

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Suck it Up and Drive on Soldier: A Burkean Rhetorical Analysis and Critical Examination of The Internal Rhetoric of a Military Rape Victim.

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Sexual assault in the military is prevalent, underestimated, and sadly overlooked. This is largely due to the inherent patriarchy and hegemonic masculine ideologies that set rigid power boundaries in the military. The roles of powerful and powerless are indoctrinated into Servicemembers from the first moment of training, and are reified throughout one's military career. Internal rhetoric is a form of discourse which, like all discourse, aids in constructing meaning. Military training and influences internal rhetoric. Further, military sexual assault (MSA) directly and negatively impacts a victim's internal discourse in a way that in turn shifts his/her self and world-views. In order to present a holistic and truly interdisciplinary research result, this thesis will first outline the nature of hegemonic masculine military ideology, its role in MSA, and its impact on female Servicemembers from a critical intercultural communication lens; and then to methodically explore the meaning, motive, and character of a victim's internal rhetoric using Kenneth Burke's cluster-agon rhetorical analysis method on the private autoethnography of a survivor of military-on-military rape victimization.

The objective of this research is to contribute an interdisciplinary qualitative perspective on the intersectionality of the three primary areas of military hegemonic masculine ideology, military sexual assault, and internal rhetoric (or 'self-talk') of the victimized.

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Suck it Up and Drive On Soldier: A Burkean Rhetorical Analysis and Critical
Examination of The Internal Rhetoric of a Military Rape Victim

by
Corrina M. Ward

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Corrina M. Ward, Author

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Introduction

Sexual assault in the military is prevalent, underestimated, and sadly overlooked. This is largely due to the inherent patriarchy and hegemonic masculine ideologies that set rigid power boundaries in the military. The roles of powerful and powerless are indoctrinated into Servicemembers (this term is capitalized henceforth in accordance with military style and capitalization of the term) from the first moment of training, and are reified throughout one's military career. It can be widely understood that the ideologies of the military serve to condition Servicemembers to fight in war and react with precision and control to violence, chaos and fear. Though our Armed Forces can be argued as essential to the maintenance of certain U.S. American ways of life, military hegemonic masculine ideology creates institutionalized discrimination and sexual victimization of women, in-turn constituting damaging life-long psychophysiological pain.

What is too often overlooked academically is the intersectionality of hegemonic military ideologies, sexual assault against female Servicemembers, and the resulting life-long internal rhetoric that serves to negatively redefine the victim's self and world-views. There is a good deal of research available on military sexual assault (MSA), as well as hegemonic masculine ideologies; however, the majority of this scholarship is primarily quantitative in nature. Furthermore, there is very little qualitative communication studies conducted on directly on the internal rhetoric of military rape victims specifically, and how it contributes to the construction of meaning for victims and survivors of MSA.

In order to present a holistic and truly interdisciplinary research result, this thesis will first outline the nature of hegemonic masculine military ideology, its role in MSA,

and its impact on female Servicemembers from a critical intercultural communication lens.

Next, I methodically explore the meaning, motive, and character of a victim's internal rhetoric using Kenneth Burke's cluster-agon rhetorical analysis method on the private autoethnography of a survivor of military-on-military rape victimization. The objective of this research is to contribute an interdisciplinary qualitative perspective on the intersectionality of the three primary areas of military hegemonic masculine ideology, military sexual assault, and internal rhetoric (or 'self-talk') of the victimized.

I define an interdisciplinary approach as using critical intercultural communication to first examine the unique and marginalizing aspects of military power difference via hegemonic masculinity and its relationship to MSA; to then demonstrate the myriad-like levels of motive and meaning behind the very private thoughts of a victim by using rhetorical analysis. Applied anthropology is used, in a form of ethnographic research, to provide the text for rhetorical analysis. Together, this approach will provide a more holistic tapestry of the life-defining and life-long experience and impacts of military rape. A second objective of this multi-faceted approach to studying the inimitable culture of MSA survivors is to encourage scholars to embrace and understand the value of interdisciplinary qualitative research into military-on-military sex crimes. Ultimately, this thesis will reveal the uniquely severe and life-long nature of the impacts military rape has on female Servicemembers by showing this intersection between a culture of hegemonic masculine ideology, military sexual assault, and internal rhetoric (self-talk) of the victimized.

First, I will review literature on hegemonic masculine ideologies, military socialization, military sexual trauma, and rhetoric in relation to sexual trauma.

This literature review will establish the need for more communication scholarship of MSA and internal rhetoric, by establishing a relationship between hegemonic masculine ideologies, MSA, and the resulting way a victim's thoughts shift and re-define self and world-views.

Next, I will briefly discuss research methods, explaining the use and value of autoethnography as method (in this case, data collection method), as well as detailing Kenneth Burke's cluster-agon analysis and its purpose. I will then detail a cluster-agon analysis of the internal rhetoric represented in my own autoethnography as a military rape survivor. Additionally, to better frame the preceding Burkean cluster-agon analysis, I present a contextual background on the military's hegemonic masculine ideology and its relationship to MSA and female Servicemembers, situated through a critical intercultural communication lens that focuses on the hegemony of the military's masculine ideology. The research begins with a review of literature.

Literature Review

Military sexual assault (MSA), the act of which includes rape, forcible sodomy, indecent assault, and any attempts of these offenses (Williams & Bernstein, 2011) is reported by an estimated one out of four female soldiers on average (D.O.D., 2014). On May 1, 2014, the U.S. Department of Defense reported to Congress that there were 5,061 reports of sexual assault in the military in 2013 (D.O.D., 2014). This is a nearly 50% jump from the 3,374 sexual assaults reported in 2012 (D.O.D., 2013). This is a big number. An even bigger number is the estimate of assaults that go unreported in the military by women, nearly 17,000, or roughly 80% (D.O.D., 2014). Precisely accurate numbers reflecting MSA are difficult to provide, as it is commonly known that MSA and military sexual trauma historically (MST) go largely unreported (Lutwak & Dill, 2013).

Military sexual trauma is a severe form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that occurs when a, “depended-upon-for-survival individual(s) harm or violate a dependent person [...] The victim of the harm, who is in a dependent position, is unable to confront or break ties with the perpetrator of the violation.” (Lutwak & Dill, 2013). The majority of research on MSA and the immediate and long-term psychophysiological impacts of MSA in the form of MST, is done by, or on behalf of, the United States Department of Veteran’s Affairs. Such research is primarily done via screening of health care applications and standardized crime-reporting surveys. Very little scholarship exists on the internal rhetorical process of MSA survivors - how MSA is processed internally

through self-talk - an experience that significantly shifts self and world-views of these victims.

This literature review explores existing literature on the hegemonic masculine ideology of the military, MSA, MST, and the rhetorical research surrounding military sexual assault in order to justify the need for rhetorical scholarship from a more emic perspective into this tragic and life-altering phenomenon. First, I will lay contextual groundwork by reviewing literature on the masculine ideology of the military, and its hegemonic nature. This will hopefully help readers understand the nature of the military, military identity, and how the ideology in the military is linked to violence and the dichotomous domination and subordination relationships within the military. Next, I will discuss literature regarding MSA, how it is a high-level trust betrayal act, and the respective consequences on victims of MSA. Finally, to help readers understand the important role of rhetoric in the construction of meaning and self and world-views, I will review literature on the persuasive and self/group identification nature of rhetoric.

Hegemonic Masculine Military Ideology

Truly understanding the role rhetoric, especially internal rhetoric, plays in the identity and standpoint of military-on-military sexual assault victims relies heavily on first having a framework of masculine military ideology that asserts dominance over all people and things that are seen as weaker/less than. Ramon Hinojosa (2010) defines hegemonic masculinities as “both external and internal [...] configurations of everyday gendered social practices(s) in which individuals construct gender identities in relation and opposition to other men and women” (181). Hinojosa (2010) further explains that, internal or external, hegemonic masculinity marginalizes all women/femininity, and even

other masculinities; and that this ideology “enables men to maintain positions of dominance and privilege over femininities” (181).

The military epitomizes hegemonic masculinity, which is evidenced externally, for example, by the privilege of male Servicemembers being allowed to fulfill more types of jobs than females. Internal masculine hegemony is evidenced in the military by the ranked structuring of masculinities (Hinojosa, 2010) in military elements like rank arrangement, performance expectations, and the necessity for female Servicemembers to enact masculine behaviors (like violence, aggression, etc) over feminine attitudes (181). Hinojosa’s (2010) research reveals that men who join the military, and thus who are in and who run the military, see themselves as dominant over women, in that these men, “symbolically construct masculine hierarchies in which they situate themselves on top. The men positioned themselves as more morally oriented, self-disciplined, physically able, emotionally controlled, martially skilled, or intelligent” (179).

Scholar and U.S. Army Veteran Angela Hope and her writing partner, Matthew Ericksen (2009) define hegemonic masculine military ideology as an institutionalized, “male-dominated, male-perceived, male-centered” masculine ideology. The military is, in essence, a closed and marginalizing institution that promotes aggression and violence, which supports military-on-military sexual assault (MSA) against female Servicemembers (116). Hope and Ericksen’s (2009) research reveals that,

The institutional arrangements that structure situations and, to a lesser extent, develop dispositions that (1) neutralize normal moral restraints against violence and (2) supply the motives and mechanisms necessary to carry out violence or to permit violence to occur, on a regular basis [due to] bureaucratic policies, training procedures, and routines [that] assist [in] dehumanizing acts in total closed institutions. (116)

The military, as a closed and self-governed system, was created from a male perspective to be male centered and male dominant (Hinojosa, 2010).

In turn, this system constructs a masculine ideology, placing ideal masculinity hierarchically at the top of all other identities (Hinojosa, 2010). Due to the nature of the military's role to protect and go to war, it follows that military ideology places specific emphasis on the masculine constructed ideologies of aggression and violence (Hope & Ericksen, 2009). In totality then, the military institutionalizes hegemonic masculine ideology.

With an understanding of the nature of hegemonic masculinity and masculine military ideology, it doesn't take an unreasonable inferential leap to deduce that hegemonic masculine military ideology is directly related to men's violence against fellow Servicemembers, specifically females. Jeff Hearn's (2012) work on violence against known women is most compelling. Hearn (2012) states, "Violence is not a fixed set of behaviors; rather the very construction of violence is related to historical intersections of gender power, social divisions, ideology, and indeed hegemony" (590). Hearn (2012) elaborates to explain that violence is directly related to consent in a way that restructures the concept of power (591). Male Servicemembers, therefore, enact sexual assault against female Servicemembers in the framework of the power and social divisions between male and female in the military.

This emphasis on violence is fundamental to military ideology (Turchik & Wilson, 2010). This inherent role of violence in the military is stated obviously in a Servicemember's duty to kill and/ or injure as commanded (Turchik & Wilson, 2010).

However, grounds that violence is inherent to military life are also demonstrated in more subtle acts, such as slang and cadence calls (Turchik & Wilson, 2010).

J.A. Turchik and S.M. Wilson (2010) explain that the military uses violence as a “means to an end” (271). It becomes easier for people to legitimize the systemic violence enacted by military Servicemembers because, generally, the populace understands that Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, and Seamen are trained to protect through dominance, aggression, and even killing (Turchik & Wilson, 2010).

Over the course of decades, the military has changed its training in a way that desensitizes and conditions Servicemembers to dramatically increased rates of violence from previous years (specifically firing their weapons to kill/harm) against those seen as inferior (Turchik & Wilson, 2010). It is reasonably logical to adopt the presumption that training a group of humans to be desensitized to act violently against their fellow humans, can in turn – even if unintentionally - desensitize and condition Servicemembers to act violently towards one another.

Military Sexual Assault and Trauma

This embedded military emphasis on violence against others can especially lead to male Servicemembers aggressing and dominating over women, who through hegemonic masculinity are seen as less-than (Hinojosa, 2010). When you tie together the work done by afore mentioned scholars, it shows that the link between military ideology and (MSA) lies in the hegemonic masculinity espoused by male military members, the military as an institution, as well as the aggression, dominance, and violence conditioned into Servicemembers via training and conditioning (Hope & Ericksen, 2009; Hinojosa, 2010; Hearn, 2012; and Turchik & Wilson, 2013).

Williams and Bernstein's (2011) define military sexual assault as rape, forced sodomy, unwanted sexual contact, or any attempt to commit these (138).

In a 2013 issue of *Military Medicine*, Nancy Lutwak and Curt Dill define MSA as a high-level trust betrayal act that significantly negatively impacts the physical and psychological health of victims (359). Considering this, it can be asserted that MSA significantly and continuously undermines unit cohesion, and physically and psychologically harms victims, causing military sexual trauma, a form of post-traumatic stress disorder, and self-destructive internal rhetoric, all of which act together to significantly shift a victim's self and world views.

The relationship between military ideology, MSA, MST, and perhaps more relevantly to my research between MSA, MST, and internal rhetoric of survivors, starts to become more evident. Beyond the known impacts of general sexual assault in civilian cases (non military-on-military sexual assaults), MSA transcends an individual traumatic event, and is instead an *ongoing experience* of organization trauma (Hope & Ericksen, 2009). As they explain in their work, *From military sexual trauma to 'organization-trauma': practicing 'poetics of testimony'*, Angela Hope and Matthew Ericksen provide that, essentially, masculine military hegemony at an institutional level causes 'organization trauma'. Hope and Ericksen (2009) define organization trauma as being,

Constituted as a series of traumatically violating experiences which is committed by the organizational establishment either through a colluding group of soldiers whose identity is interwoven with the organizational culture and/or by top management officials. (117)

In essence, the “dominant discourses, culture, and practices in the military organization help create the mediums for traumatic violations to occur against marginalized women.” (Hope & Ericksen, 2009).

The ‘organization’ nature of trauma is also due, in part, to the reporting and prosecuting process for sexual assault in the military. Note that organization trauma is a term coined by scholars Hope and Ericksen (2009). It is different than organizational trauma.

Organization trauma, according to Hope and Ericksen (2009), transcends organizational trauma because the trauma is being induced and perpetuated *against* female Servicemembers *by* the systemic hegemonic masculine ideology of the organization.

What truly delineates *military* sexual assault from *non-military* sexual assault is the high-level trust betrayal discussed earlier, and the ongoing traumatic experiences perpetuated by the very nature of hegemonic masculine military ideology and processes. The Joint Hearing before the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs and the Subcommittee on Health of the Committee on Veteran’s Affairs U.S. House of Representatives One Hundred Eleventh Congress presented various authorities regarding MSA and MST, and their relationship to the process of reporting and prosecuting military-on-military sexual assault (Subcommittee, 2010). According to several witnesses’ testimony (Subcommittee, 2010), like that of Helen Benedict, note that women who try to report assault are treated by the military and VA as

Liars and malingerers [...] their sexual response coordinators assigned to help them by the military often treated them with such suspicion that they felt re-traumatized and intimidated out of pursuing justice. Indeed, the usual report of sexual assault within the military is to investigate the victim, not the perpetrator, and to dismiss the case altogether if alcohol is involved (6).

Hope and Ericksen (2008) also note that MSA is not a single event, but rather an *ongoing experience* because victims are constantly re-victimized due to consistent re-exposure to their perpetrator.

This re-exposure includes things like being required to honor and respect perpetrators who out rank the women they victimize, as well as being treated like a betrayer for reporting the MSA (Hope & Ericksen, 2009). The idea of organization trauma in the military is further supported by Kimerling, Gima, Smith, Street, and Frayne (2010) who remind us that MSA is perpetrated by fellow military members from whom the victim cannot escape due to the nature of military personnel living, eating, sleeping, working, playing, and training together every day (1409).

When the military, as an institution, further marginalizes female Servicemembers for reporting MSA, especially when it is done so due to and through the systemic hegemonic masculine ideology of the military, the event of MSA becomes an experience of not only individual trauma, but also organization trauma. This deepens the level of high-trust betrayal experienced by victims. High-trust betrayal, coupled with organization trauma and continuous re-exposure to victimization by perpetrators, leads to a severe form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) called military sexual trauma (MST). PTSD/MST is directly linked by many studies I will discuss next to self and group identification and re-identification markers, including the self-talk victims use to re-define themselves and the world they now see thorough the lens of MST. Therefore, organization trauma, via hegemonic masculine ideology, causes PTSD, which in turn causes a significant shift in self and world-views of victims.

The Relationship Between PTSD/MST and Rhetoric

Self and world-views are the result of many things including lived experience, learned experience, and executive function (Aupperle, Melrose, Stein, & Paulus, 2012). I define lived experience as a pretty straightforward term meaning experiences humans live through. I define learned experience as what humans are taught, or learn from the experiences of others. Executive function is not so simply defined. In Neuropharmacology, Aupperle, Melrose, Stein, and Paulus (2012), refer to *Principles of Psychology* (1890) author, William James', definition of executive function is, "the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought [...] It implies the withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others" (686). In other words, executive function is one's personal control over "complex goal-directed behavior" (Aupperle et al., 2012), and involves *attention* [focusing one's mind]; *working memory* [active maintenance and manipulation of information in one's mind]; *sustained attention* [maintaining focus, *inhibitory function* [inhibition of automatic responses to maintain goal-directed behavior]; *flexibility/switching* [ability to switch between thought processes/tasks], and finally *planning* [ability to develop and implement self direction]. Aupperle et. al (2012) also explain that "cognitive and emotional aspects of learning in PTSD clearly interact with one another and are intrinsically intertwined." (688) Finally,

Aupperle et al state that executive function of PTSD victims begins to shift the moment victimization occurs (686).

Considering that language constructs and shapes meaning (Burke, 1945), and that humans use language in the form of rhetoric to persuade and understand, it makes sense that scholars of rhetoric, as well as those who study MST, should seek to understand the relationship between the internal-rhetoric of MSA victims and the MST form of PTSD they suffer.

It is also important to recognize how both work together to significantly shift self and world-views. This relationship cannot be understood by way of quantitative research alone. As mentioned earlier, most research done on MSA and MST involves STEM sciences, as well as the quantitative use of surveys and health questionnaires of victims who report MSA, usually after they leave the military altogether. This type of research does not allow an emic inquiry, or provide an emic perspective. In other words, the majority of existing research does not account for the internal rhetoric during cognitive processing within the minds of MSA victims, which is a gap in scholarship that could illuminate and help victims as well as care providers and military/veteran institutions alike. If this gap is filled, if more qualitative research is done about MSA/MST by MSA/MST victims who embark on the path of scholarship, then perhaps the 1 in 4 women who report MSA, and the 80-plus percent who do not, will have more tools to improve their executive function, to improve their mental and physical health, and to positively align self and world- views, taking them from the lens of a victim to that of a wizened survivor of an oppressive and re-defining experience.

Rhetoric, Meaning, and Military Sexual Trauma

Stephen Adjei (2013) explains that discourse is how humans shape, negotiate, and communicate meaning. Through discourse, humans communicate lived and learned experiences, which reflect culture and interpretation of meaning (Adjei, 2013). Language, then, as a tool of communication and interpretation, influences meaning constructions.

Scholars like Kenneth Burke (1941, 1945), and Michael Foucault (1972) teach that rhetoric is the language we use to describe all in our imagination, persuade ourselves and others, and move through the identification process, be it identification with a group or our own self via identity development. Also, we use language to describe objects, thoughts, feelings, and events we experience, all of which influence what we decide is truth. Frederich Nietzsche explains that truth and meaning are subjective, and move through a rhetorical process (Schrift, 1985). We use rhetoric to persuade ourselves and others about what is true and what is not (Schrift, 1985).

Kenneth Burke (1950) writes in *A Rhetoric of Motives* that every time a person tries to persuade another, the two identify with each other. This is what happens to recruits who are socialized into military ideologies. Identifying with an assailant is uniquely positioned for victims of military sexual assault. Servicemembers are indoctrinated to identify with one another intimately through an intense socialization process. In order to join the military's hegemonic masculine ideology, a non-masculine

person must submit certain of their own ideologies, which then helps create a sense of identification with the organization and fellow Servicemembers.

In *A Grammar of Motives*, Kenneth Burke (1945) asks readers to consider what goes into describing others, their actions, and their motives. How does a person's rhetoric relate to their action? Burke (1945) puts forth that there are five motivations involved in what and why people do what they do. He explains that act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose (1945), interact to inform the human thought process and action. French and Brown (2011) continue after Burke's (1945) philosophy that "Interpretation is a reflection of reality...a selection of reality and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality" in their own work in relation to rhetoric and military sexual assault (45).

Using Burke's pentad, French and Brown (2011) find that, "The issues of [obesity and] sexual assault both embody linguistic choices that oppress and control women's perceptions of agency and their ability to free themselves from guilt and shame" (9). Military sexual assault often results in victims using language that is reflective of guilt (Lutwak & Dill, 2013). The internal rhetoric we use involves linguistic choices that reflect and help construct meaning. What humans view as true and meaningful is shaped and reflected, and deflected by language, which in turn shapes our ideologies, behaviors, actions, and interactions (French & Brown, 2011). French and Brown (2011) also explain that victims of sexual assault from known assailants, "Often perceive themselves as agents whose will, and not just physical strength mislead or failed them." This is due, in part because victims can identify with their attackers (French & Brown, 2011).

Believing you failed yourself or misled yourself regarding your own rape is a reflection of guilt.

Associations between guilt and being a victim of sexual assault are not limited to the victim alone. Nancy Washington (2008) published research on the hegemony of mediated sexual assault discourse. Washington finds that “news consumers draw on their own identity and existing discourses to construct meaning and, in some cases, to enter the fray over sexual assault discourse.” The meaning humans construct is based on the various experiential and encoded lenses, and then is ascribed to form a subjective meaning of sexual assault. Washington (2008) also says that there are still patriarchal discourses in our society that are not recognized as anything other than “common sense”. This means that certain types of discourses are seen as common sense because the patriarchy that governs them is so systemic in society, that society doesn’t recognize the patriarchy. The discourses that revolve around sexual assault in Washington’s study (2008) follow this patriarchal “common-sense” archetype. Further, patriarchal discourse sets up and helps perpetuate hegemonic masculinities, like those that pervade the military.

Discourses that may further contribute to misled social constructions of sexual assault are those that “reduce perpetrator responsibility” (Coates & Wade, 2004). In their 2004 research, Coates and Wade study the language in Canadian judgments of sexual assault cases. They find that, in most cases, judges used language to transfer blame of sexual assault from the agency of the perpetrator to his scene (Coates & Wade, 2004). In other words, the discourse of sexual assault cases reflects a patriarchal discursive model that frames deviant male behavior as being excusably caused by the perpetrator’s

environmental factors. This type of discourse found in Canadian sexual assault case judgments is the result of everyday discursive norms that favor the masculine.

As Coates and Wade (2004) state, “The simple act of participating in everyday, taken-for-granted discursive practices [such as those in the patriarchal model discussed in the study] directly and indirectly reproduces social injustices and impedes effective intervention.” (522). This research supports the concept that language and discourse, including internal rhetoric, “Do not merely ‘reflect’ an independent reality: ‘Discursive practices entail an active relationship with reality and, in fact change reality.’” (Coates & Wade, 2004).

To move away from masculinity-driven discourse that acts to oppress women, especially, specifically survivors of sexual assault, scholars can study the rhetoric of female victims. For example, Kate Lockwood Harris (2011) studies the use of the word ‘rape’, as used by women who survive this type of trauma. Lockwood’s (2011) research reified that women who experience rape often avow self-blame, and that using the term ‘rape’ in their internal and external rhetoric helps them “Shift away from self-blame”. However, Lockwood’s (2011) participants also explained that using the term ‘rape’ simultaneously robs them of agency because it “required them to acknowledge a complete lack of control over what had happened.” This suggests a contradictory construct of what it means to use the label ‘rape’, specifically for a survivor. Also, Lockwood points out that women who experience it claim that rape is too ambiguous a term to describe the experience. Thus, though using the word rape in a victim’s rhetoric can be helpful, it is also limiting and inadequate. This study of the term rape from the

perspective of victims demonstrates the value of qualitative research of involving the emic perspective rhetoric of first-hand experiences.

Summary of Literature and Gaps in Research

Scholarly literature regarding military ideologies support that military beliefs, attitudes, and structure is inherently dominating, aggressive, and violent, especially towards lesser or non-masculine traits; thus it is a hegemonic masculine ideology. Academics have established that the military's hegemonic masculine ideology is linked to violence, including sexual assault, towards female Servicemembers.

Further review examines literature on the construction of meaning through rhetoric, and its relation to sexual trauma. There is a definite link illustrated in the literature between the construction of meaning, identity development (i.e. self-view), language, and rhetoric. Further, some scholars have contributed research that helps establish that there is value in studying the testimony of sexual assault victims. This type of research is critical in understanding the relationship between sexual assault and internal rhetoric.

Unfortunately, the body of literature is lacking in scholarship on the intersectionality of the military's hegemonic masculine ideology, military sexual assault, and the emic perspective of MSA victims that is represented through internal rhetoric. Furthermore, there is inadequate research on the relationship between MSA, internal rhetoric, and the impact of both on a victim's self and world-views.

The plight of female victims of military sexual trauma is complex and convoluted. Quantitative research cannot adequately address the points of struggle and

conflict that are created by military sexual trauma that results from the ideologies of the Armed Forces. Critical scholars have a unique opportunity to qualitatively research a powerful problem in U.S. American society.

There is both a need and a niche for communication research from a critical intercultural lens that could make a difference in many lives.

It is interesting enough to note that the primary financier of MST research in the United States is the U.S. Veteran's Health Administration (Kimerling, et al., 2007). In my own scholarship, I found most academic research that has been done on MST, particularly in relation to PTSD and other significant comorbidities, has relied heavily on the VHA's work (Kimerling et al, 2007). Much of the research on MST that is conducted is generally quantitative in nature, reflecting controlled and restricted interviews, surveys, universal screening of Soldiers and veterans, and numerical data analysis.

Little research has been conducted that shows the cognitive process of MST victims in their transference and transcendence journey beyond MST (Hope & Erickson). This process helps to reveal the point of struggle between women and men, power and powerlessness, and masculine vs. non-masculine hegemonic ideologies. To transcend the MST experience and learn to redefine themselves while living with the repercussions, a victim and caregivers need to step into the cognitive process of 'the Other', and consider more than statistics and brief statements made in interviews. In order to better understand and critically theorize the impacts of MST, scholars should broaden their methods to not just include personal narrative (testimony), but to critically analyze and theorize from it.

Furthermore, MST victims are a stand-alone cultural group in their own right. By approaching MST through an interdisciplinary lens that critically analyzes the narrative

of personal narrative as an artifact, scholars can potentially reveal deeper understanding of MST victims and their fight to transcend the beliefs and values that reshaped them through the masculine hegemonic military ideology.

With this knowledge, victims could potentially claim their power of agency to change one of the most masculine hegemonic ideologies in the U.S.

Methods – An Interdisciplinary Approach to Research

The nature of MSA against female Servicemembers, specifically rape, is exceptionally private, personal, and emotional. In order to truly understand the experience and impacts of military-on-military rape, scholars must not limit themselves to strictly quantitative social science methods. To do so constrains research and significantly restricts findings to quantifiable and measurable data, essentially silencing and removing the agency and action of victims much like military hegemonic masculine ideology itself does. However, the results of strictly subjective research risk failing scholarly scrutiny within a field of inquiry because they represent too narrow a scope. For this reason, I take an interdisciplinary methods approach and use autoethnography as a means of data-collection, critical intercultural communication as a way of understanding power and hegemony in the military, and rhetorical analysis as a means of discovering the hidden meanings behind MSA victim rhetoric.

My research into MSA, including government reports, military medicine, mental health, hegemony, and second-hand interpretive research of traumas has taught me that, though highly valuable in their own right, heavily quantitative research often fails to adequately account for the subject's lived-experience, singular perspective, and voice of agency. Specifically when studying the internal rhetoric of an MSA victim, it is important to gather more data than what can be accomplished through quantitative surveys and health records. This is because no number or brief answer on a survey or

health questionnaire can truly reflect the rhetorical process of dealing with MSA and how that process redefines a victim's self and world-views.

I posit that a combination of methods more holistically contributes insights into MSA and the resulting internal rhetoric that traditional quantitative and qualitative research forms cannot.

Therefore, my research text is an autoethnography of my own MSA experiences. I balance the subjectivity of using my personal narrative as text by then conducting a rhetorical analysis of the document itself using the interpretive method of Kenneth Burke's cluster-agon analysis. I chose to analyze my own autoethnography to honor the value of personal narrative over interpreted interview as data collection method. I acknowledge the subjective nature and thus respective risks of analyzing my own narrative of what is perhaps the most traumatic event of my life. However, I again assert that provision and analysis of first hand experience and knowledge by the experiencer reveals insights into motivation, meaning, character, and 'otherness' that second-hand interpretation cannot.

Autoethnography as Method

In order to conduct useful research, one must have data. Data collection is often generally conducted, in both qualitative and quantitative research, via surveys, polls, interviews, and/or the analysis of an existing text or body of texts. Relatively new to research data collection is the autoethnography. In its simplest description possible, an autoethnography is a personal narrative that the researcher uses as a vehicle to reveal a better understanding of the recorded experience, the related topic(s), society, and culture, all through a theory-based academic lens.

Trying to define autoethnography in a way that fits social science's idea of research is challenging at best.

That is why I rely on Communication discipline experts like Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams, and Arthur Bochner who explain in their work, *Autoethnography: An Overview* (1996),

Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno). This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others, and treats research as a political, socially-just, and socially-conscious act [...] Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product.” (1)

In truth however, autoethnography involves so much more than personal narrative and reflection. It is complex and nuanced. Qualitative research has fought hard to win its place among the ranks of valuable inquiry. Autoethnography is still fighting that uphill battle. However, more and more scholars are asserting that autoethnography is a valuable niche of first-hand information, a window into the mind of the subject (Ellis, 2004). An autoethnography breaks the mold by being a qualitative research tool that confesses, accommodates and allows for the scholar's personal experience and relative emotions, subjectivity, and influence (Ellis & Bochner, 1996). These internal elements are conceded openly and up front, rather than ignored (Ellis & Bochner, 1996), as is too often the case in other forms of research.

To do autoethnography, a researcher must study society and its cultures with an outward focus towards “social and cultural aspects of their personal experience” (Ellis, 2004). Autoethnographers then turn their lens introspectively towards their own vulnerable inner self, which works through, bend, and fight cultural interpretations (Ellis, 2004). Essentially, autoethnography should use critical and theoretical analysis of what is

personal, juxtaposed against the social, to reveal, reflect, and research what is political and cultural (Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013).

For this reason, I use a critical intercultural communication lens to first study, and then present, the societal point of struggle within military culture as it relates to MSA, MST, and PTSD.

Furthermore, autoethnography is a form of research that allows the self to be representative of ‘the other’ contextually juxtaposed both against and within society (Ellis, 2004). It involves a process that becomes, through reflexive and theory-based analysis, the product. The product represents the self, but also stands as representative of ‘the other’ for all who are not the researcher.

An autoethnographer writes about memories and experiences much like an autobiographer (Ellis, 2004). Unlike the autobiographer, however, the researcher takes additional steps to analyze her work through the use of social science theory and methodologies. Then, the researcher’s analysis is incorporated into the narrative so that readers can use it in their own reflection, research, and understanding of not only the researcher, but also of similar individuals and cultures and their role in global society.

The process of writing autoethnography is also therapeutic and transformative for the researcher (Ellis, 2004). First, an autoethnographer collects data through intense writing, like journaling, about a chosen experience. To transform this data into an autoethnography, I analyzed my personal narrative using using academic theories and methods, such as Kenneth Burke’s cluster-agon rhetorical analysis, for example. The resulting discoveries about the self are then juxtaposed against society and culture to gain

a better understanding of the experience and relative topic as it pertains to cultural and societal beliefs, behaviors, and norms.

The end product is an intimate study of the researcher's experience and process that reveals layers of meaning about the topic and human interaction, reaction, interpretation, and understanding. This product contributes to the larger body of research of relevant inquiry in a way that promotes the import of social sciences and increases understanding of the human condition in modern societies.

Forms, limitations, and advantages of autoethnography. There are various forms of autoethnography. My primary focus is on critical research of personal narratives that analyzes the rhetoric within my story, using my experience with MSA as the phenomenon. This type of autoethnography produces meaningful narratives that are focused through a lens of academic research of personal life (Ellis et al., 2011). Personal narratives are advantageous because they act as witness to human experience. These narratives *are*, by definition, the elusive windows into the inner self (Ellis 2011). As in ethnography, the data is then methodologically organized, analyzed and interpreted using scholarly theory. In my case, I use the autoethnography of my own experience as a military rape victim as data, and Kenneth Burke's cluster-agon analysis as theory-based objective analysis.

A perceived limitation of autoethnography is that it can seem too subjective, like an autobiography or creative non-fiction. However, autoethnographer Mitch Allen (2006) explains that what makes an autoethnographer's work more valuable than something like an autobiography is that the autoethnographer is a researcher. The researcher uses a set of tools that are theoretical and methodological (Ellis et al., 2011).

Thus, a delineator between autoethnography as a valid and valuable research tool versus purely subjective ruminating is the process of analysis of the finished text.

Military rape is an extremely private, personal, and subjective experience for any person to write about. Rather than avoid personal viewpoints, my research embraces the subjectivity of autoethnography as a priceless means of discovering layers of meaning and impact that quantitative (or any other strictly objective form) research cannot reveal.

Another challenge of autoethnography is the scholarly community's perception of accuracy with concern to reliability, generalizability, and meaning of one's recorded memory (Allen 2006; Ellis et al., 2011). There is a great hunt for capital 'T' truth in the realm of research. Communication scholars and autoethnographers typically understand that truth (capital "T" or otherwise) can be as fluid as the construction of meaning itself. Therefore, accuracy in autoethnography must rely on the researcher's intended outcome, theoretical approach, methodology of analysis, and vigilant awareness of presented and hidden episteme(s) within the text (Ellis, 2004). A researcher of autoethnography must also be wary of imposing meaning, rather than revealing it, onto memory. This can be done by writing text and setting it aside for a period of time, and later analyzing it to reveal a pre-ordained goal, or by re-writing or doctoring text along the way when analysis reveals something pertinent to the researcher (like a 'new' memory, or a 'new' meaning pertaining to a memory). My research avoids these limitations of memory by focusing on patterns of repetition and similarity amongst passages from my text.

This research examines the unique relationships between internal rhetoric and self and world-views that result from military-on-military rape through the rhetorical

analysis of a retrospective autoethnography of lived experience. Therefore, the reliability of precisely accurate memories of specific details are not pertinent.

Rather, the internal rhetoric used to process and understand the horrific event, and the way it shapes self and world-views, is the crux of my analysis. Thus, my research avoids many of the limitations of memory accuracy and reliability. Since my analysis method clusters specific words (described later in this chapter) to reveal meaning in U.S.

American social context(s), concerns about the generalizability of my memory and meaning largely are negated.

An autoethnographer bears the burden of responsible research, perhaps more so than others (Wall, 2008). There must be self-accountability to present true experiences and honest interpretations in order for the autoethnography itself, and respective analysis, to present research that in-turn serves the global community (Taber, 2010). Thus, I extend my research to include relative information on topics such as MSA, MST, PTSD, and the military's hegemonic masculine ideology. This additional research, in addition to scholarly peer reviews, helps hold me, as the autoethnographer and the analyst, accountable against exaggeration, assumptions, and over-generalization. It also provides readers with an in-depth understanding of the general topic under which my research is situated, and affords a philosophical framework for positioning the results of the cluster-agon analysis.

Kenneth Burke's Cluster-Agon Method as Data-Analysis

One of the most useful means of understanding the multiple layers of meaning within any given text is rhetorical analysis. There are arguments, turns, and movements within rhetorical analysis that are as numbered as the discipline is old. One highly

respected contributor to the discipline of Rhetoric (and Speech Communication as a whole) is Kenneth Burke.

Burkean analyses and critiques are not limited to the communication discipline, however. Burke's work is prolific, and permeates into nearly every scholarly field of inquiry.

Part one: cluster analysis. A Burkean cluster-agon analysis is a two-part, multi-tiered process used to “objectively analyze the motives, meaning, and character of the writer.” (Berthold, 1976) The first part of this method is the cluster analysis, and the second is the agon analysis. A cluster analysis reveals terms that ‘go with’ each other (Burke, 1941). A cluster analysis cannot stand alone, because it doesn't provide “symbolic conflict” (Berthold, 1976). Therefore, a cluster analysis is incomplete without an agon analysis. An agon analysis “reveals those terms which are in opposition to one another” (Berthold, 1976).

To conduct a cluster analysis, the critic first chooses a text to analyze. This is usually a speech, a letter, or other form of address. I chose to analyze my narrative about one of my MSA experience. Then, the text is carefully analyzed to discover primary key terms that appear repeatedly or significantly within the text (Berthold, 1976). These primary terms are chosen due to frequency and/or intensity of use. Primary terms are grouped, or clustered, to reveal a ‘god’ and a ‘devil’ term. The god-term is the primary term that is either most frequently used, most intensely used, or both. Scholar Richard Weaver (1953) defines god-terms as, expressions that fall second to no other expressions. The god-term is the main term around which every other term is ranked (Berthold, 1976). The god-term is surrounded by what Weaver (1953) claims are good terms. These terms are the other primary key terms that contextualize the god-term. They are not as

powerful as the god-term, but are secondary only to it (Berthold, 1976). Typically, good terms represent ideals highly respected and endorsed by society (Berthold, 1976).

The devil term is simply defined as the word or term that counters the god-term (Weaver, 1953). Though the devil-term is also a primary term, it is not typically surrounded by Weaver's (1953) good terms. Rather, the devil-term is revealed as the counterpart of the god-term by the negative terms that contextualize it (Berthold, 1976). Burke (1941) notes the importance of the holistic approach of including both god and devil terms when he says,

If a man's virtuous characters are dull, and his wicked characters are done vigorously, his *art*, had voted for the wicked ones, regardless of his 'official front'. If a man talks dully of glory, but brilliantly employs the imagery of *desolation*, his *true subject* is desolation.

Once a researcher has discovered the key terms within a text, s/he can then start the cluster analysis (Berthold, 1976) to reveal the motivations and meanings of the texts and character of the writer.

God and devil terms are surrounded by secondary terms that contextualize, giving the god and devil terms place and meaning (Berthold, 1976). A cluster analysis involves listing the (potentially hundreds) of contexts in which each key term is used (Berthold, 1976). A researcher 'lists' contexts by locating secondary terms that surround the key term. The use of contexts, or secondary terms, helps the critic the clusters and relative agons, and also note the weight of each term (Berthold, 1976). The weight of key terms is revealed through secondary terms, and provides the hierarchy of significance of the primary terms.

Contexts are discovered generally by meticulously reviewing the sections of text that surround each god or devil term that has been selected. In the case of a large body of text like my narrative, I separate the various contextual sections of text in which each key term is located, to allow for more precise analysis. The contexts, or contextual sections, reviewed are then analyzed for prevalent secondary key terms that surround and associate with the primary key terms (Berthold, 1976). Secondary terms are usually associated with primary terms via conjunctions like *and* (italics in original), a noted cause-effect relationship between the primary and secondary terms, imagery, and even “mutual relationships to third terms” (Berthold, 1976). The ways terms can be associated is seemingly without limits (Berthold, 1976).

It is important to note that the various types of secondary terms that are connected to primary terms influence the importance of primary terms, specifically in relation to the hierarchy of terms (Berthold, 1976). This hierarchical order is also determined by whether or not a secondary term is directly or indirectly linked to a primary term (Berthold, 1976).

Part two: agon analysis. Once the cluster analysis is done, the critic can then begin the agon analysis. A cluster analysis focuses on “what goes with what” whereas an agon analysis reveals “what is vs. what” (Burke, 1941 p. 58). It is important to locate opposing terms because they reveal conflict that occurs within the speaker himself (Rueckert, 1963). Richard H. Rueckert (1963), explains, “The opposed principles represent the self’s choices, and the movement towards and away from them...represents the quest, the self’s journey toward unity of being” (Berthold, 1976, p. 304).

The process of agon analysis is similar to that of cluster analysis. The analyst first reviews the cluster analysis to locate the god-term and other key terms (Berthold, 1976). Then, the researcher again analyzes the context to reveal secondary terms that oppose the god and primary terms (Berthold, 1976). Berthold (1976) describes, “Each opposition consists of a god term and a devil term placed in some form of contraposition” (302). Like clusters, agons can also involve various connections. For example, opposing terms can be directly associated with words like and, can also be “expressed by describing a form of competition between two terms, and even relate indirectly through a third term” (Berthold, 1976).

Part three: potential analysis implications. Once both the cluster and agon analysis parts are completed, a critic can then analyze the relationships to discover deeper levels of meanings and motivations than what the primary text reveals as a whole and on the surface. These meanings and motivations serve to reveal aspects of character of the text’s author.

Method Application Process

In order to apply the interdisciplinary process of a Burkean cluster-agon analysis of my military rape and autoethnography, I first had to produce a cohesive narrative. To do so, I collected historical journal entries, medical transcript notes, and my PTSD disability claimant statement for the U.S. Veteran’s Affairs, to comprise an autoethnography of 23 pages. These texts ranged from journal entries written prior to the trauma, to journal entries written during and after the trauma, as well as journals written during the PTSD/MST cognitive processing therapy progression.

I felt it important to include journals from these three areas to get a fuller picture of the shift in my own internal rhetoric that took place due to the trauma. This shift is more obvious when the pre-trauma rhetoric is juxtaposed against during and post-trauma rhetoric. I label each example from my text as either pre/during/post rhetoric for clarity. I then used these texts to create an autoethnographical text, of which I ran computerized search programming to locate patterns of repetitions and relative clusters. Once the god and devil terms were discovered, I analyzed the contexts surrounding each. The result is an insightful analysis of the relationship between the impacts on internal rhetoric due to the trauma itself, military ideologies and values, and social constructs of meaning.

For the cluster analysis, I first combed through the entire text to locate key terms. Once these terms are revealed, I used them to single out my god and devil terms. Then, using the located god and devil terms, I separated out sections of text in which the key terms were found. More specifically, I isolated sections in length of about one paragraph prior to and following the key terms. Next, I analyzed contexts, secondary terms, that positively associated with key terms, including god-terms. I repeated the process accordingly for the agon analysis, focusing on contexts and secondary terms that opposed the primary and god-term. Through this analysis, I was able to learn the hidden connections that underpin the pain that is obviously articulated in the narrative as a whole.

This type of analysis is particularly helpful to understanding how the internal rhetoric of military rape victims acts to redefine their self and world-views because it discovers meaning beyond what is outwardly shared/stated.

Often, research into this topic focuses on what is clearly and succinctly stated in questionnaires, surveys, interviews, and the like. Together, autoethnography and cluster-agon analysis work to provide scholars, care-givers, other victims, perpetrators, and key military personnel a deeper and more holistic understanding of the myriad of severe and life-long impacts of MSA.

These impacts go beyond what has already been established through the mostly quantitative research that has been conducted on MSA, MST, and related PTSD. The impacts of MSA, in conjunction with military hegemonic masculine ideology, literally change the way a female Servicemember thinks, on the deepest, most invisible level. In turn, this shift in thought is passed on to those who participate in interpersonal and intercultural relationships. If these self and world-views are profoundly negative, then it reasonably follows that the messages and 'truths' passed along by victims will perpetuate destructive attitudes. By using personal narrative and cluster-agon analysis of an MSA victim, the victim herself and others can reveal the invisible destruction and stop the painful cycle that began on the first day of training, which commences conditioning into the military's hegemonic masculine ideology.

Data Analysis

Meaning is shaped and represented by language (Adjei, 2013). This means language is the symbolic representation of meaning in the form of verbal utterances. In a cluster-agon analysis, the type of meaning one looks for is the motivation behind a speaker's character; the hidden meanings that can be revealed by studying how primary terms are contextualized by other terms (Burke, 1941). These primary terms are known as god and devil terms.

As described in the methods chapter, a god term is the primary term that is either most frequently used, most intensely used, or both. Scholar Richard Weaver (1953) defined 'god-terms' as, "That expression about which all other expressions are ranked as subordinate and serving dominations and powers." The 'god-term' is the main term "about which all others are ranked by degrees of comparison with it" (Berthold, 1976, p. 302). On the other hand, the devil term is simply a term that opposes a god term (Berthold, 1976). The devil-term often connotes negative meaning that conflicts with the positive implication of god terms and other key terms. Devil-terms are typically surrounded by the opposite of good terms (Weaver, 1953).

There are ultimately eight key terms that rank highly in my text in either frequency, intensity, or both. Of the eight, there are two god terms and three devil terms. I will analyze each of the eight terms in detail later in the chapter, but first I will provide a general overview of my text's key terms.

Analysis of Key Terms

'Responsibility' and 'the right thing' are the first two key terms in my text and are used synonymously throughout it.

Each occurs about the same number of times ('responsibility', 46; 'the right thing', 47); predominantly appearing around one another throughout (33 times). It is interesting enough to note that 'the right thing' plays multiple roles in the text: as a synonym for other key terms; as a direct link to core values; and as both a positive and negative connotation term used to contextualize other key terms. Due to the coterminous nature of the use of 'responsibility' and 'the right thing' in my narrative, I treat them herein as synonymous. 'Responsibility' and 'the right thing' are also both directly opposed by the word, 'fault', making this a combination of two god-terms in my cluster-agon analysis.

My third key term, 'fault', is seen throughout the text a total of 51 times, with significant imagery that adds intensity to almost each use. The term 'fault' occurs most often in a causal relationship with key terms like 'responsibility', 'the right thing', and 'accountability'. This relationship is demonstrated most often when I write about feeling a need to atone for my own blame in the rape by taking 'responsibility', 'accountability', or 'doing the right thing'. 'Fault', though it is used in the text to describe a compulsion to act honorably, is associated with negative connotations because the fault is usually surrounded by 'bad' words, like 'stupid', 'bad choice', and 'irresponsible'. A devil term; however, is weighed down by bad terms (Weaver, 1953). Therefore, 'fault' is one of my two devil terms rather than a god term.

'Friend' is the fourth key term, and the second devil-term of my text. 'Friend' appears 49 times in the narrative overall, and is more often supported by negative terms than it is opposed by them. For example, 'friend' is surrounded by good terms, such as 'loyal', 'trust', 'protect', 'the right thing', and 'responsibility'. However, the use of these terms is not positive, thus do not lift 'friend' up as a good term.

Instead, terms like ‘loyal’, ‘trust’, ‘protect’, etc... are used to oppose friend.

Additionally, despite an initial inclination to think of them as opposites, ‘friend’ is often supported by the negative term ‘betrayal’. In fact, ‘friend’ is described in the text as ‘betrayal’. ‘Friend’ also appears near other negatively connoted terms like ‘hurt’, ‘hate’, and ‘pain’. A specifically notable aspect of the devil-term ‘friend’, is its complicated relationship with the term ‘loyalty’, which it opposes, and is addressed later in this chapter. Because of its role of opposition, ‘friend’ is categorized as a devil term.

The fifth key term, ‘betrayal’, occurs 43 times and is one of my key terms used with the highest intensity of any other term in the text. It directly contextualizes ‘friend(s)’ 27 times. It also directly opposes the key term, ‘loyalty’ (11 times). Because it directly opposes what is used as a good term, ‘betrayal’ meets the requirements of a devil-term. However, ‘betrayal’ is another term that is complexly used. In my text it is used to position ‘friends’ negatively. It is also used to describe the act of rape, the act of staging a rape, as well as the act of hiding a rape. However, I also write about my own ‘betrayal’ of personal and military values against myself and others in relation to the sexual assault. I use ‘betrayal’ in the text to describe my own failure to act; my failure to stop, accuse of, or report a rape. This is a dialectical use of the word ‘betrayal’, to symbolize both action and inaction.

The sixth key term, ‘accountability’, occurs 45 times in the text, surrounding ‘responsibility’ 13 times and ‘the right thing’ 21 times. ‘Accountability’ is used mostly to relay ownership of not only blame, but also of the corresponding ‘responsibility’ to make right whatever wrong was done.

Sometimes, ‘accountability’ is used in place of ‘the right thing’ altogether. This directly associates holding oneself ‘accountable’ as the presumed ‘right thing’ to do.

‘Trust’, my seventh key term, is powerfully imagined via language. ‘Trust’ occurs in the text 27 times. The terms used to frame ‘trust’ are words like ‘sacred’ and ‘live and die’, are strong and intense, in fact making ‘trust’ the other of my two highest intensity terms used in the textual artifact. Furthermore, ‘trust’ contextualizes every other key term in the text at least once. The intense imagery combined with multiple uses implies that ‘trust’, though it does not meet the technical criteria as a god-term, is a crucial concept in the text.

‘Loyalty’ is my eighth key term, and shares an interesting relationship with ‘friend’ and ‘betrayal’. ‘Loyalty’ appears in the text 17 times, and is directly opposed by ‘betrayal’. However, ‘loyalty’ also is opposed by the term ‘friends’, creating a paradox of meaning because, in addition to this negative use, loyalty is supported by positive terms early on in the narrative; terms like ‘valued’, ‘solid’, and ‘trusted’.

There are many key terms in the text, the eight I focus on appear with the most frequency and/or intensity from start to finish. The two god-terms, ‘responsibility’ and ‘the right thing’ are both opposed by the devil term ‘fault’. Also, these god-terms are sometimes used interchangeably. The two devil-terms, ‘fault’ and ‘friends’, are complexly used, wherein each shares a dialectical good and bad relationship with other key terms. In the sections below, I detail each.

Responsibility/The right thing vs. Fault: A classic cluster-agon

responsibility/the right thing. ‘Responsibility’ occurs a total of 45 times; appearing 32 times without another ‘god-term’, and 13 times in conjunction with its partner, ‘accountability’. Though ‘responsibility’ is often found near the devil term, ‘fault’, it is consistently inferred as an important duty to do what is right. For example, ‘responsibility’ is most often surrounded by the terms: ‘honor’, ‘leadership’, and ‘protect’. Weaver (1953) claims “good” words in these supporting positions are the other primary terms that contextualize the god-term. Shortly after I began the PTSD treatment process through the Veteran’s Affairs, I wrote the following passage in a daily cognitive processing journal I’d been assigned by my VA social worker (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes):

excerpt from post trauma (January 2012). “I’ll never forget when Runko¹ went and pissed on Dillinger’s door the next morning...waving his moral *leadership* right in front of the CQ SOG [Charge of Quarters, Sergeant of the Guard] and everything! I think in his own way, he was *protecting* me, making my well being his **responsibility**, taking revenge on my behalf...and I felt, for just a second, *honored* in a way...no matter what had just happened with Dillinger. Cool. I remember thinking, ‘Wow, I guess now it’s my turn ...to be a good **friend**, to hold myself **responsible** for his *protection* too.”

Initially, I couldn’t help but notice the awkwardness of Runko’s ‘responsibility’ to protect me take form as urinating on a fellow Soldier’s barracks door. Awkward or not, ‘responsibility’ in this context implies an obligation of honor both to perform and to receive protection. ‘Responsibility’ is not just a concept of having the authority to act, or to complete a task. Rather, in this context, ‘responsibility’ represents a duty, something not only important, but also owed and earned in turn, ultimately something honorable.

¹ All true names changed to protect identity.

Typically, good terms that surround god-terms represent ideals highly respected and “sanctioned” by society (Berthold, 1976). For instance, in the excerpt above, ‘responsibility’ is contextualized by good terms like ‘leadership’, and ‘protection’. ‘Leadership’ is demonstrated in mass media, pop culture, business models, both political and civilian hierarchies, and even in elementary classrooms as a highly desirably quality to which we all should aspire. Whether it is politicians and pundits debating about the performance of leadership; glamorized and sensationalized leadership roles on the silver screen; or competitions for first place in kindergarten’s ‘who-can-be-the-quietest-in-the-recess-line’ game; leadership is highly valued in many societies. The use of the term ‘leadership’ to contextualize ‘responsibility’ implies the strength, goodness, and potential behind the my conception of the meaning of ‘responsibility’. ‘Responsibility’ is thus motivated by values like strength, duty to inspire, and duty to follow through.

The text also positions ‘responsibility’ to be an honorable duty. In this context, ‘honor’ is a privilege one feels in response to an act of protectiveness from a friend. In much of society at large, honor is elevated as the most esteemed characteristic one should have. For example, many symbolic tributes to ‘honor’ are evidenced in American culture. ‘Honor’ appears in the nation’s Pledge of Allegiance. It is a fundamental value discussed in texts of major world religions, and – in direct relation to my research - is even one of the *Seven Core Army Values* (“Soldier’s Guide”, 2009). ‘Honor’ is sanctioned by society as a value to uphold, exemplify, and respect. It is also seen as an extraordinary trait of distinction, dignity, and trustworthiness.

In American society, honor is what backs trust, earns admiration, and implies integrity.

In the military, one of the first things recruits learn is that it is an honor to serve one's country. As quoted above, I was *honored* that Runko cared enough to act protectively via a vengeful act towards my attacker. In that context, 'responsibility' is supported by honor in a way that is reflective of the meanings of privilege, valued obligation, and duty to protect.

When serving one's country, a primary mission is to protect. The word 'protect/ion' appears several times in my autoethnographical text, particularly near key terms like 'responsibility'. This suggests that 'responsibility' takes form in my mind not only as a duty, but in the roles of protector and protected. For example, I write in one post-trauma entry (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes),

post-trauma (December 2012). "For the longest time. What, 8 years now...no 9...I believed it was my **responsibility** to *protect* him from our secret, to *protect* our unit from the headache, and our **friends** from paying for what I thought was all of ourjoint *crime*. I never even realized it was all their **responsibility** to *protect* me from the system, from him, from them...from myself."

It doesn't take a huge inferential leap to presume that 'responsibility', 'leadership', 'honor', and 'protection' are generally "sanctioned by society" (Berthold, 1976) as positive ideals. Society generally conceptualizes each with a sense of duty and security, and assumes the responsibility (pun intended) to both provide and seek each of these traits out. The same is true for the meaning of 'responsibility' in the excerpt above.

What is most interesting to me regarding the role of the term 'responsibility' is its rhetorical shift in meaning that is discovered through cluster analysis.

Using the combination of terms like ‘leadership’, ‘honorable duty’, and ‘protection’ to contextualize ‘responsibility’ implies that this god term represents an obligation to take initiative/charge (leadership), follow through with obligations (honorable duty), and keep harm at bay (protect). For example, in a pre-trauma writing, I describe ‘responsibility’ (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes):

pre-trauma (February 2003) (during deployment). “So, I sit here at 2am, **responsible** for *protecting* the Holy Land against terrorism. Insane. 1SG [First Sergeant] said our *duties* make us *honored leaders* of nations. He said we are *honor* embodied through our **responsibility** to protect freedom. But what if that **responsibility** means I have to do something *dishonorable*, like *hurt* someone, maybe even *kill* a baby?”

Until the end of this quote, the god term ‘responsibility’ is “lifted up” (Weaver, 1953) by positive and intense contextual terms like, ‘protect/ing’, ‘honor/able’, and ‘leaders’. The use of these terms associate ‘responsibility’ with their respective connotations, which reifies the conceptualization of ‘responsibility’ as a good trait. Near the end of the excerpt, when discussing the risk for hurting whom I would consider innocents, my understanding of the honor of ‘responsibility’ starts to get confused.

This type of confusion of the meanings associated with ‘responsibility’ is exacerbated by my MSA experience. At the time of the trauma, the text illustrates that I believed I was ‘responsible’ for the incident and all its potential collateral damage, especially any damage to my unit, my attacker, and his accomplices who helped plan the assault. This is evidenced in the following excerpt (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes):

during-trauma (November 2003) “What was I thinking? Was I thinking? What am I thinking? Do I have to think? Yes. If I don’t think this through, and be careful, all the *fall-out* to *everyone* who knew about it would be my **responsibility**.”

It would be my **fault** that me, Dillinger, and even the unit looked *bad* because I *couldn't control* my alcohol and got myself ...well..slept with a married man.”

The text in this excerpt positions ‘responsibility’ in the role of ‘fault’ for being the cause of potential harms and ills to my unit and attacker. Juxtapose this concept against the prior meaning of ‘responsibility’ that was constructed by my pre-trauma internal rhetoric, and it is evident that the meaning behind the language of self-talk shifted, blurred even. Pre-trauma, ‘responsibility’ was considered an honorable duty. During the days immediately following the trauma, the term ‘responsibility’ represented a failure of my duty, or my ‘responsibility’ to be a leader, enact honor, or protect myself and others. I held myself accountable for the potential harm to others that talking about my assault might cause. In this context ‘responsibility’ also took on an association with the concept of ‘dishonor’, because to cause harm through one’s own irresponsibility to act dishonorably.

Thus, failure and dishonor are hidden motivations of character behind the use of the term responsibility in my text. It might be that, to allow harms to my own self would be seen, at that time, as a failure in ‘responsibility’. Therefore, through the internal rhetorical and cognitive process of working through MSA, ‘responsibility’ shifts from an honorable duty to a source (even a representation) of failure and dishonor to myself and others. Once this shift is in place, the constructed meaning of ‘responsibility’ is a convoluted and contradictory one that is based in dialectic relationships between dichotomous terms. In other words, after MSA impacts a victim’s internal rhetoric, that rhetoric shifts not just in terms of internal language use, but also implies confusion in understanding the very meaning of even simple terms.

Language shapes meaning (Adjei, 2013), which shapes self and world-views. This juxtaposition adds strength of intensity to the god term ‘responsibility’.

Weaver (1953) describes intensity as the strength of imagery used to describe a word (Berthold, 1976). In this context, ‘responsibility’ is the only term described both as a positive duty and negative characteristic. Furthermore, ‘responsibility’ also works in the text as a reflection of the overall negative experience of military-on-military rape. This can be seen when I wrote (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes),

during-trauma (January 2004). “This whole ‘**responsibility**’ to protect them is a *burden*. I mean, c’mon, am I the only one who’s gonna hold themselves *accountable* for what amounted to *tricking* a friend into staying in a *locked* room with someone who’d been asking for sex all day? Isn’t anyone *man enough*, *Soldier enough*, to be like, ‘hey Ward, *sorry* for my part in what went down with you and Dillinger. I was a little **responsible** for that *trick* too.”

In this context, imagery imposed by words like ‘burden’, ‘trick’, and ‘sorry’ contradict the pre-trauma imagery used to describe ‘responsibility’, which included terms like those discussed above, ‘leadership’, ‘honor’, and ‘protection’. This negative connotation works throughout the text to construct the god term ‘responsibility’ as a strange dialectical co-existence between the dichotomy of it being representative of both good and bad ideas.

Several passages in addition to those already provided, ranging from pre-trauma, through trauma, and several years post-trauma supports that MSA impacts the internal rhetoric of victims in a way that shifts self and world-views.

For example, (key terms are bolded and contextual terms are italicized post-original for demonstration purposes):

pre-trauma (February 2003) (during deployment). “I don’t really let on to this to any one around here, I don’t like most of them anyway, but I really *dig* this whole be a *leader-slash duty* to country and countrymen thing. And it’s not just ‘cuz Germany is so amazing, either! I think it’s a *cool, noble, honorable responsibility* even.”

- and -

pre-trauma (April 2003) (during deployment). “I *love* my *duty*. I love being a Soldier. I *love* knowing that I *fulfill* a **responsibility** to be something beyond myself.”

- then -

during-trauma (November 2003). “It was my *fault* for getting that drunk...I knew better, knew how to act **responsibly**. I knew what was right and wrong, hell, *honorable* even...and so I have to take **responsibility** for my part and hold myself **accountable** for my own *stupid choices* and actions.”

- and -

during-trauma (December 2003). “Just be **responsible, accountable**, and suck it up. It was my **fault** that I didn’t have enough **responsibility** to bang on the *stupid* locked door. I’m the one **accountable** for turning my keys into CQ like a *stupid* person. It was my **responsibility** to make sure he knew I still didn’t want to, even if it was my **fault** for drinking so much. It was my **responsibility** to fight, to keep *pretending* to sleep through it, to keep saying no, anything. But I didn’t. I guess that makes me **irresponsible**. All I can really do now I guess is stop *feeling sorry for myself*, do the **responsible** thing and hold myself **accountable** for my own *stupidity*, keep quiet and drive on.”

-finally-

post-trauma (December 2012): “Looking back, I realize that my way of accepting what happened was to not accept that it was rape, that instead it was my lack of **responsibility**, my duty to hold only myself **accountable** for “putting myself in that situation”. Duty. **Responsibility** was the *vehicle* I used to *move on*, without really moving on. I really *hate* that word sometimes. But it keeps me *honest*, right? Only now my **responsibility** is to stitch together some semblance of the ‘old’ me, the actually **responsible** and *confident* me, because what I am definitely **responsible** for is my family, and I am **accountable** especially to them.”

The good and bad connotative relationships, along with the shifting of meaning between key terms and contextual terms, suggests a transference; an instability of certainty about what responsibility is supposed to mean, or perhaps once meant, and what it means post-trauma. This shift is also evident in my second god term, ‘the right thing’.

The right thing. This expression, the ‘right thing’ occurred a total of 47 times overall, 31 times without another god-term around, and 16 times in conjunction with other key terms. ‘The right thing’ is an intense term, specifically due to the significant imagery imposed by the value terms that surround the term. Furthermore, the expression ‘the right thing’ could almost always substitute for my other god-term, ‘responsibility’, and vice-versa. This god term could also substitute for the key term ‘accountability’ in many passages of the text. This coterminous nature of ‘the right thing’ implies there is a significant symbiotic relationship between the values behind the terms ‘the right thing’, ‘responsibility’, and ‘accountability’. This is evidenced in a during-trauma writing exercise excerpt in which I say (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes),

during-trauma (February, 2004). “I need to be the one who is **accountable** and does the **right thing** and *protect* everyone from getting in trouble over this. It was mostly my **fault** anyway. I mean, well, anyway. The point is that if I do the **right thing** by *keeping silent*, by keeping this from becoming everyone’s debate over doing the **right thing** when really I’m the one to mostly **blame** here. Then maybe it will help me feel better, *less guilty* for *helping* someone cheat on their wife and baby.”

In this excerpt, any version of doing ‘the right thing’ could be replaced with a version of ‘responsibility’, or the key term ‘accountability’ and vice versa.

For example, in place of, “I need to be the one who **does the right** thing,” I could write “I need to be the one who *takes responsibility*, or “*is accountable*” and the meaning wouldn’t really change (Italics added for emphasis). This reciprocity between the three key terms is prevalent throughout the pages I analyzed. The natural interchange between the terms also adds a layer of intensity to the god-term ‘the right thing’.

However, besides the opposition that occurs between ‘the right thing’ and ‘fault’ (discussed later), what most distinguishes the ‘right thing’ is the meaning that is constructed through the use of the Army’s core values as contextual terms used to describe ‘the right thing’. In this context, there is a direct connection between the meaning behind ‘the right thing’ and the Army’s Core Values, loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage (LDRSHIP). This is significant because it implies that the meanings of each of the Army’s Core Values that recruits and career soldiers alike are socialized to embrace and embody are transferred to other language used in a soldier’s internal rhetoric. This demonstrates how the military socialization process itself shifts self and world-views through external rhetoric that becomes internal rhetoric.

This new foundation of the meaning of certain value terms like ‘the right thing’ is what gets impacted by MSA the most, because it is the Servicemember’s new baseline language, a baseline created via the military’s socialization and identification processes. For example in one passage alone, the ‘right thing’ is surrounded by several core values (key words bolded, contextual words italicized post-original for demonstration purposes),

during-trauma (January 2004). “I want to *honor* my *duty* to have enough *integrity* and *courage* to do **the right thing**, whatever that is, but also don’t want to lose *respect*, either for myself or my unit.

If I start asking around about what makes for date rape, than I'll lose *respect* forever just like Sgt. Diosa did when she “**did the right thing**” and reported it, which if you ask me took a lot of *courage* and *loyalty* to the military justice system.”

In this passage, the ‘right thing’ is lifted up by actual Army core values (italicized) that act as contextual terms. This is the only passage in which so many core value terms are used to contextualize a key term. Of the two god-terms, ‘the right thing’ stands apart for this reason.

The contextual terms clustered around ‘the right thing’ in the quote above are endorsed by society (Berthold, 1976) as good terms (Weaver, 1953). For example, ‘honor’ and ‘integrity’ are denotatively synonymous. As discussed earlier, ‘honor’ and ‘integrity’ are traits that implies one is truthful, trustworthy, and upright. The social connotation of ‘honor’ is deeply rooted in the concept of ‘goodness’ and ‘reliability.’ After all, to this day people back their promises with ‘their word’, which is in turn backed by ‘their honor’. Thus, ‘honor’, ‘integrity’, and to ‘do the right thing’ share a naturally symbiotic relationship.

‘Duty’, on the other hand, is a synonym to ‘responsibility’, and is socially constructed in the military as an honorable obligation with which one must follow through. The textual relationship between ‘duty’ and ‘the right thing’ suggests that ‘the right thing’ is something morally owed. Additionally, to do ‘the right thing’ ascribes positive attributes to the character of the person enacting whatever ‘the right thing’ is.

‘Respect’ is a term socially interpreted as a thing of dignity, involving concepts of being valued and admired for one’s behaviors, accomplishments, and attitudes.

Using ‘respect’ to contextualize ‘the right thing’, adds intensity to the god term because it suggests ‘the right thing’ will earn the admiration and value of others. Furthermore, ‘respect’ in the military is the praxis, reflection into action, of other core values like ‘loyalty’, ‘honor’, ‘integrity’, etc.

Finally, ‘loyalty’ implies allegiance, trustworthiness, and constancy. Society views those who are ‘loyal’ as those who can be or are trusted because they are faithful to commitments. Similarly, in America, a ‘loyal’ person can be depended upon to ‘do the right thing’ for whichever side s/he claims. The connection between ‘the right thing’ and ‘loyalty’ implies that doing ‘the right thing’ is an action done by an agent who embodies the values implied by the term ‘loyalty’.

‘The right thing’ appears with the most combined frequency and intensity of the key terms in my text. This sets it up as a potential god term. Weaver (1953) explains that Burke’s cluster-agon analysis really rests on the agon-side, because opposition creates conflict, which is where we can find the construction of meaning. Therefore, ‘the right thing’ is technically a god term because it has an opposing term, ‘fault’, which also happens to be my first devil-term.

fault. ‘Fault’ occurred in my autoethnographic text 51 times, and nearly always positioned me as a victim of myself, rather than of my attackers. ‘Fault’ directly opposes both terms ‘responsibility’ and ‘the right thing’ in my text, making the former and latter each god-terms, and ‘fault’ a devil term. Most occurrences of ‘fault’ are surrounded by expressions like: ‘I deserve it’, ‘stupid choices’, ‘become a failure’, ‘let down’, and ‘make it right’.

For example, the day after the trauma, I wrote (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes):

during-trauma (November 2003). “God he’s such an asshole! Did he really have to chase me around all day and corner me to say basically my **bad** and, oh by the way the condom broke and you might be pregnant?! I guess it’s my **fault**, I mean, *I deserve it right?* That’s what happens when you get drunk and make *stupid choices*, you *become a failure*, let yourself down, and get pregnant. If I am, I’m to *blame* because, well, I guess he said it all when he asked me this morning why I didn’t go down on him last night. So, if I am pregnant, it’s really *my own fault* for my own *stupid choice* to not do that with him, even though I don’t really remember much. But whatever. *My problem.* I’ll *make it right*. I mean, I wanted to be a mom, right? But I won’t tell him, and I won’t *disappoint* the kid by telling her how it happened either.”

The consistently close proximity of the term ‘fault’ with these contextual terms implies that the meaning of ‘fault’ is not only constructed as blame, but also associated with concepts of failure, disappointing others, and an overall loss of credibility. ‘Fault’ is also dragged down by the terms ‘stupid’, and ‘dumb’, as well as the expressions, ‘I knew better’, and ‘my own choice(s)’. this devil-term shares a causal relationship between fulfilling and failing a duty. Furthermore, the meaning of ‘fault’ especially in the text because, not only is it surrounded by negative terms like ‘stupid’, but it is also an negative meaning, supporting its role as a devil-term. However, what technically makes ‘fault’ a devil-term is its direct opposition of the terms ‘responsibility’ and ‘the right thing’.

In this area, my analysis examines the internal rhetoric of guilt and shame that works to re-define an MSA victim. I find that the internal rhetoric used during and post trauma is significantly linked to militaristic concepts of ‘duty’ and ‘accountability’ in my text. For example, in the following excerpt I write (key words bolded, contextual words italicized post-original for demonstration purposes),

post-trauma (March 2012). “I honestly believed *rape* didn’t happen because it was my own **fault** that I *failed* my *duty* to act **responsibly** and not get too drunk and *lose control* of my situation. Because it was my **fault**, I had to *hold myself accountable*, especially since I could no longer hold my attacker or our **friends** who helped **accountable** by the time I realized this.”

In this example, ‘fault’ is dragged down by terms like ‘fail’ and ‘lose control’, which act to connote ‘fault’ negatively. Additionally, ‘fault’ directly opposes ‘responsibility’, implying that ‘responsibility’ is not only a term that embodies concepts like ‘leadership’, ‘honor’, etc, but also that ‘responsibility’ can be failed, or used to ascribe blame for a situation. In this particular case, ‘fault’ indirectly also relates to taking on blame for committing an act, or failing to prevent an act, that undermines unit cohesion. Thus, ‘fault’ is then seen as a failure of the victim’s various duties to country, military, unit, and self.

The word ‘fault’ is one of my devil terms because it opposes the god terms ‘responsibility’ and ‘the right thing’. However, what I find most interesting about ‘fault’ is its dialectical position. Not only does ‘fault’ work in the text to oppose “good terms”, but it also acts to negatively connote the devil-term ‘friend’. For example, in the following excerpt, ‘fault’ appears in a causal relationship with ‘responsibility’, opposing ‘responsibility’ against blame (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes):

during-trauma (December 2011). “I need to do the **responsible** thing and just *keep it zipped*. He has a **responsibility** to his family....his brand new baby, and it would be my **fault** if he *lost* them. *I knew better*, even when I woke up and realized what was happening, I knew I had to be the **responsible** one. But I just laid there, pretending to be asleep, hoping he’d stop, hoping he’d realize how *irresponsibly drunk* I was. It’s my own **fault** for being **irresponsible** then, so I should be **responsible** now.”

In the above quote, ‘responsible’ and ‘responsibility’ are positive attributes, and are inferred as doing ‘the right thing’, as well as taking ownership of what was viewed then as a personal mistake. ‘Responsibility’ to keep quiet is used in a way that implies a ‘responsibility’ to do the honorable thing of protecting my attacker from losing his family if news of the assault were leaked. ‘Fault’, however, is used to oppose ‘responsibility’ in a causal way. ‘Responsibility’ to do what’s right must be taken because of the blame I believed I shouldered for doing what was wrong.

Being irresponsible in a combat military unit is dangerous. Unfortunately, there are countless ways in which U.S. military cohesion is compromised, most of them involve attitudes and behaviors. Once a victim embraces the idea that she is to blame, *and* that she must hold herself accountable in accordance with military standards and values, essentially punishing and berating herself for her failure and fault, her self-view is dramatically shifted to a negative and self-destructive standpoint. This self-view spreads through internal rhetoric to re-tint the victim’s other lenses.

The destructive internal rhetoric, combined with a conditioned response to failure, acts to redefine a victim’s understanding of self in a harsh and punishing light.

The victim tells herself over and over again that it is not only her ‘fault’, but that she failed others, thus is laden with guilt and a sense of duty to never forgive oneself until she can fix what she’s done to others, to her ‘friends’. In the following significant excerpt (from a text written within days of the trauma), the devil-term ‘fault’ illustrates this (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes),

during-trauma (November 2011). “I should have never stopped trying to force the locked door. It was my **fault** that this happened. I am more *responsible* than this. I know better, knew better. Did I participate? I can’t remember.

I must have because he asked me the next day why I didn't "go down" on him. Why wouldn't he ask that, since I'm obviously to **blame** for him thinking I wanted it. Isn't it my *duty* to do the *right thing*, always? That's what the value says. It is. It is my *duty* to hold myself *accountable*, at **fault** for my role in this, for all of this. That's why *it wasn't rape*. It was me making a slew of bad choices, of *failing* my *duty* to protect myself, my country, my friends, even him (I wonder who he needed protecting from more, me or him). I could have *fought harder, louder*. I could have left earlier. I could have appealed to his *honor* instead of throwing mine out the window, instead of pretending to sleep and just letting him finish. I could have stopped it. *Stupid stupid stupid, weak and irresponsible female failure!*"

The reiterated utterances of 'fault', 'blame', in contrast with terms like 'responsibility', 'accountability', or 'right thing' suggests the connection between one's duty and integrity to do 'the right thing' and to make wrong choices right. This, together with the rhetorical relationships made between 'fault' and ideas of 'failure', like 'stupid', and 'weak', imply not only guilt and shame, but also total ownership of my own assault, and all the negative repercussions thereafter. This blame ownership goes beyond the typical to make it the victim's duty to embrace the 'fault' of not only her own choices, but the utter failures of her 'friends' as well. Such a revelation reifies that MSA victims suffer a complex high-level trauma that redefines them as the person at 'fault' not only for the trauma, but for all damage done to all those connected to the victim. This, sense of 'fault', in-turn, leads to a fully embraced belief that not only is the victim the one to blame, but it is the victim's duty to never forget what she did, and to always strive to make up for her failure to herself, her relations, and her sacred duties to protect and uphold military values. Such constructions of meaning and connections between duty and blame largely stem from the military's ideologies, and how they relate to MSA.

It is also inferred in this passage that 'fault' equates to irresponsibility, and thus directly opposes 'responsibility'.

However, in other passages, the devil term ‘fault’, negatively connotes my other devil term, ‘friend’. For example, when ‘fault’ is used to describe what type of friend I believed I would be if I told anyone what had happened, it implies I would be a bad one (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes):

during-trauma (December 2011). “I’m sure he was prolly three sheets to the wind too. I mean, he’s my **friend**, they all were...are...he wouldn’t *betray* me and just keep going if he was sober...maybe he was even more *drunk* than me... which makes it my **fault**, which makes me a *horrible friend*. Right? And if I told anyone, asked anyone about what they thought, other **friends** would know, and then his wife would find out he *betrayed* her and it would be my **fault**. My *stupid fault* for being a *stupid stupid friend* to get us in this mess.”

In the above text, the devil term ‘fault’ is used not only as a way of shouldering blame. Rather, the term operates as an adjective as well as a method for taking on blame. Specifically, my use of ‘Fault’ in the text is a way of describing what type of ‘friend’ I believed I would be if I said anything to anyone about what happened between Dillinger and I. ‘Fault’ in this sense implies betrayal, in that because of the ‘fault’ being mine, it would be my betrayal (in the form of talking to someone about what had happened) that could have caused Dillinger’s loss of family. This internal rhetoric painted me, in my self-view during trauma, as a bad and unworthy ‘friend’. It also acts as a lens for my world-view, constraining my definition of ‘friend’ as a person who should sacrifice their own rights and mental well being, regardless of actual ‘fault’ of transgressions, in favor of another’s.

Friends and betrayal: A dialectic of devil-terms

friend/s. The term ‘friend/s’ occurs a total of 49 times in the text. The key term most often used to contextualize ‘friends’ is ‘betrayal’.

When describing the ideal of what ‘friends’ are or should be (or what they were believed to be prior to the trauma) words with positively connotations, such as ‘loyal’, ‘trust’, and ‘protect’ cluster around the term ‘friend’. However, in most instances, the term ‘friends’ was used synonymously with the word ‘betrayal’, which occurs even when ‘friends’ is near one of its secondary “good terms” (Weaver, 1953). For example, in the following excerpt, I write about the moment I realized my ‘friends’ had planned the assault against me (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes):

during-trauma (December 2011). “There’s this little place in me, where I can’t lie – I think everyone has this place – not even to myself. And in that place I know my **friends are betrayers**. In that place, my *closest friends personify betrayal* of *trust and safety*. She even told me she’d been planning with him and a few others to *trick* me (isn’t that the same thing as **‘betray’** duh) and lock us in all day... and asked me if it worked?! How was he?! I wanted to scream at her, to weep at her, to tell her thank you because now I understand that there is no such thing a *good friend*, or a *bad friend* really....just people who **betray** you. Then, when you realize you’ve been **betrayed**, *hurt, lied* to (and about) by these **betrayers**, you also realize that **betrayers** is just another word for what **‘friends’** really are, instead of the *fantasy* you used to think **friend** meant.”

In the above context, ‘friends’ is both an ideal and a reality that opposes the ideal. In the moment of realizing the duplicity of my ‘friends’, the meaning of the term, and all it connotes, shifted from positive to negative. Thus, how I viewed what a ‘friend’ is, what a ‘friend’ should be, and how I would enact the meaning of ‘friend’ also shifted. The following excerpt further demonstrates the change in self and world-view, as represented in the symbolic use of the term ‘friend’ caused by MSA:

post-trauma (September 2013). Yesterday, I realized I don’t really have anyone that meets a societal definition of friend. Every time I think of the word ‘friend’ and mean it, I see Felicity, Dillinger, and the others in my head. So I use the word when I talk about loved people in my life, but I don’t mean it. I have some people I love very much, and I guess I call them ‘friends’, but they aren’t.

It's so confusing, this idea of 'friend'. Before the Army, **friends** were anyone who was not an *enemy*. Nowadays, my **friends** are *more* to me than what I think others define as a **friend**, but also are *significantly less*. That, and I try harder to be an *ideal* and *trustworthy friend* more than just about anything. I guess there is no such thing as what society thinks of as a **friend** in my life. It's like people in my life skip that step. I skip that step. People go from being an *acquaintance* to being either an *out-grouper* or practically like *family* in my heart. I go from relatively liking or respecting someone to either feeling marginally *indifferent*, or feeling a sense of *love and obligation* for them. No **friend** stage. I don't like **friends**, don't **trust** them. That's why I don't have them, why I don't make them, and why I try so hard to be *better* than what most people think a **friend** should be."

This selection is a reflection of shifted meaning about what a friend is.

Prior to military sexual assault, a 'friend' was someone to be trusted and loved, and who trusted and loved you in return. Post assault, a friend is synonymous conceptually with one who betrays and causes pain and harm. Furthermore, there is an obvious connection between the term 'friend' as both good and bad. This juxtaposition implies an unclear construction of what 'friend' means. When you consider that the meaning of 'friend' has shifted and is unclear post assault, there is an implication that MSA survivors have difficulty negotiating boundaries and intricacies of interpersonal relationships.

betrayal. Betrayal is surrounded by terms like 'lie', 'hurt', and 'pain'. This juxtaposition denotatively and connotatively implies that 'friends' is a confused concept; instead of being either good or bad it is both loyal and disloyal, trustworthy and untrustworthy, safe and dangerous. 'Betrayal', surrounded the devil-term 'friends' 18 of the 23 times the devil-term was used, which suggests the two, at least at the time of each passage in which his relationship occurs are closely associated.

The use of ‘friend’ – ‘betrayal’ - loyal consistently appears in passages both during and after the trauma, and continuous as late as November, 2013, when I wrote (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post original for demonstration purposes),

post-trauma (August 2013). “Why do I refer to them as **friends** still, especially after such a *disgusting betrayal*? Because they were my **friends**; I *loved* them, at least in the way a Soldier *cares* for those in her unit as if they were *family*, and in turn my “**friends**” *hurt* me, **betrayed** trust, *hurt* me on levels I still don’t understand. I would have done almost anything for either of them, and the others too. I would have died to protect them, because that was my *duty*. I still call them **friends**, because I think I still *honor* what they were to me once. I believed in that exclusive *bond of devoted loyalty* being a **friend** was supposed to embody. Even though I no longer continue to think of either of the two primary *attackers* as **friends**, naming them with this *honorific* term reminds me of what they were when they **betrayed** my trust, reminds me to *be cautious* of who is a true **friend**, or who will **betray** you in order to maintain *control* over my environment, to not *risk safety, lose my agency*, and to protect myself and my family, especially my family, from my own need to *connect* and be *devoted*...a need that their **betrayal** proves can lead to *danger* and *hurt*.”

The frequency with which ‘betrayal’ opposes ‘friends’ implies that, at least post-trauma, what was once considered a trustworthy form of relationship was transitioned through MSA into a dangerous risk. Additionally, the text shows a relationship between ‘friends’ and ‘attackers’, which is a rhetorical representation of a blurring of boundaries between two dichotomous concepts. Finally, there is a marked equality in the number of times the term ‘friend’ and ‘betrayal’ each appear, which is seven. This implies that perceptions of each go hand in hand, associating conflicting terms with a singular negative connotation/meaning.

Whereas ‘friends’ is generally surrounding by positive terms, ‘betrayal’ is not. Betrayal is heavily weighed with negative terms like ‘hurt’, ‘attacker’, and ‘danger’. In this context, betrayal morphs into an almost physical action.

Such a relationship indicates the perception of betrayal involves fear of physical harm, which makes sense when contextualized by MSA.

Contextually Important Key Terms

There are a few key terms that do not meet Burke's cluster-agon analysis criteria for being a god or devil term. However, they are used with enough frequency and high intensity to merit a brief discussion. Understanding these particular contextual terms helps further situate the internal rhetoric of an MSA victim, especially within the framework of military values.

Accountability. Even though 'accountability' does not qualify as a god-term, as it is not directly opposed by another key term, it merits further analysis because it appears so often in conjunction with the god-terms 'responsibility' and 'the right thing'. Both terms are supported in the text several times by the key term 'accountability'. 'Accountability' appears 45 times, surrounding 'responsibility' 13 times, and 'the right thing' 21 times. In addition to typical correlations made between 'accountability' and 'responsibility', 'accountability' is also (and more often) surrounded by terms like 'courage' and 'honesty' throughout the text:

pre-trauma (February 2003) (During deployment). "It's surreal, to be here in the Holy Land acting out war. I wonder how we'll hold ourselves accountable for the sins we commit in this place. Will we have the courage to do what we're told is right, even if it's wrong, and then be honest enough with ourselves to admit what we do is never right, especially not here."

The use of 'courage' lifts 'trust' up to be a noble concept, as 'courage' is characteristically a trait that is honored by many societies as an act of selflessness. It is seen as admirable, akin to brave, even envy-worthy to some. To have 'courage', one must overcome personal fears and engage in risk-taking.

The correlation between ‘accountability’ and ‘courage’ in the text implies that being accountable is, in effect, being selfless, or at the very least, putting ‘the right thing’ before oneself. As a soldier, ‘personal courage’ is espoused as an Army Core Value. In journal entries, during, and post trauma, ‘accountability’ is presented as having the ‘courage’ to do what is morally right, to discipline oneself in to be in control of answering for one’s actions, good or otherwise.

Similarly, ‘honesty’ is a fundamental value closely associated in many cultures with trustworthiness, integrity, and honor. Thus, ‘honesty’ is generally a connotatively good word. The ascription of concepts about ‘honesty’ onto the meaning of ‘accountability’ contextualizes the latter as a positive motivation of honorable character. This constructed meaning for ‘accountability’ streams throughout my text. For example, in various entries, I describe accountability thusly (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes):

during-trauma (December 2003). “To be *honest*, it was *scary* at first, sure, and I still can’t figure out how or why I was locked in the room, but I had to have be *brave*, you know, have *personal courage* and all that, to *overcome* that, be **accountable** to my *responsibility* as a grown woman to present a strong stiff upper lip, be *honest* about my role in it all, to soldier on and all, especially since it was mostly my **fault** in all *honesty*. We are Soldiers, dammit, we set the example of driving on, of holding *fear* **accountable** to us, not the other way around. Besides, aren’t we **accountable** to *honesty*, you know, *truth* among comrades and such?”

- and -

post-trauma (December 2011). “I think it wasn’t Dillinger who needed to be **accountable**, to be *honest* enough or *courageous* enough to admit what happened. I wonder if he was kind of a victim too sometimes, if he really didn’t have as much **responsibility** in it as everyone says. Maybe someone else needs to speak up and be *honest*. I think it was Felicity (name changed to protect identity). She locked me in. She had been trying to get me to say yes to him all day.

It was her room, her party, her endless alcohol, her...plan. Now it's too late, she'll never be held *accountable* to tell the *truth*, to apologize, to make it right, to be *courageous*. Then again, how *courageous* is it to blame her? How *honest* is it to say he might be blame free? How is that me acting **responsibly** or being **accountable** to *truth* and *courage* at all?"

In these contexts, 'accountability' is the way in which a person demonstrates s/he has the 'courage' to face scary memories, or the fear of repercussions, and be a 'responsible,' 'honest,' and trustworthy soldier/adult. Even in the earlier discussion of 'responsibility', in which the term reflects negative aspects of surviving MSA, 'accountability' is still seen as an honorable act. This is because, though being 'accountable' is a burden, it is still what one does to ensure s/he do the 'right thing' and be trustworthy.

Trust. In the military, trustworthiness might just be the most important tool of a Servicemember. Part of the purpose of the military's hegemonic masculine ideology is to build 'trust' in the cohesion and effectiveness of your unit, the competence and reliability of your leadership, and the purpose of your mission ("Soldier's Guide", 2009). As a Servicemember, you must be willing and able to commit extreme acts of violence against any enemy, foreign or domestic, young to old. To do this, Servicemembers must 'trust' each other without reservation. Each member must be 'trusted' to do their job and to be willing to do whatever it takes to protect the country, the military, the unit, and his or herself when the need arises.

'Trust' made an appearance 29 times. Where 'trust' lacks in frequency, when compared to the other key terms, it more than makes up for in intensity. Most often, the term 'trust' is surrounded by strong words mostly in the during and post-trauma journal entries.

Use of words like, ‘sacred’, ‘hard-earned’, and the expression ‘life depends on’ delineates ‘trust’ as perhaps the lynchpin value of all values, herein and otherwise. The passages in which ‘trust’ was particularly emphasized included powerful imagery and significant emphasis, as is evidenced in the following (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes):

pre-trauma (February 2003) (during deployment). “Each and every one of us could *die*. I don’t even know these people. I’ve only been here a week, my *life depends on* **trusting** them to do the *right thing*. Can I? I mean, I **trust** them to *take a bullet*, because they have *honor*, they’re Soldiers like me. I **trust** their *skill* and *dedication* to stop in-coming fire, because they’re trained like me. I at least **trust** them to *bleed with me*.

I **trust** them enough to *sacrifice* my own *safety* and *bleed with them*, because that’s what Soldiers do, the *honorable* thing, the *right thing*. I **trust** them to **trust** me, to **trust** my *skill* and *reliability*, to help *protect* one another, to have *integrity* out there, and in here. Don’t I? Well, yes or no, we’re here, in *war*. I can hear the Navy jets and rockets overhead. I sit here, on my cot, in all my gear, waiting for the alert, waiting to maybe *kill* or maybe *die*, or maybe for my *sacred* **trust** to pay off.”

- and -

post-trauma (December 2011). “I **trusted** them. I **trusted** them to *protect* me. I **trusted** them to be my *friends* and to be Soldiers, *real Soldiers*. I embraced my **trust** for them, *celebrated* it. I **trusted** them enough to *risk my life* to *protect* them and they knew it. I **trusted** them and they *raped* me. How could they? How could they plan it out and follow through, like it was a *joke*, like my **trust** was *unworthy*, like I was *unworthy*? How could they *reward* my **trust** with smiles, jokes, and drinks with me after a hard week of work, and then *betray* my **trust** and *plot to hurt me*? They were my *friends*. My *friends* and my fellow Soldiers.”

In these contexts, ‘trust’ is supported both negatively and positively, much in the same way as ‘responsibility’ and ‘accountability’. However, the intensity of imagery, emotion, and significance is much more prevalent in the treatment of the term ‘trust’. In the pre-trauma excerpt, ‘trust’ is a thing given and earned through familiarity and familial associations. In this context, ‘trust’ is tenuous, but a thing to be honored and a

trait whose value is in its ability to help strangers rely on one another, and be able to live and die together for a joint cause (in this case, war). ‘Trust’ is honorable, reciprocal, and reflective of the integrity of Servicemembers as a rule. The imagery in the first context is vivid...bleeding together, dying together, taking a bullet, killing are all terms that graphically support the importance of ‘trust’.

The vivid imagery and rhetorical contextualization of ‘trust’ is why I find it to be one of the key terms expressed with the highest intensity. I often catch myself explaining, both in my narrative and in conversations, that I have less trouble dealing with the physical interaction and actual event of the rape itself than I do with the level of ‘betrayal’ it took for my ‘friends’ to set it up. This is now explained through data analysis of the language of my internal rhetoric. For example, in a PTSD cognitive processing writing exercise, I explained (key terms bolded, contextual terms italicized post-original for demonstration purposes):

post-trauma (March 2013). “The military, the way it is able to function, is *built on trust* in your peers, your *leadership*, your training, and the military system (and a little bit on the other guys’ incompetence). I can barely remember the sex-act of my *rape*, partially because some is blocked, partially because I was passed out for a lot of it, and partially because it’s been so long. But I’ll never forget the *sinking feelings*: the *fear for my safety* and maybe even my life, the overwhelming *rage* at myself for being so *stupid*, and the *devastating* sense of **trust betrayal...** Because this was about to happen... he was my friend and mentor...that they had locked me in knowing I’d been turning him down all day. It was all so...heartbreaking. That feeling of the moment **trust** was *broken* is what *haunts* me. That **trust betrayal**, uncertainty, *guilt* for being *stupid*, and feeling of being the kind of person people want to *hurt* for fun...those feelings, not the sex-act, are what I wake up with every morning when I have a nightmare I can’t see.”

Society understands that ‘trust’ is paramount to survival. As children we are told the story of the boy who cried wolf in order to teach us not to lie.

We learn the relationship between ‘trust’ and ‘honesty’ in children’s stories like Pinocchio, and grown-up stories like those of Ponzi and Madoff. As adults we learn that broken ‘trust’ causes painful, for some the most irreparable, damage to interpersonal relationships. ‘Trust’ of the self is necessary for people to gain confidence and accomplish goals, from mundane to grandiose. ‘Trust’ of others is what builds peace and progress between people, organizations, and nations. In the military, ‘trust’ is what allows Servicemembers to sleep, eat, work, play, fight, suffer, rest, and die together.

In many aspects, it could be argued that all of the Army’s Seven Core Values hinge on ‘trust’. To exercise loyalty, one must have ‘trust’. ‘Trust’ is required to fully perform any duty as ordered. ‘Trust’ is a cornerstone of respect; without ‘trust’ a Servicemember will neither respect his or her fellows, nor will ever be respected in turn. Honor and integrity both are built on ‘trust’, because without either a person can never be believed. Likewise, personal courage requires ‘trust’ in self, others, and the system in order to overcome one’s fears with honest bravery. Finally, selfless service is rewarded with ‘trust’ of one’s fellows, and of the nation a Servicemember protects and danger.

loyalty. Once ‘trust’ is established between Servicemembers, ‘loyalty’ is easier to enact. Reversely, broken ‘trust’ directly and negatively causes corrosion of ‘loyalty’. This term occurs 17 times in my text, and has the most direct relationship with ‘friends’. The concept of ‘loyalty’ is constructed by surrounding terms like ‘earn’, ‘trust’, and ‘betrayal’. ‘Loyalty’ is opposed by the devil-term ‘betrayal’, but does not directly meet any other criteria to be a god-term in a cluster-agon analysis. However, ‘loyalty’ is a key term because it is used in close proximity to other key terms, and - most specifically - because it shares a direct relationship with military values.

‘Loyalty’ is the only key term that is also one of the Army’s Seven Core Values.

Analyzing this term provide insight into how a Servicemember’s internal rhetoric is shaped by military rhetoric. For example, in an early writing during basic training, I write,

pre-trauma (August 2002). “Today the drill sergeant asked us which of the Army Values means the most to me. I can’t decide between **loyalty**, *honor*, and *integrity*. I think they are circular. I mean, being **loyal** means not **betraying** someone. But I think now it means more. Now that I’m in the Army, my **loyalty** makes people **trust** me, which *earns* me *honor* and *integrity*. But...without *honor* or *integrity*, people won’t want to be **loyal** to me. So, I guess **loyalty** means ‘bearing true faith and allegiance’ like the book says, but doing so with *honor* and *integrity*.”

In this context, ‘loyalty’ is defined by the military, is processed using military context, and is representative of the intersectionality of certain military values. In the end, I decided that integrity is the most important value to me, and maintain this belief to this day. However, the point in using the above excerpt is to show that my understood meaning of the term actually adapts to the military’s meaning.

The analysis of my eight key terms, ‘responsibility’, ‘the right thing’, ‘fault’, ‘friends’, ‘betrayal’, ‘accountability’, ‘trust’ and ‘loyalty’, reveals a unique dialectical relationship between often dichotomous concepts. This relationship makes for a muddled construction of meaning that is at odds with itself. Such conflicts in meaning create skewed self and world-views that change not only the way an MSA victim thinks, but also influences interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, an MSA victim’s clouded constructs of meaning, self and world-views, and interpersonal relationships directly effect how s/he experiences, reacts, and responds to future tension or conflicts, and perhaps even interpersonal relations in general.

Discussion

A careful analysis of a military rape victim's self-talk can help one to understand the 'why' behind certain reactions, anxieties, confusions, etc. Introspection alone is not enough though. It is fairly common understanding that trauma changes a person for a myriad of reasons. However, when one combines introspection with academic analysis, we can achieve a more holistic and deeper understanding of the connections between trauma, language, meaning, and behavior.

For example, using a Burkean cluster-agon analysis of private journals about my experience with military rape produced two god-terms, two devil-terms, and other key terms. Key terms contextualize the motivation and conflicts of character behind the speaker (Burke, 1941). My key terms, and their meaning, are constituted through internal rhetoric, a form of discourse, which is "paramount in the negotiation, and construction of meaning" (Adjei, 2013). Therefore meaning, for me, and the motivations and conflicts therein, is created by my self-talk. The analysis of self-talk pinpoints key terms and how they are used and contextualized. Furthermore, by conducting my analysis of journals that stretched across pre-during-post trauma time periods, I am uniquely able to find patterns of shifts in use and meaning that were direct results of military rape trauma experience.

One purpose of analyzing a trauma victim's internal discourse is to help the victim survive the psychophysiological impact (Freedman, 2006) of violation, betrayal, and fear associated with military sexual assault. A victim uses language to mentally process his or her trauma in order to negotiate the violations between experience and expectations that are created by military-on-military rape.

This rhetorical process must be done in a way that allows a victim to continue to function within an environment that inherently re-subjugates her repeatedly to her attacker. This results in a rhetorical negotiation of conflicting meanings. The process of negotiating conflicting meanings can result in the construction of convoluted meaning.

Stephen Adjei (2013) explains that a person's perceptions are not "enduring and stable across situations and time"; instead, these perceptions can change in relation to the context and purpose of discourse (Adjei, 2013). Internal rhetoric is another way of saying self-talk, which is a form of discourse. If perceptions are influenced by internal rhetoric, which is similarly influenced by experience, then the logical presumption is that experience impacts both internal rhetoric and perceptions.

Like other Servicemembers, my internal rhetoric during military service was shaped through military training that was designed and executed in accordance with military ideologies, and was further influenced by my military experiences. This stems first from indoctrination of the values, and then is complicated by MSA due its inherent violation of a soldier's expectations of how those values are supposed to be enacted through military service.

Unfortunately, service in the military is rife with struggle. Servicemembers are trained to deal with conflict, both internal and external, via training into adopting and embodying the military's basic ideologies. These ideologies are based on core values. One of the more interesting findings in the cluster-agon analysis of my text is that I found a direct relationship between my key terms and the Army's Seven Core Values. This is indicative of the level to which military socialization shifts the internal lens of recruits and Servicemembers.

It also implies that reactions to the trauma were processed through the pre-existing lens of embodying the Army's Seven Core Values. This in turn implies that my cognitive process occurred though the broader lens of my unit's ideology, and broader still, the military's ideologies. Not discussed in the data analysis, is this interrelationship between the core values, my key, god and devil terms, the rape, and the military's hegemonic masculine ideology.

In order to fully understand the intersectionality of MSA and the powerful shift of a victim's internal rhetoric, specifically in relationship to military service, one must also understand the framework of military ideology and its relationship to MSA and the formation of meaning. The best way to approach understanding this is to first discuss meaning and military values. Next, I will address masculine hegemony in the military, which is an important element of the military's constructs of meaning and conditioning of recruits. Understanding the military's hegemonic masculine ideology also requires an introduction into how recruits are conditioned through training to adopt the belief system, which I discuss next. However, it is also helpful to consider women's role in a hegemonic military masculinity, which is also included in this discussion. Once there is a basic knowledge of military values and meaning constructs, military hegemonic masculinity, conditioning of recruits into the ideology system, and women's role in this system, I address the relationship of these to military sexual assault, military sexual trauma, and post traumatic stress disorder, all of which shift a victim's baseline of understood meanings. To provide perspective and fluency, I will include examples and observations of my rhetorical analysis throughout.

Military Values and the Construction of Meaning

The United States military is an honored institution. Its ranks are filled with Servicemembers who agree to risk their lives to protect America and Americans from threats to our way of life. Our Servicemembers literally sign away their constitutional rights when they join the military (United States Code: Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), 2010), and do so in order to better protect the freedoms and rights of all U.S. Americans. It is my experience that active duty Servicemembers and Veterans alike often receive expressions of respect, gratitude, and pride from countrymen and countrywomen. This is just, as the sacrifices Servicemembers make in order to ensure freedoms are many.

Members of our Armed Forces sacrifice through the standards they embody, which are defined by a rigid set of character values. In this, I mean that Servicemembers are expected to exhibit a standard of living that exemplifies what are known as core values (“The Soldier’s Guide”, 2009). Especially salient for a Servicemember are those values belonging to his/her respective military branch. In the Army, for example, the core values every soldier must learn, live, and demonstrate daily are: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage (“The Soldier’s Guide”, 2009 Mattacks, K.M., Haskell, S.G., Krebs, E.E., Justice, A.C., Yano, E.M., Brandt, C., 2012). These values, like so many other expressions in the military, are condensed into an acronym, LDRSHP. The Army’s Seven Core Values are conditioned into soldiers on the first day of arriving at basic training, and are reified throughout the entire military career. Each value is a pledge a soldier makes. The Army Values can be found in Army training manuals, public relations materials, and even on the Army website, Army.mil, which is available to military Servicemembers and civilians alike.

The acculturation of these values into recruits fundamentally defines what each term means to a Servicemember.

Based on the results of my Burkean cluster-agon analysis, key terms in my text often symbolize conflicting meaning, which implies convoluted and contradictory constructions of meaning in my mind. The baseline of what certain terms mean to Servicemembers is founded and shaped by military ideologies and training, and then can be reshaped and influenced by military experiences.

This is demonstrated by the analysis of the use of the term ‘responsibility’ in my texts. Initially, as a recruit in training, the concept of ‘responsibility’ in my journals is supported by contextual key terms that are good terms (leadership, honorable, important, etc). Furthermore, the Army’s Core Values associate ‘responsibility’ with ‘duty’, the second of the core values. When a Servicemember pledges to embody the Army Core Value of ‘Duty’, s/he is literally promising that “I will fulfill all my obligations” (Army Values, 2014). Such a definition causes a Servicemember to understand the term ‘duty’ to mean always succeeding in meeting every one of a person’s responsibilities.

My textual analysis reveals that I understood this meaning of ‘responsibility’, but that I also understood that my involvement or blame in military sexual assault was a failure of my duty to maintain military bearing and protect myself and others at all times. For example, in the excerpts discussed in the Data Analysis chapter, there is a shift in the rhetorical use of ‘responsibility’ in my text occurs over time (pre-during-post trauma) from meaning something akin to an honorable obligation, to representing ‘fault’.

This implies that while soldiers are trained to view ‘responsibility’ as an honorable onus of which to be proud; an MSA victim understands ‘responsibility’ as a failed honorable onus, which makes them dishonorable in the context of their military service. Such an understanding contradicts what a soldier is trained to believe ‘duty’ to mean.

Thus, my construction of what ‘responsibility’, a.k.a. the Army Value of ‘duty’, means is a complicated combination of good, bad, and fault.

The connection between Army Values and conflicting constructions of meaning brought on by experiencing MSA is not limited to “duty”. Another example can be found in the Army Core Value ‘Loyalty’, which pledges: “I will bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, my unit and other Soldiers.” (Army Values, 2014).

For instance ‘loyalty’ in my text connotes the term ‘friends’, assigning it the meaning (to me) that ‘friends’ bear allegiance to one another, which is a transfer composition fallacy of logic. This is because my internal rhetoric describes friends as people who exchange loyalty, a trait I transferred by me to all friends, even those who were involved in my military sexual assault. My analysis exposes the conflict between meanings when clusters show that both the term ‘loyalty’ and ‘friends’ are set up as both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ terms by the words that contextualize them. The conflicting associations of meaning between the two terms is deepened because of what military socialization, via the Army Values, taught me ‘loyalty’ is supposed to entail. As a recruit, I was trained that loyalty (Army Values, 2014) means to,

Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other Soldiers. Bearing true faith and allegiance is a matter of believing in and devoting yourself to something or someone.

A loyal Soldier is one who supports the leadership and stands up for fellow Soldiers. By wearing the uniform of the U.S. Army you are expressing your loyalty. And by doing your share, you show your loyalty to your unit. (Army Values, 2014).

Therefore, my understanding of 'loyalty' before MSA was that it's demonstrated through the honorable and selfless service of all duties a soldier is ordered to complete, including the duty of "devoting yourself " to your unit and other soldiers, a.k.a 'friends'. Since all my 'friends' were soldiers, I assigned them 'loyalty'. However, those friends involved in perpetuating MSA against me violated the expectations of 'duty' and 'loyalty'. Yet, because I was also trained to avow 'loyalty', I was devoted to them as fellow soldiers. This is not just a demonstration of how an MSA victim constructs a dialectical relationship between themselves and their attacker(s), which alone is an enormous implication for the need to further research this area. It also demonstrates the rhetorical impact of both the indoctrination of army values through a hegemonic masculinity and how the violation of those values redefines the meaning associated with them.

There are five remaining Army core values Servicemembers are expected to live and represent. 'Respect' states, "I will treat people as they should be treated" (Army Values, 2014). 'Selfless service' is a promise to "Put the welfare of the nation, the Army and my subordinates before my own" (Army Values, 2014). 'Honor' insists on, "Carrying out, acting, and living the values of respect, duty, loyalty, selfless service, integrity and personal courage in everything I do" (Army Values, 2014). 'Integrity' demands that a Soldier, "Do what's right, legally and morally" (Army Values, 2014).

Finally, ‘personal courage’ calls for a Soldier to, “Face fear, danger or adversity (physical or moral)” (Army Values, 2014).

A soldier’s heart is supposed to beat these values, one of the character motivations that sets a soldier apart from the rest of society. They are ingrained relentlessly through the military socialization process. Currently, one Army campaign, the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response/Prevention (SHARP) program, relies on the message: “Are you living the Army values?” (2014). Many soldiers, and other Servicemembers, do indeed embody these values. They are loyal to their country, its cause, and each other. They perform duty after duty in the names of freedom and national security. They respect one another and those they protect. They sacrifice in big and small ways. By definition, Servicemembers honor their respective core values, their chain of command, and hard work. They act with integrity to ensure other values are irrefutable. Servicemembers who honor core values face personal fears that civilians could not begin to imagine, all so that Americans can be protected from terror, both foreign and domestic. In these ways, Servicemembers “live the Army values.” (Army Values, 2014).

There are some soldiers and other Servicemembers, however, who do not embody core values, but rather violate them, causing fear through abuse of others. Sadly, these perpetrators of victimization are rarely held accountable (Carlson, Stromwall, & Lietz, 2013). Their victims too often face scrutiny from leadership and peers alike (Mattacks Haskell, Krebs, Justice, Yano, & Brandt, 2012).

The legal systems, reporting guidelines, and various processes in place do not protect victimized Servicemembers, particularly female Servicemembers, from enduring debasing and permanently damaging military-on-military sexual crimes (Subcommittee, 2010). Additionally, the continual exposure of victims to their attackers and the responsible military ideology, undermine unit cohesion and directly contradict core military values that are necessary for the functionality and success of our Armed Forces (Subcommittee, 2010). Such perpetration of victimization remains largely and relatively unchecked, mostly because of the military's oppressive ideologies.

Military Hegemonic Masculinity

The complexity of an MSA victim's understanding of meaning and self and world-views is further complicated by the military's hegemonic ideologies. Hegemonic masculinities involve male-centered values created through male-centered perceptions and expressed through masculine language (Hinojosa, 2012), which exist to dominate over lesser masculinities, including non-masculinities. This suggests that military values in and of themselves are borne from and perpetuate hegemonic masculine ideology. Once Servicemembers embrace military values, like the Army's Seven Core Values, for example, their own ideologies and the language that reflects and expresses them shift at a fundamental level. This shift results in a new baseline ideology and platform for understanding meaning in various contexts.

At the root of this issue is the military's fundamental ideology, which is a hegemonic masculinity (Hinojosa, 2010).

Hegemonic masculinity is defined by Ramon Hinojosa (2010) as, “Configurations of everyday gendered social practices(s) in which individuals construct gender identities in relation and opposition to other men and women” (181). Hinojosa (2010) further explains that, “Internal or external, hegemonic masculinity marginalizes all women/femininity, and even other masculinities,” and that this ideology “Enables men to maintain positions of dominance and privilege over femininities” (181). To further focus this definition within a military context, remember that military hegemonic ideology is, “An institutionalized, male-dominated, male-perceived, male-centered [ideology that] promotes aggression, dominance, patriarchy, condescension, and even violence in order to achieve one’s goals and missions, and to maintain one’s standard position of power” (Hope & Ericksen, 2009, p. 114-117).

Considering the nature of hegemonic masculinity and masculine military ideology, as discussed earlier, it makes sense that hegemonic masculine military ideology is unswervingly related to violence, specifically against females. Hearn (2012) reminds us that, “Violence is not a fixed set of behaviors; rather the very construction of violence is related to historical intersections of gender power, social divisions, ideology, and indeed hegemony” (590). This, in a military context, implies that acts of violence against those who are seen as weaker are systemic. According to Hearn (2012), this form of inherent victimization is directly related to consent in a way that restructures the concept of power (591). Sexual assault is a blatant disregard for consent, and thus forces not only unwanted sexual acts, but also imposes powerlessness. Male Servicemembers who sexually assault other Servicemembers, therefore, enact framework of the power and social divisions between male and female in the military.

Significantly salient to those women who are sexually assaulted in the military, is the affect of gender they experience when faced with ideologies like the military's. When discussing race and power, Harding and Pribram (2004) reveal that 'affect' is the salient feeling of 'otherness' within a marginalized person. This feeling results from experiences, "People have in their practices, identities, experiences, everyday life, and so on that influences what is important to an individual, what s/he values, and the emotional intensity that structures those values" (Harding & Pribram, 2004). Harding and Pribram applied their affect theory to race. However, there is a clear connection between how strongly one feels their marginalization and gender, especially within an exceptionally gendered environment.

The emotional structures of a marginalized group, like women in the military, are intensified when their powerlessness results directly from an aspect of 'otherness' like gender (Harding and Pribram 2004). For example, when former Senator Dick Black (VA, Rep.), who is also a Veteran military officer, says military rape is basically a foregone conclusion because, "Think of yourself at 25, wouldn't you love to have a group of 19-year-old girls under your control, day in, day out?" (Redden, 2014), he is using language that is fundamentally hegemonic. On a relative side note, Black's comment is even oppressive in its use of ontological metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1982) when describing young female soldiers "under your control". With this language, Black demotes female Servicemembers to a marginal existence, literally placing them beneath a male and without control. Considering the historical fight women have had for equality, especially within military ranks, such a positioning acts to even further silence and victimize female Servicemembers.

There is a profound and rigidly structured stratified power difference between men and women in the military, particularly pertaining to the powerlessness of military sexual assault victims. The ideology of stereotypical masculinity perpetuates aggression, dominance, and the victimization of 'the other'. Long-term exposure to such repetitive victimization can negatively shape future identity development of victims (Aupperle, R., Melorse, A., Stein, M. & Paulus, M., 2011).

It is important to realize that constructed military culture is particularly prevalent in contemporary American society. It is an inherently unique hegemonic system that institutionalizes endangerment of women through its masculine ideologies, and thus is in urgent need of critical intercultural communication scholarship. Now that I have outlined the hegemony of the military's masculine ideology, I will frame how this ideology is conditioned into soldiers in a way that pervades the military and shapes its marginalization and victimization of women by institutionalizing and encouraging sexual domination via assault.

Conditioning Military Recruits Into A Hegemonic Masculine Ideology

The ideology that allows such violent victimization is deeply conditioned into Servicemembers during training processes. This is why it is critical to fully comprehend the military socialization process, e.g. basic training (also referred to as 'boot camp'), and how it anchors masculine ideologies in recruits. Also, to even better understand the exceptionally severe nature of MST and its impacts, one must first garner a basic understanding of how the military works when it comes to socializing civilians into becoming 'war fighters' and 'freedom defenders' (Subcommittee 2010) who are dependent upon one another for health and survival.

Military conditioning shifts a person's perceptions on a fundamental level, which in turn alters the way a person views themselves and the world, as well as the way a person responds to traumatic events.

The old joke about Basic Training (Army) and Boot Camp (Marines), or the military in general, 'brain washing' recruits to be robots who follow orders, aka-killing machines, isn't an extreme fancy of imagination. The military creates warriors by socializing citizens to become warriors who unquestionably enact violence upon command, which is accomplished through military training, and the loyalty cycle. This training and cyclical reification of embodying military core values creates a paradox of meanings associated with internal rhetoric that drives a Servicemember to willingly adhere to military values, even if doing so is a violation of the very spirit of their original meaning.

To live in a military environment, be it during deployment or peace time, a person must be able to psychologically and physically process and deal with expectations, duties, and stressors no civilian would ever dream of enduring (Evans, 2012). Whether it is one of numerous surprise home inspections with highly trained dogs and military police for the purpose of 'health and welfare' (Army Regulation (AR) 1-201, 2008); or sleep deprivation for training and various duties (Army Field Manual (FM) 6-22.5, 2009), or enacting the horrors of war craft.

For instance, Servicemembers must be physically and psychologically ready, willing, and able to respond to the needs of the military, up to and including taking a human life of any age (Mattacks, Haskell, Krebs, Justice, Yano, & Brandt, 2012). To do so, a civilian must transform into a warrior.

This psychological and physical transition takes place through the rigors of training a recruit to redefine how s/he sees themselves and the world, as well as how s/he responds to various environments and events. Ultimately, this training refocuses a recruit's way of thinking so that the recruit can respond as needed in times of war and other crises ("The Soldier's Guide", 2009).

Military training also ensures an unwavering respect of, and strict adherence to, a rigid chain of command ("The Soldier's Guide", 2009). According to chain of command, each Servicemember reports first and foremost to his or her first line supervisor. Though rank is definitive in the military, and every Servicemember duly respects whoever outranks them, following the chain of command is paramount. A chain of command is sacred to military members, and never to be broken. In other words, a Servicemember honors the chain of command at all times, rarely if ever 'going above' one's direct supervisor.

Servicemembers are socialized into the military rank structure, and all its auspices, from day one. This is in addition to being made to memorize, exercise, and exemplify their respective branch's core values discussed earlier. Remember that, in the United States Army, the first core value is 'loyalty', which supports the indoctrination of the unquestionable infallibility of one's chain of command. This is only one way in which the core values and military training redefine various lenses of a citizen-turned-soldier. Loyalty involves faithful service to army, country, unit, and values ("The Soldier's Guide", 2009). When such loyalty is betrayed by a trusted person, especially via invasive sexual assault, a fundamental ideological pillar of identity is broken.

The same can be said for the Army's remaining six core values: duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. These values become an intrinsic part of a soldier's psychological and emotional construct (Lutwak & Dill, 2013). Furthermore, for Servicemembers who thoroughly embrace their service and all it entails, these values dictate their lives quite literally every minute of every day.

The systemic marginalization of non-masculinities by the institution acts to perpetuate masculine hegemony. The recurring oppression and marginalization of lesser and non-masculinities results in organization trauma. Note that organization trauma and organizational trauma are different (Hope & Ericksen, 2009). Organizational trauma is trauma within an organization. Whereas, organization trauma occurs because of the systemic flaws of the organization itself that result in victimization (Hope & Ericksen, 2009).

The socialization process of military training, followed by continuous and progressively more intense conditioning once service members enter respective units, causes the internal rhetoric and episteme of our military members to shift in a way that utterly redefines the self and worldviews. The 'brain washed' new perceptions, core values, and ways of communicating and responding ultimately align on a fundamental level with the military's hegemonic masculine ideology.

Women in a Hegemonic Masculine Military

This is particularly problematic for female military members, as they not only face redefining themselves literally from the inside out to succeed in a patriarchal masculine culture, but also because women face a significantly increased risk for sexual harassment and assault (Valente & Wright, 2007).

More often than not, because she has been conditioned to live within the masculine ideology of aggression, dominance, etc., a female Servicemember enacts to subordinate herself. So, when faced with aggression, post-sexual assault, a female Soldier is likely to enact submissiveness. Likewise, dominance is often met with subordination, and so on. This post-assault lens encourages self-destructive self and world-views, and skews future identity developments and interpersonal relationships. It begins when she first enters the military socialization process that is ‘training’. In order to become a ‘defender of freedom’ (Subcommittee, 2010), a person must be socialized in a way that causes him or her to redefine the self to such a degree that their own core values and language of internal rhetoric (self-talk) is fundamentally altered (Carlson, Stromwall, & Lietz, 2013). Leaders and peers evaluate recruits on their assimilation into military culture based on physical fitness and soldiering skill, yes. However, recruits are also evaluated on their ability to thoroughly espouse military behaviors and ideologies, such as the power of masculinity, the chain of command and core values, before graduating any level or rank throughout their training and continued military career (“*Army Leadership*”, 2012) (italics added for emphasis).

A hegemonic masculine ideology (Hope & Ericksen, 2008), is a belief system that promotes aggression, dominance, patriarchy, and often violence in order to achieve one’s goals and missions, and to maintain one’s standard of power. Considering the military’s ideology in this framework, one wonders about the role of women in such an organization.

Not coincidentally, the U.S. military has a long-standing history of being a man’s domain. The U.S. Army’s inception was 14 June 1775 (Titunik, 2000).

Yet, the Army did not become fully gender integrated (and some may reasonably argue it is still not) until June 1948, when President Harry Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act into law (Titunik, 2000). In 2013, the U.S. Department of Defense was still weighing the merits of officially allowing women to join direct combat military occupational specialties (MOS) outside of Air Defense Artillery (ADA). The reasons for not allowing women to serve in direct combat jobs are varied, but generally are fundamentally gendered arguments based more on patriarchal masculine attitudes than female Servicemembers' abilities ("Breaking the Ground Barrier", 2011).

Combat roles or not, women have been joining the regular (as in not a reserve or female only unit) military for just over six decades (Titunik, 2000). Even so, the military remains overtly masculine and imposes a form of hegemony that has gone relatively unchallenged for 239 years (Laster, 2013). This is largely in part because of the long-term institutionalization of patriarchy and masculinity during the first 173 years (Laster, 2013) before women were allowed to officially join the 'regular' army.

Given the military's history and primarily male population in modern-day active duty forces, it is not surprising that women only comprise about 14.6% (Turchik & Wilson, 2010) of the Armed Forces. Respectively, it is also not alarming that the prevalent ideology is masculine. Furthermore, considering the nature of discipline and socialization discussed earlier, it is not surprising that the masculine ideology is hegemonic. Therefore, women who join the U.S. armed forces step into world that is a closed institution that systemically subjugates and oppresses them (Williams & Bernstein, 2011) through hegemonic masculinity.

Typically, when a woman citizen becomes a female Soldier, for example, she assimilates as much as possible into the culture of being “one of the boys”, lest she be ridiculed and harassed as weak and overall ‘less than’ (Taber, 2005). To do this, many females in the military give in to the socialization practices of hazing, participating in gender specific joking and pranking (usually degrading to females), and taking on the masculine mantra “suck it up” as a response to challenges of any nature (Taber, 2005; Williams & Bernstein, 2011). To fit in, be accepted, and reduce risks inherent to being female (ranging from being treated as frail, to being teased and ostracized, to being looked over for promotion, to being sexually assaulted) in the military, these women adopt masculinity like a second skin (Taber, 2005). Not only do they face the physical challenge of performing their MOS duties on par with males, female service members often challenge themselves to meet the male physical fitness test standards (Haring, 2013). Women in the military assimilate the philosophies and literally walk the masculine walk and talk the masculine talk (Taber, 2005), or face daily abuse in some form.

A female’s role in the armed forces is especially paradoxical because of the nature of the military being a closed institution (Taber, 2005). Women are faced with the knowledge that they will never be accepted as would a male in this man’s world, yet simultaneously must live up to the expectation of keeping pace both physically and psychologically with the males. In other words, no matter how well female Servicemembers walk the walk and talk the talk of masculinity, they will never embody it. For example, if a female soldier steps over the boundaries of either gender performance expectation, acts too masculine or too feminine, she is ridiculed in some way (Taber, 2005; Williams & Bernstein, 2011).

Sometimes, that punishment is social shunning (e.g., being referred to as the unit's 'friendly port', or being openly targeted as the brunt of all jokes). Other times, the punishment is sexual harassment and/or assault.

There is a double standard of the female's role in our armed services.

Military functionality, especially during times of crisis and stress, relies on every soldier to know and execute his/her role, and to trust one another to espouse all training. Female Servicemembers play their role by adapting their beliefs and behavior in a way that supports and reinforces a military philosophy that emphasizes violence (Turchik & Wilson, 2010). The dominance through aggression that too often results in subordinating and victimizing women, as well as the perpetuation of marginalizing female Servicemembers, is where our military systemically fails all of its soldiers and all those it seeks to protect. Moreover, the perpetuated inherency of aggression, dominance, subordination, and victimization in military culture creates an additional power paradigm in which the victims are barred from their own agency of controlling their position, situation and situational responses, and even self-view (Taber, 2005). This is especially true for female victims, who must subordinate all aspects of their femininity in service to their country, in order to coexist with their male counterparts (Taber, 2005). Hegemonic military masculinity uniquely reifies an ideology of dominance, aggression and violence, due, at least in part, to the inherent role of these traits in accomplishing military missions and objectives, especially in times of war. Unfortunately, such reification of an aggressive and oppressive ideology can lead to sexual violence.

Acronym Soup: MSA, MST, and PTSD in Female Servicemembers

Military sexual assault violates military core values, and the spirit that embraces and represents them. Unfortunately, many mistake military sexual assault as an event that a victim learns to ‘get over’ or ‘let go of’. Nothing could be farther from the truth. One of the most profound results of military sexual assault is military sexual trauma (MST). There is no cure. There is only learning to forever negotiate symptoms and challenges.

To simplify the difference between MSA and MST, understand that military sexual assault is particularly marginalizing and victimizing to women because it imposes gender subordination and is considered a severe high-level trust betrayal act that invokes extreme and pro-longed perpetuated fear for one’s safety and life (Lutwak & Dill, 2013). The effects of military sexual assault result in what is termed military sexual trauma (MST), which anchors life-long post-traumatic-stress-disorder (PTSD). MST is the term used to describe the unique form of high-betrayal PTSD victims of MSA must negotiate for the rest of their lives. The Department of Veteran’s Affairs (VA) (2013) defines MST in their MST: General Fact Sheet as,

Any sexual activity where a Servicemember [sic] is involved against his or her will -- he or she may have been pressured into sexual activities (for example, with threats of negative consequences for refusing to be sexually cooperative or with implied better treatment in exchange for sex), may have been unable to consent to sexual activities (for example, when intoxicated), or may have been physically forced into sexual activities. Other experiences that fall into the category of MST include unwanted sexual touching or grabbing; threatening, offensive remarks about a person's body or sexual activities; and threatening and unwelcome sexual advances (all parentheticals part of original text).

In other words, once sexually assaulted by a fellow military member, victims, particularly women, are subject to enduring harsh psychological and physical health damages for the rest of their lives (Freedman, 2006; Valente, 2007; Subcommittee, 2010; Lutwak & Dill, 2013). Some of the damages include flashbacks, severe insomnia, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, major depressive disorder, memory loss, inability to control emotional responses to stress, feelings of unreasonable fear and anxiety, and unexpected lapses of reason, prolonged periods of confusion over relatively simple tasks and decisions, and suicidal inclinations (Freedman, 2006; Valente, 2007; Subcommittee, 2010; Lutwak & Dill, 2013).

To this extent, the hegemonic masculine ideology that encourages aggression and dominance, specifically sexual assault, has the potential to also severely and permanently impact female Servicemembers health and well being for the rest of her life. Sadly, both MSA and MST operate as a continuum of lived and re-lived experience that is too often misunderstood by many as a singular or series of events (Lutwak & Dill, 2013). Victims of MSA, then, can expect to need mental health care for a condition that has no cure (VA, 2013).

The Veteran's Health Administration (VHA) has rated PTSD as notably prevalent in female veteran military Servicemembers who have been sexually assaulted by another military member (Turchik & Wilson, 2010). Furthermore, studies done on behalf of the VA and reported in a Congressional joint hearing of the One Hundred Eleventh Congress (2nd Session) regarding military sexual trauma (2010) repeatedly report MSA to be one of the most severe traumas to trigger PTSD (in many reports, even more severe than combat related PTSD) (Kimerling, Gima, Smith, Street, & Frayne, 2010).

One study reveals that rape in the military can have deeper impacts than most non-military rapes because the victim faces continued forced “exposure and involvement with the perpetrator.” (Lutwak & Dill, 2013).

Additionally, military-on-military rape creates what is collectively called “high betrayal trauma” (Lutwak & Dill). High betrayal trauma is defined by Lutwak and Dill (2013) as, “trauma in which depended-upon-for-survival individuals harm or violate a dependent person, thus breaking the social agreement of trust.” This break of trust is exponentially far-reaching not only because the victim cannot escape the perpetrator on any level, but also because the victim of MST cannot align their reasonable and conditioned expectations with their personal reality (Lutwak and Dill, 2013). The impact of this is that Servicemembers who are raped or otherwise sexually assaulted by another Servicemember(s) experience “long-term and anguishing” devastation of their “well-being, self-concept, relationships, and views of the world” (Lutwak & Dill, 2013).

Military sexual assault violates military core values, and the spirit that embraces and represents them. As an MST victim explains in one study,

It is disconcerting to have somebody who is supposed to save your life, who has your back, turn on you and do something like that...you don't want to believe it's real. You don't want to have to deal with it. The family doesn't want to deal with it. Society doesn't want to deal with it. (Kappelman, 2011)

Unit cohesion and mission readiness are significant factors in why so many sexual assaults in the military go unreported. Many victims refuse to report military-on-military rape for fear of repercussions (Kimerling et al., 2010).

Often, females who report any level of sexual harassment or assault are singled out as troublemakers, liars, overly sexually promiscuous, and unpatriotic (Kimerling et al., 2010). Additionally, some studies have discovered that “unit cohesion may create environments where victims are strongly encouraged to keep silent about their experiences, have their reports ignored, or are blamed by others for the sexual assault.” (Kimerling et al., 2010) Together, these elements corrode not only the victim, the unit, and the mission, but also compromise the military institution and cohesion as a whole. This is an example of how organization trauma exacerbates experiences like MSA.

According to Hope and Ericksen (2009), organization traumas result from,

The multiple traumatic violations leading up to the sexualized act or acts of violence and those that follow the acts (...) Even though organization itself is not inert or concrete, the dominant discourses, culture, and practices in the military organization help create the mediums for traumatic violations to occur against women. (117)

When a female is raped in the military, she must face additional extreme stressors a civilian rape victim is far less likely to have to endure and more (Turchik & Wilson, 2010). In almost all cases, women in the military are sexually assaulted by someone in their own unit; typically someone who outranks victims (Turchik & Wilson, 2010). Furthermore, those sexually assaulted in the military by another military Servicemember must live, work, eat, and often sleep within the same work and billets environment as their attacker (“Healing Wounds”, 2010).

Unique to the military is the reliance on one another for everything from making sure paperwork is complete for issues like pay and rank, to saving one another’s life while under enemy fire.

A Servicemember must be able to trust her colleagues on and off the field, and must also be willing to save the lives of fellow Servicemembers (Hope & Ericksen, 2010). When a Servicemember is sexually assaulted by other military personnel, it is particularly devastating because the military institution and fellow Servicemembers define every fiber of one's existence (Hope & Ericksen, 2010). This is the framework one must know in order to fully comprehend my rhetorical analysis of my MSA experience narrative.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that MSA is not limited to a single act or event, but is a complex experience endured over time (Subcommittee, 2010). The ongoing nature of the MSA experience results in an equally ongoing impact (known as military sexual trauma) on a victim and his/her internal rhetoric. Such a continuous influence on internal discourse can cyclically shape and re-shape a victim's perceptions, including those relative to meaning and self and world-views. This continuously shifting rhetoric is how an MSA victim constructs convoluted and sometimes conflicting meanings that take shape symbolically through language. It is a vicious and confusing cycle that redefines how a victim processes information for the rest of their life (Williams & Bernstein, 2011).

Military recruits are trained and socialized to know and enact the military's hegemonic masculine ideology and its resulting value set. What is not as clearly understood, however, is that through embodying the seven core values, soldiers revoke their own agency, even if that agency is to do 'the right thing', especially if 'the right thing' in the soldier's perspective isn't what the military has in mind. Soldier's take on the duty of embodying military values, literally swearing an oath and signing a contract to realign their attitudes and behaviors to represent those of the military.

Eventually, some soldiers at least, embrace the socialization enough to enact military ideologies – whether the soldiers themselves avow them or not – and do so as if the value set were first nature, not second. In this way, the military’s hegemonic masculine ideology is reified for those who drank the proverbial Kool-Aid™. Finally, as a reward for their faithful demonstration of loyalty, soldiers are ascribed integrity by the institution, if not their peers. Theoretically, soldiers of integrity are respected and earn loyalty. They are thusly initiated into a self-feeding cycle that begins, ends, and begins anew with loyalty to the military’s hegemonic masculine ideology.

Ironically, embracing and adhering to this loyalty cycle ultimately revokes a soldier’s personal agency. By swearing to adopt military values and ideologies above all others, a Servicemember must sacrifice any of his or her own values that conflict with the organization’s (which is, also ironically, a prime example of enacting the Army Value of “Selfless Service”). It is this sacrifice that acts to remove a soldier’s agency. Sacrificing one’s own values to those of the military takes away control over choice to enact one’s own tenets, especially if personal values conflict with orders or a soldier’s duty to live the Army Values (“Soldier’s Guide”, 2009).

An eclipse of one value set over another impacts internal rhetoric just as it shapes the way a soldier speaks and acts. It is a lot like earning a formal academic education. The more we learn, the more differently we think, speak, and act. When trained, recruits are taught to act and think like a soldier (“Soldier’s Guide, 2009), to live within the boundaries of military ideologies, even if they are generated through hegemonic masculinity. This is necessary in order for typically non-violent people to follow orders, particularly orders to engage in aggressive and violent acts of war if necessary.

These processes of becoming and remaining a soldier are steeped in hegemonic masculinity that gets enacted and perpetuated through the loyalty cycle. In turn, the military's ideologies are reified over and over through time. The military is founded on an ideology of dominance, aggression, and violence over all masculinities seen as lesser or absent. This encourages violent acts like military sexual assault. Military sexual assault is a high-level betrayal act that confuses a victim's constructions of meaning. This convoluted lens of processing information impacts a victim's self and world-views, which further confuses interpretations.

Reflecting The Personal to Understand the Social

Autoethnographical research calls on the personal to help interpret and understand the social (Ellis, 2010). The subjective nature of using deeply personal narratives poses the danger of producing research that is so bias, it is not accepted by scholars as a legitimate contribution to a body of academic work. However, carefully executed with a lean towards theoretical analysis, subjective qualitative research of extremely personal and redefining experiences can allow scholars unique insights that otherwise might be overlooked.

The process of conducting this research has been rife with personal challenges. Immersing myself back into military mindsets and experiences triggered the worst of my own post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms time and time again, making negotiating the differences between now and then particularly painful and difficult. In addition to increased episodes of flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety attacks throughout the last year, this research has strained even my closest interpersonal relationships as well.

There are some in my inner circle who have been directly impacted by my research process, up to and including triggering the release of their repressed memories of military sexual assault and thus hurling them into delayed on-set PTSD. Such experiences and challenges are painful and confusing.

That being said, this research process has enlightened me, and some close to me, in ways that help heal and ultimately enrich our lives. The personal lessons I have learned from this research are many and varied. Some include:

1) My rape was not my fault. I am more than a survivor of rape. I am a victim of the U.S. military and its organization trauma. Though I still believe I am responsible for my own choices, those choices are not responsible for the betraying actions of the fellow soldiers I considered friends. I spent over a decade believing my rape was my fault because of the meanings I constructed about concepts like loyalty, duty, honor, etc. These meanings were shaped by military conditioning and warped by the high-level betrayals of my colleagues that violated the meanings I had constructed and come to expect.

2) The military really does 'brainwash' recruits, but it goes beyond preparing us to engage in war. The social conditioning of the military also acts to dominate and silence all forms of masculinity that are less than hegemonic, including the femininity inherent to female Servicemembers. Though I understand why some may consider this necessary for Servicemembers in order to conduct war, this oppression ultimately shifts the base level meanings of certain key concepts within the minds of Servicemembers, within my mind.

This shift of basic values and interpretations means my own understanding of the world and certain concepts like duty (responsibility), honor (accountability), and integrity (the right thing) changed through military socialization.

3) I am not a bad, stupid, or hurtful human. Rather, I avow these traits because of the internal shift of self-and world-views that was created through military conditioning. By this, I mean that I understand certain values (like those above) as prescribed by the military; values that were then violated by military sexual assault. The violation of meaning confused my understanding of concepts like responsibility and accountability, which feeds a cycle of guilt.

This impacts my interpersonal relationships, choices, and actions because many are equally cycled through self-reproach.

4) I often replace my agency with confused conceptions of duty. When I believed for over a decade that my rape was my fault, I also felt that I needed to protect my rapist and his accomplices because their need was greater than mine. This belief stemmed from an understanding garnered through avowing military values of rank. I believed my perpetrators needed to be protected because they were more important than me; they outranked me, were more vital to the unit than I, and were generally seen by me as simply 'more', 'stronger', 'better'. This urge to protect them over myself is a direct result of being acculturated into the military's hegemonic masculine ideology and core values, like selfless service.

Furthermore, a soldier's duty to protect and look out for others, as well as the avowal of values and rank, carried through transition into civilian life for me. Because of my convoluted post-trauma constructions of meaning for concepts like duty and selfless service, I often limit my agency in favor of living up to standards I impose in the name of others I believe to have more import than me.

5) I will never be cured of MST or free of its symptoms, and I am okay with that.

This process has taught me that MST does not have to define me.

Rather, I can now better understand how I define my past, present, and future. I have learned the root of my way of thinking, the way it has been maligned through traumatic high-level betrayals, and how to connect the dots between conflicting meanings. I may need to take a few extra minutes to cognitively process certain situations or occurrences, but this thesis research has taught me that meaning and language impact praxis. I can finally understand why I have bouts of unreasonable panic, fear, insecurity, doubt, etc. I can finally understand why I think and react the way I do about certain things. Knowing this helps me regain control of my emotional reactions, of my life. This arms me for a more confident, peaceful, fulfilling future self.

The military's masculine ideology shifts internal rhetoric and meaning for Servicemembers. The new meaning is steeped in military ideologies that espouse dominance, aggression, violence, and self-sacrifice. These values motivate the character of Servicemembers, which allows them to endure and enact the horrific traumas involved in war.

When the expectations of what these values mean are violated, as in the act of military-on-military rape, a Servicemember's avowed constructs of meaning that were based in military ideology get convoluted. My constructs of meaning have been convoluted, as have meaning constructions of other Servicemembers who have been traumatized by military experience in some way. In essence, I was trained to take responsibility, hold myself accountable, and do the right thing. Unfortunately, 'the right thing' in the military is to always put country, military, unit, and mission before self.

Implications for future research. Future qualitative, ethnographic, and autoethnographic critical scholarship into the intersections of the rhetoric of the military's hegemonic masculine ideology, military sexual assault, and the internal rhetoric of those who perpetrate and are victims of MSA could significantly benefit MSA victims, their caregivers and family members, military leaders, policy makers, and educators alike. Also, it is important to realize that Servicemembers eventually become citizens, and understanding how military experiences influence cognizance of meaning via internal rhetoric could help build better treatment models for military veterans who suffer service-connected mental illness.

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative scholarship into the emic military trauma survivor perspective offers a window of analysis into the very heart and soul of meaning construction in the military. Understanding how military rhetoric operates internally to shift a person's self and world-views can help treat veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, and could also help military leaders discover more effective and less hegemonic and harmful means of training our military.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is a need to research the rhetorical impacts of military trauma because eventually soldiers become citizens, and bring back into society with them their individual avowals of various military hegemonic masculine ideologies. Those who experience traumas like MSA also bring with them into society their redefined and confused constructions of meaning, and trauma-tainted self and world-views. Those views get shared and passed on to others. Views about duty and selfless service particularly can impact the transference of military beliefs to civilian values. There is an interesting area for research into the rhetorical juxtaposition of a hegemonic masculine military's value of selfless service and the enculturated characteristic of women to sacrifice their needs to the needs of others, for example. Building on this, future research can examine how military ideologies, and the internal rhetoric they create, extort and reify oppressive relative cultural beliefs. For instance, a trait taught to many women throughout the world is to sacrifice the self in care of others, especially men. Understanding the military's inherent rhetorical subjugation and perpetuation of violence against women might help scholars and military policy makers alike devise a new system that effectively utilizes diverse masculinities and femininities.

When I shared my hopes for future research possibilities with my MST social worker recently, she surprised me by warning that the danger of my claims is that anyone can interpret them to mean all blame rests on the military organization. I think she means that the inherent danger of lying blame at the military's feet entirely could cause anyone to excuse the choices and actions of perpetrators, as well as minimize the deeply personal nature of victims' experiences. Such a belief would be a double negative, justifying perpetrators and further silencing victims.

I have thought about this, am still thinking about it, and will probably think and worry about it for a very long time. I can understand her logic, and agree that my conclusions could be misinterpreted. So, how do I sleep at night with her warning weaving its way through my internal rhetoric, even asking myself why I would want to risk finishing this work and sending it 'out there' at all? I remember the dots this research has helped me to connect and simplify it, telling myself that at some point in time, choices and actions come to a crossroads with right and wrong. We teach our children how they should respond to these proverbial forks in the road in accordance with our own beliefs and practices. To wit, we define right and wrong for our children. Eventually children make choices about what is right and what is wrong, and how to respond when faced with either...choices that are influenced by what those little decision makers were taught by others. In the same vein, we are taught as children and into adulthood how to use language to symbolize and process everything around us, to describe what we sense, and communicate what we think and feel. Eventually, most of us talk to ourselves, and hopefully others. What we express internally and externally, however, is influenced again by what we were taught. This impact of how and what we are trained to do on what we eventually do transcends parenting. It is just as salient in military life and experiences. So, though I respect and understand my counselor's considerations, I can sleep a little better at night because I now more clearly understand the relationships between what the military taught me to value, what I experienced, and how it impacted my construction of meaning, my choices and internal rhetoric.

Also, writing this autoethnography of my experience as a military rape victim and its impact on my internal rhetoric as earned me a more scholarly understanding of a myriad of aspects of the military and my experiences within. The answer to why I would ever want to finish this and send it out there, is that hopefully at least one person might read this and sleep a little better at night too.

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