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UNDERSTANDING THE EFFICACY OF SUPERVISOR TO SUBORDINATE FEEDBACK OF MILITARY PERSONNEL - A QUALITATIVE STUDY

By

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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of individuals in a small sized military unit in regards to feedback. Specifically, the current perception of feedback from supervisors to employees was examined with focus on the areas of timeliness and effectiveness. The aim was to assess the effectiveness of the current supervisory feedback situation to determine whether or not feedback standards and expectations were being met. Where gaps in the existing feedback process were found, recommendations were given on how to improve. Using a phenomenological approach, the study consisted of interviewing unit members to determine the existence and potential effectiveness of feedback. The research study findings suggested that although there were some positive aspects of feedback within the unit, there were some gaps in areas as perceived by the study participants. Additionally, the results of this study have provided six major themes that supervisors may consider as important to subordinates. Supervisors should consider these themes in the future while formulating and providing feedback: strength/weakness identification, leadership development, frequency & timing, content, authenticity, and feedback method. As part of a plan for improving feedback, a six-prong approach was recommended. This included conducting workshops, having quarterly training, developing a roadmap, creating a tracking system, holding team building events, and allowing for and encouraging self-reflection. This study has provided awareness of both the positive and negative areas within the feedback situation as well as given insight for future supervisors within this organization as to how feedback should be conducted.
Dedication

This is dedicated to my mom, Erika Romero, and my Uncle, Dr. John “Johnny” Romero, who both passed away during my doctoral program. My mom provided unwavering support throughout my lifetime, no matter what I decided to do. I could always look to her for encouragement. My Uncle Johnny was a role model, as he was the first of my relatives to get a doctorate degree. He was very supportive during my doctoral journey and provided much guidance to me up until his passing. I know that both of you are up in Heaven beaming with pride over my accomplishments.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Background

There are many factors that contribute to the success of an organization accomplishing its mission. Arguably, the most important factor is the effective management and utilization of the organization’s greatest asset—its employees. As part of this, an effective performance management system, including providing candid and constructive feedback, can help individuals maximize their performance and success in the workplace ("Issues Related to Poor Performers," 2005). Feedback, which is both a process and information regarding a perception to a person’s performance, is an important aspect within the leadership and management aspects of an organization’s supervision structure. Employees at all levels, from brand new college interns working in their first job to corporate Chief Executive Officers (CEO), have some type of oversight by a supervisory individual or body. Unfortunately, not all supervisors receive training on how to be an effective manager of their employees. Part of this includes feedback. In an era of increased competition, diminishing budgets, and increased financial pressure, proper mechanisms to recruit and retain productive and happy workers can be critical for organizations. This Dissertation in Practice looked at the efficacy in the timing and effectiveness of feedback from supervisors to subordinates in a small military unit in the midwestern United States.

Statement of the Problem

The focus of this research was on feedback between supervisors and subordinates in a small military unit. The unit had a structure in place, providing a supervisory chain of command for a variety of functions, to include performance reviews, feedback
sessions, promotions, disciplinary matters, and a wide variety of administrative tasks. The research focused on the timeliness of feedback and the perception of feedback effectiveness. Specific areas of interest included: whether feedback was being provided at all, an assessment of whether provided feedback met the prescribed timing and content dictated by military regulations/instructions, as well as whether existing feedback followed generally accepted organizational recommendations of what feedback should be, to include what the military prescribes.

The population affected was the approximately 80-person military unit being studied. Although the unit had an administrative structure in place, unit members were often not collocated with their supervisors. Each Air National Guard member, except for a small group of staff members, were geographically separated and integrated around the active duty Air Force base. Often an individual unit member was the only Air National Guard member in the respective workplace, working side-by-side with mainly active duty Air Force personnel, who did not fall into the administrative or leadership structure of the member. There were often long periods (days, weeks, months) where the Air National Guard unit members did not see their actual supervisors, although they could communicate via email, phone, text message, or other mechanism.

The researcher analyzed whether feedback standards and expectations were being met and offers a plan for improvement in cases where needed. In cases where the minimum threshold for feedback effectiveness was not happening, an improvement plan was recommended. Although this study focused on a military unit, it is hoped that the topic of feedback efficacy can contribute to the greater field of feedback and supervisory practices within many organizations.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the feedback landscape (amount, mechanism, and efficacy) for individuals of a small sized military unit in the Midwest, using a qualitative research method.

Research Question

What is the current perception of feedback from supervisors to employees in a small midwestern military unit, and is that feedback timely and effective?

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the current supervisory feedback situation in the aforementioned military unit. Where gaps were found, recommendations were provided on how to improve. It is the hope that the commanders will take these recommendations, where applicable, to create a local policy to supplement the existing Air Force and Air National Guard regulations as well as a training program, where needed.

Methodology Overview

This Dissertation in Practice examined a small military unit geographically dispersed around an active duty Air Force base. The qualitative study consisted of interviewing unit members to determine the existence and potential effectiveness of feedback from supervisors to subordinates. The rationale behind this was that timely and effective feedback are critical elements of a supervisor’s responsibilities that can lead to greater employee effectiveness and happiness.
Rationale for Qualitative Study

Qualitative research was a good fit for this study because no numerical data were needed and lived experiences were used. Although critics note that this method is subjective, McLean, Jensen, and Hurd (2007) argued that it follows a strong methodology for this type of research. Additionally, Baxter and Jack (2008) noted that the qualitative research methodology allows researchers to study complex problems within their contexts. Qualitative research lends itself to the study of subjects in their natural setting while allowing the researcher to place themselves into that world to gain knowledge of that environment. They use that information to bring meaning and use this knowledge to transform the world (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Qualitative research is beneficial because the research being conducted takes place in its natural setting. Data is collected where it happens, not in a controlled environment such as a laboratory. Patton (2015) noted that qualitative research’s purpose is to understand situations in their own particular context and with their own interactions. Creswell (2013) additionally pointed out that the researcher needs to keep focused on the meaning that the study participants experience about the issues at hand, not the meaning that researchers bring to the research through the literature.

Rationale for Phenomenological Study

The research approach employed was the phenomenological approach. Natanson (1973) described any project currently underway “phenomenology.” Phenomenology involves the use of rich description and the analysis of lived experience. It also embraces the truth of an event and portrays it through embodied perception. Meaning is created through this experience (Starks & Brown-Trinidad, 2007). Moustakas (1994) said,
“Phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge” (p. 26).

As noted by Morse and Richards (2013), there are two major assumptions that inspire phenomenology. The first is that perceptions of the world are given to the researcher as they are lived, not how they are thought to be. Additionally, people can only be understood in their own context.

This study was to gather perceptions and perspectives from military members as they relate to feedback received from their supervisors. Qualitative research utilizing a phenomenological method was the most beneficial way of accomplishing this goal. This approach entailed studying a project that is currently underway. The project, in this case, was the feedback being given (or not given) by supervisors to their subordinates in the aforementioned Air National Guard unit. This approach was based on describing what all participants had in common on a topic. It was also to determine, as a whole, whether members of the unit were receiving feedback. Further, a goal was to identify what type of feedback was being given and at what frequency. In addition, an objective was to discover and describe whether that feedback was appropriate, and if not, recommendations were given on training supervisors on how to give proper feedback.

The top commander had already stated that he believed feedback was currently a problem in the unit, so the goal was to verify whether this was correct, as well as to discover and find specific details on the problem. Additionally, where problems existed it was deemed necessary to come up with a solution, to include developing or increasing training.

In this case, the overall big picture of feedback was looked at. The assumption was that there were some supervisors who did give appropriate and timely feedback and
that this was helping the military members’ productivity and growth. Any instance that
was not the norm was considered an outlier. The overarching idea was to find out what
members have universally experienced. A phenomenological approach deals with a
heterogeneous group of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon, which fits
this scenario very well. Military units pride themselves on some sort of standardization,
and it was determined that there is not much standardization on feedback. Part of the
goal was not to develop exact prescribed feedback sessions at predetermined intervals,
but to determine at least some minimum standard to achieve.

Using a phenomenological approach gives the option, according to Creswell
(2013), to bracket the researcher out of the study by discussing personal experiences with
the phenomenon. This means researchers could choose to use themselves or not use
themselves as part of the study. In this case, to be more effective and appropriate, the
researcher set aside his own experiences so the focus could solely be on the experiences
of the participants.

A defining characteristic of a phenomenological approach is it ends with a
descriptive passage that discusses the essence of the experience for individuals
incorporating what they have experienced and how they experienced it (Creswell, 2013).
This methodology fit exactly with the original research plan.

Creswell (2013) noted that the data collection procedure for a phenomenological
approach typically involves interviewing individuals who have experienced the
phenomenon. Further, the data analysis stage must follow systematic procedures that
move from the narrow units of analysis on to broader units and then on to detailed
descriptions. These descriptions summarize two elements: “what” individuals have
experienced and “how” they have experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). The best approach was to interview people within the Air National Guard unit. By virtue of the topic, everybody in the unit had experienced the phenomenon in some way. Each person either had received no feedback, some feedback that was not timely or effective, or perfectly effective and timely feedback. This opened up the target audience to virtually anybody within the unit.

In-depth and multiple interviews were conducted with participants, which is what Creswell (2013) prescribed for this type of approach. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that sampling needs to be purposeful and based on the assumption that the researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain insight. Therefore, the researcher must select a sample from which the most can be learned.

During the data collection interviews, it was discussed with participants what type of feedback they have received within the past two years. The researcher asked whether the feedback was verbal or written or if the supervisor used some other mechanism. The timeframe of each piece of feedback will also be discussed, to include the interval between feedback sessions. Individuals were also asked if they believed that the feedback was effective and if the interval between feedback sessions was appropriate. It was also important to get a feel for whether the feedback given was able to be digested and applied, and whether it contributed towards a positive outcome.

Although phenomenological approaches focus mainly on interviews, they do allow for other methods as well, such as documentation or observation. In this particular case, it was determined not only to be too intrusive to look at documentation, but also documentation would not exist in cases where there was no feedback. Supervisors would
not have necessarily wanted the researcher to look at private feedback documentation between them and their subordinates. Additionally, the Air Force and Air National Guard did not prescribe any specific mandatory documentation method. They did suggest an Air Force form that can make it easy for a supervisor to give feedback, but it was not mandatory to use. In cases where feedback was not given at all or often enough, the amount of documentation would even be less. Observation is not a reliable method in this case since the researcher would not typically see supervisors give feedback to unit members. Feedback is often done in private, and outsiders would not be welcome to observe. Due to this, interviews were the primary data collection method.

**Definition of Relevant Terms**

There are a number of terms, particularly terms common to the U.S. Air Force, that may be unfamiliar to civilian personnel and even to members of other services. The following terms were used specifically for this qualitative study:

*Active Duty:* Full-time service in the Air Force component of the armed forces. This is often distinguished from the Reserve components of the military as described below.

*Air Force Base:* A physical installation (location) where Air Force members and equipment are located and often operate out of.

*Air National Guard:* One of two Reserve components of the military. This component supplements the active duty component described above and consists of full-time and part-time (traditional) Air National Guard members.

*Chain of Command:* An official hierarchy of authority that dictates who is in charge of whom and of to whom permission must be asked.
Guard Drill: A training period for Air National Guard members, often occurring one-weekend per month.

Member: Someone who serves in the armed forces. Often referred to as a military member.

Military Unit: An organization of a variety of sizes within the overall military organizational structure.

Radical Candor: A technique whereby a supervisor is blunt and challenging, yet cares personally for the subordinate.

Rank: A hierarchical designation that defines authority and responsibility within a military hierarchy.

Ratee: A person who receives a rating, to include a performance review.

Regulation/Instruction: A set of military laws and procedures that dictate how operations and jobs are to be operated. Traditionally, these are called “regulations,” although officially the Air Force now calls them instructions.”

Reserve Component: Consists of the Air National Guard as well as Air Force Reserves, which are the two Reserve Components of the U.S. Air Force as a whole.

Traditional Air National Guard member: A part-time member of the Air National Guard.

Assumptions

Gelo and Carlo (2012) noted in qualitative research, the researcher makes assumptions regarding methodological choices and arguments. Additionally, we all make unproven assumptions about reality. As a former member of this military unit, the researcher brings some assumptions to his research. The researcher understands that each
person’s experiences, including his own, stand alone, and there is a supposition that they are different.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

Bryant (2004) defined delimitations as factors that would prevent the study’s findings from being true for everyone, always, and everywhere. Further, a limitation is defined as a feature of a study that may negatively affect the results or the ability to generalize (Roberts, 2010). These are factors in the study and are out of the researcher’s control. One limitation was that a sample of convenience was used, as opposed to a random sample. In other words, certain individuals were interviewed based on their current schedule, they were deployed at the time of the interviews, and their willingness to be interviewed. Therefore, the sample was not random.

Purposeful sampling has been described by Patton (2015) as:

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations. (p. 230)

Another limitation was time. The study was conducted over a certain period of time. It was a snapshot dependent on conditions that occurred during that period. This supposes that the snapshots in time were indicative and representative of the feedback picture that existed at the time. Recency of data was important, so data were “fresh,” and a two-year timeframe was chosen to give a long enough period to analyze.
Delimitations are those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study, and they are in the researcher’s control (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). The first delimitation was the choice of the problem itself. The researcher could have chosen to expand the research into discussing whether the unit members felt “engaged” based on feedback received. The researcher could have also looked at supervisors as a whole and study whether their direction, style, mannerisms, personality, and leadership type have an effect on unit members. The scope also could have expanded to include all of the Nebraska Air National Guard, all of the Air Force, or all of the military. Both of these delimitations were set in place to narrow the scope of the research to a manageable sample. It would have been extremely unwieldy and have taken too many years, and it would have been difficult to expand into other areas outside of the decided scope of this study.

Due to this research being completed in a military unit, one delimitation was that the results of the study may not apply to civilian organizations. Since there generally is not anything unique in military vs. civilian performance feedback, it is the hope that this delimitation will be insignificant. Organization size can be another delimitation factor. This study focused on a group of 80 military members. Along the entire spectrum of size in both military and civilian organizations, only a small percentage would fit into this approximate size. However, the individual element of one supervisor dealing with one subordinate would stay constant no matter how large or small the organization. The final delimitation is that this study looked at personnel who are not physically located with their supervisors. This could contribute to less or more feedback (most likely less) than situations where the supervisor and employee work close to each other. However, with
the advent of telecommuters and greater geographic responsibilities for some supervisors, the results of this study have the potential to be overcome this delimitation in a number of situations.

Any study has limitations, and this one was no exception. The plan was to solicit volunteers who were willing to be interviewed. There is a chance that a small number of people did not volunteer. This could have been due to them not being comfortable speaking to somebody of a much higher rank, or fear that supervisors could potentially find out about any negative remarks. This was mitigated by ensuring all participants that their responses were completely confidential, that their names would not be associated with interviews, and the recordings and transcripts would be confidential. The participants were interviewed away from the workplace in a private setting so the chance of a supervisor seeing the subordinate being interviewed was virtually eliminated. The difference in rank, theoretically, could have been an issue, although the researcher believes that was overcome in most or all cases. The researcher had been in the military unit for over 12 years and had knew most unit members. Most knew the researcher as an approachable, trustworthy individual. Over the years the researcher had welcomed new members of all ranks and tried to make them comfortable. Without realizing it at the time, this helped mitigate the former limitation mentioned above.

**Leader’s Role and Responsibility in Relation to the Problem**

Feedback is an inherent part of leadership, management, and organizational behavior. Xiaoyan and Jing (2016) not only noted that over the past three decades there has been an increasing interest in employees seeking feedback in the workplace, but also that feedback has great benefits. They quoted several studies that suggested that
employees seeking feedback has become critical for managers and has great benefits for all involved. This shows that the topic of feedback is as important as ever and wherever feedback is lacking, these benefits are also missing or at least hindered.

An article that reaffirms the importance of feedback from leaders deals with teachers. The authors focused on feedback for teachers in a variety of fields. Kilbourn, Keating, Murray, and Ross (2005) mentioned that feedback in the education field has a rocky history, at best. They noted that beginning teachers find that the amount and quality of feedback given to them was less than they had hoped. Associate teachers find that schedules and daily pressures do not leave much time for feedback. Veteran teachers support the idea of receiving feedback but typically do not welcome the actual practice of it (Kilbourn et al., 2005). In my years of teaching, years in the military, and years in other jobs, I have witnessed the rarity of feedback and have heard from others who confirm that it is rare. Many would feel somewhat like the veteran teachers mentioned above, since they do think that feedback is valuable, but they prefer to not have to be monitored in order to get feedback. I believe deep down none of us really wants to have somebody monitor us at work even though we all realize the importance of it.

The Environmental Health Department in the city of Plano, Texas, is one of many examples of an organization where a concerted effort at better feedback became a strong and successful step. They designed and implemented an improved feedback system and found that it affected positive change in the morale, attitude, and behaviors of managers as well as employees. It also served to create a team-oriented and participatory style of management that prioritized and valued input from employees to rate each manager’s success (Collins, 2002).
Different aspects of leadership and management, to include feedback, have wider implications than many would realize. According to Diego Montano (2015), supervisor behavior, including feedback, has an impact on employees’ health. He gave an example of how destructive leadership, which is when a leader violates social norms and shows aggressiveness, may represent a serious occupational hazard for several health-related outcomes. The author pointed out an important fact, which is that followers are not passive components of the leader-follower relationship. In other words, the follower can help impact the feedback loop and contribute to better health as well. In particular, the health-related aspects that can be affected are follower affectivity, stress, and well-being.

In the not so distant past, most in the workplace received feedback only once a year during performance reviews. Times have changed, and the practice of once-a-year feedback does not have a place in the modern workplace (Zabriskie, 2018). In the past, supervisors gave more frequent feedback to poor performers than good ones (Hobson, 1986). Frequent feedback, particularly if it is favorable, has been shown to be directly related to lower turnover in the workplace (Van Waeyenberg, Decramer, & Anseel, 2015). As noted by Merritt, Noble, Prochazka, Aagaard, and Stickrath (2017), providing real-time feedback can guide the development of not only subordinates, but supervisors as well.

Feedback is an essential component and instrument of learning in many professions. It is integral to the learning process in fields such as music, drama, sports, literature, and other fields with apprenticeships (Kilbourn et al., 2005). An example is in a clinical setting. The effectiveness of workplace learning is not always optimal, and feedback often occurs infrequently during clinical learning environments. Additionally,
there is often a lack of continuity in training in this career field, which can lessen the amount of and opportunity for feedback (Daelmans et al., 2006).

An interesting area within the broader topic of leadership is employee engagement. Some common themes that come from engagement are satisfaction with work, pride in the employer, belief in what the employees do, perception that the employer values the employee, and the willingness of the employee to go the extra mile (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Balakrishnan, Masthan, and Chandra (2013) noted that employee engagement leads to better employee retention. According to Samuel and Chipunza (2009), employee retention has been a serious concern to managers due to an ever-increasing rate of employee turnover. Loss of personnel means that organizations must pay money to recruit, hire, and train new employees. New employees generally come in at a far lesser experience level than the people who left. Additionally, management in many organizations is driven by claims that employee engagement drives bottom-line results (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

**Significance of the Study**

Feedback between supervisors and subordinates has been shown to be an important factor in the workplace. Feedback from supervisors is one variable that has a significant impact on employees’ behavior in competitive work environments. Having a supervisor who gives feedback and has a supportive supervisory style can have positive effects on organizational outcomes (Noefer, Stegmaier, Molter, & Sonntag, 2009). The lack of feedback between supervisors and subordinates has the opposite effect. If employees do not receive feedback, behavior can be negative. Similarly, negative effects can occur for organizational outcomes when there is no feedback loop present. In a study
about easy, difficult, or no feedback, Hoffman, Hill, Holmes, and Freitas (2005) noted that all types of feedback were given when the supervisor was open to it. When no feedback was provided, it had negative effects for the subordinate in personal as well as professional areas.

This study aimed to look at one organization and showed whether feedback was being given effectively and in a timely manner between supervisors and subordinates within that organization. Any deficiencies that existed were identified, and a corrective plan of action was recommended to help the unit develop in a positive manner. Employees need to know how to improve in order to become more productive and contribute to the organization.

A direct link exists between employees who seek feedback from supervisors and participative decision-making. Further, participative decision-making can serve as a management tool to stimulate, encourage, and foster employees’ feedback seeking behavior (Xiaoyan & Jing, 2016). Feedback not only enhances the trainee-supervisor relationship, but it also increases teachers’ satisfaction with their role (Chur-Hansen & McLean, 2006). British researchers found that positive feedback increased Senior House Officers’ confidence and decreased their stress levels (Baldwin & Newton, 1997).

The results gathered during this study may be applicable to a wide variety of organizations. Although this particular unit is small (80 personnel), the feedback itself is always between a supervisor and employee. Similar supervisor/employee relationships exist in a wide variety of organizations, no matter what the size.

Writing this Dissertation in Practice allowed me to improve what I found to be a needed improvement within an organization. Through more effective aspects of
leadership, such as employee feedback, strides can be made to make the organization as productive as possible.

**Summary**

This study looked at feedback standards and expectations in a small military organization in the midwestern United States. Items such as feedback timeliness, effectiveness, and perception were looked at and compared with industry and military standards to decide whether supervisors within the organization were hitting or missing the target. An improvement plan was developed for the organization based on any deficiencies and room for improvement was noted.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Feedback from a supervisor is something many employees feel they are deprived of, yet is important for the well-being and performance of the individual (Saari & Judge, 2004). Additionally, quality feedback can pay dividends for the organization because individuals who regularly receive feedback feel more engaged and are more likely to have increased performance that ultimately will help the organization (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2017). The following literature review presents findings of the importance of feedback in the workplace, findings of the impact of the lack of feedback in the workplace, and discusses how effective and timely feedback to employees can increase engagement, which can encourage more participative decision-making from each employee (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2017).

Importance of Feedback in the Workplace

Feedback has been shown to be an important factor in the workplace. It is an essential component and instrument of learning in many professions (Kilbourn et al., 2005). It is integral and visible in fields such as music, drama, sports, literature, and other fields as well (Kilbourn et al., 2005). A link has been shown between participative decision-making and employees’ feedback seeking from supervisors. Participative decision-making has been positively associated with employees seeking feedback from supervisors (Li & Qian, 2016). Results suggest that this can serve as a management tool to stimulate, encourage, and foster employees’ feedback-seeking behavior (Xiaoyan & Jing, 2016). According to Hodge (2013), feedback is important for both individual and organizational success. Additionally, opening up more communication through feedback
contributes positively to employees’ job satisfaction, productivity, performance, and communication. All of this results in less of a feedback gap between supervisor and employee.

The Air Force as an organization believes that feedback is important. The Air Force regulation governing performance evaluations and feedback first specifies that the supervisor is to “effectively communicate performance standards and expectations and feedback on how those standards and expectations are being upheld” (Fedrigo, 2019, p. 9). Besides the required feedback, according to Air Force regulation AFI36-2406, a ratee can request feedback from a supervisor at any time, and it must be provided within 30 days of the request.

Research shows that feedback is just as crucial as supervision. Additionally, in order to progressively improve performance, feedback must be an essential part of the performance assessment loop (Sergeant, Bruce, & Campbell, 2013). In a number of studies aggregated by Veloski, Boex, Grasberger, Evans, and Wolfson (2006), formal feedback was shown to have positive effects on performance. It is even recommended that supervisors receive professional development in the area of feedback in order to become a more effective supervisor. This includes developing skills in providing high quality and honest feedback, particularly when working with poor performers (Hamdy, 2009).

Brooks et al. (2019) showed that positive verbal feedback about task performance was helpful in performing moderately better on tasks. They also noted that their results matched similar research in the area of physiological and psychological positive responses. Positive feedback was shown in both self-reports as well as physiological
measures (heart rate variability and salivary response, as two examples) to evoke positive outcomes. One such outcome is to positively influence the efficacy of the task at hand.

Feedback from supervisors is one variable that has a significant impact on employees’ behavior in competitive work environments. Additionally, a supportive supervisory style can have positive effects on different organizational outcomes. Supportive supervisors are those who show concern for employees’ feelings, encourage them to voice concerns, provide positive and mostly informational feedback, and foster skill development. Employees who felt valued by the organization had a higher affective attachment that led to proactive behavior in the workplace. Employees profited from supervisor support as it helped them with high self-efficacy beliefs to accomplish organizational goals.

One study on supervisory feedback showed that there was a positive correlation between a supportive, non-controlling feedback style and employees’ creative performance (Noefer et al., 2009). In this study, employees who felt valued by the organization displayed higher affective attachment that led to the generation of new ideas in the workplace. In another study, which was specifically designed to examine the influence of feedback on employee job performance, Guo, Liao, Liao, & Zhang (2014) found that feedback had a significant positive effect on both intrinsic motivation as well as job performance. That intrinsic motivation had a significant positive relationship to performance on the job.

The significance of feedback has been studied and shown to be important when given to students and trainees. One example is the shift of emphasis from summative assessment – specifically, certifying exams at the end of training – towards formative
assessment throughout the training period (feedback). These changes have led to a push for more efficient postgraduate training and for transparent, credible assessment (Dijksterhuis, Schuwirth, Braat, Teunissen, & Scheele, 2013). Formative feedback is an essential part of the supervisor’s role as described by Chur-Hansen and McLean (2006) in medical education literature, as just one example.

In a study designed to explore how the supervisor feedback environment influenced employee deviance and employee stress, researchers found that when employees perceived an appropriate supervisor-provided feedback environment, their deviance was suppressed (Peng, Tseng, & Lee, 2011). Therefore, to decrease poor behavior, organizations should promote an environment where supervisors are encouraged to improve their knowledge and execution of feedback to subordinates.

**Implications of Poor Feedback**

Poor or no feedback to employees has been generally accepted as a factor in decreasing performance in an employee, or at least in not improving performance. Poor performance and engagement in employees lead to a higher turnover rate when compared to situations when employees feel actively engaged and are performing at high levels. This turnover rate can represent a significant cost to an organization, to even challenge the sustainability of an organization over time (Selden & Sowa, 2015). Focusing on and improving situations that lead to high employee turnover can pay great dividends to the organization itself, as well as each individual who benefits directly from it.

Despite the well-documented advantages of effective feedback improving the quality of employees’ performance in the workplace, Latting (1992) noted that ineffective feedback in the workplace is still the norm. The author recommended that supervisors
receive training in the following areas: (a) deciding whether to give corrective feedback, (b) deciding what to say when giving feedback, (c) deciding how and when to give the feedback, and (d) deciding how to handle the receiver’s response.

Lack of Feedback in the Workplace

A lack of feedback can present multiple problems. If supervisors do not pay attention to developing employees’ sense of psychological ownership, feedback-seeking behaviors will not be present (Xiaoyan & Jing, 2016). Feedback is supposed to be a means of induction and improvement, but traditionally, feedback in teaching has been rocky at best. Newer employees found that the amount and quality of feedback was less than they had hoped for. The supervisors in this case found their hurried schedules and daily pressures did not allow time for giving feedback. The long-term employees supported the idea of feedback but seldom welcomed the practice of it (Kilbourn et al., 2005).

Despite the importance of formative feedback to students and trainees being known and documented, very often these trainees did not receive adequate feedback. A recurring theme in site accreditation visits is trainee complaints about not receiving feedback on their daily functioning. Supervisors often feel uncomfortable providing formative feedback. They may feel it is not their place, that they are being critical, and that feedback may damage the student-teacher/trainee-supervisor relationship (Chur-Hansen & McLean, 2006).

Willems, Monten, and Portzky (2018) looked at previous research dealing with employee burnout. They found that the main positive stressors include receiving feedback from a supervisor. One of the main negative stressors is lack of feedback.
They suggested the allocation of resources to improve supervisors’ skills, to include providing social support as well as improving feedback methods and recognition.

**Increase in Satisfaction and Engagement in Workers**

Participative decision-making refers to the opportunity for an individual employee to provide input into the decision-making process and to exercise control over matters related to work. Through this process, influence and power are shared among individuals who are otherwise hierarchically unequal in the workplace. The employee’s concern about job performance is the fundamental motive that could drive feedback-seeking behavior. When employees perceive ownership of their jobs, they tend to exert effort to engage in the job and are more willing to seek feedback more frequently (Xiaoyan & Jing, 2016).

Constructive feedback concretely helps the teacher assume an attitude of inquiry in monitoring his or her own pedagogical practice. Constructive feedback is not just giving advice. Rather, its goal is to adopt the view of the teacher to examine his or her own teaching (Kilbourn et al., 2005). Three higher order themes emerged that explain the level of active engagement in formative assessment by trainees or supervisors: individual perspectives on feedback, supportiveness of the learning environment, and credibility of feedback or feedback giver. Long-term commitment between trainees and supervisors is a pre-requisite for a genuine impact of assessment for learning (Dijksterhuis et al., 2013).

Researchers pointed out that providing formative feedback enhances the trainee-supervisor relationship and increases a teacher’s satisfaction with their role. A British study found that positive feedback increased Senior House Officers’ confidence and
decreased their subjective stress (Chur-Hansen & McLean, 2006). One study examined feedback in a large organization, the Department of Veteran’s Affairs, and found that higher employee engagement can come at no additional workplace costs. Better relationships and feedback between employees can lead to higher employee satisfaction and engagement, less burnout, and lower turnover among staff. A subsequent study conducted in 2018-2019 came to the same conclusion based on interviewing executive leaders (Derickson, Yanchus, Bashore, & Osatuke, 2019). The researchers in this study all described that the use of employee feedback contributed to the highest improvement ratings over the two year period.

One method that has come into favor is coaching in the workplace, which is an overt style of periodic feedback designed to increase employee effectiveness and productivity. Specifically, it refers to a variety of one-on-one development activities. Jones, Woods, and Guillaume (2015) conducted a study that attempted to synthesize the existing research on workplace coaching. In the past, coaching has been often perceived as a development activity for those at the executive level within an organization. This study showed that coaching should not be limited to only executives or even just managers. They found that coaching was extremely effective when conducted by internal coaches as well as when feedback comes from a single source. Their meta-analysis supported this practice as an approach to employee learning and development within organizations. One of the most prevalent types of internal coaches is the employee’s supervisor, so this shows that using coaching as a type of feedback mechanism can positively affect the employee.
It is important to note that the assumption that a positive feedback environment is always beneficial for the well-being and performance of an employee may be flawed. Gabriel, Frantz, Levy, and Hilliard (2014) discussed that there also needs to be a look at boundary conditions, such as the disposition of the employee, that could have an effect on the outcome of the feedback. Gabriel et al. (2014) showed that there can be some cases where employees will have a beneficial feedback environment if they are favorably oriented towards receiving feedback. Likewise, feedback may be less beneficial for those who are not receptive and do not want to receive feedback.

**Perspective on Feedback from Supervisors and Subordinates**

Through the development of employees’ feelings of ownership toward their jobs, participative decision-making can awaken and foster feedback-seeking behaviors. The perception of psychological ownership will mediate in the association between participative decision-making and employees’ feedback seeking (Xiaoyan & Jing, 2016).

Constructive feedback can be difficult to learn and conduct. Despite difficulties, an approach to feedback that emphasizes inquiry into professional practice for both the teacher and the observer is a significant step towards the understanding and improvement of constructive feedback, and ultimately the understanding and improvement of teaching (Kilbourn et al., 2005). In a study regarding feedback as part of workplace-based assessment, the researchers noted that feedback is of great benefit to employees with three stipulations: (a) both observation and feedback were planned ahead of time by the trainee and trainer; (b) the delivery, as well as the content, must be adequate; (c), and the employees actually use the feedback received to guide their growth and learning by linking it to their goals. It is interesting to note that this study found that some employees
purposefully avoided observation, while other employees overcame their trepidation and actively sought feedback. With some work, the supervisors were able to help the latter employees overcome their fears (Pelgrim, Kramer, Mokkink, & van der Vleuten, 2012).

Employees who felt valued by the organization had a higher affective attachment that led to proactive behavior in the workplace (Noefer et al., 2009). Not all feedback automatically translated into learning, however. The credibility of the feedback, as well as the feedback giver, were both important. When these were not credible enough, feedback was often rejected and did not result in the intended learning. Lack of credibility could be due to no authenticity and whether feedback can be judged against a clear and well-accepted standard. Personality traits and feedback strategies were other important determinants of the credibility of supervisors. Feedback from supervisors who were perceived as role models, well-respected, enthusiastic about their chosen specialization, and encouraging to trainees was highly valued (Dijksterhuis et al., 2013).

There has been a shift towards more formative assessment aimed at steering and fostering trainee learning over the training period. The driving forces behind this shift are the fragmentation of postgraduate training due to reduced working hours, increased part-time staff, and sub-specialization (Dijksterhuis et al., 2013). An example of where supervision and feedback have been major focuses is in the new Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists Training and Assessment Regulations. Mechanisms to ensure feedback is given to trainees have been instituted due to the realization of the importance and positive effects of feedback (Chur-Hansen & McLean, 2006).
This literature review summarized the research on feedback in the workplace, considering its importance and positive effects. Feedback from a supervisor has been shown to have extreme importance. Those who received feedback are more engaged and subsequently help the workplace more. Employees who felt valued and had supportive supervisors were shown to have more proactive behavior in the workplace. There are many professions where feedback has been shown to be an important mechanism for learning. Teaching and fields with apprenticeships are just two examples.

Besides not allowing for the positive effects in the workplace, a lack of feedback can also present multiple problems. Feedback is supposed to be a means of improvement, and without it, employees have more difficulties. There are many areas and studies that show that trainees do not receive adequate feedback for multiple reasons, including supervisors having difficulty in presenting it. If employees are expected to be productive members of their organization, feedback should be part of their routine work lives. Supervisors should want employees to show ownership of their jobs and exhibit feedback-seeking behavior. This, in turn, will benefit the organization.

**Summary**

Knowing that feedback is important in the workplace makes this study an important one for the education of supervisors regarding giving effective feedback to subordinates, which has multiple benefits, such as increased employee productivity, more job satisfaction, and improved retention. As previously discussed, employees are more valuable to the organization when they feel valued by their supervisors and the organizational hierarchy.
CHAPTER THREE: PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the feedback landscape (amount, mechanism, and efficacy) for individuals in a small-sized military unit in the Midwest, using a qualitative research method.

Research Question

What is the current perception of feedback from supervisors to employees in a small Air National Guard unit, and is that feedback timely and effective?

Research Design

This study used a qualitative design in order to maximize the richness of the answers provided by participants. This allowed the researcher to understand the complete feedback picture between supervisors and subordinates in the organization, highlight any deficiencies, and develop a plan of action for improvement in any deficient areas. Additionally, using this design allowed the researcher to adapt the questions throughout the data collection period, as needed. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) defined this type of research design as “a bundle of skills, assumptions, and practices that researchers employ as they move from their paradigm to the empirical world” (p. 14). This strategy steered the researcher’s choice of methodology, data collection, and analysis.

Participants/Data Sources

Participants were recruited from within the organization studied, which was a military installation located in the midwestern United States. Purposeful sampling was used to select each person, and interviews were performed until data saturation was reached. Morse (2015) noted that data saturation is the most frequently touted assurance
of rigor in qualitative research. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) said achieving data saturation is the “gold standard by which purposive sample sizes are determined” (p. 60). The gathered data was compared to best practices from within the military community, civilian organizations, and academia. This allowed an analysis of whether the studied military unit’s supervisors were giving feedback in a generally accepted manner and frequency. The frequency of feedback being given was also compared to prescribed military standards and requirements to discover whether supervisors were meeting this requirement.

Data Collection Tools

Structured interviews were accomplished with each participant to gather experiences and expectations. Interviews were adapted, as needed, based on data/questions that were valuable and helpful. A list of questions (Appendix A) was developed to gain the appropriate data and allow exploration of the topic. The participants were instructed that the entire interview would be recorded and later transcribed, but no identifying data would be kept. This ensured the participants’ confidentiality and maximized the probability of full and truthful answers. The researcher presented himself as a Doctor of Education candidate from Creighton University, not as a member of the military hierarchy. Participants had complete freedom to accept or decline the invitation to be interviewed and provide data for the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Cope (2014) noted that qualitative research is not inferior to quantitative research, but it requires a different approach. She noted that because the methodologies are different between the two types of research, credibility and trustworthiness are important
when conducting a qualitative study. Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2000) and helps to increase credibility and trustworthiness. Validity is based on whether the findings are accurate from the view of the researcher, participant, or readers of an account. This leads to high-quality results. Noble and Smith (2015) recommended some methodological strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of findings. These were accounted for within the scope of this research and dissertation: (a) accounting for personal biases which may influence findings, (b) ongoing critical reflection of methods, (c) strong record keeping that demonstrates a clear decision trail, (d) rich and thick verbatim description of participants’ accounts, and (e) respondent validation, which includes inviting participants to comment on the interview transcript. Some methods to ensure credibility and trustworthiness within a qualitative study are an audit trail, member checking, and a peer reviewer.

Audit Trail

De Kleijn and van Leeuwen (2018) stated that when performing qualitative studies, the audit procedure is the most specific and elaborate procedure to ensure quality. Multiple researchers who have used the audit procedure have noted that it enhances transparency and acceptability (Akkerman, Bronkhorst, & Zitter, 2013). As part of this, a researcher must create an audit trail documenting the entire research process including how the data was gathered as well as analyzed. The five components listed by de Kleijn and van Leeuwen (2018) are obtained by creating: (a) an initial document showing the conceptual framework, planned methodology, and expected results, as well as the researcher’s position in the study; (b) a final document such as a journal article; (c) the raw data; (d) the processed data which could include coded records or summaries; and (e)
a document describing the process undertaken and results as they relate to data gathering and analysis.

In this Dissertation in Practice, the aforementioned method was used to ensure a high-quality product. A framework was initially laid out showing what methodology was planned along with expected results. It was also noted that the researcher was a member of the unit, and steps were taken to mitigate preconceived notions and bias. The raw data were used to create codes to help develop themes, and the process undertaken was described thoroughly so the reader would understand how data was gathered and analyzed.

Member Check

Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) stated that trustworthiness of results is the bedrock of high-quality research. They further noted that member checking, also known as respondent or participation validation, is a highly-regarded way to look for the credibility of results. They note that Doyle (2007) said that researcher bias can be reduced by actively involving the participants in checking and confirming the results. Creswell and Creswell (2017) stated that member checking determines the accuracy of qualitative findings by taking either the final report or the specific information back to the participants. In this way, the participants can determine whether they are accurate. In the process of gathering and analyzing data for this dissertation, the researcher provided the transcript to seven of the eight participants for verification. One of the eight participants preferred receiving this verbally, and to accomplish this, the researcher read the transcript over the phone to the participant. This entire process gave each participant the
opportunity to view their recorded experiences translated into written or verbal form and allowed each participant to verify the accuracy of the transcript.

Smith (2017) described peer review as the backbone of scientific and medical research and noted that although it is not perfect, there is no superior alternative system. Smith (2017) noted that peer review is to improve the accuracy of the data and the quality of papers published. He further stated that although it is a flawed process, it is likely to continue to remain so because of the belief researchers hold in it, and it is central to validating research. During this dissertation, the researcher used a committee member as a peer reviewer throughout multiple phases of the process. Through frequent and detailed meetings, the researcher was kept abreast and approved aspects of the entire process. In a way, the peer reviewer acted as an auditor, which Creswell and Creswell (2017) described as somebody who can provide an objective assessment of the project. This can be completed throughout the process of research or at the conclusion of the study. In this case, the peer reviewer was consulted both during the process and at the end. The peer reviewer looked over aspects of the project in order to enhance the overall validity of the dissertation.

**Ethical Considerations**

There were several ethical issues considered for this dissertation. During the interviews with subordinate Air National Guard members, the researcher could have potentially found out some information that was not intended to be heard. Some participants could have used the opportunity to talk and wanted to tell the researcher more than what was being asked. As part of the interview process, it was made clear to the participants that their participation was voluntary as well as confidential. The
researcher had a duty to keep the recordings and transcripts protected and not attributable to an individual person. Because of this confidentiality, it could have led to participants revealing more information than they needed to. The goal was to keep the interviews on task and stick to the pertinent questions only.

According to Haverkamp (2005) and Ponterotto (2013), qualitative research poses unique ethical challenges in multiple areas, including “informed consent, recruiting participants and gaining access to diverse communities, confidentiality, researcher dual roles and multiple relationships, interpretation and ownership of knowledge generated, and challenges posed by Institutional Review Board’s (IRB) of universities and communities” (p. 28). Another example of an ethical challenge in qualitative research is a deception of research participants and those who control access to communities and information. Researchers may be purposely vague when describing a study for fear they will not obtain access to the data. This was handled by the researcher by providing exact details of the scope and purpose of the study to the participants.

Another ethical consideration was the harm that could have come to the participants. There were several ways participants in this study could have been harmed. If a participant’s supervisor knew that the unit member spoke with the researcher regarding feedback, the supervisor could have subsequently taken some kind of negative action against the person. This would most likely only have happened if the supervisor had not been previously giving feedback to the member. Additionally, the member may have felt stressed about having spoken with the researcher about the supervisor. Adding any stress to a person’s life was not something meant for this study. This was mitigated by the researcher explaining the purpose, which was not to denigrate any particular
supervisor. The data collected was protected, including the audio recording and transcript, by putting in a password protected folder to which only the researcher has access. No identifying information can be attributed to any person who was interviewed, as none was collected other than the audio footprint on the recording. The recordings were also protected via a password protected folder accessible only to the researcher. It is hoped that one substantial benefit from this research is that the unit supervisors will receive awareness and training in giving feedback. The unit members who subsequently receive feedback who had not been receiving it in the past will hopefully benefit from this study. Overall, this will hopefully improve the communication in the unit regarding expectations and performance.

Another ethical issue was the protection of each participant’s identity. Due to this qualitative study containing rich descriptions of study participants, a breach of confidentiality was of utmost concern to the researcher. Several approaches were considered and used to ensure confidentiality. Crow, Wiles, Heath, and Charles (2006) discussed that confidentiality at the outset of the research is needed in order to obtain informed consent from the participants as well as build their trust. In fact, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2005) stated that researchers and review boards must ensure adequate provisions to protect respondent privacy and maintain confidentiality. It is interesting to note that the literature on research design offers very little practical guidance on disguising respondents’ identities or preventing deductive disclosure in qualitative research (Giordano, O’Reilly, Taylor, & Dogra, 2007). In the case of this dissertation research, each participant was notified of the importance of confidentiality, that their real name would not be used in association with their transcript,
and that any identifying data would not be used. Once member checking was complete, any identifying information was discarded. During the interview transcription (and subsequent coding and theme development), special care was taken to not reveal any details, such as rank, position, unique circumstances, or anything else that could lead to loss of confidentiality.

**Summary**

This study analyzed whether feedback standards and expectations were being met and offered a plan for improvement. In cases where the minimum threshold for feedback effectiveness was not happening, an improvement plan was recommended. Although this study focused on a military unit, it is hoped that the topic of feedback efficacy can contribute to the greater field of feedback and supervisory practices within many organizations.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This phenomenological study sought to answer one main research question: What is the current perception of feedback from supervisors to employees in a small midwestern military unit, and is that feedback timely and effective? Additionally, this study had three aims: (a) to assess the effectiveness of the supervisory feedback situation in this military unit; (b) to recommend improvements if any gaps in the existing feedback process were found; and (3) to summarize recommendations to be used by commanders to create a local policy to supplement the existing Air Force and Air National Guard regulations. This chapter will present the findings of this qualitative research study.

Presentation of the Findings

Participants

As there were approximately 80 personnel in this military unit, all 80 personnel were potential participants in the study. Volunteers were solicited via email and word-of-mouth at staff meetings using the Commander’s Support Staff as a conduit for notification. The only person excluded from the interview pool was the top commander of the unit, as that person’s supervisor is not part of the unit and therefore would be outside of the scope of this research. The Commander’s Support Staff is a group of four military personnel who are a central focal point for the unit and handle many administrative tasks for the unit. The researcher interviewed eight personnel in the order in which they responded to the solicitation (the first person who responded was the first to be interviewed, for example). After eight interviews, data saturation was reached. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), failure to reach data saturation has an impact on the
quality of the research conducted and negatively affects the validity of the results. In this case, the researcher used guidance from Fusch and Ness (2015) and determined data saturation was reached when the study was able to be replicated based on the data received and when there was not enough new information to attain.

Of the eight personnel, two (25% of participants) were female, and six (75% of participants) were male. This aligns closely with the overall male/female ratio in the Air Force. In a summary report published by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (Quester & Shuford, 2017), approximately 19% of Air Force personnel were female and 81% were male. Besides gender, of the eight Air Force personnel who participated in this study, there were representations from both the officer and enlisted side of the service.

All interviews were conducted in-person using the same questions (Appendix A). Each interview was recorded using software on a portable device. The interviews were scheduled to take place in a non-threatening space, away from the work environment. This ensured maximum freedom for the participants to provide details about their feedback experience. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) recommended arranging the interview in a quiet, semi-private place. The workplace is often a convenient place to conduct an interview for interviewees. However, the workplace would not have provided as much freedom for the participant, as there may be a fear of being seen by the supervisor. Additionally, a public place such as a restaurant or a coffee shop may appear as inviting places to talk, but these locations usually have too much background noise to obtain a quality recording (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Additionally, all of these locations could be distracting for the researcher and participant. A library was chosen for three of the
participants, and a variety of other locations were used for the remaining five participants. All locations were away from the workplace as well as quiet and non-distracting.

As each interview was completed, it was uploaded and transcribed by Rev.com. The researcher checked the transcription for errors by comparing the recorded version to the written version. Each transcription was presented to its associated participant for a review and check of accuracy.

The researcher’s next purpose was to transform a large amount of data into an organized and concise summary of the results key to the study, as described by (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Ganapathy (2016) noted that any researcher who wishes to become proficient at doing qualitative analysis must learn to code well and easily. The excellence of the research rests in large part on the excellence of the coding.

In a qualitative study, a code is “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldana, 2013, p. 3). Both descriptive coding and pattern coding were used, as primary topics that the participants described were pulled out to look for patterns in the data. The researcher then looked for common themes to allow the categorization of data to be able to fully analyze the pertinent data within the responses given. Moustakas (1994) described how the researcher should use phenomenological reflection and imagination variation to construct thematic portrayals of the experience.

There are many advantages to using a qualitative data analysis application. This type of software can free up the researcher from what many view as mundane, manual,
and clerical tasks. There can be a substantial amount of time saved, and it allows increased flexibility, is able to handle large amounts of qualitative data, and it can improve the validity and audibility of the research (John & Johnson, 2000). Some concerns about using software instead of manual coding are the often-rigid processes required, retrieval methods, pressure on researchers to focus on too much volume, the learning curve associated with using computer packages, and distraction from the true analysis (John & Johnson, 2000).

Accurate qualitative analysis is time-consuming, and its validity benefits from member-checking of coding and categorization (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Hesse-Biber, 2017; Warren & Karner, 2015). In the interest of ensuring the most accurate analysis possible, codes were presented to each participant along with the transcript provided.

Although several types of coding software were researched, the manual method of coding was used. Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017) described the process as starting with the initial step of reading and re-reading the interviews to ensure an overall general understanding of what the participants reported. The transcripts were then divided into smaller units, while still ensuring that the core meaning was retained. Codes were then created and grouped into categories in order to see what themes were common among participants. Coding is a critical step in the research process and allows the researcher to define what the data are about by labeling segments of data with a code that categorizes, accounts for, and summarizes the data (Charmaz, 2006). In qualitative research, coding is “how you define what the data you are analyzing are about” (Gibbs, 2007, p. 54).
Phenomenological Interview Summaries

Phenomenology is a qualitative research method used to look at the perspectives, feelings, and understandings of those people who have experienced the phenomenon or situation being studied (Giorgi, 1997). In order to further understand and see the perspectives of each person, a summary of each interview was provided. These summaries gave a sense of the richness of the data collected and how each person reported their experience. Note that in order to protect each participant’s identity, the use of his/he and her/she are alternated and have no indication as to the gender of the actual participant.

Participant 1 Interview Summary (he)

The first participant believed that constructive feedback is very important. He stated that it allows a person to know what they are doing correctly. Additionally, he noted that feedback is needed to be able to be corrected if goals are not being met and also to learn what priorities the supervisor believes are important. He stated it is not only for correcting things that need attention, but also a time for praise and to advise a subordinate to take on additional duties. He believed that it is important for a supervisor to know what their subordinate’s position is, what the employee is doing, and how they are contributing to their organization. In this study, personnel often belonged to two different military organizations. The employee typically worked day-to-day in one location, but the member’s supervisor was not physically collocated and may have been situated in another building or even on the other side of the Air Force base. Participant number 1 believed that if the supervisor is not invested or has knowledge of what the
subordinate does, the feedback becomes pretty obscure and not relevant to his day-to-day tasks.

Participant 1 noted that the vast majority of personnel within the unit were in a leadership role, whether it be formal or informal. By the nature of the military, higher ranking individuals and those with more tenure in the military naturally are looked upon as leaders regardless of formal positioning within the unit. This participant believed that feedback from the boss should identify strengths and weaknesses, especially as they relate to leadership. If a military member was not in a leadership role at the present time, he or she may be in the future as they progress through the ranks or are just members of the organization longer. By not being able to identify strengths and weaknesses to work on, they will not have proper preparation for these leadership roles as they present themselves in the future.

Participant 1 had received only one formal feedback session during the past two years, and he said it was a very negative experience. The supervisor who gave him feedback had no idea what his (the participant’s) day-to-day duties were, what the participant had accomplished, and did not work within the participant’s office. There was hardly any contact between the participant and the supervisor throughout the year, and the participant believed this one-time formal feedback was off target and ineffective. The participant had been receiving weekly and sometimes daily informal feedback from those in the work center and had been told that he had been doing a good job. There appeared to be a disconnect between the informal and formal feedback content and frequency.
When asked what feedback frequency is sufficient, the first participant stated that it depends on the type of job. He believed that if feedback is given too much, it is just redundant, and there is not even time to improve, see change, or meet goals. In general, he believed formal feedback should be given on a quarterly basis but that informal feedback could be given anytime. He would rather know in the present if he is doing something wrong or needs improvement as opposed to six or twelve months later.

The most important element of feedback, according to this participant, was that the supervisor needs to know details of the subordinate’s job. In this organization the participant stated that it is not true that the supervisor knew these details. Because the supervisor, who also is the rater on the performance report, did not work in the same office, they were unaware of what they had been tasked with by the active duty Air Force counterparts. They also did not know what the subordinates had accomplished unless the counterparts or the personnel made a concerted effort to tell them.

Participant 1 provided an example of when he was either penalized or had a negative outcome as a result of not receiving feedback from his supervisor often enough. This participant received a lower overall score rating in his evaluation. Part of the Air Force’s evaluation process was to receive at least two annual feedback sessions per year in most situations for most ranks. Air Force regulation AFI36-2406 required initial feedback (when the person was initially assigned to the rater), midterm feedback, and end-of-reporting period feedback for most ranks. Midterm feedback is defined as a feedback session midway between when supervision begins and the projected close-out date of the next performance report. During an annual report, midterm feedback would be at the 6-month point (Fedrigo, 2019). This was not completed during this evaluation
period. The participant believed that he not only did not receive feedback during the reporting period, but if no feedback was received the supervisor should not have penalized the employee on his evaluation/performance report. Additionally, the participant stated that his actual supervisor (the rater) did not accept the input that the day-to-day supervisor and peers had given him at the work center in which he was working. The end result was that the feedback was very negative, non-productive, and had nothing to do with his job performance or goals, in the opinion of the participant.

The beneficial feedback this participant had received was the aforementioned non-official feedback from his office peers and unofficial day-to-day supervisor. Unfortunately, this feedback was not the official feedback prescribed by Air Force regulations/instructions.

When asked which method was the most effective for receiving feedback, participant 1 said he preferred face-to-face feedback. He stated that this was the most effective type of feedback for him and also has the benefit of giving the subordinate a chance to address things that the supervisor may not be aware of that could be affecting job performance or that the supervisor is just not aware of that the person accomplished. The participant does believe that telephone or email could be used for a feedback session if a person was out of the office for an extended period of time and the feedback needs to be accomplished.

**Participant 2 Interview Summary (her)**

The second participant stated that feedback is important to her because it is good to know where a person stands with his or her supervisor as well as expectations. While receiving feedback is important, she believed that “no news is probably good news,”
which means she assumed that she is doing a good job unless she was being pulled in to speak with her supervisor and told that she is not meeting expectations. However, future moves into leadership and supervisory positions are inevitable and an honest look at a person’s strengths was needed to help develop those skills.

Participant 2 received feedback approximately four times within the past few years, which is more than she had in the previous 10 years. The feedback was formal and face-to-face. This participant reported the feedback as ineffective, however. She believed it was a “colossal waste of time” because she was told things that she already knew. She believed it did not have any effect on her being able to navigate the work environment. She just kept doing what she knew she was supposed to do. Regarding feedback frequency, this participant did not feel she needed feedback if she was meeting expectations. She only needed feedback if she was deficient in some area that she needed to work on. She believed that in this line of work, people knew what their jobs were, and they executed them and therefore did not need frequent feedback if they were staying on target with expectations and doing the right thing.

This participant reported that she had never been penalized or had any negative outcome based on not receiving feedback from her supervisor often enough, but she has had positive outcomes. Participant 2 had recently received feedback from her supervisor stating that she had not done a good enough job putting together an award package and fighting for one of her subordinates. This participant said that this type of feedback was exactly what she was looking for as an example of good and effective feedback. She believed that this feedback got her back on track and showed her how she could do better in the future in this area.
Face-to-face was this participant’s preferred method of feedback. She pointed out that whenever she has received text messages letting her know that her supervisor needs to speak with her, her heart rate escalated because there was a tendency to fear that the feedback or issue would be negative. To account for this, she recommended that a bit more information in the text message would be helpful to calm her fears prior to the face-to-face meeting.

**Participant 3 Interview Summary (he)**

The third participant stated that feedback is important because it allowed him to see where his strengths were in order to work with those strengths, as well as where the weaknesses were in order to work on them. He believed that it is important to get pointed in the proper direction on what needed to be done and what needed to be focused on to be able to be ready for a future leadership position. This feedback allowed the participant to flex and mold himself to become a better leader back then and in the future.

Participant 3 had received feedback once in the past two years, and it was negative. He stated that it did not allow him to navigate the work environment at all. It was all focused on a sole event and did not lead him towards anything that could help him become a better leader within the unit.

This participant believed that sufficient feedback would be every six months. He believed one of those feedback sessions would be close to the time that his annual performance report was due. But he believed that it should also occur at least four to seven months prior to that. He reiterated that he would want to know what his strengths were, what his weaknesses were, what direction he should be heading for his own career, and what direction he should be going to help the unit. He wanted to know what the next
year, two years, and five years held for him so he could hopefully see a continual upward slope on the leadership track within the unit.

This participant believed there should be opportunities to have feedback more often than twice a year. He gave several examples of why feedback could be given. The first was to let the person know if something was being done that was negative that could hurt the mission. The second was if a person was doing something positive that had a huge impact on the mission. He believed that two times per year is the minimum, but it definitely could happen more often.

In the area of feedback content, participant 3 stated that the feedback should entail “radical candor,” which is being very blunt and to the point regarding the issues at hand. Radical candor is a relatively new management philosophy based on caring personally while challenging directly. Vich and Kim (2016) noted that radical candor may help reduce the influence of some psychological factors in order to make organizational members more engaged and satisfied with the feedback process. In particular, this style focuses on the use of acceptance of negative feedback. This participant mentioned that the feedback should not be “sugar coated” with phrases such as, “I think you’re doing great.” He had received a lot of feedback in the past from supervisors telling him that he was doing great and would be perfect for a particular position, and he even then aligned himself towards that position only to find out that somebody else was picked. He believed that honesty was missing. He reminded the researcher that one of the Air Force’s values is integrity and that this should have reminded the supervisor to be full of integrity and not put people on a path that would not lead to achieving their goals and objectives. He believes that in the past he and many others received fake positive
feedback and promises from a supervisor only because the supervisor did not want to risk
giving bad feedback to the person and have their morale suffer because of it.

Participant 3 noted that he had been penalized in the past based on not receiving
feedback often enough. In this instance, he had found certain elements of what a future
plan was, and he did not know that it was supposed to be held in confidence. He was
subsequently told that he was not a team player because he shared the document with
others. He said it caused quite a commotion in the unit because many personnel who had
been told previously that they were on the leadership track were not listed on the plan. In
effect, this plan disclosed that personnel had been lied to, including this participant. He
reiterated that this is a military unit, where people are supposed to be tougher than the
average person, and we should be “able to have radical candor pushed right in our face
without emotion.” He believed that giving false hope is disingenuous.

Participant 3 cannot recall any time where he had actually benefited in a positive
way or had a positive outcome in receiving feedback. He reiterated that he had been told
in many different ways how great of a job he was doing, what a huge impact he had made
for the unit, and that his future was bright, only to be told later that there was not a plan
for him to move up into higher leadership but that his supervisor did not want to tell him
for fear of him being hurt.

He also believed that receiving no feedback from a supervisor is a bad thing. He
noted that there are always opportunities for humans to grow and learn and that feedback
should be an important part of that. He again referenced radical candor, which he saw as
taking shape in a lot of cultural leadership elements outside of the military. He said this
was needed to make people better. He also believed that making people better should be
the ultimate goal. Receiving no feedback is not going to make anybody better, and it is most likely going to lead to dissolution of the company, the group, the unit, and/or the military organization.

For feedback preferences, participant 3 has always received face-to-face feedback. He believed this is the most effective and was his preference because each person would get to look the other in the eye and see that they were committed to things. He noted that this assumed the person had integrity. If the subordinate found out that similar positive feedback was being given to everybody, when the reality was that everybody was not going to scale the leadership pyramid, it would be detrimental.

Participant 4 Interview Summary (her)

Participant 4 believed that feedback was important because employees need to know how well they are performing at their job. If a person did not receive any feedback, she noted that this means she is doing everything correctly. She assumed that if she was doing something wrong, her supervisor would intervene.

In the past, this participant had received feedback annually during the performance report evaluation time. Her current supervisor had given formal feedback at least every six months, but she had gotten informal feedback more often. Her supervisor often told her when there was something that she could have been doing better or if there was something that the supervisor really liked and wanted her to keep doing. She believed that she had a very good supervisor at the time of the interview. She believed that this feedback helped her to know what the supervisor was looking for from her. Her job duties were a bit vague, and there were so many things she could have been doing in her position that if she had not been receiving feedback from her supervisor, she would
not have been serving the supervisor’s needs in the best possible way. Feedback had really helped participant 4 to tailor what she did in the job to what the supervisor wanted.

This participant believed that formal feedback should be every six months. Because this particular military unit had part-time members (traditional Air National Guard), she believed that six months may actually be a little too frequent. Since a traditional Guard member may only perform duty one weekend per month, they theoretically could have performed duty only four weekends in between feedback sessions. In a six-month period there may not be enough time to make much of an adjustment and may not give the supervisor much time to observe. However, this participant reiterated that six months would be appropriate for a full-time member. She would not want to wait a year for her supervisor to tell her that she was doing something the supervisor did not like.

In the area of what feedback should contain, participant 4 believed that feedback should not be only negative because in that case employees would not want feedback. She stated that nobody wants to sit down and just be told what they were doing wrong. They also should be hearing what good things they had accomplished. She also believed very specific details are really important. If she was doing something wrong, she wanted some specific examples, a way she could have handled the situation better, as well as a correction that the supervisor would like to see in the future. If the supervisor notices areas where an employee is weak, this should be addressed with an opportunity to fix these areas. If the supervisor notices strengths of the employee, the identification of these is important in order for the employee to continue those behaviors. The more specifics, the better.
With this participant’s previous supervisor, there was not a lot of conversation or feedback, negative or positive. This left her feeling very confused. She believed she was always in a gray area. She did not know what her supervisor wanted her to do, what the supervisor saw her job duties as entailing, and what the supervisor saw as her role for this position. She did not understand because the supervisor never explained it to her. This left her really frustrated and feeling as if she was not being utilized in the best possible way. The lack of conversation also did not give her much opportunity to voice her opinions to the supervisor. She stated that having feedback sessions allowed the opportunity to have a two-way conversation. She did realize that she could have relayed the fact that she believed she was being underutilized, but the more feedback sessions they had, the more comfortable she and others would be to come to the supervisor with concerns.

She did receive some feedback not too long ago, which was really helpful. It had to do with a way that she interacted with the supervisor’s boss. She did not understand the supervisor’s boss’s expectations prior to that point. During this feedback session, her supervisor explained some recommendations that were received by the boss and passed those along to this participant. This greatly helped her understand what the expectations were and went a long way in allowing her to tailor her interaction with the supervisor’s boss in order to be the most effective she could be.

Participant 4 stated that receiving no feedback from a supervisor can be detrimental and leave people in the dark. People need feedback in order to know if they are doing a good job or not. She gave an example of a person who believed he was doing a great job, but the supervisor thought that person was doing a poor job. In this case, if
there was no feedback, the person would have continued doing a poor job, to the
detriment of the workplace. To make sure the supervisor and subordinate were on the
same page, honest, open, and candid feedback should have been given. The participant
stated that the feedback should not be sugar coated, as has happened often in the past.

This participant preferred face-to-face feedback. She did not like email or text
messages because something could be missed or misinterpreted. Because there are
subtleties involved when people are talking face-to-face, email or text messages are not a
good replacement. In particular, negative feedback should be given face-to-face.
Meeting with a subordinate in-person can show that the supervisor actually cares and that
they appreciate open communication. She acknowledged that some people are
uncomfortable with and do not like face-to-face communication. Because of this, it is
important to know the needs and desires of a subordinate and what is most effective with
that person.

**Participant 5 Interview Summary (he)**

Participant 5 stated that feedback allows us to know how we are doing in the
workplace, and more importantly, to capitalize on our strengths and improve upon our
weaknesses. He said that we want to do the best job possible at work, and knowing what
our supervisor’s expectations are helps us to achieve that goal.

This participant had received one feedback session in the past two years, and it
was brief. Only positive feedback was given. He said on the surface this seemed like a
good experience, but it left him not knowing what he could improve upon. He believed
that he was not perfect and therefore would have liked to know at least a few areas in
which he could have improved. Additionally, he wanted to know what actions he needed
to take and what work he needed to do and focus on in order to climb the hierarchy into positions of increasing responsibility and leadership.

Participant 5 believed that formal feedback should be completed at least two times per year, at approximately 6-month intervals, but the supervisor should give feedback more frequently if warranted. This participant believed that if he had been working on or doing things that were not in alignment with the supervisor’s goals, corrections should be made earlier, rather than later. Having feedback only once a year or even less frequently does not allow the person to know what path they need to take. He has seen many people in his unit focus on what they believe is important, only to find out later that they were focusing on the wrong things and because of this were not able to progress into leadership positions. He also noted that some people in the unit had been told what things to focus on in order to progress to leadership, but even though they focused on these things, leadership opportunities never materialized. He believed they received disingenuous feedback and were only told what the supervisor thought they wanted to hear. Largely based on this, he believed that the unit had had a big morale issue.

Participant 5 believed it was important to have a mixture of positive and negative feedback. If all feedback is positive, it does not allow for improvement in needed areas. If all feedback is negative, it is demoralizing and counterproductive. The supervisor should be specific in areas where the person has done well, as well as areas in which the person needs to improve. This will allow for the best growth in the person.

This participant stated that lack of feedback had penalized him by not giving him information to guide towards being able to get the right things accomplished in order to progress into leadership. He saw others in the unit being guided into opportunities that
strengthened their resumes and experience, and he believed that he had not had that opportunity. He believed that since he had not received negative feedback, that would typically mean that he was doing everything correctly. Obviously, that must not have been the case if he was not allowed to progress. To him this felt like an indirect penalty.

Participant 5 believed that the positive outcome of receiving feedback from his supervisor dealt with his morale, although that was short-lived. Initially, when only good feedback was received, this was a morale booster. He believed he was doing things correctly and doing them well. However, once he realized that he really had not been receiving effective feedback, his morale took a downward turn. It not only led him to realize that he was not progressing towards leadership positions and not improving himself to help towards future promotions, but also that he probably was not being the most effective that he could be for the unit. Participant 5 believed that not receiving feedback from a supervisor was detrimental to him personally, as well as to the mission of the unit and Air Force.

This participant believed that face-to-face feedback was the most effective type of feedback for him. He believed that email and text messaging especially did not force the supervisor to confront the subordinate in-person and could lead to less effective feedback. He also believed that many supervisors do not like to give negative feedback face-to-face, which is often why feedback was not given at all or at least far less frequently than needed. He believed face-to-face feedback is something supervisors need to work on to improve.
Participant 6 Interview Summary (she)

Participant 6 stated that feedback in the workplace is extremely important. She believed it allowed her to grow personally and professionally into a more productive and effective worker. She believed that she knew what she needed to do, but if that did not align with the supervisor’s goals and the unit’s goals, it was all for naught. In this case, she would not have been doing things she needed to for future promotions, and she also would not have been contributing to the unit’s mission as effectively as she should have been.

This participant had received feedback twice during the previous two years. This was in a formal setting after the review (military performance report) was written. She sat down with her rater, and they both went through the performance report together. She did not believe this was the most effective feedback because all of the performance reports she had seen in the military had been highly inflated and only focused on the positive things. She stated that military supervisors have been put into the position of inflating performance reports in order to give their subordinates the best chance to compete at promotion boards. This participant did not believe these performance reports were effective, especially if that was all the supervisor covered during a feedback session. This type of feedback did not help this participant navigate the work environment.

Participant 6 believed that receiving feedback at least every six months would be sufficient, which she said was the minimum prescribed by Air Force regulations. If the supervisor noticed good or bad things along the way, they should not hesitate to provide that feedback. This participant noted that there is a problem in this unit because most supervisors were not physically located with the people they supervise. This means the
supervisor could not have seen what the employees were doing day-to-day and therefore
would have no idea if there were areas for improvement or tasks the person had done
good. For the yearly performance review, participant 6 either wrote it herself or provided
a list of accomplishments for the year, none of which were ever seen by the supervisor.

Participant 6 believed that feedback should be honest and thorough. The
supervisor should discuss what he or she saw as weaknesses as well as strengths.
Additionally, the supervisor should make clear how the person had been fitting in with
the goals of the supervisor as well as the unit. Since most people in this unit were split
between allegiance to two different workplaces, they needed to know what goals are
important for each. The feedback should have pointed them in the right direction, so they
knew what they needed to do in order to grow and be the most effective.

Participant 6 did not feel that she was overtly penalized by not receiving
feedback, but she did feel that there had been a negative outcome. Because she had not
had feedback often enough, and her supervisor rarely saw her in action, she had not
received feedback and guidance to be able to grow herself. Additionally, she noted that
people who worked closer to the leadership of the organization and had more chances for
visibility were usually the ones recognized and promoted ahead of others. This
participant had seen multiple instances when people were rewarded for things when she
had done even greater or more important things. Her supervisor just did not know about
them because the supervisor did not take the time to come to the workplace, whereas the
other people were more visible. The participant believed that this could have been
rectified by her continually updating her supervisor as to what she had been working on
and accomplishing, but that she did not believe as if there was an open line of
communication between her and her supervisor due to the supervisor’s lack of interest and communication with her. The participant did not believe that she had a positive outcome based on feedback, other than having inflated performance reports that looked good on her official record.

This participant had mixed feelings in instances where a supervisor gave no feedback to the subordinate. On one hand, she believed that it was detrimental to her because she would not have any guidance on her strengths and weaknesses. On the other hand, she believed that getting no feedback from her supervisor would be the best thing if the supervisor did not have any idea of what she did day-to-day. She would not want to receive feedback from somebody who had no interest in or visibility of her in the workplace.

Participant 6 stated that she prefers face-to-face feedback best, although a close second place would be a phone call. She believed that actually speaking with her supervisor in person makes feedback the most effective. Vocal tone and inflections can be heard in person and over the phone, which can help to make sure there are no misunderstandings. In-person meetings have the added benefit of being able to read visual cues as well. All of these would be lost if feedback was given using text messages or emails. However, she believes there are opportunities where texts and emails work well. If there are small pieces of positive feedback to pass along, email or texts would work. She believed that it could be a bit time consuming and awkward to call for every bit of positive feedback. For example, if a person emailed the supervisor some good words about the subordinate, it would be perfectly acceptable to forward that info via
email in order to pass it along. Participant 6 did not believe there were any times where negative feedback should be given using text messages or email.

**Participant 7 Interview Summary (he)**

Participant 7 believed feedback in the workplace is the cornerstone of what allows supervisors and subordinates to progress in mutually improving the workplace. It not only enriches the employees with the knowledge of how things operate, but also increases their value to the organization. He stated that the more feedback employees receive, the better they are able to reach the goals of the organization and make the workplace more efficient and productive. He noted that this naturally would lead to future promotions since he would hope that his supervisor would guide him towards promotions with the feedback received and the tasks assigned.

This participant had received feedback two times during the previous two years. He further added that a past supervisor of his was far better at providing feedback at more regular intervals. Under the current supervisor, he had received feedback only during scheduled performance feedback sessions a few months prior to his performance report due date, which was outside of the guidelines prescribed by the Air Force. He did have a meeting with the supervisor when the yearly performance report was complete, but the meeting only consisted of him reading the completed performance report, so no feedback was given during that time. He also believed that what was on his performance report was not accurate. He said he was involved to some extent in some of the accomplishments on his performance report but that they were written to sound a lot better than what they really were in real life. He did not believe this helped him navigate the work environment very well. By the time the feedback was received, it was too late
to correct anything for that reporting period. The performance feedback report also did not help give any constructive feedback. This participant stated that raters in the Air Force often feel pressured to inflate information in the performance report to ensure people get promoted. Therefore, much of the information listed in the report is often a bit of a stretch from what was actually done. This participant’s opinion was that it would be better if the Air Force could take the pressure off supervisors, so that they do not feel as if they need to write glowing reports when more accurate reports would be far more helpful in the long run.

Participant 7 believed that receiving feedback at least monthly would be ideal, but he would settle for quarterly feedback. If his performance was subpar or extraordinary during the year, then perhaps feedback more than once a month would be more appropriate because there would be more items his supervisor would have to tell him. If he was just doing his job “as normal” then closer to once per quarter would be sufficient. He believed that everybody has something they can improve upon at any given time and that most supervisors are just too afraid to give those corrections and guidance because they feel as if people will not receive negative feedback very well. Participant 7 also noted that in this particular unit, he hardly saw his supervisor. He worked in a different area of the Air Force base, so it was not convenient for the supervisor to continually visit all of the employees. In previous units the supervisor was always physically located nearby, making the interaction between employees and supervisors a lot more visible, easy, and frequent. He believed that if the supervisor would have been able to witness his work day-to-day, he would have received feedback far more often.
This participant desired feedback that would help him improve both towards being able to do the job better, as well as in growing professionally. He believed that this would not only help him achieve the unit’s goals and mission, but also would set him up towards a long career in the military. He noted that there is pressure to keep performing at a high level in order to get promoted high enough to be able to stay in for 20 years. He expressed fears that if he does not do a good enough job in the workplace, he will not be promoted and will end up having to leave before he is eligible for any kind of retirement. He also noted that the supervisor should point out strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for him. He would like to know what he does well so he can continue doing those things. He also would like to know what he does not do well so he can improve. He also stated it is important to know what future opportunities he should be working towards, as well as if the supervisor sees any obstacles that might be in his way in achieving these goals.

Participant 7 stated that the main negative outcome he had that was related to not receiving feedback was the lack of awards received. He stated that he believed he was on an island by himself and was not provided the same feedback and opportunities as others who worked closer to their supervisor. Monthly, quarterly, and yearly awards were most often given to employees who not only were in closer proximity to their supervisor, but also received feedback more often, which help guide them towards doing the right things in order to win an award. Along these same lines, because the supervisors of the closer proximity employees were able to witness what they were doing, they were able to formulate this into nicer award nomination packages that made them more competitive. Participant 7 believed he was often “out of sight, out of mind,” and since the supervisor
did not know what activities he performed, the supervisor was never able to put these into an awards nomination package for him. This participant did not feel that he had any positive outcomes based on feedback.

Participant 7 believed that receiving no feedback from a supervisor is detrimental to the mission of the organization as well as the person’s career. Since the Air Force has a performance-based award and promotion system, there can be no positive outcome without feedback and interaction from the supervisor.

This participant stated that he prefers face-to-face feedback, even though it can be uncomfortable at times. He believed that much of the uncomfortableness comes from not being able to sit down and talk with his supervisor routinely. He noted that if this happened more often, it would greatly minimize any uncomfortableness in the situation. He believed strongly that a face-to-face meeting would provide the most honestly between the employee and the supervisor. Providing feedback via email, text, or phone would lead to things not being able to be handled as directly as in a face-to-face meeting. He also stated that a lot can be gained from an in-person meeting, such as eye contact, tone of voice, and other body language. If there was an emergency and a performance report deadline was going to be missed, then a phone call would be acceptable, but it should be followed up by an in-person meeting as soon as possible. He did not believe text messages or email should be used for any major feedback, but perhaps for minor feedback it would be acceptable.

**Participant 8 Interview Summary (she)**

Participant 8 believed feedback is important because it informs her as to what her supervisor expects of her. Without it she would have to guess what direction her
supervisor wants her to go. She did note that she and others should know the right thing
to do and the best thing to do, and that can be done without a supervisor’s guidance.
However, if the employee’s goals do not line up with the supervisor’s goals, she may not
be doing the right things in order to get a good performance report and promotion
recommendation. That was her biggest concern.

This participant had received two formal feedback sessions within the last two
years. She did not feel that it played any role in navigating the work environment. The
feedback seemed superficial in nature and was all positive. She already believed she was
doing a good job, so it just reinforced that. She believed she was just being told things
that she already knew. Nothing was said that would help her do better at the job and
become higher ranked within the unit.

Participant 8 believed that feedback should be a continual process, but if she had
to put a frequency on it she would prefer at least four times per year as long as they were
fairly evenly spaced out. She stated that the first feedback should set expectations for the
year, the final feedback should let her know how she met those expectations, and the two
feedback sessions in between should help guide her.

This participant believed that feedback should be specific and let the employee
know what is expected along with ideas on how best to achieve the expected goals. Since
the supervisor theoretically has a lot more experience, he or she should be able to let the
employee know the best way to achieve those goals. If a person goes for too long
without feedback, he may not be doing the right things for progression in rank and
recognition. That would be detrimental to the person’s career.
Participant 8 had never been overtly penalized by not receiving feedback, although she believed that not getting feedback had not allowed her to be the best that she could have been. Since she had to navigate the work environment on her own, she believed that there is a lot that she could have learned from her supervisor but was not able to. She has never believed that she benefited from receiving feedback other than being told what she already knew.

This participant believed that receiving no feedback from a supervisor would not only have been against Air Force regulations but would also have been detrimental to her job performance and morale. She also believed that the Air Force’s intent in the regulation is for supervisors to give honest positive and negative feedback but that had not happened in her case or in most cases of people she had spoken with throughout the years.

Face-to-face was this participant’s preferred feedback method. Although she believed that other methods of feedback such as texting, email, phone calls, or written notes would be acceptable in between formal feedback sessions, they should not replace a face-to-face meeting. She believed that there is a lot to be gained when meeting face-to-face and that a supervisor could be more honest with the employee, and the employee could be honest with the supervisor and also give feedback. This two-way communication is vital for employees to do their best. She also believed that getting used to face-to-face meetings would lessen the tension that often existed in her experience when a face-to-face meeting took place. She stated that she would get nervous and dreaded the face-to-face meetings but said that she should not have.
Analysis and Synthesis of Findings

Coding and Theme Analysis

Theme development began by looking at the answers to the interview questions and capturing and identifying codes throughout each interview. In a phenomenological study, coding is a key component of determining the essence of the experience. Coding occurred in this case after the researcher listened to the recordings and read the transcripts multiple times. This allowed the researcher to find commonalities in responses in order to aid understanding of the lived experiences (Morse & Richards, 2013). Hand coding was accomplished due to the researcher wanting to stay close to the data. Looking through the codes allowed the development of themes that were common across the spectrum of interviews. Finally, the themes were used to look back at the raw data to develop commonalities and differences among the participants’ responses.

Analysis of Findings

Study and analysis of the developed themes allowed insight into the perceptions, desires, and needs of the study participants as they relate to receiving feedback from superiors. Although participants were of different military ranks and at different points in their careers, the themes that developed were insightful for how supervisors may consider providing feedback in the future.

Theme #1: Strength/Weakness Identification

Seven of the eight participants directly noted the importance and benefit of their supervisors helping to identify and use the employees’ strengths while also helping to identify and work on weaknesses. It was pointed out that the lack of guidance in this area could/would be detrimental to the individual as well as the workplace. In a study of
feedback methods at five medical facilities in Germany, researchers found a lack of knowledge regarding feedback methods among instructors (Kunz, Burkert, Heindl, Schüttpelz-Brauns, & Giesler, 2019). Fifty-five percent of the instructors noted that they would like to receive further education or information on feedback, including best methods.

**Theme #2: Leadership Development**

The majority of participants (five of eight) stated that feedback from supervisors was important in developing them for leadership positions. As is the nature of the military’s rank structure, even those not in defined leadership roles are still looked upon as leaders to those whom they outrank. Whether a person believes leadership skills are inborn or learned, most would agree that these skills can be further developed and improved. These participants believed that they need to improve their leadership skills to either be better prepared for current leadership roles or to work on improving themselves for future leadership opportunities.

**Theme #3: Frequency & Timing**

Of the eight participants, only two had received formal feedback on at least a biannual basis, as the Air Force prescribes in Air Force Instruction AFI36-2406 (Fedrigo, 2019). One of the two participants reported having received feedback every six months with her current supervisor, but her previous supervisor only provided feedback annually. Of the remaining participants, three received feedback yearly, whereas the other three received feedback only once in the past two years.

The desired frequency varied between participants. All except one participant desired at least the minimum frequency prescribed by the Air Force. Four of those
desired the exact frequency the Air Force expects (twice per year). Two would like feedback at least quarterly, although one of those participants stated that feedback should actually be a continual process throughout the year. One participant believed feedback should be given monthly. Finally, the last participant did not believe she needed feedback unless she was deficient in an area. If she is performing adequately, then no feedback is necessary.

Of the eight participants, one desired feedback monthly, two desired feedback every three months, four desired feedback every four months, and one did not desire feedback unless there was some deficiency needed to be discussed.

**Theme #4: Content**

Participant 1. Content in the past was weak because the supervisor was not in the same office and did not have any oversight. The supervisor did not know what the person’s job was and had hardly any contact. In structures like this organization, this participant believed the supervisor of record should work with actual day-to-day supervisor to get information. Feedback content needs to be constructive to allow a person to know what they are doing correctly. The person should be corrected if goals not being met. The priorities the supervisor believes are important should be conveyed. Most important is for a supervisor to know details of the subordinate’s job.

Participant 2. Feedback has been ineffective in the past, including “a colossal waste of time.” She stated that her supervisor only told her things she already knew. “Because of our training, we all already know what we need to do.” The feedback needs to show where a person stands with his or her supervisor and expectations. One example
of effective feedback was very specific regarding an award package and fighting for a subordinate.

Participant 3. Recent feedback was negative regarding a single event and did not do much to help him navigate the work environment. The perception was that he was only getting feedback because he did something wrong. He would like to receive feedback on what his strengths and weaknesses are, as well as what he should be doing to stay on track for his own career and for the good of the unit. Feedback should entail “radical candor,” which is being very blunt and to the point, not sugar coated and just being told that everything is going fine. He stated that in the past he received a lot of feedback without honesty, only to placate him. He had been told he was on a path to upper leadership but later found out that there was such a plan but not with him in it.

Participant 4. Feedback needs to show the employee how well they are performing. Without feedback, the person believes they are doing everything correctly. People naturally assume that if they are doing something wrong, the supervisor will intervene. She wanted feedback to set expectations for the employee. This type of feedback has allowed her to mold her behavior into something for which she knows the supervisor is looking. Feedback also needs to be both positive and negative. If feedback is just negative, it is not productive for the individual. The more detailed the feedback is, the better. Employees want specific examples of how they have done something well or could have done something better. Recent feedback had been helpful, as she was told of a way she interacted with the supervisor’s boss. She was able to take this feedback and change her future behavior. She just wished that there was more feedback like this, as previous feedback left her very confused because the supervisor did not speak to her very
often. She also stated that a two-way conversation between subordinate and supervisor is very important.

Participant 5. This participant stated that the content of feedback should give enough information to allow employees to know how they are performing in the workplace, as well as to capitalize on their strengths while minimizing their weaknesses. Unfortunately, in the past two years, he had only one feedback session and it did not give him enough information. His supervisor provided him with only positive feedback, so he did not get enough information to know what he should improve upon. He also noted a desire to move up the hierarchy and would have liked to have received information on what he needed to work on to increase his chances of doing that. He would like to at least have enough information from his supervisor so that he is able to make any corrections that are not in line with the supervisor’s goals. Further, participant 5 noted that the receipt of both positive and negative feedback is important. If feedback is only positive, it does not allow the person to improve in deficient areas. Conversely, if all feedback is negative, morale would be affected.

Participant 6. This participant noted that the content of feedback that she receives should be enough to allow her to grow into a better worker. She believed that she has a good handle on what is required of her, but if that is not in sync with what her supervisor believes is important, then that is not ideal. The supervisor should have a bigger picture of how each person is integrated within the unit and how they each contribute to the overall mission together. Due to this, the supervisor should be in a better position to know what each person should be working on in order to be the most effective as a cohesive team working towards a common goal. Often subordinates may not always be
able to see where they fit into the grand plan. Through proper feedback, the supervisor can and should account for this and should be able to point out what is important in achieving this goal. This participant pointed out that part of the feedback session should be focused on the performance report, which she believed to be overinflated. In the Air Force, performance reports are often completed to help make the person stand out among their peers in the rest of the Air Force around the world. This can lead supervisors to overinflate the accomplishments of their subordinates so that promotion rates for their unit are either higher or at least on par with the rest of the Air Force. Because of this, if that is all that is focused on during a feedback session, it does not accurately give feedback to the individual.

Participant 7. The biggest area of content this participant noted within feedback sessions is receiving information to be able to improve the workplace. He noted that frequent feedback allowed him to increase value for the organization, which helps him better the workplace in multiple ways. He believed that this naturally would help him do the right things in order to be promoted. During the past two years, this participant received feedback only twice. He stated that his current supervisor did not do as good of a job in providing feedback as previous supervisors. The timing of his feedback session was so close to his yearly performance report that he did not have much opportunity to change his behavior and what he focused on if he had received feedback guiding him in this area. When he received his performance report, his feedback meeting consisted only of him reading the performance report. Since he believed that his performance report was not accurate, this particular feedback was ineffective to him. He received no constructive feedback. Participant 7 would like to grow professionally, which he noted
will help him work towards a career in the military. He stated that he was under pressure to do a good job or else be released prior to the point where he would receive a pension. Without receiving proper feedback to do a better job, he believed that his entire career could be cut short, which would be devastating and result in loss of income for him and his family. Within this feedback, he wanted to know what he does well, but also what he should improve upon. He would like to have heard about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for him. If he receives all of this in feedback from his supervisor, he believes that it will maximize his chance for success.

Participant 8. The main thing this participant believed should be in her feedback is information pertaining to what her supervisor’s expectations are of her. She stated that this information is critical because it is what is needed to get a good performance evaluation as well as a recommendation for promotion. Without this info, employees may believe that they are not concentrating on the right things, but if the supervisor does not also believe those are the right things, the performance evaluation could be negative, and performance chances could be hurt. In the two feedback sessions she had over the past two years, this participant stated that the feedback did not help her. The feedback was all positive and superficial. It reinforced her belief that she had been doing a good job, but she believed that she was just being told things she already knew. She had hoped to receive information that would help her do even better and become a better performer in the unit. She noted that feedback should be specific with ideas on how to achieve expectations. She said that the supervisor should have a lot more experience and insight on the best way to achieve those goals. She also mentioned that doing the right things plays a part in future recognition as well as progression in rank.
Theme #5: Authenticity of Feedback

Authenticity, or being honest or true to oneself, is a cornerstone of many areas of humanity, including leadership. It has been found that supervisors’ behavior, including the perception of inauthenticity, influenced workers’ job stress level in a negative manner (Kang, Ye, Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2017).

Participant 1. This participant saw a big lack of authenticity in feedback. First, he pointed out that his supervisor not only did not work in the same office building as he did but also did not know what he was doing on a day-to-day basis. This was the biggest factor in the supervisor’s feedback not being authentic. He also believed the feedback was obscure and not relevant to his daily tasks and did not help him work towards future progression in the unit hierarchy. Receiving feedback by a person who did not know this participant’s job was very “defeating” and bad for morale. He believed this feedback was not relevant to his actual job performance or accomplishments. Further, this participant believed that receiving no feedback would have been better than receiving feedback from a supervisor who did not know the employee’s job or responsibilities. Fortunately, the highest-ranking person in his day-to-day workplace did give informal feedback that did a lot to help navigate the work environment. However, none of this was included in feedback by the actual supervisor and did not make it into the performance report.

Participant 2. Although participant 2 had plenty of feedback during the past two years (at least four feedback sessions), she believed it to be a waste of time, as it did not have any effect on her navigating the work environment. She was told things that she already knew regarding her performance and therefore did not receive any constructive feedback. She believed that it was being done only to comply with the feedback rules of
the Air Force and definitely not to serve her best interest in trying to improve. Although she believed that within the unit everybody should know what their job is, and they should go out and perform the job expertly, outlining what the expectations are from a supervisor is important.

Participant 3. This participant received feedback once during the previous two years, and it was very negative. It did not allow him to navigate the work environment. It was focused on a single event and did not provide him with any information or insight into helping him become a better leader within the unit. He believed that having feedback only once in a two-year period did not give much of an opportunity to improve and therefore was disingenuous on the part of the supervisor. Much of this participant’s feedback contained phrases such as, “you’re doing great” and “you’d be perfect for this position,” which caused him to continue doing what he was doing and aligning himself towards that position. He later found out that this feedback was not authentic when he was not picked for several positions for which he had been told he would be perfect. Additionally, he once found a plan for leadership positions that had a list of who would be in certain leadership positions for many years to come, and he was not on the list. He stated that not only did this show that he was not considered “perfect for this position” as supervisors had told him, but that any feedback given was not authentic because the leaders in the unit already had a plan in place regardless of his performance and actions. If he would have just been told earlier that he was not part of the master leadership plan, he would have been able to focus on doing the best that he could at his job and not try to work towards leadership. He said he understands that everybody in the entire unit cannot make it into leadership positions, and if his feedback had been authentic he would have
understood the expectations and reality. Further, he believed inauthentic feedback can lead to the dissolution of the company, the group, or the unit of the military organization.

Participant 4. Participant 4 routinely had authentic feedback. She received formal feedback at least every six months but also received informal feedback whenever needed. The informal feedback had no structure to it, but it let her know some things that she could have been doing better. If there was something that she was doing that her boss really liked and wanted her to keep doing, her supervisor was very good at letting her know. She stated that this type of feedback was authentic because it was designed to help her improve, which ultimately helped her as well as the organization. She believed authentic feedback is critical in her current position especially. Her job duties were a bit vague and if she did not receive direct and honest feedback then she would not know which direction to go and what to focus on. As part of the authenticity of feedback, it needs to cover both the positive and negative and be timely. This participant noted that if feedback is only negative, the subordinate will not want any feedback and will not be receptive in the future. Feedback should not contain only areas where they could be doing better, but also what employees have been doing well. Prior to this supervisor, the participant did not have much conversation with her supervisor. This led to feedback not being authentic because she was not able to understand exactly what her role was, meaning she had no direction and did not understand what authority she had in making improvements. A big part of that was the inability to have a voice in a feedback session, since there were hardly any feedback sessions. Not only did this leave her frustrated, but it also left her believing that she was being underutilized. In past years not receiving feedback meant she did not know if she was doing a good or bad job. Or even worse, she
may have thought that she was doing a good job, but her supervisor thought she was doing a poor job. Having open, honest, and candid feedback would lead to the most authenticity.

Participant 5. This participant had only one feedback session during the past two years, and it was brief, which meant he had not received authentic feedback in a long time. He received only positive feedback. At first, he believed, on the surface, that it was a good experience. Later, he realized that this was not a good experience because it left him not knowing what he needed to improve upon. He stated that everybody has room for improvement, and he would have liked to have received tips to get better. He stated a desire to move into leadership positions with more responsibility and would have liked to have heard ideas on what he needed to do in order to move into those positions in the future. He stated that the lack of feedback had penalized him because he was not able to accomplish things that he needed to do in order to progress. If he had been given feedback on this, he could have and would have switched gears to make sure to do these things, which, in effect, would have enhanced his career. Not receiving feedback can lead people to believe that they are doing everything correctly, which is often not the case. He also noted that others in the unit have received inauthentic feedback because he has seen them focus on what they believe to be important, only to later find out they were focusing on the wrong things. This has prevented many from moving into positions of leadership. This participant believes that the leadership already knows who they want to groom for future leadership positions, and they spend more time with those particular personnel in order to help them move into coveted positions.
Participant 6. Participant 6 met only twice in two years for formal feedback, and it was in conjunction with the annual performance report. She did not believe that the feedback was effective because all of the performance reports she had experience with while in the military were highly inflated and focused only on positive things. She noted that military supervisors have to inflate these reports in order to better the chances of subordinates looking good at promotion boards. Further, this participant believed that supervisors were limited in giving accurate feedback in this unit since they are not collocated with the people they supervise. The supervisor was not able to witness what the subordinate does day-to-day and therefore would not know if the person did well or needed improvement. Also, this participant either wrote the performance evaluation herself or provided a list of accomplishments for the year, none of which were witnessed by the supervisor. She gave the example of seeing others in the unit being rewarded for things when she had done even greater or more important things, but the supervisor was not there to see this happen. In addition, people who purposely make themselves more visible often were noticed more positively due to that visibility.

Participant 7. Participant 7 did not feel that the feedback he received was authentic. He received feedback only a few months prior to each yearly evaluation due date. He believed this to be because the Air Force mandates feedback, which is supposed to be documented on the actual performance evaluation form. The feedback was more of a meeting to get together to see how things were going. No actual feedback was given. Participant 7 noted that even if this feedback session did provide legitimate feedback, it would have been far too late into the reporting period to make any substantial changes in behavior. Part of the reason this is difficult to achieve is that this participant’s supervisor
worked in a different area of the Air Force base, and he hardly saw his supervisor. Usually he saw the supervisor only every two months during guard drill. In his previous unit, he worked near his supervisor, which facilitated more opportunities to witness day-to-day activities, as well as provide both positive and negative feedback. When the actual performance report was complete, he did have another meeting with his supervisor. However, this only consisted of him reading the performance evaluation. He did not receive any constructive feedback. If his supervisor believed that this meeting was feedback, then it was all extremely positive. He stated that performance reports are known to almost always be overly positive in order to make the person competitive for future promotions. Because of this, the participant did not feel like any of the feedback was helpful or authentic.

Participant 8. The last participant did not feel that the feedback she received was fruitful or authentic. She received two formal feedback sessions, but they were superficial in nature and all positive. Nothing was said that would help her get better at her job and have a higher chance of promotion in the future. Getting inaccurate and inauthentic feedback has not allowed her to grow and improve and be the best that she can be. Receiving only positive feedback reinforced what she was doing correctly, but she believed that there are plenty of areas she and others could use improvement in, as nobody is perfect. She believed that the Air Force’s intent is for supervisors to give honest positive and negative feedback, but that was not happening in her case or most others with whom she had spoken.
Theme #6: Feedback Method

Research that considered feedback perception in face-to-face contexts found that employees who perceived their feedback to be positive, as well as providing information on how they are doing and what steps to take in the future, were the most satisfied with their supervision and perceived that they learned the most from their supervisor (de Kleijn, Mainhard, Meijer, Brekelmans, & Pilot, 2013).

All participants in this study received face-to-face feedback, and this type of feedback was their preferred method. Several participants noted that this method of feedback delivery allowed them to address any issues they had or clarify anything they did not completely understand. It was also noted that being able to look each other in the eye is beneficial. Being able to see that the supervisor and subordinate are both committed to things, which is something more difficult to perceive if the two parties are not able to see each other, can be positive for both sides. There are often subtleties and non-verbal cues that are seen when face-to-face and can be missed with other feedback methods. One participant noted that if supervisors truly knew their subordinates, they would know which type of feedback method is the best for them and would consider using that as the primary feedback method. It was also mentioned that if supervisors take the time out of their schedules to have a face-to-face feedback session, it shows that they care and that the supervisors are trying to establish and foster honest and open communication with subordinates.

A negative aspect of face-to-face feedback that was mentioned is that perhaps some supervisors are uncomfortable giving negative feedback face-to-face and therefore may neglect to give this type of feedback. In these cases, the subordinate would not
receive valuable negative feedback in order to improve and perhaps may only receive the only positive side of feedback. Otherwise, this could lead to supervisors not giving feedback at all, far less frequently than needed, or just incomplete feedback. One recommendation from a participant was better training for supervisors so they not only understand the importance of giving positive and negative feedback but also so they can improve their skills in delivering negative feedback effectively. This can lead to better growth in supervisors as well as subordinates and allow subordinates to receive a complete picture of their strengths and weaknesses in order to adapt their future performance for the betterment of themselves and the organization.

It was noted, however, that it could be time consuming and awkward if every piece of feedback was given face-to-face. In this particular organization where most employees and subordinates do not physically work near each other, the extra time out of each person’s schedule to travel to a mutual location and have a meeting for feedback would reduce the available time during the workday to complete the employee’s primary duties. Due to this, several participants noted that a phone call would be the next best option. Talking via phone would still allow each side to hear vocal cues, inflections, tone, and other aspects related to discerning the meaning of the verbal exchange. There would be certain aspects that were missed, such as being able to see most non-verbal pieces of the conversation, but there could still be some benefits. One advantage would be that the aforementioned issue of time spent traveling to having an in-person meeting would be negated. It is interesting to note that no participants mentioned using Skype, Facetime, or other methods of video-conferencing for feedback. This type of meeting would appear to be more robust than a phone conversation, but not quite as fruitful as
being able to see the other party in-person. Perhaps in the future, as this type of technology becomes more prevalent, supervisors and subordinates will consider this a suitable feedback method.

Two of the eight participants noted that face-to-face feedback can be uncomfortable at times. They both stated that much of the discomfort stems from not routinely interacting with their supervisor. Tension between supervisors and subordinates was mentioned as something that occurs during these sessions. This is exacerbated by not working near the supervisor on a day-to-day basis. They do get to see their supervisors during monthly “Guard Drill,” however normally those weekends are so packed full of activities that they still do not have good access to their supervisor one-on-one. This unfamiliarity with interacting with the supervisor led to not having a high comfort level when it does happen. It also can contribute to stress, at least on the side of the subordinate. One participant noted that she was so uncomfortable during feedback sessions that she dreaded them. Several participants noted that when they received emails or texts requesting that they attend a feedback session, they often panicked, got an increased heart rate, and underwent stress if they did not know what the feedback session would be about. They very often automatically thought the worst and assumed that they were getting in trouble over something they had done. Over time, this could be corrected by a more purposeful effort on the part of the supervisor to interact with subordinates. This would, in large part, get employees used to communicating one-on-one with their supervisors, although this still does carry with it the negative aspect of time taken throughout the workday to accomplish tasks.
A number of subordinates noted that email would be acceptable for feedback in certain situations. One situation is when a person is out of the office for an extended period of time, yet the feedback needs to be completed. This could be because the feedback is time sensitive or that Air Force regulations require it. It also could be that the piece of feedback is minor and less formal than a full feedback session. Although multiple participants noted that information, intent, and tone can be lost via email, they did believe email is appropriate and can work for less formal situations. Most participants cautioned that if a supervisor has negative feedback to give, it typically should not be done via email. The supervisor should be in place physically to deliver that type of feedback and be able to help the recipient through any difficulty in hearing and digesting that information. It was also noted that a supervisor sending an email does not force the supervisor to confront the subordinate in-person, which could lead to less effective feedback. The perception then becomes that the supervisors are trying to “hide” behind their email and are too afraid to tackle the issue in person. The subordinates can lose respect for the supervisor as an individual in this case. However, a number of participants noted that it is acceptable if positive feedback is passed along via email, especially if it is minor feedback. Several examples were given by participants that small words of thanks could be passed along via email. For example, if a person (customer, coworker, etc.) sent an email to a supervisor, that email could be forwarded to the respective employee for praise. Since it is something that is important to be passed along but does not quite warrant time out of the day for an in-person meeting, participants believed that email is a very appropriate medium to pass along this type of information.
Summary

Six consistent themes emerged from the interviews of members of the organization. The first, strengths and weakness identification, was an area that would have multiple benefits to the organization as well as the individual. The second was leadership development. This was an area of importance because most participants had a desire to move up within the organization’s leadership structure. Even those who did not want to move into leadership positions still wanted to do what needed to be done to increase rank and pay throughout their careers. The third theme was that of frequency and timing of feedback. This was shown to be insufficient among most participants but was considered important by all. The fourth theme dealt with the content of feedback. This was important for allowing the participants to see value in a feedback session and to be able to walk away with something constructive. The fifth theme was the authenticity of feedback. This was an area of importance because participants wanted the employee/employer relationship to be one of trust and for the feedback to be practical and useful. The final theme was that of the feedback method. Although there were alternative methods of feedback, all participants preferred and perceived the most value in face-to-face feedback.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

To answer the central question of this phenomenological study, how effective is feedback between supervisors and subordinates in this military organization, the researcher obtained insights from eight members of this military organization located at an Air Force base in the Midwest of the United States. These interviews provided insights about perceptions of employees within the organization regarding whether their current feedback structure and process are effective. Saari and Judge (2004) found that feedback from a supervisor is important for the well-being and performance of the individual. By delving into what type of content from feedback sessions is important to subordinates, as well as effective delivery mechanisms and frequency, a plan for improved feedback was developed. Research participants had strong indicators as to the importance of feedback and how it helps them. They were able to pinpoint details, such as frequency, timing, and delivery method that would maximize the effectiveness of the feedback. In the end, a proposal for improved feedback will help members of the organization at all levels to become more productive and be able to more effectively accomplish the mission and objectives of the organization. As Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright (2017) noted, quality feedback can pay dividends by both the individual and the organization by increasing employee engagement as well as performance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the feedback landscape (amount, mechanism, and efficacy) for individuals of a small sized military unit in the Midwest, using a qualitative research method. The researcher sought to
answer the question as to whether the feedback in this organization within the past two years has been effective.

**Aim of the Study**

The aim of this dissertation research was to create an evidence-based description to inform leadership within the organization of the current feedback landscape, as well as factors contributing to successful or unsuccessful feedback in the workplace. The results of the research can help leaders shape future feedback policy and practice, hoping to contribute towards an improvement in efficacy. It is the hope of the researcher that these recommendations can be codified not only at the supervisor level, but also into official local policy and perhaps Air Force and Air National Guard regulations.

**Proposed Solution**

This section takes the data from the previous chapter that the researcher has broken up into themes. The themes were synthesized and reflected upon in order to recommend a solution. This section will identify and describe a framework, design, training plan, and course of action recommended for those in supervisory positions within the unit. As noted in Chapter Four, consistent themes emerged through the interviews of members of the organization. The six themes that surfaced were:

1. **Strengths and Weakness Identification**: Feedback helps subordinates identify strengths and weaknesses that have multiple benefits to the individual as well as the organization. Hecklau, Orth, Kidschun, and Nick (2018) noted that it is important to consider an employee’s strengths and weaknesses to ensure the development of their specific career development and career path. They emphasized that this is needed to retain a quality workforce. Research has shown
that the identification of these traits via feedback has positive effects on
performance (Hamdy, 2009).

2. Leadership development: Most participants want to move up in the hierarchy and
structure of the organization. This includes increased responsibility, higher rank,
and more pay. Individuals believed that the feedback process was an integral part
of developing themselves into future leaders, which will allow upward mobility.
In a study of priorities within medium to large organizations, Sherwood, Wolfe,
and Staley (2005) described the importance of a variety of aspects within the field
of leadership development as a top priority. Development opportunities have
benefits not only at the personal level but within the entire organization as well.

3. Frequency and Timing: Throughout the process of this research, the timing and
frequency of feedback were not sufficient in the eyes of the participants, nor was
it sufficient according to Air Force regulations. In a recent study, Kuvaas, Buch,
and Dysvik (2017) described the importance of the immediacy and frequency of
feedback. They showed that these factors were highly related to positive
employee performance.

4. Content: The content of feedback was subpar and did not satisfy the needs and
desires of the subordinates in order to allow them to be as productive as possible
towards the goals of the organization. Interviews with participants showed that
the content of feedback is a critical element in them perceiving a feedback session
as providing value. Qian, Yang, Han, Wang, and Wang (2018) showed that the
perceived value, including content, of feedback, was an important aspect of
employees feeling emotionally charged. The Air Force as an organization
specified that supervisors are to “effectively communicate performance standards and expectations” (Fedrigo, 2019, p. 9). This showed the importance of feedback from the highest levels of the organization.

5. Authenticity of feedback: The majority of participants perceived their feedback as being inauthentic for a variety of reasons. A climate of authenticity between coworkers, including the supervisor/subordinate relationship, leads to less employee burnout (Grandey, Foo, Groth, & Goodwin, 2012). Through experiences and observations in the classroom, one researcher noted that authenticity is when the learner perceives the educator as caring and one who gives legitimate and real information. The relationship between supervisor and subordinate is similar to that of a teacher and student in a classroom; therefore, this has wide applicability within organizations outside of a classroom (Frego, 2006). Employees who receive authentic feedback have been shown to reap the positive effects of intrinsic motivation as well as an increase in performance (Guo et al., 2014).

6. Method of feedback: All participants preferred and received face-to-face feedback, although, as noted in previous themes, it did not happen often enough. In order to address the issues these themes represent, a six-prong approach is recommended as a solution to bring the level of efficacy of feedback to where it needs to be:

1. Workshops: As unit members become new supervisors or approach the time at which they will become supervisors, I propose they participate in a 2-3 day workshop learning the fundamentals of becoming a leader within the
organization. The event should be kicked off by the most senior leader, if available, to emphasize the importance of the information within the workshop and convey the point that the senior leader within the organization is fully on board and supports this process. The senior leader should then allow the workshop coordinator to take over at this point, so the participants do not feel intimidated or threatened by the high rank of the senior leader. As a side note, the workshop should be run by one of the senior supervisors, allowing that person to get even more experience and knowledge of the pertinent topics. This will serve to further develop the workshop facilitators for possible senior leadership positions in the future. It will also encourage the attendees to have more ownership in their current or future jobs as supervisors. When employees perceive ownership of their jobs, they are more likely to put forth effort to engage in the job (Xiaoyan & Jing, 2016).

The workshop should consist of:

a. Reviewing the appropriate regulations that mandate the frequency and timing of feedback. This will set the stage early with the attendees that the Air Force as an organization takes the responsibility of feedback very seriously and that the ramifications of not abiding by the regulations is punishable.

b. The primary session within the workshop should consist of training materials developed within the organization that cover all of the aforementioned items, to include why feedback is important, how to give effective feedback, what methods of feedback are most preferred
and most desired, what the advantages and disadvantages of different feedback methods are, and the timing and frequency of effective feedback.

c. A brief discussion of the organizational hierarchy, as well as requirements for rank progression, should be included within the workshop. In particular, the attendees should leave with an understanding of what they need to accomplish in order to increase their chances of getting promoted, as well as knowledge of how likely it is that they will be able to advance into a leadership position. If a person looks at a hierarchical pyramid of the organization, it can easily be explained that within each higher level, fewer and fewer personnel will be able to progress into those positions. This will make attendees realize that not everybody who wants to progress to the top will be able to make it. As a side note, conversations will need to happen outside of this forum with each subordinate, so they can see their individual chances of advancement into leadership.

d. A study and review of best practices within organizations regarding feedback should be included in the workshop. In the literature, there are a wide variety of feedback suggestions and techniques that can be used. Since every situation is different, supervisors should be exposed to ideas and concepts that they may decide to implement in the future.

e. During the final portion of the workshop, discourse requiring participation by all attendees should be included. By providing sample
scenarios of effective and ineffective feedback, attendees can work in small groups to not only get exposed to scenarios they may encounter in the future, but also to use critical thinking to come up with their own way of dealing with the issue presented in the scenario. Much like a case study, this gives participants real-life examples to practice prior to experiencing a similar scenario in the future.

2. Quarterly training: All personnel typically get together only one weekend per month or even one weekend every other month. Therefore, there are limited opportunities to reach all unit members at the same time throughout the Monday through Friday work week. Because of this, these get-togethers are very valuable and are packed full of activities, including training opportunities. This researcher’s recommendation is to allow between 30 and 60 minutes every three months to have ongoing training sessions with all members within the organization required to participate. This could be an opportunity to designate an “up and coming” leader to research and facilitate topics of interest that will contribute to the overall knowledge in areas of feedback. Other organizations have had success in ensuring that trainees receive knowledge of the importance of feedback, and positive effects have resulted (Chur-Hansen & McLean, 2006). Emphasis should be on:

a. Rules and regulations: This information would be similar to that in the workshop required for new supervisors but just at a cursory level. This will give basic familiarity to all unit members as to the importance and benefits of feedback as far as the Air Force is
concerned. This will set the expectation of at least the minimum level of feedback each member will receive.

b. Promotion statistics: Showing personnel the actual statistics on how many people get promoted into each higher rank can shed some light and set the expectation as to what each individual’s chances are in getting promoted. At a minimum, members will be able to see numerically and statistically at each level whether they have a high chance of promotion or not. If not, they can work towards increasing their chances by following the recommendations in the next section.

c. Promotion recommendations: Although not a forum to discuss specific individuals and what they need to do to maximize their chances of getting promoted, this is still an opportunity to look at the trends and qualifications of those who obtained a higher rank through promotion. Valuable information can be seen by displaying aggregate data showing what education level, position, length of service, awards, and other pertinent factors were in those who got promoted vs. not promoted. This will informally show each attendee what the reality is regarding what they need to accomplish to get promoted and increase rank.

3. Roadmap: According to Merriam-Webster’s dictionary, a roadmap is defined as “a detailed plan to guide progress towards a goal” (Roadmap, n.d.). In this case, a roadmap will be a plan to guide unit members towards their goal but at an individual level. Some goals a person may have could be increased
responsibility, increased leadership opportunities, higher chances of promotion, or just to continue working at the current level for the rest of the enlistment or career. It is recommended that each supervisor works with each subordinate to come up with a detailed plan of where they are and how to obtain their ultimate goal. It is during these meetings that a supervisor will be able to have a conversation and set the expectations of how far up the hierarchy a person may be able to achieve, if that is their goal. Supervisors understand the bigger picture of how many will be able to move up the hierarchy versus how many have that desire. They will then be able to set the expectation as to whether that is realistic or perhaps not attainable. Based on the interviews during this research, multiple participants would be perfectly accepting of being told that they could only climb to a certain level. They would rather know this information early, as opposed to being told that they will make it into an upper leadership position when, in fact, there is little to no possibility. Participants expressed that they would prefer to know this information so they can switch their focus into other things rather than try to obtain a leadership position. Without a doubt, there will be situations where the member has no aspirations to climb into upper leadership positions. Meetings such as this will bring this information to light as well, which will allow the supervisors to plan for the future as they decide who has the strengths and qualities needed for such positions.

4. Tracking System: It is recommended that supervisors use a simple tracking mechanism to note when feedback sessions occur. This will have multiple
benefits. First, it gives the supervisor and subordinate documentation so they both know how often and how many feedback sessions were held in a given reporting period. Additionally, it can serve as a reminder to each person, assuming they review the document periodically. Time often goes by pretty rapidly, and often before a person knows it, many months can go by without feedback. If unit members at all levels incorporate a review of this document into their weekly or monthly routine, they will notice how much time has elapsed since the last feedback session. Hopefully, this will encourage the sessions to happen more frequently. Note that none of the research participants complained that feedback happened too frequently. Therefore, any improvement in frequency would be welcome and beneficial for all involved. This gives the supervisor a record to discuss or show the senior leader who is responsible for each supervisor’s performance feedback. If the senior leader wants to use this form as a means of performance evaluation, at least, in part, this would ensure its use. Finally, the worksheet could double as an informal form to document conversations about movement into higher positions as well.

5. Team Building Events: The structure and design of this military unit cause personnel to be scattered around the military installation. They do not often get to interact with their unit peers or supervisors. Team building events should be implemented to help strengthen the familiarity and bond among members of the unit. It has been shown that togetherness has a marked benefit in creating a bond between military members. Very often military
members create a strong bond between coworkers when they are deployed to a location and forced to work together. This happens even while deployed to austere locations around the world where otherwise most would believe that morale would be lower. Although, at first, some may dislike what they believe to be forced interaction, over time, as more people participate in these events, bonds are likely to become stronger. This will serve to lessen the current gap of lack of familiarity and lack of day-to-day relationships that are not able to be built. As people become more familiar with each other and strengthen those bonds, interactions, such as giving and receiving feedback, should become more comfortable as well. Building bonds between supervisors and the people they supervise can play a part in increasing feedback effectiveness in the future.

6. Reflection: Taking the time to look back upon something with serious thought and consideration cannot be understated in importance. As part of the feedback process, subordinates should be allowed an opportunity to reflect on what they accomplished during the previous reporting period. Specifically, they should evaluate and reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses, what successes and failures they have had, as well as how they believe they are progressing towards the goals the supervisor agreed to during the previous reporting period. This not only provides the subordinates an opportunity to reflect on these aspects of the performance and feedback process, but also allows them to participate more from the viewpoint of the person doing the rating. Often employees are the recipients of feedback but have not gone
through the exercise of looking deep inside themselves and trying to rate themselves as a supervisor would. This could give a far more introspective look into each individual, assuming the task was taken seriously. Supervisors also could be encouraged to reflect on what their subordinates do on a day-to-day basis in order to make them more effective.

**Factors and Stakeholders Related to the Solution**

Multiple stakeholders either contribute to the proposed solution for the current research study or are directly impacted by it. See Appendix E for a graphical depiction of each proposed solution and how each stakeholder is affected.

Employees/personnel within the unit arguably have the most to gain from the proposed recommendations. In cases where feedback has either not been given often enough or just has not been effective, following this researcher’s recommendations will go a long way in the betterment of these factors. By following these guidelines, each subordinate within the organization will not only receive feedback at a required minimum interval, but the training throughout the year should make the feedback much more effective than what has been given in the recent past.

Supervisors also stand to gain by following the recommendations. Theoretically, all supervisors should want to do the best job they can and have the most positive impact on their subordinates. By attending the workshops and training, supervisors will learn the rules, techniques, procedures, and tips that can make them more effective as supervisors. They will be able to have much more of an effect on subordinates than they have in the past. They will have a toolkit of knowledge that they can pull from in order to most effectively give feedback to their employees. This not only has an effect downstream in
the hierarchy, but also will serve to make supervisors more valuable and competitive for future higher positions in leadership.

The senior leader of the organization also gains by following and supporting the proposed plan of action. Having a bench of supervisors who are gaining in their knowledge of effective supervision and management ideas and techniques strengthens the leadership team. It also establishes a better and more robust culture of feedback all the way down the chain of command. When leaders develop and exhibit positive behaviors in the workplace, this will have an effect of developing positive outcomes for the whole organization (Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997). When young troops eventually move into junior leadership roles followed by more senior leadership roles, they will have had a lot of experience in being productive and valuable supervisors.

The organization itself gains as well. If better and more timely feedback can foster more productivity and a better overall employee, the unit gains benefits. Looking at the overall strength of the unit and having more capable employees only increases this strength and theoretically can make the execution of the mission more effective.

In the same vein, the Air Force as a whole will benefit. Under the premise that workers at all levels get better and better at feedback, leading to increased productivity and value to the workplace, many of these unit members will head to other areas within the Air Force. Bringing in more effective leaders and personnel in general should lead to a more capable workforce. This not only translates to an immediate increase in knowledge and productivity, but also has the effect of allowing these individuals to focus more on learning their new jobs as they transition to different areas of the Air Force as opposed to struggling with mediocre (or less) supervisory and leadership skills.
Finally, although it may seem a stretch, the general public will also benefit. Taxpayer dollars are used to fund the military. Anything that can be done to make the employees more effective and contribute better to the mission will give taxpayers more for their dollar. The military has a wide variety of mission sets, and any improvement in the missions will result in more value per taxpayer dollar spent. In these times of constrained fiscal resources, governmental organizations owe it to themselves to be as fiscally responsible as possible while effectively executing their mission.

**Potential Barriers and Obstacles to Proposed Recommendation**

The recommendation is only feasible with buy-in from people at all levels within the organization. This includes the senior leaders, “middle management” within the organization, everyone at the supervisory level, as well as the subordinates. The most critical for buy-in are the middle managers and the senior leader, although this does not discount the fact that this needs acceptance at lower levels as well. The senior leader is the most critical person who needs to accept this for it to succeed. Knowing that there will be great benefits by performing feedback activities better should make the chance of the senior leader accepting this pretty high. Once the senior leader decides to adopt these improvements, the result will be a lot higher chance of buy-in from the leaders at the next level down. When top leaders within the organization exemplify values and processes, they will directly and indirectly cascade throughout the organization (Schaubroeck et al., 2012).

The managers in the middle, usually squadron commanders or flight commanders, are also a critical group that needs to accept this in order to maximize the chance for success. This group of leaders will likely have competing priorities for time during their
day as well as training time during weekend Guard Drill. In an already full training day, for example, how will another activity be squeezed in? It is the hope of this researcher that priority is given to the task of trying to improve feedback. Since Air Force regulations require feedback to be given anyway, and since the organization has not been meeting at least the minimum requirement, this should be more than reason enough to implement suggestions for this program to improve. Due to demands on time, it is easy to think only tactically as to what needs to be done in the short-term. By thinking more strategically and accomplishing activities that may take some time now but will be fruitful in the future, this sets up the organization and personnel for success.

In the military, due to the hierarchical as well as rank structures, employees at lower levels do not necessarily always get a choice as to what to follow and what not to follow. In the strictest sense of the military, the subordinates will have no choice but to follow this proposal, if implemented by senior leadership. However, with greater acceptance at the most junior levels, this will allow the right mindset and positive attitude towards accepting this new way of doing things. People generally do not want to be forced into doing things, especially if they already perceive that they are too busy. However, through the quarterly training during weekend Guard Drill, it will very quickly become evident as to why this renewed focus on feedback is important. When workers can see that this will not only help them improve, but also can help their future leadership and promotion opportunities, they are more likely to embrace this new mindset and change in procedure.
Implications

Practical Implications

This research study may contribute to the greater good of the typical military organization by offering a proposed solution that senior leaders and middle managers can implement in order to create a more robust environment and culture of feedback. Personnel at all levels will benefit from this proposed solution as they not only get in line with the feedback and timeline requirements of the Air Force, but also benefit from increased awareness of training of best feedback practices. Over time, as more robust feedback practices are embedded in policies and procedures, development of personnel will be impacted in a positive manner.

Implications for Future Research

This research study provided an approach for an improved feedback mechanism, including content and timing, in an environment of a small military organization. There are three areas this researcher believes this study can serve as a basis and contribute to future research in this area: (a) the content of feedback sessions to determine the areas employees will benefit from the most, (b) the importance of informal vs. formal feedback to determine what the best amount of each is to develop and grow employees, and (c) the timing of feedback to determine the best frequency and number of occurrences for feedback to be the most impactful.

Content. The current research study provided insight into multiple aspects of the feedback situation in a military organization. Future qualitative researchers could gather more information from participants, supervisors, and recommendations from other research in order to build a robust portfolio of content that will maximize benefit.
benefit can be viewed from the perspective of the subordinate, supervisor, senior leader, or military unit, as any or all would have organizational and personal benefits. This type of qualitative study would provide an opportunity to delve deeper into what feedback sessions currently consist of and what they should consist of.

Type. The current research study provided insight into how much feedback has been given within a two-year period. A further study that looks specifically at formal feedback, as well as informal feedback, can further distill how much of each type of feedback is appropriate, welcome, and needed.

Timing. The current research study determined that the majority of the time, feedback was not given often enough. Further study on the best amount and frequency of feedback can add even more richness to the field and help leaders decide how often to plan feedback into their ongoing schedule.

**Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice**

Chapter Five addressed the role of the leader in implementing the proposed solution. The framework provided by this dissertation in practice can provide a good basis for organizations of all types to look at their feedback environment and decide whether it is as effective as it should be. Pointing back to the literature review, there are numerous reasons to ensure there is high efficacy in feedback between supervisors and subordinates. This can be valuable for personal or professional reasons for both the supervisor and subordinate, as well as lead to higher effectiveness for a department or an organization as a whole. Although this study was specifically designed to help a military unit, these findings can also be considered in both the private and public sectors within civilian organizations.
Summary

The eight participants involved in this study provided great insight into answering the question as to how effective feedback is between supervisors and subordinates in this military organization. The participants described their personal experience within the unit as well as details such as frequency, timing, and delivery method that would maximize effectiveness of feedback in their ideal world. Themes such as strengths and weakness identification, leadership development, frequency and timing, content, authenticity, and feedback method were explored. A six-prong solution was recommended as part of an overall plan to bring the level of feedback efficacy up to where it needs to be. The solution involved the implementation of workshops, quarterly training, development of a roadmap and tracking system, creating team building events, and making a concerted effort for individual reflection.
References


Hecklau, F., Orth, R., Kidschun, F., & Nick, G. (2018). The four-step approach for the creation of the HR concept for the EPIC Centre of Excellence in Production


Sargeant, J., Bruce, D., & Campbell, C. M. (2013). Practicing physicians' needs for assessment and feedback as part of professional development. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions, 33*(S1), S54-S62.


Appendix A

Participant Questions

1) Describe why you think feedback is important or not important to you in the workplace.

2) How often have you received feedback within the past two years and what role did it play, if any, on you navigating the work environment?

3) What feedback frequency is sufficient for you, and why?

4) What should feedback from your supervisor entail in order to help you the most in the workplace?

5) Please describe for me a time when you felt as though you were penalized or some other negative outcome occurred as a result of you not receiving feedback from your supervisor often enough.

6) Please describe for me a time when you felt as though you felt you benefited or had a positive outcome from receiving feedback from your supervisor.

7) What are your thoughts on receiving no feedback from your supervisor?

8) What method (face-to-face, email, telephone, etc.) does your supervisor use to give you feedback? Why is that particular method effective or not effective for you?

9) What feedback method is your preferred method of receiving feedback?
Appendix B

Participant Information Letter

DATE: ______________________

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate in Creighton University’s Interdisciplinary Doctorate of Education program. I am conducting a study looking at the effectiveness of feedback within this military unit, looking at feedback between supervisors and subordinates. The study involves research, which consists of me interviewing personnel within the unit to find out details on how timely and effective feedback has been. My intent is to include non-identifiable summary information in my Dissertation in Practice document as well as note any deficiencies and recommend a plan to improve the feedback landscape, if applicable. The Dissertation in Practice will be made available to supervisors in the unit as well, so they can see if there are any areas for improvement. I plan to interview you for a period of 20-50 minutes and will ask you questions regarding feedback that you have received from your supervisor. This study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time.

There are risks with virtually any study. There could be questions that I ask that could make you uncomfortable during the interview. My intent is not to make you uncomfortable, and you are more than welcome to not answer any question that you feel
makes you uncomfortable. This interview is completely voluntary, and its purpose is to
gather data to improve feedback within the unit.

This research could benefit you by allowing you to think through feedback that
you have received. This research can also benefit the unit by providing supervisors
information on any deficiencies seen as well as ways to improve feedback for the future.
This research may have wider applicability to other organizations as well.

The data obtained in the interview will be kept confidential. The actual verbiage
from the interview will be transcribed into a document, and no identifying information
will be kept with the recording or the document. I will be the only person with access to
the recording, and that will be destroyed/erased when the research is complete.

There is no compensation involved in participating in this study.

If you have any questions about this research, you are more than welcome to ask
me prior to or during the interview or contact me at 402-290-1791 (cell) afterwards for
further explanation. If you have questions about research participants’ rights, you can

Sincerely,

Raymond D. Romero, Principal Investigator
Appendix C

IRB Approval

Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board

2500 California Plaza • Omaha, Nebraska 68178 phone: 402.280.2126 • fax: 402.280.4766 • email: irb@creighton.edu

DATE:

TO: FROM:

PROJECT TITLE: SUBMISSION TYPE: ACTION:

EFFECTIVE DATE: EXPIRATION DATE: TYPE OF REVIEW:

July 16, 2018

Raymond Romero, EdD

Creighton University IRB-02 Social Behavioral

[1256277-1] Understanding the Efficacy of Supervisor to Subordinate Feedback of Military Personnel - A Qualitative Study

New Project

APPROVED
July 16, 2018 July 15, 2019 Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. This project was reviewed using the expedited process, in which two or more IRB members review the protocol and attachments and make recommendations as to approval and/or modification. The reviewers for the above project have recommended that this project be approved. The following documents were received, reviewed and approved:

- ConsentWaiver-416AttachmentGWaiverofConsent.docx(UPDATED:07/12/2018)
- Creighton-IRBApplicationForm-Creighton-IRBApplicationForm(UPDATED:07/12/2018)
- Letter-ParticipantInformationLetter.doc(UPDATED:07/12/2018)
- Other-DissertationProposal-interviewquestions-Romero-7Jun2018.docx(UPDATED:06/7/2018)

The Creighton University IRB-02 Social Behavioral has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The reviewers of this project have recommended approval. The consent documentation has been waived per 45 CFR 46.117 as this research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

1. Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant.
2. Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the Application for Modification of Approved Research for this procedure.

3. All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-

- 1 - Generated on IRBNet

COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the New Information Reporting application for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

4. Advertisements, letters, internet postings, any other media for subject recruitment, and information given to subjects for use in this study require approval before posting or distribution. Please use the Request for Review of Supplemental Documents form when requesting review for supplemental documents.

5. This project has been determined to be a minimal risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the Reporting Form for Continuing Review/Project Termination for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

If you complete this project within the year, you are required to close the study and submit a final report before the expiration date.

If you have any questions, please contact Brooke Fitzpatrick at (402) 280-3208 or bfitzpatrick@creighton.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.
This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Creighton University IRB-02 Social Behavioral's records.
Appendix D

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

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

1. To have enough time to decide whether to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
   
   a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.

   b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.
Appendix E

Graphical Depiction of Stakeholders

Proposed Solution – Stakeholders Affected

WORKSHOPS

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Proposed Solution – Stakeholders Affected

QUARTERLY TRAINING

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Proposed Solution – Stakeholders Affected

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Proposed Solution – Stakeholders Affected

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Proposed Solution – Stakeholders Affected

**TEAM BUILDING**

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Proposed Solution – Stakeholders Affected

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