I am a devoted follower of Jesus Christ, the King of heaven and earth (Acts 1:6-8; Revelation 11:15, 17). It is my life's aim to better understand the depths of Jesus' claim as King of Kings to both own and wield all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18).God reveals His truth through the Bible, His Church, and in the ways people experience His work and presence in their own lives. I hope to learn more about God's authority by discovering the ways military leaders handle the authority entrusted to them. I have posed my central research question as an ontological question as a means of exploring the meaning associated with the responsibility of commanders to lead their units especially as they experience insubordination.

Epistemological Assumption

Epistemological assumptions describe the essence of what is considered knowledge and how I can confidently claim to possess that knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My understanding of the world is based in the staunch belief of the inerrancy of the Scriptures, the 66 canonical books of the Holy Bible. God has deliberately revealed His will about how we are to relate to Him and to conduct ourselves while here on earth. Within academic qualitative pursuits, the best way to seek and gain knowledge is to hear from participants who have experienced particular phenomena. This study focuses on the phenomenon of U.S. Army company commanders who have experienced insubordination while they led small units. All three of my

sub-questions approach inquiry about the phenomenon of insubordination from an epistemological stance. The first sub-question explores the potential effects of insubordinate behavior on commanders who are trying to lead well and perform their duties effectively. The second sub-question explores how squad leaders work with their subordinates to accomplish the unit mission and the processes they implement to promote obedience and compliance to the commander's directives. Finally, the third sub-question explores the types of insubordinate activity these senior leaders have experienced in their careers and the ways they interact with company commanders to offer advice and guidance in navigating such distracting behavior. These senior leaders also maintain the unique perspective of having seen commanders, both good leaders and inadequate ones, who were able to navigate issues of insubordination while in command. Some insubordination could be considered justifiable, especially when a commander leads poorly or gives illegal or unethical orders.

Axiological Assumption

My axiological assumptions underscore my values. I have a special affinity for the participants of this study. Although my military background informs my values, I also have two sons who are Army officers. I greatly respect the burden of responsibility that commissioned officers bear as they strive to lead their units well. I equally appreciate the role of noncommissioned officers, who provide vital direction to and care for the day-to-day needs of their soldiers as they carry out their work. I have closely observed leadership for more than four decades. Beginning my career as the lowest enlisted rank and eventually becoming a noncommissioned officer, I initially served in Europe as a Czech linguist at the height of the Cold War. Upon completing my enlistment and graduating from college, I received my military commission in 1990 as an armor officer, training combat units in the Mojave Desert during

Operation Desert Storm. Later, I served as a military intelligence officer, a public affairs officer, and a cadet marketing and recruiting expert travelling throughout the United States to evaluate the ROTC recruiting efforts of 140 universities. I served on an Army corps headquarters general staff as a military exercise planner in the Indo-Pacific region and completed my active duty career in 2006. After retiring from the active-duty military, I spent time as a defense contractor and eventually became a Department of the Army civil servant. Because of this biographical history and my views that highly regard Army leaders, both noncommissioned and commissioned, I eagerly anticipate hearing from the participants in this study. Many of them value authority and its proper exercise as they lead their soldiers.

Researcher's Role

My role as a researcher is facilitative in the sense that I will fully interact with all participants (van Manen et al., 2016). As the sole researcher in this project, it is my role to conduct all interviews personally and to ensure they feel a sense of cooperation in the research process. My approach for the research design is hermeneutic: The implications of hermeneutic research dictate that discovering a sense of meaning corresponding to participant experience is critically important to the study (Patton, 2002). Because of my military background, I share many similar experiences that the participants will also likely express. Therefore, I will remain cognizant that my experience of the phenomenon of dealing with insubordination as a leader may challenge me to constantly check my biases; memoing is an extremely important mitigating tool for me to manage this task. Although I am not conducting a transcendental approach (Moustakas, 1994) in relation to my research, I will attempt to bracket myself out of the conversation if only to allow the free flow of information during the interview process. On a more positive note, Weinberg et al. (2018) found that researchers who fully embrace their facilitative role can exert a

transforming effect on both participants and themselves. Additionally, facilitative researchers challenge participants in their study to develop deeper understanding of their own self-efficacy, while the researchers themselves are able to gain increased confidence in their own roles as facilitators.

<div align="center">**Procedures**</div>

The purpose for this section regarding procedures is to describe any necessary site permissions needed for the study and information about securing approval from the Institutional Review Board. Additionally, I use this section to explain my method for soliciting, recruiting, and engaging participants for the study, as well as how data will be gathered and recorded. Finally, I also explain how my study achieves triangulation.

Permissions

Before beginning data collection, I first have to apply through the Liberty University IRB, a process that requires approximately seven weeks to complete. See Appendix A for IRB approval application. Regarding site approval for my study, Fort Tesla is a military post, and there is only one known IRB functioning on the post. The military hospital, Einstein Army Medical Center, is a tertiary care medical facility, research platform, and teaching hospital directly under the purview of the Defense Health Agency. Einstein Army Medical Center maintains an active IRB within its Department of Clinical Investigation. Upon checking with the IRB staff at Einstein, I learned that I would only have been required to go through their process if I had been conducting a medically-related study, which is not the case. The Einstein IRB staff members did recommend that I still write letters requesting the support of the garrison commander's office. The intent of these letters is to obtain official sanction recognizing that I have notified the garrison leadership that I am conducting a study on post and that I intend to

conduct interviews of active-duty soldiers who are stationed at Fort Tesla. See Appendix B for site letters of support.

Recruitment Plan

I plan to recruit participants based on purposive sampling. Based initially on the personal contacts I have cultivated at Fort Tesla, I intend to contact soldiers from each of three participant groups: former company commanders; current or former squad leaders; and current or former senior noncommissioned officers who have been assigned to units at the battalion level, equivalent units, or higher echelons. I intend to achieve triangulation two ways. First, the three groups of participants comprise one form of triangulation based on the notion of purposeful sampling. Second, I am employing two types of data collection strategies: interviews and letter writing. After successfully recruiting the first few participants through purposeful sampling, I will then rely on snowball sampling to leverage the networking power of my initial contacts, using email invitations, phone calls, or face-to-face contact to ask soldiers recommended to me if they would be willing to participate in the study. Whether in person or by email, I will supply each potential participant with a recruiting letter that briefly describes the study's purpose and the requested activities of participants, to include what they can expect from participating in the study. See Appendix C to find an example of the recruiting letter. Regarding the conditions for participation in this study, all officer participants must have commanded at the company, troop, or battery level, and all squad leaders must have supervised soldiers while serving in a leadership position. Additionally, participants must confirm that they have experienced or witnessed at least one instance of insubordinate behavior from the soldiers they were leading at that time. Insubordinate behavior exists when a leader has issued orders, directives, or instructions and soldiers assigned under that leader flagrantly questioned, undermined, or defied that leader's

authority to lead. This definition of insubordination will be included in the recruiting letter as a baseline definition so all participants begin with a common understanding of the topic.

Although Camp Nicola, a National Guard base near Fort Tesla, is a potentially lucrative source for participants in future studies, it is beyond the scope of this study to include them as participants. The advantage to recruiting among National Guard soldiers is that they are a more tight-knit population than active-duty soldiers, and Guard soldiers typically stay in the same unit for a longer duration than active-duty soldiers. However, the experiences of Guard and Reserve soldiers also differ significantly from those of the active component, based on their unique mission, focus, and personnel dynamics within the Guard and Reserve cultures. For these reasons, I will not recruit from the Guard and Reserve units in the area; this potential source of soldiers would serve as an excellent basis for continuing studies.

I will initially make face-to-face contact with several former commanders and other leaders who work on Fort Tesla and are acquainted with me. The goal is to request their support and possible participation in the study or provide recommendations to develop further contacts and generate a list of prospective participants. After making the in-person connection, I will follow up with each prospective participant by sending a recruitment letter by email. Participants from the snowball sampling list will also be contacted by email to be invited to participate in the study. See Appendix C to find an example of the recruiting letter. Their names and contact information of prospects are contained within the military's global email server that I am able to access. I plan to email approximately 40 to 50 invitations initially based on successful recommendations via snowball sampling efforts. After establishing the first few willing participants through that process, I will continue to employ snowball sampling by means of their recommendations to gain the remaining set of participants. I anticipate recruiting between 10 and

15 participants for the study. Recruiting efforts will cease if I reach data saturation, which is defined as reaching the point of collecting redundant information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). Once prospects agree to participate in the study, I will send each of them a consent form. See Appendix D for an example of the consent form.

<div align="center">**Data Collection Plan**</div>

The data collection strategies for this study, presented in the order they will be conducted, are interviews and letter writing. Observations will only be applicable in terms of body language exhibited during interviews for which I will account by implementing memoing techniques to capture my perceptions of observed participant behavior. Although rejecting the notion that formal method is central to the exercise of phenomenology, van Manen (2016) suggested eight methods of collecting data available to phenomenological researchers: protocol writing, interviewing, close observation, experiential descriptions in literature, biography, diaries and journals, art as lived experience, and the consultation of phenomenological literature. I will be interviewing individuals, asking selected participants to write letters to their earlier selves as a way of reflecting on what they have learned about leadership over time as my primary data collection strategies.

Protocol writing, also referred to as journaling, is the description of lived experience as written and produced by study participants; however, van Manen (2016) asserted that although the words are original to the participants, not all people are equally enthused about or skilled at writing their thoughts. Therefore, a second method of collection available to the researcher is the interview which can include follow-up activities such as the conduct of interpretive conversations with participants. These are rich opportunities to obtain feedback from participants regarding their original interviews by reviewing the written textual transcripts and offering

clarifying comments. The idea of *close observation* within van Manen's (2016) book highlighted that sometimes it is more efficient to observe human activity rather than asking interview questions. Anecdotes and participant stories are also part of this method of data collection; a great value to these artifacts is that they are often able to capture ideas, attitudes, and sentiments that mere questioning or observation cannot achieve (Guillen, 2019). War stories, vignettes, and anecdotes that military service members often tell, fit this genre. I intend to maximize participant sharing in this regard.

The remaining data collection methods about which van Manen (2016) wrote can be considered as primarily textual references: experiential descriptions in literature; biography; diaries and journals; and other phenomenological literature. A tactile exception would be the method of consulting art as a tangible source of lived experience: Painting, film, sculpture, and music are artistic media that can be categorized as such. A theme occurring throughout van Manen's book was the similarity between hermeneutic phenomenology and poetry. Both types of expression attain to the goal of showcasing man as an emotional being, although poetry strives to express human thought in an implicit way, whereas researchers employing hermeneutic phenomenology seek to explicate.

Individual Interviews

The interview process is intended as the primary means of data collection in most phenomenological studies (Maya-Jariego & Cachia, 2019). Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that the five primary qualitative research designs of narrative inquiry, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study share the necessity of interviewing in common. Certainly within the parameters of a phenomenological study, I value the richness of responses that I anticipate will be provided. The intent for interviewing participants is that all interviews will

occur in person; however, because of the nature of COVID-19, we may have to implement virtual interviews as a mitigation strategy. I also plan to apply a semi-structured approach to interviews. Although the military is a highly-structured organization, I want to promote the free flow of information to encourage participants to share their individualized experiences. Below are the proposed interview questions, indicating their linkages to the research questions, followed by explanations from the literature for the origin of the questions. See Appendix E for the consolidated list of interview questions.

Group 1 Individual Interview Questions – Former Commanders

1. Please tell me how you became interested in serving in the military and how your career has progressed thus far. SQ1

2. How would you define military leadership? SQ1

3. What experiences do you believe prepared you for command? SQ1

4. Before taking command, how did you think subordinates might react to your orders? SQ1

5. From your perspective, what is involved in leading soldiers? CRQ

6. How do you define insubordination? CRQ

7. During command, how often did you experience instances of insubordination? SQ1

8. Describe the discussions you had with your advisors regarding insubordination. SQ3

9. How would you describe the relationship you had with your squad leaders? SQ2

10. In what ways did your subordinate leaders support your decisions? SQ2

11. Describe a situation when subordinates questioned, undermined, or defied your decisions or orders. CRQ

12. How did you feel about having your orders disobeyed? SQ1

13. When you made decisions as a commander, how did you gain compliance or buy in? CRQ

14. In retrospect, how did dealing with insubordinate followers affect you as a leader? SQ1

15. What else would you like to share regarding your experiences with insubordinate conduct? SQ1

All the questions above relate directly to this study's research sub-question one which is an ontological question designed to explore the meaning associated with the right of commanders to lead their units, especially regarding their experiences related to insubordination. Sub-question one is taken from French and Raven's (1959) concept about the power base of legitimacy. At stake is the idea that Army officers initially begin their tenure in command due to being assigned to that position.

Interview question one is a *grand tour question* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) intended to begin the conversation, establish rapport, and make participants comfortable with sharing from their life experiences (Whalen, 2019). The grand tour question serves the role as an icebreaker to encourage participants to share their experiences in general, and particularly with the phenomenon of insubordination within the military setting (Jewkes et al., 2020; Karlsen et al., 2017). Questions two and three are transition questions that advance the interview from the icebreaker stage to the point of discussing participants' preparations for and expectations of assuming command. The questions establish the foundation for follow-on discussions about officer's careers, specifically regarding their time in command (Syed Mohamed, 2016). As lieutenants, Army officers prepare for their time to command by first leading troops as platoon leaders. It is also their first opportunity to be mentored by a noncommissioned officer who has usually been in the service for 10 to 12 years.

Questions four through seven address the phenomenon of insubordination; they seek to clarify the constructs of authority and insubordination from the perspective of the participants. The questions are designed to encourage the participants to amplify their understanding of authority, leadership, and insubordination and how they influence the activities of command (Bourgoin et al., 2020). Questions eight through 10 are important for establishing a context for the remainder of the interview, focusing on the officer's time in command, and narrowing specifically on the value of relationships (Estevez, 2019). Questions 11 through 13 are designed to frame actual instances of the phenomenon of insubordination that the officer has experienced (Hundman & Parkinson, 2019). I anticipate that the most detailed information and pertinent conversation will be discovered in this part of the interview. I am including questions 14 and 15 as a way of completing the interview and providing participants the opportunity to share any final thoughts they may have neglected earlier.

Group 2 Individual Interview Questions – Squad Leaders

1. Please walk me through your military career from the time you first joined the Army to becoming an NCO. SQ2

2. As a new soldier, how did you think Army leaders were supposed to act? SQ2

3. What experiences do you believe best prepared you to assume your leadership roles? SQ2

4. How do you exercise your authority as an NCO? SQ2

5. From your perspective, what is involved in leading soldiers? CRQ

6. How do you differentiate the leadership roles of NCOs and officers? CRQ

7. How do you define insubordination? CRQ

8. Please explain the dynamics of working for your company commanders. SQ2

9. What did you and your peers discuss when the topic of insubordination surfaced in conversation? SQ2

10. What kinds of insubordinate acts have you experienced as a squad leader? SQ2

11. Please describe a memorable situation when your soldiers questioned, undermined, or defied your commander's orders or decisions. SQ2

12. How did you respond to those acts of insubordination? SQ2

13. How did your experiences regarding insubordination affect either your daily duties or your career? SQ2

14. In retrospect, how did dealing with insubordinate followers affect you as a leader? SQ2

15. What else would you like to share regarding your experiences with insubordinate conduct? SQ2

All the questions relate directly to this study's research sub-question two. This epistemological question explores how squad leaders work with their subordinates to accomplish the unit mission and the processes they enact to promote obedience and compliance to the commander's directives. The question is derived from French and Raven's (1959) concept about the power base of legitimacy. At stake is the idea that squad leaders initially begin their leadership role as junior supervisors due to being assigned to that position.

Interview question one is a *grand tour question* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), intended to begin the conversation, establish rapport, and make participants comfortable with sharing from their lives (Whalen, 2019). The grand tour question serves the role as an icebreaker to encourage participants to open up about their experiences in general, and particularly with the phenomenon of insubordination within the military setting (Jewkes et al., 2020; Karlsen et al., 2017). Questions two through four are transition questions that move the interview from the icebreaker

stage to the point of discussing participants' preparations for and expectations of supervising troops. The questions lay the groundwork for follow-on discussions about the NCOs' careers, specifically regarding their time in leadership roles (Syed Mohamed, 2016).

Questions five through seven are aimed at addressing the phenomenon of insubordination; they seek to clarify the constructs of authority and insubordination from the perspective of the participants. The questions are designed to get the participants to amplify their understanding of authority, leadership, and insubordination and how they impact the activities of command (Bourgoin et al., 2020). Questions eight and nine are important for establishing a context for the remainder of the interview, focusing on the leader's time in leadership roles, and honing in specifically on the value of relationships (Estevez, 2019). Questions 10 through 13 are designed to frame actual instances of the phenomenon of insubordination that the NCO has experienced (Hundman & Parkinson, 2019). I anticipate that the most detailed information and pertinent conversation will be discovered in this part of the interview. I am using questions 14 and 15 as a way of completing the interview and providing participants the opportunity to share any final thoughts they may have missed earlier.

Group 3 Individual Interview Questions – Senior NCOs

1. Please walk me through your military career from the time you first joined the Army to becoming an NCO. SQ3

2. As a new soldier, how did you think Army leaders were supposed to act? SQ3

3. What experiences do you believe best prepared you to assume your leadership roles? SQ3

4. From your perspective, what is involved in the activity of leadership? CRQ

5. How do you differentiate the leadership roles of NCOs and officers? CRQ

6. How do you define insubordination? CRQ

7. During the time you served as a squad leader, what was it like to work with the various leaders in your company? SQ3

8. Please explain the dynamics of working for your former company commanders. SQ3

9. What did you and your peers discuss when the topic of insubordination surfaced in conversation? SQ3

10. What kinds of insubordinate acts have you seen during your time in the Army? SQ3

11. Please describe a memorable case of insubordination you have seen in the Army. SQ3

12. What advice or guidance have you offered to commanders who were dealing with insubordinate troops? SQ3

13. How was your advice received? SQ3

14. How did the situations resolve? SQ3

15. Thinking back on the mentorship you have offered leaders regarding insubordination, what advice has had the greatest impact on unit morale? SQ3

16. Which aspects of your advice have most helped mission accomplishment? SQ3

17. What else should we have touched on regarding this topic? SQ3

All the questions above relate directly to this study's research sub-question three. This epistemological question explores the types of insubordinate activity these senior leaders have experienced in their careers and the ways they interact with company commanders to offer advice and guidance in navigating such distracting behavior. They also maintain the unique perspective of having seen commanders, both good leaders and inadequate ones, who were able to navigate issues of insubordination while in command. Some insubordination could be considered justifiable, especially when a commander leads poorly or provides illegal or unethical orders. The question is derived from French and Raven's (1959) concept about the expert and

referent power bases. Senior noncommissioned officers have served in multiple leadership roles as supervisors of troops at the squad, platoon, company, and higher echelons, and they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to bear whenever they offer advice. This research sub-question focuses on the shift from merely being in charge because external authorities assigned someone to a duty position to the more personal power that comes with experience, knowledge, and well-crafted relationships.

Interview question one is a *grand tour question* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), intended to begin the conversation, establish rapport, and make participants comfortable with sharing from their lives (Whalen, 2019). The grand tour question serves the role as an icebreaker to encourage participants to open up about their experiences in general, and particularly with the phenomenon of insubordination within the military setting (Jewkes et al., 2020; Karlsen et al., 2017). Questions two and three are transition questions that move the interview from the icebreaker stage to the point of discussing participants' preparations for and expectations of supervising troops. The questions lay the groundwork for follow-on discussions about the noncommissioned officers' careers, specifically regarding their time in leadership roles (Syed Mohamed, 2016).

Questions four through six are aimed at addressing the phenomenon of insubordination; they seek to clarify the constructs of authority and insubordination from the perspective of the participants. The questions are designed to get the participants to amplify their understanding of authority, leadership, and insubordination and how they impact the activities of command (Bourgoin et al., 2020). Questions seven through nine are important for establishing a context for the remainder of the interview, focusing on the senior noncommissioned officer's time as a trusted advisor and leadership coach, especially honing in on the value of relationships (Estevez, 2019). Questions 10 through 14 are designed to frame the perspective of senior

noncommissioned officers regarding the phenomenon of insubordination and the advice and guidance they have provided to junior officers and enlisted leaders in the past (Hundman & Parkinson, 2019). I anticipate that the most detailed information and pertinent conversation will be discovered in this part of the interview. I am using questions 15 through 17 as a way of completing the interview and providing participants the opportunity to share any final thoughts they may have missed earlier.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Data are critical for any study as there must be something to analyze or there is no study. The two methods of data collection for this study are interviews and letter writing. I will rely on voice recording devices to capture the interviews. I will transcribe the interview recording soon after each interview as practical so I can record the data directly into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis as well as to keep from becoming overwhelmed. This also allows pertinent note taking and memoing while my memory of the interview is fresh. Once I have the spreadsheet data populated, I will begin initial descriptive coding by grouping data (Saldaña, 2016) and making pertinent notes on the side. I plan to repeat this procedure for each interview; when all descriptive coding is complete, I will combine the codes to create one working set of interview codes for second-cycle coding to detect emergent themes in the data (Saldaña, 2016),

Letter-writing

By acknowledging that people generally find it easier to speak than to write, van Manen (2016) addressed the burden on participants who will be requested to journal or write letters. Yet van Manen argued that there is much to be gleaned from letter writing: It promotes reflective thought, evokes latent emotions, and attunes writers to feelings they may have been unaware of or suppressed. The goal of letter writing is to capture how plausible the writer's experience might

have been (van Manen, 2016). To that end, many of the participants from this study will be asked to write letters to their earlier selves, except squad leaders, who typically have only two or three years of time in grade as noncommissioned officers due to their limited leadership experience. However, commanders will be asked to write a letter to their *pre-command selves* regarding information about insubordination; the intent of the letter is for them to share knowledge and experiences they would like to have known before taking command and encountering insubordinate soldiers. Similarly, I will ask senior noncommissioned officers working at battalion-and-higher-echelon units to write a letter to young officers about to take command who could benefit from the perspective of a noncommissioned officer about techniques for dealing with undisciplined soldiers. See Appendix F for examples of letter writing prompts.

Letter Writing Data Analysis

Upon agreeing to conduct an interview, I will ask the participants to also write letters. At the end of the allotted time, which I estimate to take two weeks, I will collect the letters from officer and senior noncommissioned officer participants, and then transfer the text into an Excel spreadsheet to begin the coding process. Maxwell (1996) advocated for a balanced approach to data analysis. He suggested that memoing, categorizing strategies, such as coding individual sentences and phrases to assign discreet names for each idea, and contextualizing strategies, such as taking the text as a unit to derive an overall meaning; each strategy had an important place to determine the full range of analysis options. I will begin the process of seeking for and discovering themes only after I have collected all sources of data from interview transcripts as well as letters from participants, placed all text into spreadsheets, and have assigned codes for the text. I am considering descriptive and in vivo coding methods at a minimum. The purpose of using descriptive coding is to create names or tags for various groups of data (Saldaña, 2016). In

vivo coding supports the use of participants' voices to gather similar ideas for further coding. However, I will also informally analyze the data as I collect them through the process of memoing and recording my initial impressions of the answers participants provide.

I will also use these reflective memos as a form of bracketing as I begin the coding process and again as I seek to discover themes later in the analysis process. In this way, my original memos will serve as a first-impression touchstone against which my analysis can be compared. Process coding, values coding, and initial coding may also be appropriate choices to begin first-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2016). I will place the data from the letters into an Excel spreadsheet for first-cycle data analysis. I will also write memos of my initial impressions of the letters as a way of capturing the original state of the data. Once I have populated the spreadsheet data, I will begin initial descriptive coding by grouping data and making pertinent notes on the side. I will combine the codes to create one working set of interview codes for second-cycle coding to detect emergent themes in the data (Saldaña, 2016).

Data Synthesis

Data analysis is a critical step in the process of making sense of the data (Stewart et al., 2017). The data analysis strategies that will be employed in this study are coding and memoing, and organizing codes into themes. Several cycles of coding are involved in this process of coding and memoing. I will also catalogue the auditing steps and procedures implemented in this study. Because hermeneutic phenomenology stands apart from most other traditional hard sciences, and even many of the other qualitative forms of research, the processes applied to collect data can differ significantly. However, at the heart of analysis is the notion of reflecting on the data to engage in sense-making for both researchers and their audiences (Patton, 2002; van Manen,

2016); all the while, honoring the original meanings of how those who lived the phenomenon would also understand those meanings.

Evaluating data that capture essences can be disorienting (van Manen, 2016). Therefore, within the discipline of hermeneutic phenomenology the watchword regarding data analysis is balance; specifically, balancing the parts of the research with the whole of the design's overall orientation. The key to maintaining equilibrium in the study is to keep the central research question in mind at all times (van Manen, 2016). This method of data analysis will allow me to tangentially explore where the data may lead, yet always serves as a way-finding tool to reorient back to the central research question. As van Manen (2016) expressed, the act of writing informs both reflection and action. The activity of writing commits the words of the research author to paper, while the written words recommend themselves to the writer for further honing and possible exploration.

Coding and Memoing

The first act in data analysis is to gain a holistic sense of the data (Marjan, 2017). The guiding concept in this step is establishing context. By examining the evidence in a holistic manner or *sententious approach* (van Manen, 2016), it is possible to determine if there is an overall explanation of the phenomenon readily apparent within the data. Patton (2002) referred to this approach as *synthetic thinking,* which he argued is the essence of functional meaning. To underscore his point, Patton suggested an influential everyday example that counters synthetic thinking: A car that has been taken apart can no longer serve its designated purpose.

Organizing data into similar groups is the next step. Saldaña (2016) disaggregated this process into two major steps: first-cycle and second-cycle coding methods. First-cycle coding is an attempt at initial organization of data with the goal of getting data into a more manageable

size (Huffman et al., 2016). Because my central research question is primarily ontological, and all three of my sub questions are epistemological, I plan to implement elemental and affective coding methods (Saldaña, 2016) to organize the data in this first cycle of data coding. Specifically, among the 32 options Saldaña presented, he recommended the following types of first-cycle coding methods for ontological questions: in vivo, process, values, and dramaturgical coding methods. Regarding epistemological questions, Saldaña suggested descriptive, process, initial, and versus coding that may be appropriate for my study. He also expressed that it is appropriate to begin the coding process with these methods broadly in mind, knowing that finally seeing the data in print may sway the decision to favor one method over another. I am inclined to consider at least the descriptive and in vivo coding methods as I begin. The purpose of using descriptive coding is to create names or tags for various groups of data; in vivo coding supports the use of participants' voices to gather similar ideas for further coding.

Second-cycle coding methods are then implemented to refine the data toward the goal of definitive theme discovery. It is critically important to ensure the data from all sources are combined at this stage of analysis, as the goal of detecting themes must override the original data input sources. Memoing notes, ideas, emotions, and thoughts in the margins of the text are also techniques applied to capture thoughts and impressions during the data collection process, especially while they are still fresh in the researcher's mind. In keeping with my 40-year practice of reading books, I have constantly engaged in a written dialog with authors, and I have always initialed and dated my comments to keep track of my developing thought patterns. I developed that practice when I first started reading my dad's books and I wished to distinguish my thoughts from his. He was an interactive and insatiable reader, and he and the authors he read often

conducted spirited and robust conversations by way of notes scribbled throughout the pages. This memoing habit will serve me well during the entire data analysis process.

Organizing Codes Into Themes

Saldaña (2016) discussed in detail a number of coding methods for both first- and second-cycle coding processes. His purpose was to acknowledge the myriad ways of re-describing words and phrases and to remind researchers there is no single correct way to code. During second-cycle coding Saldaña recommended focused coding as an appropriate follow-on method to address ontological questions, although he regarded pattern coding as helpful second-cycle coding to seek themes for epistemological questions. In the past, color coding to distinguish certain ideas has been a successful process for me to quickly identify topics in my reading. For example, I have applied green for money and resources, and when dealing with scriptural study I have applied green for life and growth. In the context of this study, green represents important ideas about authority, power, and the human will. I employ red for items of concern, so in a study about authority and insubordination, I would expect to identify many controversial topics that highlighted red in the text. In my color palette, purple represents noble or royal ideas, to include God's rule; blue is reserved for definitions and explanatory ideas. Yellow serves as a placeholder for items that I cannot quickly categorize; it alerts me to work that still needs attention. Once the basic colors are identified for the study, I will transfer those groups into second-cycle codes, such as focused, pattern, or possibly axial codes, to seek more descriptive and targeted meaning (Saldaña, 2016). This process is important because it maximizes the ability to quickly highlight the text on initial and subsequent readings, and immediately clarifies the data. In particular, the memoing is important because it helps me as the researcher to formulate take-away thoughts derived from the data that result through interviews

(Kirk Wiese et al., 2019); it also helps me to capture pertinent thoughts and ideas while working with the text and can be later transferred to a draft.

Because color coding can automatically groups ideas, and I am a visual learner, I am able to see a more holistic concept of the ideas form immediately. This also helps with connecting one idea to another, even when the two thoughts might appear to be non-sequiturs (Saldaña, 2016). Besides memoing, drawing little cartoons in the margins, doodling, drawing lines from one idea to another, can initiate advancing to the final stage of telling the story. The guiding question for discovering code matches is: *What concepts seem to match?*

Trustworthiness

The concept of trustworthiness implies a level of assurance to audiences that research is worth considering. Lincoln and Guba (1985) implemented the terms *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* to convey various aspects that comprise trustworthiness. They stressed the need for readers to feel confident that the data and analysis within a research study have been handled according to appropriate protocols and that the researchers scrupulously guarded and shepherded the data collection process in an upright manner.

Credibility

Credibility speaks to the believability of the study's findings regarding the way the study accurately portrays the reality of the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).It also acknowledges the role of the researcher as the primary custodian of that data (Shufutinsky, 2020; Stewart et al., 2017). A specific issue regarding credibility in this study relates to the relationship between the perceptions of commanders about insubordination and the resulting exercise of the legitimate power base as per French and

Raven's (1959) theory of social power. Member checking, triangulation, and peer debriefing (Patton, 2002) are the three techniques I plan to apply to establish credibility.

Member Checking

Member checking is a process inviting collaboration and input. Essential to the process are the activities of accurately capturing of participant words, phrases, and ideas, and then ensuring those data points truly convey what the participants intended from their input; hence, checking back with the participants is necessary (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Birt et al. (2016) elaborated on that process with a specific and in-depth method of synthesizing their member-checking activities, which they employed with patients who had been diagnosed with melanoma as a means of keeping the patients active in their own healthcare. For Birt et al., member checking was an important way, although not the only way, to lend credibility to the research process. The member checking process includes continuing to communicate with participants to ascertain their whereabouts during the course of the study, but the important point is that participants become confident the researcher faithfully represented their ideas and values within the context of the study, also providing a greater sense of validity to the data analysis (Saldaña, 2016). I plan to share participants' interview transcripts with them to ensure they have ownership in that their words were correctly captured. Besides the act of confirming, this sharing activity also allows them the opportunity to add or correct that which they feel was not quite correct during the interview. I will repeat this process of sharing my analysis results with participants when I have discovered the themes, so they have an idea of what I have discovered from their sharing in our conversations. Again, this is yet another opportunity to obtain their feedback, and perhaps they will even provide helpful in vivo quotes for inclusion in the data analysis records.

Triangulation

Triangulation is applied to lend credence and strength to studies by combining methods (Patton, 2002). I intend to achieve triangulation two ways. First, three groups of participants comprise a form of data triangulation (Richards & Hemphill, 2018) based on the notion of purposeful sampling. Company commanders, squad leaders, and senior noncommissioned officers working on battalion or higher echelon staffs compose the three groups. Second, I am employing methodological triangulation by using two types of data collection strategies: interviews and letter writing.

Peer Debriefing

The intent of peer debriefing is to bring an outside research perspective to the study (Scharp & Sanders, 2019). The key to peer debriefing is for primary researchers to independently conduct their initial analyses of the data and then share the data with peer debriefers to ascertain how they analyze the data compared to the primary researchers' analysis efforts (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). One method for achieving peer debriefing is closely collaborating with my dissertation committee and incorporating that feedback into my work. Another way will be to debrief with my dissertation mentor, with whom I am cultivating a mentoring relationship now. Although this nascent relationship is still quite immature, I see an opportunity to potentially develop this into a workable scenario of collaboration. If my mentor is unable or unwilling to participate in sharing his perspective of the data in this study, I will seek to work with one or two of my fellow classmates to arrange a workable solution.

Transferability

Transferability describes the way a research study's findings can have meaning within the context of other research scenarios (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The stories of individual

participants are personal and not always readily applicable to the experiences of others. However, such stories contain similarities that can resonate with and apply to the lives of others, provided that researchers have taken the time and care to richly account for the details of the personal histories of their participants (Amankwaa, 2016; Connelly, 2016). I plan to interview company commanders, squad leaders, and senior noncommissioned officers regarding their individual perceptions about how insubordinate activities occurred within their specific unit contexts. Reports of similar observations within each group, and especially any similarities discovered among participants from the various groups, may be indicators that certain views about insubordination could apply beyond the scope of this study.

Dependability

Dependability speaks to the idea that a particular study's findings can potentially be replicated in future research studies. Describing a study's procedures in enough detail for other researchers to emulate is an important aspect of dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My dissertation committee serves as the inquiry audit process role of checking to ensure this study is being conducted in a dependable manner. These processes include recruiting activities, interactions with participants, memoing about issues that arise during the course of the study, interview activities, the data analysis process, and interactions with my dissertation chair and the IRB. Because this study relies heavily on ascertaining a variety of perspectives regarding the phenomenon of insubordination, it is vital that the process of selecting and interacting with participants is clearly documented, which I accomplish in my section on procedures. Although I am initially relying on personal relationships I have developed within the U.S. Army in order to begin the snowball sampling, most researchers should be able to replicate a similar procedure,

depending on the level of familiarity they have to the participant scenarios. The key issue is to demonstrate transparency (Amankwaa, 2016) in an effort to show my work.

Confirmability

Confirmability addresses issues of potential researcher bias that can appear in a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), using the voices of participants whenever possible to scrupulously guard against possible bias (Patton, 2002). Throughout my study, I strive to provide the types of robust descriptions of the conditions for the study that accurately and fairly represent my participants' lived experiences. This implies that I am careful to include the participants' in vivo responses as appropriate and to faithfully represent the themes discovered from the data analysis process. Reflexivity is a process that allows the researcher to provide a backdrop of personal baggage and biases as a way of exercising transparency about the topic of study (Connelly, 2016). In my case, I served many years in the military, holding leadership roles, and had my own authority challenged on occasion. Reflexivity, the awareness of the context surrounding the research study (Patton, 2002), is important to this study because I have knowledge of several possible issues the participants may share in the course of the interview process. For my part, maintaining a reflexivity journal will be important, and it is considered a best practice (Amankwaa, 2016).

Ethical Considerations

Although the setting where my research will be conducted does not explicitly require site permissions, I will inform the garrison commander's office by way of letter that I will be conducting interviews of soldiers assigned to the Army post. Each participant will also receive a consent form to complete which explains the essence of the research study, the voluntary nature of the participants in the study, and what they can expect to experience upon agreeing to

participate. The greatest concern for most the participants involved in research studies is the condition of their reputations (Kardos et al., 2019). I will stress throughout the data collection process that they can be assured that I will guard their anonymity to the greatest extent possible. If there is an instance in which recounting past experiences might elicit a negative response, I will stop the interview process to check on the participant's state of mind. After establishing that all is well, regroup, and continue with the interview. However, if a participant was to acknowledge reliving a particularly difficult memory, I would consider stopping the interview to acquire professional help beyond the scope of my capabilities.

There is a strong potential that military leaders could have their words used against them, which could potentially harm their career mobility or reputations. This is especially concerning in regard to the good order and discipline of the units these leaders command. Because vulnerability is crucial to understanding the topics of authority and insubordination, all participants will be assigned pseudonyms to protect both their personal identities and that of their units. No direct attribution will be associated with any particular participant's actual identity.

A second issue regards the good order and discipline of units and the possible fallout that might occur if any member of that unit realized the way challenges to authority are perceived by leaders. The military is unique among all institutions in America because its members are all subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), which is an entire additional set of laws these Americans live under. UCMJ is an authority complete with unique rules, regulations, requirements, and restrictions, even having its own courts and punishments, some of which are quite severe, in order to keep obedience complete.

Ethical considerations occur throughout the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These actions range from initial preparations to conduct a study, such as providing informed

consent to participants, through identifying and carefully working through the essential process of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), to the fastidious performance of research data collection and analysis. As a final note regarding data storage, I will be the only person with access to the data, and I intend to secure it for three years after the dissertation process is complete, when I will remove the data stored on my computer hard drive and shred any paper copies of data.

Summary

This chapter focused on the logistics of conducting the study including the study design and operational processes. Included in the chapter were sections that address the design of the study, as well as the central and subordinate research questions that will serve as the guide for the study; sections describing the study's setting and participants, the researcher's positionality, and the procedures for obtaining the data. Next, a section regarding data collection details specific types of collection, including interviews and letter writing. Extensive question lists from the perspective of three distinct groups of participants are shared to adequately describe the individual interview process. Finally, the chapter concluded with sections related to data analysis and synthesis, trustworthiness, and ethical concerns. Because this is a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, both data collection and data analysis can appear to those in other disciplines to be rather elusive and tentative (van Manen, 2016). To be sure, any effort to capture individuals' thoughts can be a daunting task. However, van Manen did offer practical suggestions for operating in such a difficult environment to promote a practical way forward. It is my hope that I have been able to capture that process in this document and that I will successfully execute that process during the study.

The whole point of considering how U.S. Army officers and other small unit leaders perceive the phenomenon of insubordinate conduct is that they have an important job to conduct

and have the very lives of their soldiers resting on the successful execution of their lawful orders,

especially in times of conflict or under combat situations. I have deliberately chosen to select

officers who have already served as commanders and leaders who have been squad leaders

because they now enjoy the luxury of reflecting on the past and how they might have responded

differently. I say *luxury* because at the time one is actually commanding, the world is something

of a haze, and problems generally appear without a chance for one to breathe or think about them

quietly. The hope is that in documenting how these participants dealt with their overwhelming

issues, it will provide future military leaders a pathway forward to face their challenges.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

Based on the findings of my data analysis, soldiers seem to thrive best in units whose leaders are trustworthy, inspiring, authentic, and credible. The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology is to explore the experiences of U.S. Army company-grade leaders regarding insubordinate acts aimed at undermining their legitimate command authority. This chapter includes descriptions of the participants, the data as narrative themes, relevant outlier data, and concise responses to the research questions.

Participants

For the most part, my participant recruitment strategies were successful. I was able to meet my goal of securing 10 to 15 participants; the final number was 12. I was able to begin with criterion-based sampling and transitioned directly into snowball sampling. My sample size for each group comprised five former commanders, three squad leaders, and four senior noncommissioned officers. However, my timelines for data collection and analysis were significantly skewed, primarily due to more than half of the participants either moving or deploying for training purposes. I was able to achieve my goal of more than half the interviews being conducted in participants' work offices which provided a better perspective into their military background. Armando was very proud of his paratrooper military heritage, and he even spoke with me in detail about his experiences both before and after the actual interview. Armando boasted, "I'm a paratrooper for life regardless if they ever let me jump out of an airplane again, if they put me back on status, which is what I want to do, while I'm still physically capable of doing it."

After initially completing interviews with 11 participants, I was able to interview one more former commander which now increased my participant total to 12 U.S. Army officers and noncommissioned officers. The reason for including this most recent participant is that I previously had only one woman's perspective represented; this new officer added an additional woman's perspective, increasing the number of female perspectives in my study to align with the current population of women in the Army which is about 15% of the force.

Group 1 Participants

Five former commanders comprise Group 1, consisting of two captains and three majors, one of whom, Dan, is promotable to lieutenant colonel and slated to become a battalion commander. Three of the Group 1 officers have experienced multiple commands with a variety of combat arms and combat service support officers among the group. One participant is Hispanic, two participants are women, and the group ages range from the mid-20s to late-30s. One officer, Maria, left the Army after her initial service obligation was complete, and another officer, Frank, was medically retired midway through his career. Frank is also the only participant with both Active Duty and National Guard experience.

Group 2 Participants

Group 2 participants include three squad leaders: an Infantryman, an Artillery soldier, both of whom are still on active duty, and a Medical Service Corps soldier, Gerald, who is retired. Also, Scott learned toward the end of the study that he had been selected for promotion to sergeant first class. In this group participant ages range from the mid-20s to late-40s.

Group 3 Participants

Group 3 comprises four senior Active Duty Army NCOs. There is one master sergeant, a sergeant major, and two command sergeants major; they originate from a variety of backgrounds

like Groups 1 and 2. This group includes the only Black participant in the study, Bob, who is

originally from a western African country. Additionally, one participant, Armando, is Hispanic.

The senior NCO ages from Group 3 range from their late-30s to mid-40s, and although all four

of them are eligible for retirement, none currently plan for imminent retirement.

Table 1

Group 1 Participants—Former Commanders

Officer Participant	Years in Service	Interview Location	Rank	Army Branch	Combat Deployed
Maria	6	Office	CPT	Medical Service Corps	No
Dan	15	MS Teams	MAJ	Infantry	Yes
Allen	9	MS Teams	CPT	Infantry	Yes
Frank	12	MS Teams	MAJ	Medical Service Corps	Yes
Lisa	10	Office	MAJ	Nurse Corps	No

Table 2

Group 2 Participants—Squad Leaders

Jr. NCO Participant	Years in Service	Interview Location	Rank	Army Branch	Combat Deployed
Scott	10	Home	SSG	Infantry	No
Gerald	20	Office	SFC	Medical Service Corps	No
Brad	10	Post Library	SSG	Artillery	No

Table 3

Group 3 Participants—Senior NCOs

Sr. NCO Participant	Years in Service	Interview Location	Rank	Army Branch	Combat Deployed
Joe	24	Office	CSM	Infantry	Yes
Bob	20	Office	MSG	Medical Service Corps	Yes
Armando	20	Office	SGM	Medical Service Corps	Yes
Jeff	25	Office	CSM	Signal Corps	No

Results

Perhaps an analogy about vacation might help introduce the findings of this study. The participants described the act of commanding an Army unit in terms similar to the process a person applies when deciding to climb a mountain. During the study, the participants emphasized three primary areas of interest: (a) considering a unit's military mission, (b) deciding how that mission could be achieved, and (c) measuring the effectiveness of those efforts. In terms of someone planning for a mountain climb, those three areas can approximately equate to vision-casting, trail guiding, and azimuth adjusting.

Vision-casting is like selling would-be mountaineers on the idea of climbing, pitching the possibilities. Trail guiding is descriptive for the in-person guide walking with the group up the trail to the summit, similar to personal coaching. Azimuth adjusting is akin to fine-tuning the ascent plan; this person confirms the direction and helps the group remain on task. The vision-caster approximates the role of a salesman who convinces group members to buy tickets for an unforgettable trip. The trail guide walks beside the group, explaining what's happening and

bearing burdens with group members. The azimuth adjuster is the compass person who keeps the group on track to reach the desired destination.

Clear Vision-Casting Promotes Mission Accomplishment

Because of the inevitability that insubordination will occur within the military small unit setting, U.S. Army company commanders must diligently implement policies and practices that minimize the effects of insubordinate conduct. Because of such needed restraints, commanders incur the obligation of casting a strong and clear vision for how they will accomplish their unit missions. Dan asserted, "You must also have your own vision for how to implement those objectives within the capabilities and personalities of your company." Commanders are also responsible for the overall mission accomplishment of their respective units. They are charged with creating and maintaining a command climate that maximizes the full potential of the company.

One primary theme emerging from the course of this study is that company commanders need to provide a clear vision to their subordinates, so their units move in the positive direction required to accomplish their military mission. Three subthemes of command-initiated direction help identify the vision-casting efforts of commanders: leadership, preparation, and buy-in. Effective vision-casting is accomplished when commanders exercise personal leadership, conduct thorough planning and preparation for their assigned missions, and invite a sense of buy-in from subordinates to reach their goals. Lisa affirmed, "I'm all about teamwork. That's a good life motto: like, 'You can't do life without the team.'"

Personal Leadership Sets the Stage

The primary job of a company commander is to provide purpose and direction for the unit to accomplish its specific military mission. Army units are trained and equipped to perform

unique battlefield operations, and the commander implements personal leadership skills to analyze the mission, devise and communicate operational plans, and marshal the unit's forces to effectively attain the objective. Jeff argued, "I think leaders are supposed to teach you how to be an expert in whatever your job is: They're supposed to hold you accountable. They're supposed to provide leadership; they need to care about you." Armando added, "It is my duty as a leader to try to find the way that motivates each and every soldier on an individual level."

Preparation is Key

Commanders envision, plan, resource, and decide the most appropriate courses of action to complete their mission in support of the higher-echelon commander's goals. Preparation involves grasping the situation at hand, having the foresight to anticipate potential challenges, and exercising the discipline needed to respond in a timely manner. Maria pointed out, "You must be prepared, as you only have one chance to make first impressions." However, there are times that people fail to properly prepare themselves. Frank declared, "But at the same time, I wouldn't write off people that I thought were just terrible. I would sometimes ask them questions, because I wanted to know: were they really unprepared, or are they really just dumb?"

Inviting Subordinates to Adopt Buy-In

Good commanders cultivate subordinate buy-in for the unit to effectively complete its missions. Subordinates *buy into* the unit mission by demonstrating they possess a rudimentary concept of the operation, realizing that their particular actions can help secure the objective, and believing their leaders are capable of making sound decisions in a timely manner. Frank offered, "Ultimately, it was my plan. But it would comprise many different thoughts and different people, and that would get them to buy into it. And then they felt like they had ownership over it." Dan

shared, "If people don't feel like they have a voice, or their voice is deliberately not listened to, buy-in is going to be slim to none."

Authentic Supervision Bridges the Commander–Soldier Gap

Another primary theme is authentic supervision. Three subthemes supporting this type of supervising are presence, trust, and accountability. As first-line supervisors, squad leaders set the conditions for soldiers to understand and comply with the commander's direction for the company. Because squad leaders are responsible for the care, training, and day-to-day supervision of soldiers, they are well positioned to serve as a bridge between commanders who give orders and the soldiers who do the work. Squad leaders demonstrate authentic supervision when they spend time with their soldiers by regularly being present. This exercise of presence allows soldiers to develop trust in their supervisors which further supports accountability and gaining confidence to perform the actual mission. Scott explained, "The 'Staff Sergeant Mafia,' as I'm going to call them, is really the ones … who make what the commander wants to happen. I will say the squad leaders even more are the bridge from Private McPrivate-face to Captain McCaptain-face."

The Practice of Presence

Squad leaders provide daily direction to their soldiers through personal contact and supervision, responsible caring, and realistic training. Squad leaders know their soldiers well, and they demonstrate a dedication to diligently overseeing their soldiers' activities. These junior noncommissioned officers cannot simply call in such a responsibility: It requires face-to-face contact to show they care. Bob described it as "being present, being visible, but really it's being present, and getting to know the soldiers that are under you. … Then you can engage at the lowest level before it blows up and turns into a problem."

Squad Leaders Seek to Engender Trust

Soldiers develop trust in their squad leaders as they perceive genuine, ongoing examples of how noncommissioned officers exemplify the activity of maintaining military standards. Squad leaders display to their soldiers the best ways to meet and exceed the standard; they do not compromise on quality or accept half measures. Such trust from subordinates toward their leaders generates greater confidence for soldiers to perform their jobs. Armando posed this statement: "The point is, how do we build that team? How do we trust each other? That's where I really began to understand that the Army is a team sport." Scott reported, "If you don't give them the leeway … they're not gonna be able to handle the next level either. You've got to be able to trust them with little to trust them with a lot." Conversely, regarding the constant nagging of some soldiers asking for additional time off, Brad disclosed: "So there, you have no reason to go home. If I can't trust you on an OP [observation post] in Afghanistan by yourself, I'm not sending you home."

Accountability for Meeting Standards

The point of accountability is for leaders to assign responsibility to subordinates to learn and maintain established Army standards. Accountability embodies the ideal of performing the right actions in any given situation. In turn, standards that are consistently maintained separate the good organizations from the great ones. Gerald quipped, "If you kind of slack off and don't enforce a standard or don't show the right way to do things … it kind of becomes the norm." Armando countered, "When we start ignoring small standards, what does it say about the big standards that we have to uphold? We're probably not going to uphold those either." Allen summarized, "Brief the troop and allow your subordinate leaders to enforce standards. They will crush them and will surprise you at what they are able to achieve."

Leader Development Furthers Military Culture

The final primary theme of this study regards the symbiotic relationship between leader development and enduring military culture. The culture needs strong leaders to emerge, while emerging leaders depend on a thriving traditional culture. Senior noncommissioned officers are the de facto guardians of military culture. Based on their years of accumulated wisdom derived from their rich leadership experiences, senior noncommissioned officers offer encouragement to young leaders and promote an atmosphere conducive to professional development. Through their invaluable examples of overcoming adversity, these senior leaders provide a hedge of protection for the U.S. Army's culture as an institution. Jeff said regarding his unit, "I'm going to take this organization and I want to make the biggest positive impact I can across the NCO Corps and across the Army. … That requires me to be involved in what's going on in the organization."

Four subthemes elucidate this theme: inspiration, encouragement, development, and culture. Because senior noncommissioned officers adhere to accepted Army standards and traditions, they can concurrently inspire junior leaders to seek the best ways to attain successful unit mission accomplishment while also pointing those same leaders toward personal and professional career-enhancing aspirations. Joe explained, "Unit morale is definitely driven by when soldiers know their leaders care, that they're invested in the soldiers and not just themselves. They're going to follow regulation, but they take the totality of any situation into account."

Senior NCOs Spark Inspiration

Inspiration refers to the power of affecting a person's emotions or intellect. Senior noncommissioned officers are particularly well positioned in the Army hierarchy to observe the potential of junior leaders and suggest ways for them to improve their leadership skills. Formal

military training, while helpful, must be augmented by critical on-the-job training, sometimes aided by provocative nudging, and often followed with gentle encouragement. Junior leaders often need to have someone more experienced come alongside them to paint the picture of possibilities within the Army. Armando maintained, "It's through your actions day in and day out, that really inspires them. It's who you are, at all times, not just in certain moments."

Encouragement Offered

Encouragement is the act of giving hope and stirring others to better themselves. Senior noncommissioned officers encourage both junior commissioned and noncommissioned officers to endure the frustrations of leadership much in the same way that middle-aged adults offer sage advice to new parents. Such encouragement is a necessary step for junior leaders to stay engaged in the daily responsibility of leading soldiers; it helps them see beyond present difficulties to seek greener pastures later in their careers. Jeff averred, "It's about teaching them what right looks like, it's about increasing their understanding of the Army values and their loyalty to you and to the Army."

Focus on Development

Development tends to flourish best when influencers seek to cultivate or engender growth in others. Personal development is a natural extension of the active encouragement offered by concerned outsiders, such as senior leaders; it speaks to the improvement of personal character and attributes. Conversely, professional development, while also serving as a form of personal improvement, is more focused on the leader's honing of skills in the workplace. This form of personal development directly affects the work world of those who are developing their skills and abilities. As Frank put it, "part of being a leader is: wanting to develop yourself."

The Legacy of Military Culture

Culture is a particular group's set of commonly accepted beliefs, traditions, attitudes, and customs. Military tradition is uniquely positioned as a vital subset of a nation's cultural norms. Because American military leaders derive their powers from the Constitution in the defense of the nation, they are charged with securing the rights of Americans. Allen cautioned, "Be a good dude. You will have a lot of authority that is given to you as a company commander. Don't let it go to your head. … The soldiers you lead will go the extra mile."

Based on this responsibility, military tradition depends on the buy-in of each succeeding generation of military leaders. In their efforts to inspire a sense of duty in newer military leaders, the more senior military leaders seek to bequeath the military mission to defend America to the next generation. The vehicle for gaining that buy-in is military culture. Scott ventured, "There is tough love involved, the same way with parenting. You need the discipline. But it's not hateful … because at the end of the day, we're stewarding the profession."

Outlier Data and Findings

Several participants described insubordination as a backdrop for lapses in true leadership. Many seemed more concerned about the right actions rather than focusing on the negative results of insubordinate actions. The overarching consensus was that if leaders are vigilant to lead well, there would be fewer instances of soldiers resisting authorities. Jeff reluctantly admitted, "I guess I could be insubordinate, unknowingly, by buying into somebody else's narrative."

Insubordination is Like a Play

The implication of this minor theme is that no one instantly becomes insubordinate. There has been a concerted effort to transition someone to that point: role selection and casting, comparable to choosing ones associates; preparation, similar to the way actors get themselves

immersed into the method acting mode; script writing and line memorization; designing of costumes and props; initial rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and final rehearsal. All these actions lead up finally to the live stage play. Frank expressed, "The act [of insubordination] is just the fight. It's just the crescendo. Like, you don't just get on stage one day. There's a lot that leads up to it."

Some Leaders are Conspicuously Absent

Absence is the antithesis of presence; it stands in stark opposition to the concept of being in the moment with others. Armando confessed, "We had a very non-present first sergeant: She was always gone." Absence is a major contributing cause of soldiers undermining authority, becoming willful, and acting out on insubordinate ideations. Armando spoke further, "So you can't meet somebody through a computer screen and expect him to build any meaningful relationship. Yeah, you have to be there, they have to be face to face; you have to be in the mix of things."

Both Good and Bad Leaders Inform Soldier Actions

Several participants mentioned in passing that they had experienced both good leaders and leaders who hardly deserved the title. Of note, every participant painted this occurrence as a natural part of being in the Army. Not one person expressed significant bitterness about having worked for bad bosses; rather, they consistently voiced the positive learning lessons they took from their bad situations. Brad confided, "With one of those commanders, I had no problem going into his office and telling him that we had a problem … in the company. With the other one, nothing was gonna change, so I didn't even try." Sometimes the bad leader practiced hazing activities, but more often the participants were impressed by having seen the moral failings or tactical incompetence of the bad leaders, usually citing a personal vow to never repeat such activities in front of their own future subordinates. Later, Brad wistfully lamented about one of

his bad squad leaders, "I learned a lot about how *not* to go about personal relationships with your soldiers, how *not* to interact daily with your soldiers if you want a productive, like, an effective leadership style."

<p align="center">**Research Question Responses**</p>

The central research question focuses on the premise that U.S. Army commanders wield command authority to achieve specific unit missions tailored to each unit's combat design. The research sub-questions were originally developed with three distinct participant groups in mind: Company commanders have a distinct perspective based on their command responsibilities; squad leaders are first-line supervisors and maintain the closest connection with the lower enlisted soldiers; and senior noncommissioned officers holistically experience several echelons above the company level. These questions form the basis for my inquiry into the ways insubordination potentially can interfere with unit mission accomplishment. Because the U.S. military tends to approach operations with a problem-solving mindset, military leaders are prone to identify potential threats early in the decision-making process and develop strategies to mitigate them. The Army can, therefore, legitimately be classified as an insubordination-avoidance culture.

Central Research Question

How do U.S. Army company commanders use their legitimate power when confronting insubordinate conduct? Commanders exercise their power in good faith that the unit mission will be accomplished as they motivate their subordinates to gain buy-in to that mission. Frank explained, "You have agency. Command is the only position where these levels of responsibility and authority are innate and ultimate. Do not take this lightly; it is the greatest responsibility you will ever have in the Army." However, commanders do not exercise their legitimate power in a

vacuum; by delegating some of their command authority, commanders rely on their subordinate leaders to carry out lawfully-issued orders and to maintain good order and discipline among the soldiers.

A surprising discovery about the extent my participants relied on the legitimate power base became apparent during data analysis. Although originally intending to validate the role of legitimate power, as stated in the Theoretical Significance section of this dissertation (p. 22), I realized that my participants seemed to uniformly rely on the value of referent power as a primary means of discouraging insubordinate behavior among their troops. Perhaps this is the 21st-century update of French and Raven's (1959) power taxonomy that I mused about in the Theoretical Significance. I believe this discovery deserves more consideration.

Sub Question One

How does insubordination affect company commanders as they seek to exercise their right to lead? Based on the inevitability of insubordination, junior leaders incur the obligation of casting a strong and clear vision of how the unit mission will be accomplished. Jeff expressed, "No one in your company understands what it feels like to be the one person responsible for everything your company does or fails to do. Understand the unit's mission and how it ties into the next higher headquarters." In terms of controlling potential insubordination, commanders not only must establish a definitive direction for the unit, they must also rely on their subordinate leaders, especially the squad leaders, to be attuned to discontent potentially developing within the ranks and to develop healthy relationships with their soldiers to overcome such strife.

Sub Question Two

How do squad leaders, as first-line supervisors, support command legitimacy in the face of insubordinate conduct? As a bridge between the soldiers and the commander, squad leaders

establish the conditions for soldiers to understand and comply with the commander's direction for the company. Allen asserted, "It's a conversation; before we go execute, we try to do some face to face, and we figure out our plan [to] be on that unified front with buy-in from everybody." Squad leaders are best able to support their commander through understanding the overall unit mission and their squad's part in that mission. Further, they must know their soldiers well enough to adequately monitor possible dissention or disruptive attitudes among soldiers. Squad leaders accomplish this bridging activity by being authentically present with their soldiers, by earning their soldiers' trust, and by encouraging soldiers to accept their part of the mission and to buy into it.

Sub Question Three

What types of advice do senior noncommissioned officers offer to small unit leaders regarding insubordinate conduct? Senior NCOs offer encouragement to young leaders and promote professional development based on their rich leadership experiences and invaluable examples of overcoming adversity. Joe shared his own perspective: "The biggest advice I have given and continue to give is: Keep yourself emotionally separated from it. A soldier refusing to follow orders can quickly turn personal. Now it's not, 'You're not refusing an order; [it's] you're refusing me.'"

Summary

Soldiers appreciate honest and straightforward leaders. They tend to respond best to authentic leaders who demonstrate personal credibility, cultivate trust among their subordinates, come alongside them to encourage personal and professional development, and actively invite them to support the mission of the organization. The participants raised three primary topics of interest during the study: How a unit accomplishes its military mission, how the unit mission can

best be achieved, and how effective the unit's leaders are in those efforts. Stated as themes, the

soldiers seem to be looking for (a) leaders who present clear vision-casting efforts that point to

mission accomplishment; (b) authentic first-line supervisors who seek to bridge the gap between

the commander and the soldiers; and (c) leaders who sufficiently care to develop their

subordinates, a command climate that, in turn, creates the conditions to improve military culture.

Perhaps the most tangible example of these themes is the often-repeated emphasis participants

made about being present with their troops. This appears to factor heavily in the perception of

authenticity which will be further established in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

Based on the findings of my data analysis, soldiers seem to thrive best in units whose leaders are trustworthy, inspiring, authentic, and credible. The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology is to explore the experiences of U.S. Army company-grade leaders regarding insubordinate acts aimed at undermining their legitimate command authority. This chapter includes interpretation of findings, implications for policy and practice, theoretical and methodological implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

After completing my data analysis, I discovered a mismatch between my findings and my research questions. I discussed this issue with my committee chair and concluded that if I were to adjust the central research question, I could better synchronize my findings to it. I initially thought that such a technique was tantamount to altering the standard; however, my chair assured me that qualitative research is sufficiently nimble to accommodate such a course of action. As I disclosed earlier, I adhere to the social constructivist perspective, and I am, therefore, amenable to negotiating meaning to create explanations for my actions.

Qualitative research has been characterized as a "messy" process (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 24), which advances the discussion about how one should conduct qualitative inquiry. Patton (2015) debunked the notion of a solitary existing "gold standard" for research, particularly referring to a particular academic bias that says randomized control trials are considered the fixed standard against which all studies should be measured. Patton cited the whimsical case of the parachute industry; according to him, people have generally been unwilling to participate in

randomized control trials to test the viability of parachute function (pp. 93-95). Expressing a similar concern to reject the one-size-fits-all approach to research design, Lincoln and Guba (1985) in their classic book, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, wrestled immediately with the concepts of truth and paradigm, stating that paradigms represent particular worldviews that by convention are accepted although they cannot be proved. Therefore, based on the fluidity of the qualitative research process that these scholars have championed, I feel confident in changing my central research question from a more esoteric emphasis on the nature of power to a more specific focus of how commanders actually apply their power. In this chapter, I now discuss my findings based on my overriding interest to discover the ways commanders react to insubordination.

I originally stated my central research question as: *What is the nature of a commander's legitimate power in the face of insubordinate conduct within company-sized units of the U.S. Army?* Considering my findings, I have rephrased the central research question to highlight the options available to commanders upon detecting potential insubordination within the ranks. Based on this new perspective, my updated central research question is: *How do U.S. Army company commanders use their legitimate power when confronting insubordinate conduct?*

Interpretation of Findings

This section presents the study's three primary themes, identifying some of the more important findings. The first theme focuses on vision-casting efforts of company commanders as they explain how the unit plans to accomplish the mission. A second major theme of the study showcases some of the ways authentic first-line squad leaders seek to bridge the gap between commander and soldiers. The final substantive theme of this study centers on senior noncommissioned officer actions as they attempt to develop junior leaders to set the conditions for improving military culture.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Drawing on the three primary themes from my findings, I have chosen to especially highlight six sub-thematic areas: presence, trust, buy-in, accountability, encouragement, and leader development. Additionally, I have included one of the outlier findings as a seventh significant subtheme to discuss. Comparing insubordination to a play relates this study's findings as a body directly to French and Raven's (1959) taxonomy of social power.

Being Present With Others. Presence is a key concept when dealing with anyone in a particular context or situation. Face-to-face participation demonstrates the importance of individuality. Study participants uniformly expressed their perspectives to me about the value they placed on spending time with other people. Not only do people appreciate that another person would dedicate the precious commodity of time to them, but people can also sense that others are genuinely investing in their lives. Gerald explained, "I can't always be in one place. I got to mix it up and be down with the folks at the aid station, go down to the motor pool and see what's going on there." Raven (1993) stated that social dependence and the importance of surveillance were two critical factors in choosing the type of power by which leaders attempted to influence others. He believed that exercising both reward and coercive power caused socially dependent changes and required continual surveillance when determining how best to apply those two forms of power. On the other end of the spectrum, he also found that influencing via informational power required neither surveillance nor social dependence. In the middle remained the legitimate, expert, and referent power bases, each of which he found to be socially dependent but did not require any surveillance to be effective. The relevance of Raven's findings to the idea of presence is that the exercise of both reward and coercive powers depends fully on presence.

The Importance of Trust. Trust is fundamental for people to get along. It becomes easier for soldiers to trust their leaders when they feel they matter to their leaders, and they realize their leaders care for them. Scott affirmed, "If you establish yourself as competent ... it builds trust and confidence in your recommendations and your own competence, which is really your purpose as an NCO to be able to make those recommendations." Legitimate caring goes beyond soldiers' perceived needs, such as being paid on time, receiving awards, recognition, and time off; leaders also show they care when they hold soldiers accountable, provide tough, realistic training, and challenge soldiers to step up into appropriate levels of responsibility.

Cultivating Buy-In. The point of buy-in is specifically to invite subordinates to learn about the mission and begin to believe their personal contributions to the unit mission will matter. By expressing their desire to identify with the purpose of the organization, soldiers agree to become a part of something greater than their individual lives. This sense of belonging and feeling needed improves the confidence of all unit members who have agreed to the principle of being bought into the mission. Armando frankly stated, "You get that buy-in: You want to call that, 'I drank the Kool-Aid at [Fort] Bragg?' Yes, I did."

Accountability as a Virtue. Perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of leadership is the art of holding people accountable for their actions. This can be painful for some leaders, as Lisa confided: "I didn't really know how to deal with [conflict], being a nurse and just trying to be a nice person. But [command] definitely helped me understand how hard I need to be. … You can't be nice to everybody." However, the essence of doing the hard, but correct, action rather than taking the easy way out lies at the heart of accountability. Frank maintained, "You have to hold your leaders accountable. You don't give people an Article 15 just because it's fun. It's not

fun; it's terrible. It feels awful taking somebody's rank. … But sometimes you do that to make them better."

Encouraging Subordinates. Most people desire that their leaders treat them with the same respect and dignity that should be afforded to all human beings. Soldiers are no different in this regard. Soldiers want to know their leadership discerns their potential; hence, there is a strong need for soldiers to seek encouragement. Wise leaders who hope to forge good relationships with their subordinates will recognize this human need and act accordingly. One way to develop a trusting relationship is for leaders to establish a good counseling program for their people. In this same spirit, Scott pointed out, "The counseling is a guide to a conversation. Because at the end of the day, that's also where you develop the relationship."

Why Develop Leaders? The U.S. Army has been in existence predating America's birth as a nation. One of the secrets for this successful longevity is the strong tradition Army leaders have continually practiced in seeking talented soldiers of great potential to improve the organization. Just as recruiting and retention are necessary for the continued success of the Army, so too is it important to identify excellent future leaders for further development. The difficulty in this endeavor is not just finding promising young soldiers in which to invest, but also to instill in them sufficient confidence for them to attempt leadership. Regarding idealism versus the realities of measuring leader performance, Brad asserted, "So, they can talk about development all they want, but until you're in a leadership position, and you've dealt with situations, you have no idea what your leadership style is gonna be." One point seems evident: Organizations that fail to refresh their leadership pool are doomed to irrelevancy.

The Act of Insubordination. Frank, one of the participants in the study, compared insubordination to a play by stating that people are deliberate in their insubordinate actions.

According to Frank, people plan their potential insubordination, audition for the part, and rehearse their lines and behaviors before ever actually acting in undermining ways. This is an important subtheme as this concept relates the corpus of this study's findings directly with French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power. French and Raven stated that people who exert power select from a range of classical types of social power bases, including reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert power. Later, Raven (1965) proposed *information* as an additional power base which seems to also be strongly connected to acts of insubordination. Another participant, Joe, referred to the "threshold of insubordination," a term he applied to describe the tendency of some "soldiers who would continually do low level infractions, and just be that problem soldier that there's always something going on with them." By implementing the informational power base as a tool, soldiers potentially weaponize their activities to attain their own personal agenda. Jeff described insubordinate soldier activities as "somebody that is purposefully not doing something that they should be doing or trying to be destructive or disruptive to an organization to advance their own agenda."

Telling the Story

In keeping with the final stage of data analysis, the typical researcher focuses on finding a storyline based on the themes detected during the coding and data organizing process (Cohen, 2018). This is the heart of social constructionism (Patton, 2002). Onwuegbuzie et al. (2016) creatively used Saldaña's 32 codes as a grid and template by which to translate prior research codified in literature reviews. As a practical example taken from my life, I practice this step with my granddaughter all the time. We start with a picture and take turns adding to the picture, a process that works for storytelling and for pass-along pictures. If I mention a castle, she immediately adds a princess, to which I invariably add dragons and knights; it goes on from

there. If themes serve as the nouns for a given sentence, there must be action words to connect the themes. I seek to describe the themes with activities that will cement the connections I had discovered in the earlier coding process.

The story that has unfolded during this study is similar to someone planning to climb a mountain. Company commanders are like vision-casters, selling would-be mountaineers on the idea of mountain climbing; they also pitch the possibilities of what could be. Commanders strive to paint the picture of the mission a unit is tasked with and how they will collectively get there. Trail guiding is descriptive for the in-person guide who traverses the trail with the group as they work toward the summit, similar to the personal coaching and supervision a squad leader provides. Finally, the person who conducts azimuth adjusting seeks to fine-tune the ascent plan, confirming the direction to help the group stay on task, just as senior noncommissioned officers provide sage advice to leaders.

Company commanders are responsible for everything the unit and its members do or fail to do; however, they are not able to accomplish the mission without help. During the course of conducting this study, I found that the most successful commanders form a team approach to accomplishing the work by listening to good counsel. They also demonstrate trust in their subordinate leaders to supervise the soldiers in the unit by way of delegating authority to complete assigned tasks. Squad leaders accept their delegated authority and serve as effective bridges between commanders and soldiers. The senior noncommissioned officers function as trusted counselors who, knowingly or not, preserve the traditions of Army culture by way of encouraging junior leaders to excel in their profession.

Implications for Policy or Practice

Based on the six sub-thematic areas of presence, trust, buy-in, encouragement, accountability, and leader development presented earlier in this chapter, I now provide some implications for policy and practice. Accountability and leader development are explicated as implications for policy. Then I discuss presence, trust, buy-in, and encouragement as implications for practice. I am also including one additional outlier finding as a seventh significant subtheme to discuss. The outlier subtheme of comparing insubordinate acts to the process of creating a play illustrates several ways that some of this study's findings relate directly to French and Raven's (1959) taxonomy of social power.

Implications for Policy

All organizational leaders must consider the ramifications their policies potentially have on the organization, as well as how those policies affect its members individually (Halpin et al., 2018). Because policies are typically aimed at controlling individual action and attempting to provide organizational predictability, they must always be perceived in terms of the ways they affect people. Two areas within the military context deserve thoughtful organizational policy consideration; those themes are accountability and leader development.

Accountability. At the most basic level, accountability is the act measuring how closely someone's actions come to meeting an accepted standard. The Army has traditionally performed well with this concept; however, each new generation of leaders must renew the pledge of holding subordinates accountable for accomplishing the unit mission. This pledge of renewal applies especially to the Army's noncommissioned officer corps which styles itself as the backbone of the Army. Jeff characterized the art of holding soldiers accountable by suggesting

NCOs should make good application of the direct approach: "Hey, here's the stuff we're seeing, and here's the impact you're having on the organization. This stuff can't happen."

Leader Development. Conversely, leader development focuses more on the character and skills of the individual leader. Wise senior leaders within organizations tend to recognize the need for strengthening junior leaders who lack key leadership skills. Therefore, organizational policies should formally produce the most effective path to develop young leaders, helping them to increase their worth to the group. If the act of holding others accountable is the purview of leadership, then leader development is the baseline expectation to make the system function properly. Although I have described accountability and leader development within the Army context, these themes can very likely be applied in other private or public fields of endeavor.

Implications for Practice

Presence. The notion of presence as considered within the Army context equates to leaders and subordinates spending significant amounts of time together. Perhaps the most basic practical consideration I observed throughout this study is that military supervisors need to carefully count the cost of spending too much time away from their subordinates. They must strike an artful balance of their time between direct supervision and other duties that might draw them away from their soldiers. Without exception, every participant in the study made direct reference to the value of consistently being present with soldiers. The skills of building rapport, providing visible examples for subordinates of how to act properly in military settings, and caring enough to spend both quality and quantity time with their soldiers were the hallmark of every interview in this study. Investing healthy amounts of an Army leader's time in supervisory activity appears to be a best practice.

Trust. Trust is never lightly given; it must be earned. Trust is also a two-way street, as both leaders and subordinates must prove themselves to the other for trust to flourish. Finally, trust is slowly developed, due to the fragile nature of proving oneself to another human being. Because the cliché that *trust takes years to build but only seconds to destroy* rings true, trust is a valuable commodity. King Solomon extolled the great value of a good name (Proverbs 21:1, NIV, 1984); so too is the value of keeping one's word, as that is a central activity to making a good name.

Buy-in. The concept of buy-in becomes possible as the trust developed between supervisor and subordinates expands sufficiently to anchor the previously established rapport. Soldiers need to understand the assigned mission and believe in their leaders to the point that they have confidence to contribute to making the mission successful. A practical outcome of that rapport is that leaders spend less time cajoling soldiers and more time inviting them to participate.

Encouragement. Employing a commonplace metaphor to begin the description of this theme may be helpful. Encouragement is like oil in the engine crankcase; it makes everything run smoother. It is the missing link between establishing rapport with soldiers and getting them to believe in themselves. However, taken from its root meaning, encouragement is essentially the act of helping others to perceive the boldness they already possess, or at least, potentially they can maintain. From the perspective of soldier counseling, leaders incur the responsibility of providing encouragement to those they oversee; that is, Army leaders owe their soldiers the human decency of helping them to see beyond themselves, to envision what they might one day become.

Planning for Insubordination Mimics Hollywood. Participants characterized their perception of soldiers planning acts of insubordination as similar to the efforts involved in producing a Hollywood movie or a Broadway play, implying that no one just wakes up one day and decides out of the blue to become insubordinate. Insubordinate soldiers are intentional long before they act out. Activities such as role selection and casting equate to choosing whom one associates with. Other activities can include role preparation, similar to the way actors immerse themselves during method acting; script writing; line memorization; costume and prop design; initial rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and final rehearsal. All these actions culminate in a live stage play. In turn, soldiers often experience a similar process before acting out.

This parallel to producing a movie or play highlights several of the power bases as described in French and Raven's (1959) power taxonomy and in Raven's (1965) follow-on study. The *carrot and stick* power bases of reward and coercion are perceived when people are auditioning for a role, as well as all throughout the rehearsal phase. The director makes decisions about the script and role delivery. So, too, is the case with people trying out the ideas of rebellion; they take note of the influential people in their lives to see whether they approve of budding ideas about insubordination. Regarding the information, or persuasive, power base that Raven (1965) discussed, people thinking about acting on insubordinate ideations are often interested in communicating their ideas to others to see if the actions they are contemplating can gain traction. To date, this has been especially true in this era of social media.

Because the Army tends to be an insubordination-avoidance culture, leaders need to contemplate applying the other practical considerations discussed in this section. This requires vigilance, especially on the part of squad leaders, to remain attuned to the attitudes of their

subordinate soldiers. It is much easier to recognize soldier attitudes that might be bending toward potential insubordination than to deal with the aftermath of undermining or blatant rebellion.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

My study was predicated on the notion that company commanders who operate at the initial Army echelon allowed to wield UCMJ authority are more likely to counter insubordinate acts perpetrated within their units by relying primarily on their legitimate power to command than on expert or referent power (French & Raven, 1959). Rather, I found that the company commanders I interviewed chose referent power as their chief basis of power, often followed in descending order of frequent reliance on informational, expert, legitimate, reward, and coercive power (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965, 1993). However, this ordering of the power taxonomy is based on my study's limited set of participants, and readers should exercise caution when extrapolating from these results to apply to larger populations. Leadership styles are context dependent, as Brad pointed out: "Until you're in a leadership position, and you've dealt with situations, you have no idea what your leadership style is gonna be."

Diverging From Previous Research

In the process of conducting the literature review, I discovered only two studies that approached addressing perceived authority issues within the Army command structure, although neither study focused on the company level of the Army. Estevez (2019) attempted to determine how U.S. Army ROTC cadets at a public university perceived authority, as well as exploring the expectations about authority the cadets had formed prior to becoming commissioned officers. Hundman and Parkinson (2019) offered case studies about very senior military officers from foreign armies who had established sufficient credibility during their time in service to challenge, without fear of retaliation, the military systems in which they served. The authors concluded that

relationships the senior commanders had developed from previous settings caused tensions that set the stage for disobedience to specific orders that triggered a crisis of conscience. During my study, I found that the participants I interviewed have placed a high value on cultivating relationships. Although both Estevez (2019) and Hundman and Parkinson (2019) acknowledged the role of military relationship building within their respective studies, none of these scholars assigned a great deal of emphasis on how or why developing relationships might occur. The findings of my study point to the value of cultivating relationships as paramount to success in combating insubordination within the military environment.

Novel Contributions to the Field

My study contributes to the academic field of learning by way of exploring the phenomenon of insubordination and its effects from the perspective of U.S. Army company commanders. The literature is all but silent about activities occurring within Army company-level units, and because of my study the perceptions of those junior leaders are now accessible. This study represents merely a beginning to investigating the lived experiences of company grade commanders and issues about insubordinate behavior. I will discuss future research opportunities later in this chapter.

In addition to the uniqueness of studying the company-level echelon of command in the Army, I also discovered that many Army leaders display a penchant for identifying and mitigating potential insubordination rather than allowing it to fester in the ranks. This was especially noticeable when I initially approached potential participants. When asked about the extent of their experiences with insubordinate behavior, most of my participants denied having dealt with the phenomenon. However, upon further questioning I found that every participant truly had endured such encounters; they just were not accustomed to calling their experiences

insubordination. Further, I discovered that when I asked about the details of their command history in dispensing military justice, the participants soon realized that they had experienced insubordination, albeit referring to it with different nomenclature.

Reflections on My Methodology

Senior-level military participants are difficult to track for purposes of conducting in-depth interviews. Additionally, because so many of my participants had either moved from their current jobs or were deploying outside the continental United States for training, my original plans to conduct focus group became untenable. However, I was able to make good application of Microsoft Teams to conduct more in-depth interviews than I originally had thought possible, and that particular video format facilitated increased access for posing follow-up questions. I recommend that doctoral candidates who are planning to interview senior leaders in organizations carefully assemble multiple venues, scenarios, and formats in which they can possibly conduct interviews; candidates should also consider expanding their timeline for data collection, as senior leaders are often very busy due to a significant load of responsibilities and expectations within their organizations.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are defined as potential study weaknesses and as such are not in the control of the researcher (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Coker (2022) found that researchers often applied limitations in a careless manner. Theofanidis and Fountouki also described delimitations as conscious decisions researchers make to define the boundaries of their studies.

Limitations

Only a small number of the U.S. Army's 26 specialty branches were represented in this study. Because of the small number of participants considered acceptable for a qualitative study,

I simply did not have the capacity to obtain soldiers to represent each sub-branch perspective. However, I was able to include participants in my sample from the three primary categories of combat arms, combat support, and combat service support. For example, although several Infantry and Artillery soldiers in the study were members describing the term *combat arms*, no one in the study represented the Cavalry, Armor, or Aviation branches of the combat arms. The presence of the lone Signal Corps soldier who represented the *combat support* specialty branches in my study implies that soldiers from Military Intelligence, Military Police, and Chemical Corps, among the other combat support specialty branches were not included in the study. Similarly, the only specialty branches from *combat service support* were Medical Service Corps and the Nurse Corps, effectively under-representing all the other logistics-oriented branches within the Army, such as the Ordnance, Quartermaster, Transportation, and Chaplain Corps.

I conducted all my data collection from just one site; that is, I interviewed participants from one Army post within the continental United States. It is quite likely that future researchers may discover different command experiences at other military posts or bases both within the continental United States and abroad. These differences exist for several reasons, to include the mission focus for the most prominent military units at a given post, the level of community support to military units at that post, the amount of economic and social reliance communities maintain regarding nearby military installations, and the attitudes local residents bear toward the military and public service more generally.

Unanticipated transitions were challenging after conducting interviews with several of the participants. Two people physically moved from the area with one taking a job in another field of work unassociated with the military, while the other person moved to the National Capital Region to accept a position of great responsibility within a unit commanded by a four-star

general. Two of the participants received promotions to the next higher rank after we had conducted our interviews. Finally, four participants unexpectedly deployed overseas for an extended time either during or just after their interviews with me; of those four, I was obligated to interview two of them by means of MS Teams due to the timing of their deployment travel and their availability because of time zone differences.

Delimitations

Cultural differences between the six service branches of the U.S. Armed Forces limited my usage of the word *military* when applying my findings to the phenomenon of reacting to insubordination. Because of those distinctions, I chose to more narrowly define my targeted culture and population: U.S. Army active-duty soldiers. This decision implied that I would exclude certain military subcultures. For example, I chose the service branch with which I was most familiar, the U.S. Army. The other services of Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, Air Force, and Space Force were all beyond my scope of investigation. Additionally, of the three service components in the U.S. military, I chose to seek participants from the Active Component, which is also called *Compo 1*. Therefore, I also excluded soldiers of the *Compo 2* National Guard and the *Compo 3* Reserves from taking part in the study.

Because of cultural implications associated with certain "elite" units, such as the Special Forces group of Green Beret soldiers and the Ranger battalion stationed at Fort Tesla, I made a deliberate decision not to recruit from them, as the set of challenges within their subcultures would vary significantly from everyday challenges most Army units encounter. Finally, the officers were required to have successfully completed at least one company-level command and the junior NCOs needed to have served in a first-line supervisory capacity as squad leaders or section leaders.

Recommendations for Future Research

      This section establishes a four-step approach for recommending productive future studies related to this dissertation. Maxwell (2013) recommends an interactive approach by relating the purposes for conducting a potential study to a conceptual context which, in turn, leads directly to the research questions and methodology. Maxwell's process essentially begins with the proposed study's importance, supported by a theoretical framework to point toward the unknown: the research questions proper. The chosen method of study equates to the *how* of the study which then allows the researcher to contemplate the *what-if* factor that Maxwell refers to as validity.

Study Replication

      The first step of my recommendations for future researchers is to consider conducting my study with the same methodology I implemented but focusing on different audiences. Three elements comprising this step can consider insubordination by armed service branch, component, and echelon. The areas of inquiry can include investigating the phenomenon based on the culture and traditions of the armed service branches other than the Army as well as the components of Active Duty, National Guard, and the Reserves. The richness of possibility for study also exists within the various echelons of each service or component.

      By Service Branch. Within the American military context, there are five other services of the U.S. Armed Forces that could be studied: Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, and Space Force. Each service is named here by its longevity as a military service branch. All the services rely on their own traditions to uphold their unique cultures. This is a showcase for the value of qualitative studies.

      By Component. Additionally, I only considered the Army's Active component in this study. The U.S. Armed Forces maintain two other components: the National Guard and the

Reserves, which have developed cultural nuances widely differing from the Active component. Guard units are especially interesting because in peacetime their commander-in-chief is thestate or territorial governor. Their missions also encompass disaster relief, combating seasonal forest fires, and riot control, as well as being prepared to respond to national combat deployments. Guard units also allow for cultivating unique personal relationships as their members normally are assigned to one unit for much longer periods of time.

By Echelon. While I have chosen to investigate issues of insubordination at the company level, there are several echelons above the company level that deserve closer scrutiny. This is true for all services and components. A logical follow-on study could investigate the dynamics of handling insubordination at the Army's battalion level, for example. The battalion is the next higher echelon above company, and battalion commanders are entrusted with field-grade Article 15 powers; they can impose more severe punishments in response to serious infractions, such as drug use or harassment.

New Techniques

A second path to further examine elements of my study could be to choose a different qualitative method of study. Examples of this path include use of narrative, grounded theory, or case studies as potentially appropriate methods to investigate. Choosing another qualitative method may be appropriate when examining other aspects of insubordination such as how poor behavior affects various populations within the military. Adopting such an approach would likely necessitate adjusting my research questions to fit other methodological choices. For example, case study might be a helpful method to employ if one is interested in comparing how various units deal with insubordinate behavior. Rather than seeking to holistically understand how commanders respond to insubordination, it might be interesting to measure the combat

effectiveness over time of similar types of units whose leaders dealt with insubordinate behavior differently.

Exploring Leaders' Stories

During my data collection efforts, I noticed that the leaders in each participant group exhibited significantly different leadership traits and development perspectives. Leaders have diverse backgrounds, skills, and visions in carrying out their duties; some leaders are simply better than others. This observation leads me to consider the potentially rich areas of discovery available to researchers regarding the background, training, influences, and abilities of leaders. The narrative research method seems to be especially suited to accomplish this task (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). One of the benefits of this method is documenting the variety of approaches to leading troops, and in so doing, researchers may discover patterns developing that can help to explain the elusive question about whether leaders are born or made (Northouse, 2019). In other words, this method allows researchers to explore leadership traits and training as exemplified in present-day military leaders.

Instrument Development

Finally, researchers may wish to develop fresh tools to measure elements of a study about insubordination. What sorts of instruments are currently available to answer research questions and provide leaders with actionable findings or suggest updating existing policies? Are those instruments readily available, or should the researcher consider proposing new instruments for further exploration, such as designing a specially targeted survey or a leadership questionnaire? Such instruments should be considered for their value in augmenting various methodologies, not just pursued for the sake of novelty.

Conclusion

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology is to explore the experiences of U.S. Army company commanders regarding insubordinate acts aimed at undermining their legitimate command authority. Serving as a foundational guide, I relied on French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power, which states that power is divided into five unique forms that leaders use in exercising their will to accomplish tasks. I especially wanted to examine how company commanders use the legitimate power base, a form of social power often asserted by virtue of holding an office or formal organizational position. I conducted interviews at an Army post in western USA among three groups of Army leaders: company commanders, squad leaders, and senior NCOs. Data collection methods included interviews and letter writing.

Besides investigating Army company-level commands, I discovered many Army leaders are adept at identifying and mitigating potential insubordination rather than dealing with it later. In particular, I found that as leaders cultivate trust among their soldiers, subordinates tend to cooperate better. However, trust is never lightly given; it must be earned. Furthermore, trust is also bidirectional; it is incumbent upon both leaders and subordinates to prove themselves to the other group for trust to truly flourish. Additionally, I was able to see how senior leaders offer encouragement. Army leaders must help their soldiers see beyond present circumstances, so they can envision what important roles they might someday aspire to. Stated as themes, soldiers want commanders who offer clear vision-casting efforts directed at mission accomplishment; authentic first-line supervisors strive to bridge the gap between the commander and the soldiers; and senior NCOs care enough to develop their subordinates, promoting a command climate that, in turn, improves military culture long term. Future research opportunities exist in exploring insubordination in other military services and components.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Application

The formal application to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board appears in this appendix. When the Liberty University IRB grants me permission to proceed with my study I will replace the application letter with the IRB approval letter. I understand that no data collection will begin until I have IRB permission.

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 31, 2022

Woody Stone
David Vacchi

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-783 Military Command Authority: A Phenomenological Study of How U.S. Army Company-Grade Leaders Experience Insubordination

Dear Woody Stone, David Vacchi,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at █████████.

Sincerely,
██████████ MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Site Letters of Support

According to the IRB staff at Einstein Army Medical Center on Fort Tesla, I would only have been required to go through their IRB process if I had been conducting a medically-related study, which is not the case for this study. The Einstein IRB staff members did recommend that I still write a letter requesting the support of the garrison commander's office. The intent of these letters is to obtain official sanction recognizing that I have notified the garrison leadership that I am conducting a study on post and that I intend to conduct interviews of active-duty soldiers who are stationed at Fort Tesla.

February 10, 2022

████████████████

Garrison Public Affairs Officer

████████████████████████

Dear ████████████

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education with a concentration in Organizational Leadership. The title of my research project is "Military Command Authority: A Phenomenological Study of How U.S. Army Company-Grade Leaders Experience Insubordination" and the purpose of my research is to explore the experiences of U.S. Army company-grade leaders regarding insubordinate acts aimed at undermining their legitimate command authority.

I am writing to request your permission to contact service members from your organization to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to contact me to schedule an interview. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to ████████████████. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Thomas W. Stone
Candidate, PhD in Education
Liberty University

February 11, 2022

Thomas W. Stone
Candidate, PhD in Education
Liberty University

███████████

Dear Mr. Stone:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled "Military Command Authority: A Phenomenological Study of How U.S. Army Company-Grade Leaders Experience Insubordination," I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at ███████████ ███████████

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☒ I grant permission for Thomas W. Stone to contact active-duty service members on ███████████ ███████████ to invite them to participate in his research study.

Sincerely,

🔲 Invalid signature

X ███████████
_____

█████ Garrison Public Affairs Officer
Signed by: ███████████
███████████
Garrison Public Affairs Officer
███████████

Appendix C

Recruiting Letters

Below are digital copies of the verbal recruiting script and the recruiting letter I will email to prospective participants to request that they consider taking part in this study. The intent of these letters is to provide prospective participants with information describing the purpose and goals of the study. They will also learn about what they can expect if they agree to participate in the study.

Hello [Potential Participant],

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education with a concentration in Organizational Leadership. The purpose of my research is explore the experiences of U.S. Army company-grade leaders regarding insubordinate acts aimed at undermining their legitimate command authority, and if you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Participants must currently be a soldier in the active component of the U.S. Army. If you are a commissioned officer, you need to have successfully completed at least one tour of command at the company level. If you are an NCO, you need to have served, or currently are serving, in the role of a squad leader. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take part in a face-to-face interview and a focus group with two or three of your peers, each of which should typically last no more than one hour. I will record the personal interview using audio equipment. Officers and senior NCOs will also be asked to write a notional letter to their *pre-command selves* regarding helpful information about insubordination. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the researcher will use pseudonyms in the write-up to protect your identity.

Would you like to participate? [Yes] Great, could I get your email address so I can set up a time for an interview? [No] I understand. Thank you for your time. [Conclude the conversation.]

A consent document will be given to you at the time of the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education with a concentration in Organizational Leadership. The purpose of my research is explore the experiences of U.S. Army company-grade leaders regarding insubordinate acts aimed at undermining their legitimate command authority, and if you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Participants must currently be a soldier in the active component of the U.S. Army. If you are a commissioned officer, you need to have successfully completed at least one tour of command at the company level. If you are an NCO, you need to have served, or currently are serving, in the role of a squad leader. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take part in a face-to-face interview and a focus group with two or three of your peers, each of which should typically last no more than one hour. I will record the personal interview using audio equipment. Officers and senior NCOs will also be asked to write a notional letter to their *pre-command selves* regarding helpful information about insubordination. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the researcher will use pseudonyms in the write-up to protect your identity.

Would you like to participate? If you are willing to join, please respond to me by email (████████████████) or call my cell phone number (████████████) so I can set up a time for an interview. If you do not wish to participate, I understand. Thank you for your time.

A consent document will be given to you at the time of the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

Sincerely,

Thomas W. Stone
Candidate, PhD in Education
Liberty University
Cell: ████████████
Email: ████████████████

Appendix D

Consent Form

On the next two pages is a digital copy of the two-page consent form I will provide to participants of this study. The intent of this form is to officially provide participants with advance knowledge that they are being asked to take part in research and that they agree to cooperate with the researcher. This also allows me to be protected by written evidence that my participants grant their permission for me to work with them.

Consent

Title of the Project: "Military Command Authority: A Phenomenological Study of How U.S. Army Company-Grade Leaders Experience Insubordination"
Principal Investigator: Thomas W. Stone, M.A., B.S., Liberty University School of Education

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must currently be a soldier in the active component of the U.S. Army. If you are a commissioned officer, you need to have successfully completed at least one tour of command at the company level. If you are an NCO, you need to have served, or currently are serving, in the role of a squad leader. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of U.S. Army company-grade leaders regarding insubordinate acts aimed at undermining their legitimate command authority. Acts of insubordination will be generally defined in this study as the attempts by soldiers, civil servants, or federal contractors to thwart military good order and discipline.

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1. Take part in a face-to-face interview, which should typically last no more than one hour. I will record the personal interview using audio equipment.
2. Take part in a focus group with two or three of your peers. This group discussion should last about an hour, and I will record the focus group interview using audio equipment.
3. Commissioned officers will be asked to write a letter to their *pre-command selves* regarding helpful information about insubordination. Similarly, senior NCOs who have served at battalion level will write a letter to notional young officers about to take command who could benefit from the perspective of NCOs in dealing with insubordinate soldiers. This letter-writing process should take about one to two hours of your time, depending on the level of detail you choose to include in your letter. I will ask you to return the letters to me two weeks after you complete your personal interview.

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include sharing your personal experiences about insubordination in a military setting. The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.
- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus group conversations will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

The researcher conducting this study is Thomas W. Stone. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at ▮▮▮▮▮ or by email at ▮▮▮▮▮. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. David Vacchi, at ▮▮▮▮▮. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, ▮▮▮▮▮, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at ▮▮▮▮▮.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix E

Interview Questions

Below are the proposed interview questions that will be used for individual interviews of participants. The linkages of interview questions to their corresponding research questions are indicated at the end of each question below. I have crafted unique questions for each group of participants in order to facilitate some order for later coding and data analysis.

Group 1 Individual Interview Questions – Former Commanders

1. Please tell me how you became interested in serving in the military and how your career has progressed thus far. SQ1

2. How would you define military leadership? SQ1

3. What experiences do you believe prepared you for command? SQ1

4. Before taking command, how did you think subordinates might react to your orders? SQ1

5. From your perspective, what is involved in leading soldiers? CRQ

6. How do you define insubordination? CRQ

7. During command, how often did you experience instances of insubordination? SQ1

8. Describe the discussions you had with your advisors regarding insubordination. SQ3

9. How would you describe the relationship you had with your squad leaders? SQ2

10. In what ways did your subordinate leaders support your decisions? SQ2

11. Describe a situation when subordinates questioned, undermined, or defied your decisions or orders. CRQ

12. How did you feel about having your orders disobeyed? SQ1

13. When you made decisions as a commander, how did you gain compliance or buy in? CRQ

14. In retrospect, how did dealing with insubordinate followers affect you as a leader? SQ1

15. What else would you like to share regarding your experiences with insubordinate conduct? SQ1

Group 2 Individual Interview Questions – Squad Leaders

1. Please walk me through your military career from the time you first joined the Army to becoming an NCO. SQ2

2. As a new soldier, how did you think Army leaders were supposed to act? SQ2

3. What experiences do you believe best prepared you to assume your leadership roles? SQ2

4. How do you exercise your authority as an NCO? SQ2

5. From your perspective, what is involved in leading soldiers? CRQ

6. How do you differentiate the leadership roles of NCOs and officers? CRQ

7. How do you define insubordination? CRQ

8. Please explain the dynamics of working for your company commanders. SQ2

9. What did you and your peers discuss when the topic of insubordination surfaced in conversation? SQ2

10. What kinds of insubordinate acts have you experienced as a squad leader? SQ2

11. Please describe a memorable situation when your soldiers questioned, undermined, or defied your commander's orders or decisions. SQ2

12. How did you respond to those acts of insubordination? SQ2

13. How did your experiences regarding insubordination affect either your daily duties or your career? SQ2

14. In retrospect, how did dealing with insubordinate followers affect you as a leader? SQ2

15. What else would you like to share regarding your experiences with insubordinate conduct? SQ2

Group 3 Individual Interview Questions – Senior NCOs

1. Please walk me through your military career from the time you first joined the Army to becoming an NCO. SQ3

2. As a new soldier, how did you think Army leaders were supposed to act? SQ3

3. What experiences do you believe best prepared you to assume your leadership roles? SQ3

4. From your perspective, what is involved in the activity of leadership? CRQ

5. How do you differentiate the leadership roles of NCOs and officers? CRQ

6. How do you define insubordination? CRQ

7. During the time you served as a squad leader, what was it like to work with the various leaders in your company? SQ3

8. Please explain the dynamics of working for your former company commanders. SQ3

9. What did you and your peers discuss when the topic of insubordination surfaced in conversation? SQ3

10. What kinds of insubordinate acts have you seen during your time in the Army? SQ3

11. Please describe a memorable case of insubordination you have seen in the Army. SQ3

12. What advice or guidance have you offered to commanders who were dealing with insubordinate troops? SQ3

13. How was your advice received? SQ3

14. How did the situations resolve? SQ3

15. Thinking back on the mentorship you have offered leaders regarding insubordination, what advice has had the greatest impact on unit morale? SQ3

16. Which aspects of your advice have most helped mission accomplishment? SQ3

17. What else should we have touched on regarding this topic? SQ3

Appendix F

Letter Writing Prompts

Below are the letter writing prompts that were given to participants from Group 1 commissioned officers and Group 3 senior noncommissioned officers so they could complete their letters. Former commanders were asked to write a letter to their *pre-command selves* regarding information about insubordination; the intent of the letter was for them to share knowledge and experiences they would like to have known before taking command and encountering insubordinate soldiers. Similarly, I asked senior noncommissioned officers working at battalion and higher-echelon units to write a letter to young officers about to take command who could benefit from the perspective of a noncommissioned officer about techniques for dealing with undisciplined soldiers.

Group 1 – Former Commanders

Please write a letter to your *pre-command self* regarding information you wish you would have known about how to deal with insubordinate acts. In this study acts of insubordination are generally defined as attempts by soldiers, civil servants, or federal contractors to thwart military good order and discipline within the military small unit setting. Of special note, please discuss details about the range of options available to commanders regarding UCMJ and corrective action when dealing with insubordinate soldiers.

Group 3 – Senior NCOs

Please write a letter to young officers who are about to take command who could benefit from the perspective of a noncommissioned officer about techniques for dealing with undisciplined soldiers. In this study acts of insubordination are generally defined as attempts by soldiers, civil servants, or federal contractors to thwart military good order and discipline within

the military small unit setting. Discuss the role of noncommissioned officers, especially squad leaders and platoon sergeants, and the tangible ways they can support the commander with a range of options to deal with insubordinate soldiers, including both judicial and non-judicial punishment.