



# Stolen Valor and Military Impostors: Exploring Impact and Deception

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## 1.05 Cultural Competence

The NASW (2012) developed standards as a framework for social work practice with service members, veterans, and their families.

Standard three:

“all professional social workers, regardless of practice focus or level, should have a basic understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing this population and how, as a profession, we can support and respond to the population in an effective and meaningful way” (NASW, 2012, p.17).



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

The CSWE Commission on Educational Policy (COEP) created a framework for specialized practice, CSWE published the first guide for Military Social Work in 2010.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2015) defines military social work as “direct practice, policy and administrative activities, and advocacy. Including providing prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation to service members, veterans, and their families, and their communities” (p.xvi).

834 accredited social work programs - 17 accredited programs teaching military social work education (National Association of Social Workers, 2017).



## ► The Concern

► To what extent are social workers prepared to work with military populations as CSWE accredited programs do not require military culture education courses and the NASW guide focuses on the response to working with service members, veterans, and their families in military settings, such as the DoD and VA.

## ► The Need

► For social workers to understand the military culture, not only specialized in the DoD and VA, yet to be fundamentally military culturally competent.

As a social worker, where will you encounter military members, veterans, and their families?













ALL SOCIAL WORK IS  
MILITARY SOCIAL WORK!

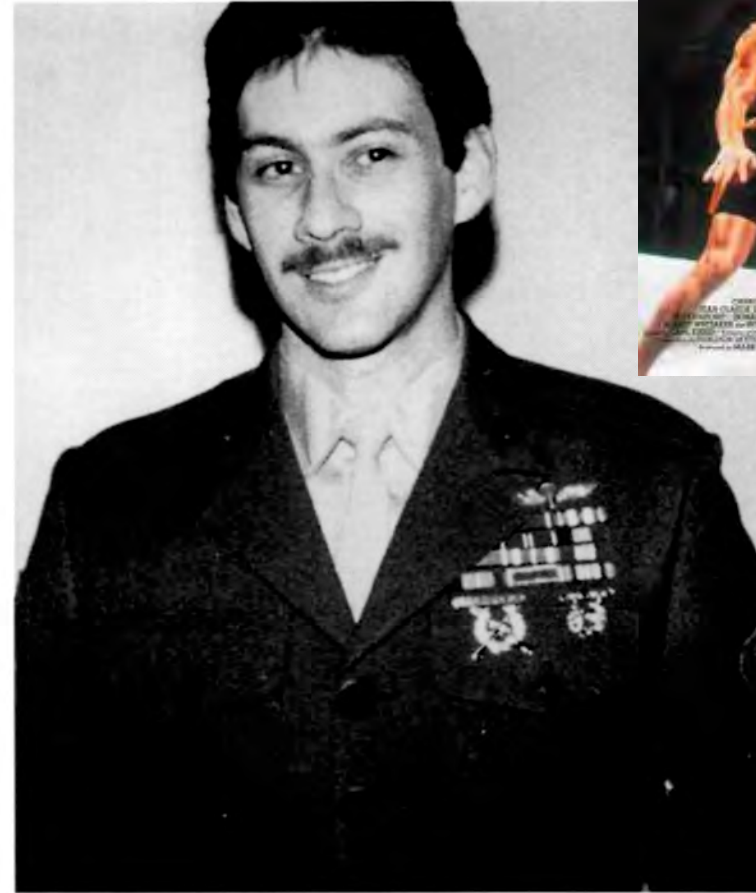


# Background

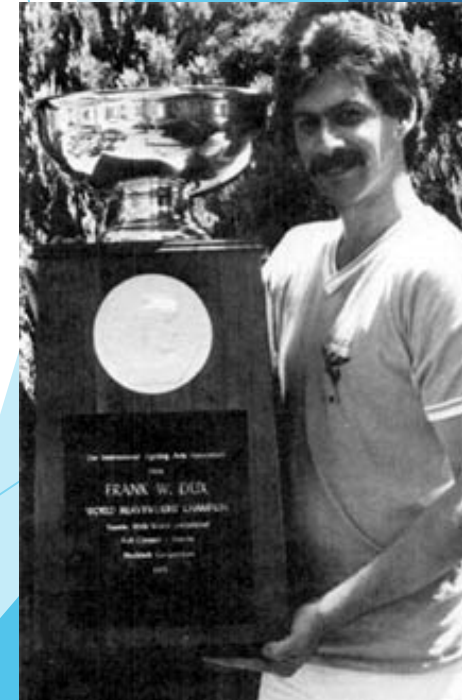


## Stolen Valor

It's not a New Thing



Frank Dux, whom Jean-Claude Van Damme immortalized in the movie *Bloodsport*, wearing bogus medals.

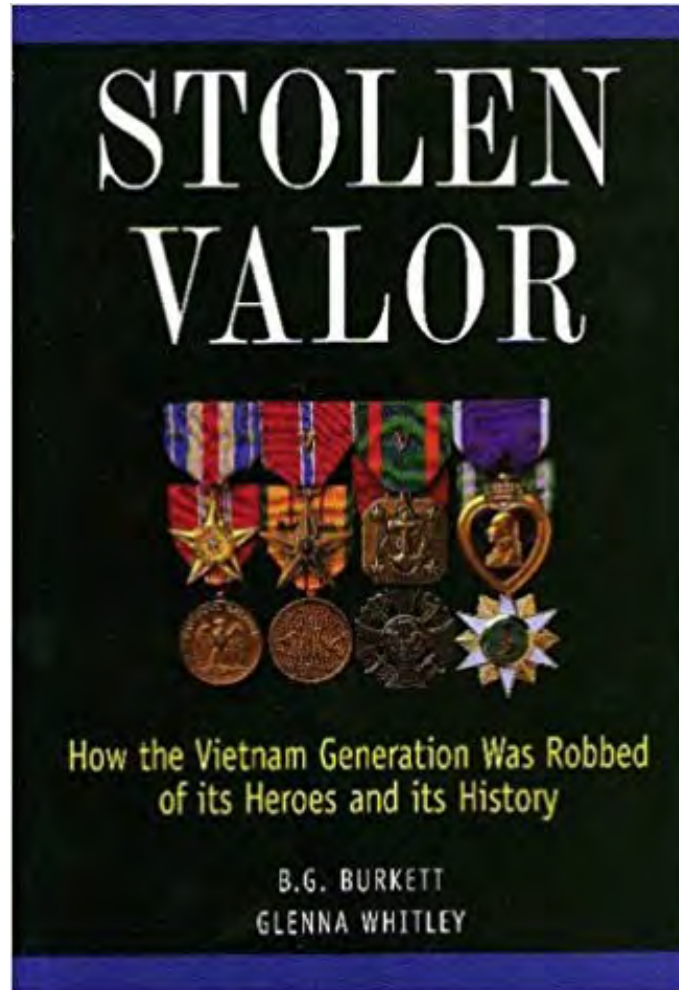


SOURCE: "Stolen Valor" by B. G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley - Verity Press, Inc. page 338

# Term Coined by B.G. Burkett in 1998



Vietnam Veteran





**"Most common question I get asked...**  
why do they do it.

I say, Willie Sutton, when asked why he robbed banks, said, "Because that's where the money is." Same answer for Stolen Valor.... "Because that gets them what they want."

~Doug Sterner



9th Circuit Court of Appeals  
U.S v. Alvarez (2011)  
"(Did not) harm anyone else."

Victimless? Or is it?





On June 03, 2013, President Obama signed into law the latest version of the Stolen Valor Act which makes it a **federal** crime for people to pass themselves off as war heroes by wearing medals they didn't rightfully earn.

The legislation passed both houses of Congress with overwhelming majorities.



## False Speech: Stolen Valor Act U.S v. Alvarez (2012)

**Facts of the Case:** Xavier Alvarez claimed to be a retired Marine and a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor. In fact, he did not receive this award nor ANY other military medal or decoration.

**Question:** Does the Stolen Valor Act, violate Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment

**Decision:** Yes. Content-based restrictions on speech are subject to strict scrutiny and are almost always invalid, except in rare and extreme circumstances.

Congress drafted the Stolen Valor Act too broadly, attempting to limit speech that could cause no harm. Criminal punishment for such speech is improper



## No Honor Among Thieves: The Legacy of U.S. v. Alvarez and the Stolen Valor Act

*Posted on March 19, 2013 by Justine Mikaloff, Former Senior Staff Writer*

### SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

No. 11-210

UNITED STATES, PETITIONER *v.* XAVIER ALVAREZ  
ON WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF  
APPEALS FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

[June 28, 2012]

JUSTICE KENNEDY announced the judgment of the Court and delivered an opinion, in which THE CHIEF JUSTICE, JUSTICE GINSBURG, and JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR join.

Lying was his habit. Xavier Alvarez, the respondent here, lied when he said that he played hockey for the





Tina Kersten



Sean Yetman



Jesse Macbeth

# Examples of Stolen Valor





# Tim Poe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pf8vTmw1w-k&t=9s>

# ACTIVITY: SPOT THE REAL VIETNAM VETS





# ACTIVITY: SPOT THE REAL VIETNAM VETS







Warning signs

DD FORM 1 NOV 56 2

30. GOVERNMENT LIFE INSURANCE IN FORCE  
☐ YES ☒ NO

31. VA BENEFITS PREVIOUSLY APPLIED FOR (Specify)  
None

32. REMARKS  
Item #3  
Lamp #2  
Blood Oro  
SELF \$10.00

33. PERMANENT AT DISCHARGE  
Said to be

1 W 0

DD 1 NOV 56 2

“It's Classified”

“I’m the only one left”







Not That  
Many POW's

► Not that  
many POW's

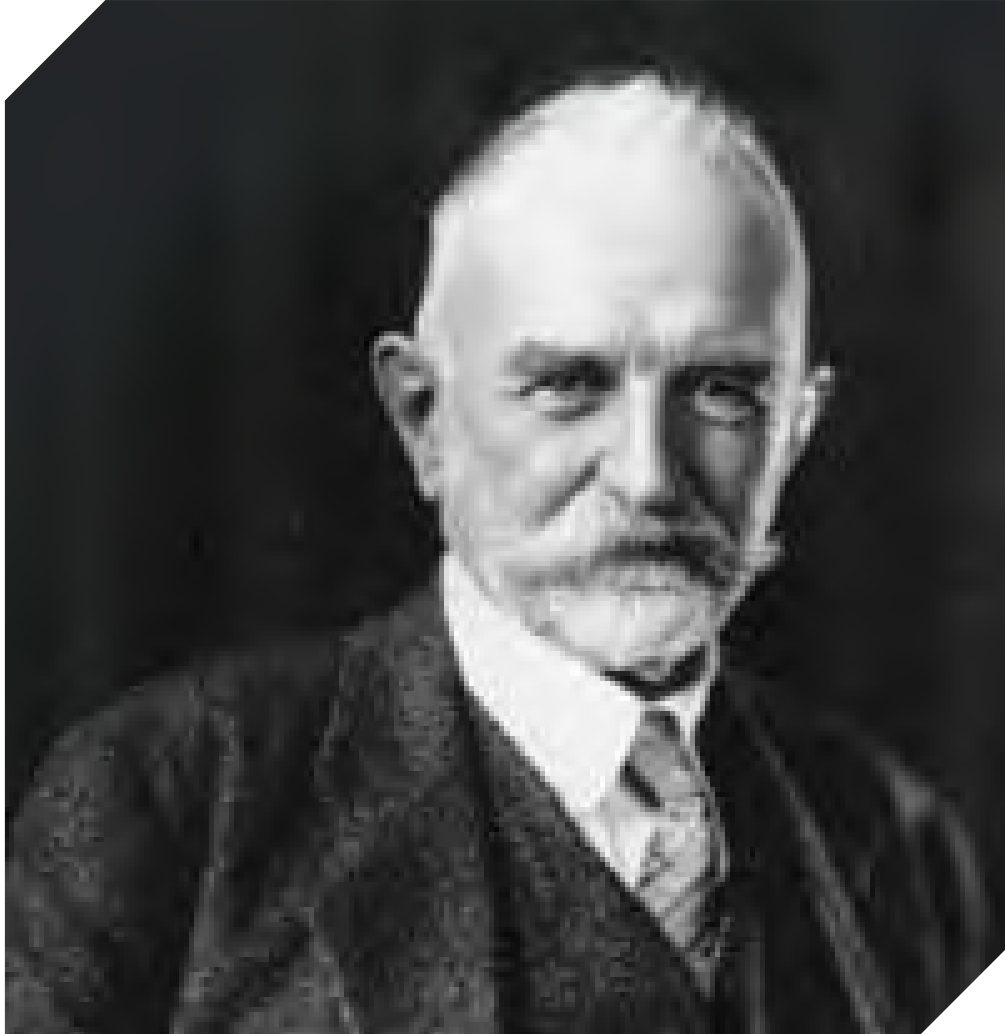




“Our business office verified it!”







# Theoretical Perspective

George Herbert Mead  
Symbolic Interactionism



# Premises

- ▶ "Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things."
- ▶ "The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society."
- ▶ "The meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in managing what he/she encounters."



How does it affect  
social work?





Micro

# DSM-V Cluster B - Personality Disorders

**Cluster B** is characterized by appearing dramatic, emotional, or erratic. It includes the following personality disorders with their distinguishing features:

Antisocial: Social irresponsibility, disregard for others, deceitfulness, and manipulation of others for personal gain

Borderline: Inner emptiness, unstable relationships, and emotional dysregulation

Histrionic: Attention seeking and excessive emotionality

Narcissistic: Self-grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy

- ▶ Misdiagnosis
- ▶ Characteristics
- ▶ Motivations



# Impact to Survivors/Victims





# ROMANTIC DECEPTION

TIMES INSIDER

## While Reporting on Facebook Scams, an Unexpected Tragedy

I was writing about women duped by fake American soldiers when one of my sources was killed. After I found out, telling her story felt even more important.



<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/28/reader-center/facebook-military-soldier-scam.html>

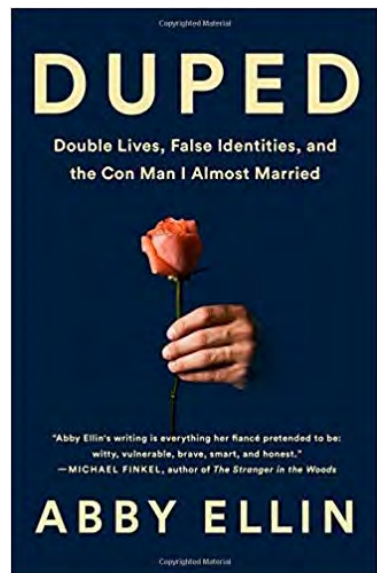


## Romance scam uses military photos to fool widow

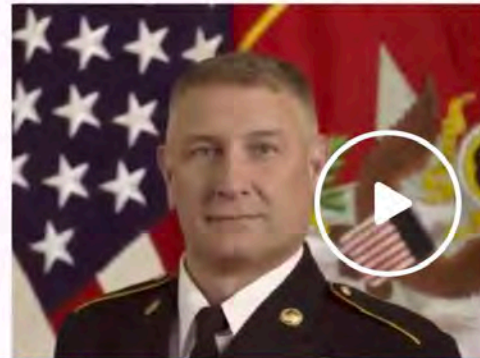
BY MIKE MCKNIGHT  
FEBRUARY 2, 2020 AT 12:37 PM

Share ↗

<https://kslnnewsradio.com/1918805/ror-uses-military-photos-to-fool-widow/>



SGT. MAJ. OF THE ARMY  
RAYMOND F. CHANDLER III



SCAMBUSTERS

**SCAMMED OUT OF LOVE AND MONEY**  
HANAHAN WOMAN BECOMES VICTIM OF ROMANCE SCAM



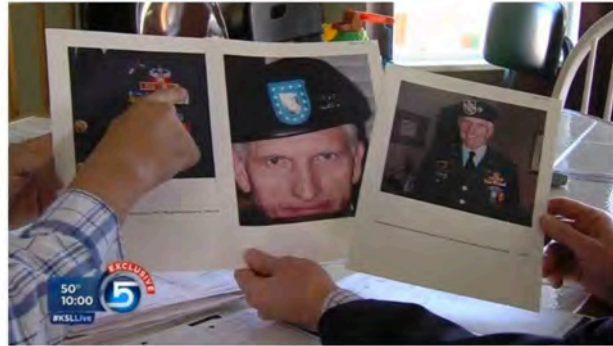
ASK THE COMMANDANT

I would like to hear from you! In order to keep our NCO Leadership Center of Excellence and NCOPDS relevant and responsive, I need your input on where you think we can improve. Your voice matters. Ask the Commandant is a tool designed specifically for members of the NCO community and other Army professionals with questions and concerns related to the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence.



<https://www.live5news.com/2019/02/15/live-scambusters-scammed-love-money/>

# FAMILY DECEPTION



Man fools family for years by

KSL.com News Sports Brandview TV Radio Live Obituaries Weather 68°



Man fools family for years by  
posing as military hero



<https://www.ksl.com/article/24746387/man-fools-family-for-years-by-posing-as-military-hero>



# COMMUNITY/BUSINESS

## DECEPTION



<https://www.wnep.com/article/news/local/lackawanna-county/scranton-christopher-crawford-stolen-valor-theft-american-legion/523-fa8bd5cb-4c05-437d-9f49-1b9937ce7a71>

### Former Blue Springs planning commissioner gets prison sentence in stolen valor case

Nov 12, 2015, 3:08pm CST Updated: Nov 12, 2015, 3:18pm CST

Michael Parker, former developer and vice chairman of the Blue Springs Planning Commission, was sentenced to 51 months in federal prison for defrauding the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business Program.

Parker is a well-known business man in Eastern Jackson County, formerly running Parker Construction Co. in Blue Springs, a company that developed several residential and commercial developments in the area. Parker was charged with defrauding the government in 2011 and was immediately placed on leave from the Planning Commission, eventually being replaced in June 2012.

Parker, his father Warren Parker and his mother Mary Parker were charged with making false claims for a company they ran called Silver Star Construction LLC. Warren Parker claimed to have been awarded three Silver Stars, four Bronze Stars, three Purple Hearts, 11 Air Medals, a presidential citation and other honors.

**RELATED:** Former KC business owner admits defrauding VA, DOD

He used his false valor claims to gain 10 contracts between 2008 and 2010 from the Veterans Administration and the



Military service records have been in the spotlight amid allegations that a Houston energy executive misrepresented his military record.





► At the bivariate level, marital status, gender, location, military experience, and type of relationship were significant among all the four criteria PCL-C subscales with race only being significant in the hyperarousal criteria. When examining the multivariate analysis, location (non-rural) and type of relationship (romantic) were most significantly associated with the PCL-C subscale criteria.

► This study also verifies the PCL-C scale can be used to measure the impact of deception and can be an important screening tool in clinical practice for those experiencing post-traumatic stress after being deceived by an individual making false military claims. The findings support the utilization applications of the PCL-C scale for clinicians.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Characteristics of Sample (n=92)*

Demographics Characteristics	N	%
Age		
<i>Older adults</i>	59	64%
<i>Younger adults</i>	33	36%
Race		
<i>BIPOC</i>	24	26%
<i>White</i>	68	74%
Marital Status		
<i>Married</i>	33	36%
<i>Not married</i>	59	64%
Gender		
<i>Female</i>	69	75%
<i>Not Female</i>	23	25%
Location		
<i>Rural</i>	35	38%
<i>Not Rural</i>	57	62%
Education		
<i>Degree</i>	59	64%
<i>No Degree</i>	33	36%
Experience with the Military		
<i>Served</i>	67	73%
<i>Did not serve</i>	25	27%
Relationship		
<i>Romantic</i>	56	61%
<i>Non-romantic</i>	36	39%



# Mezzo

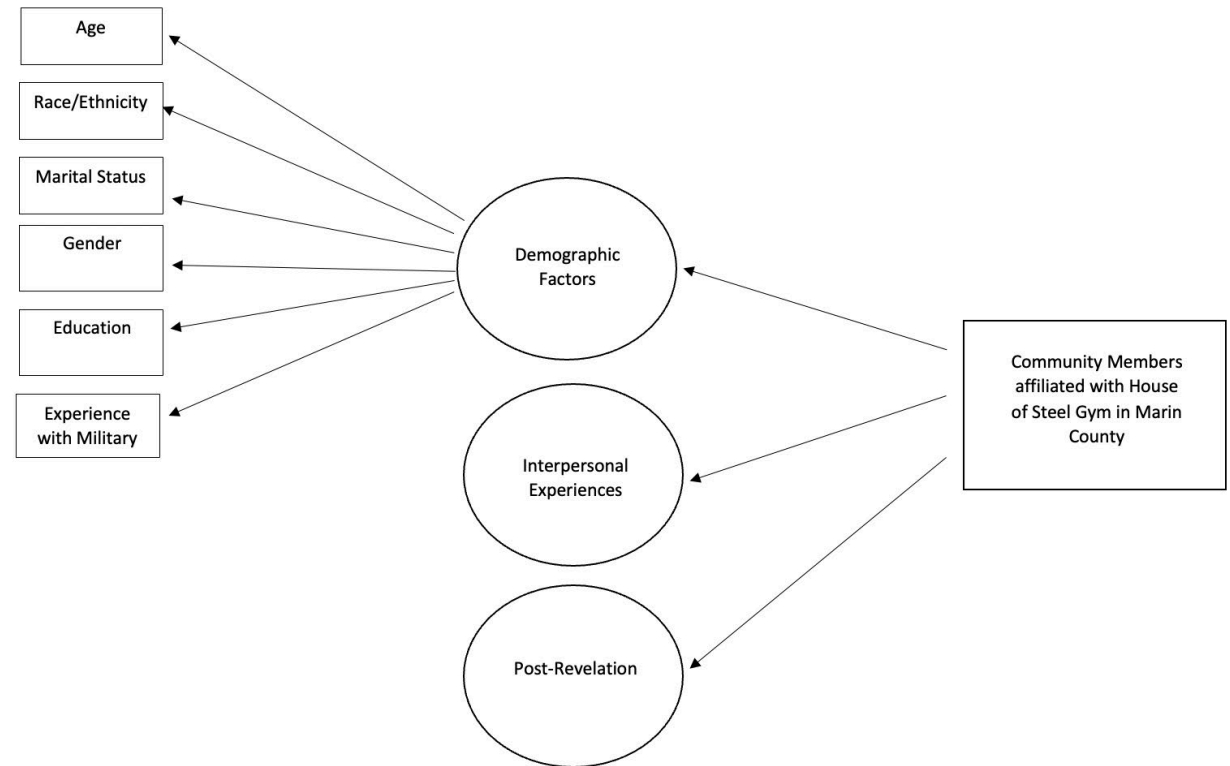
The current study explored the impact of deception residents of one Northern California county experienced from one community leader who made fraudulent military claims.

## Demographic Characteristics of Sample (n=16)

ages ranged from 46 to 80 years of age with a mean age of 65

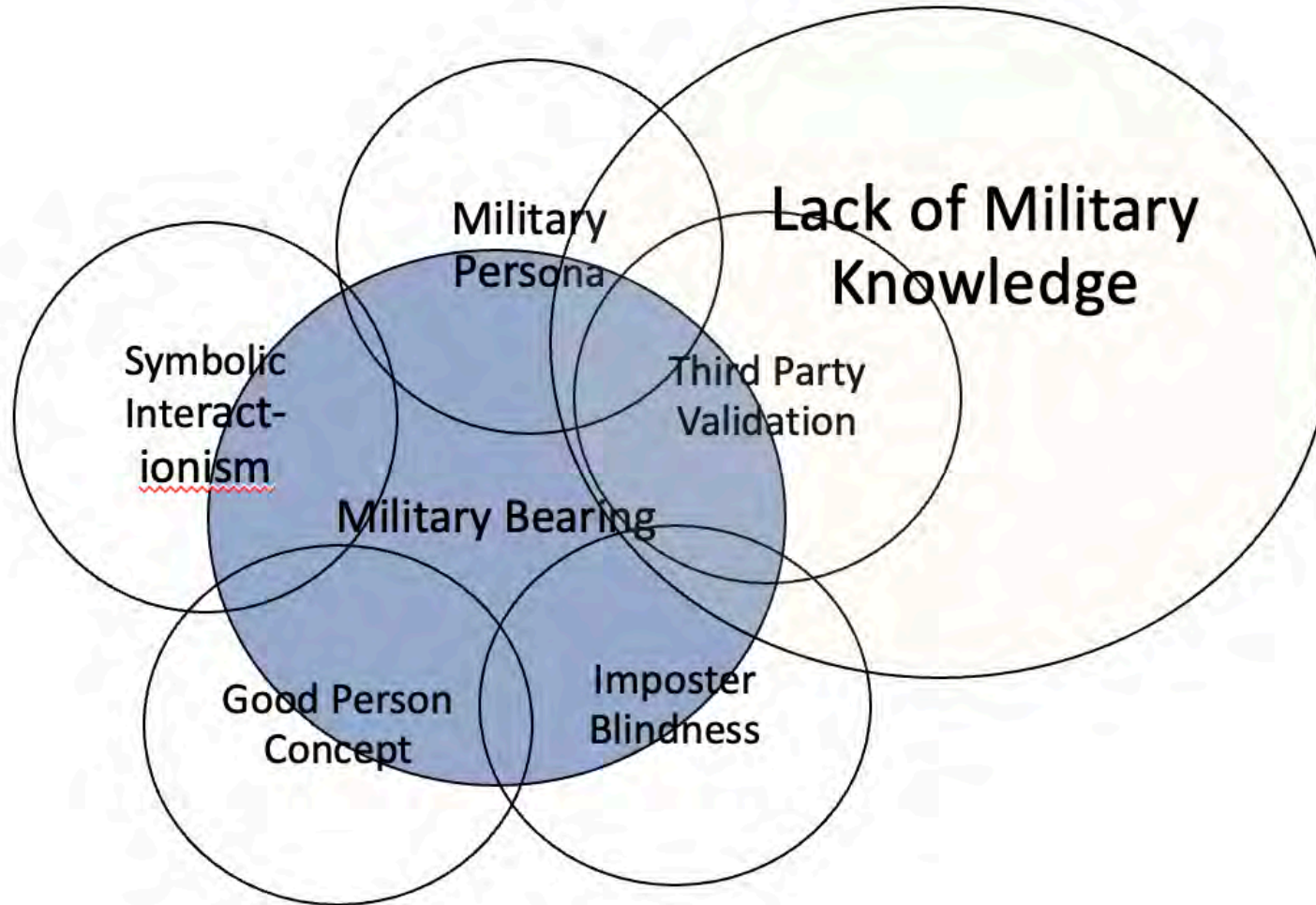
Demographics Characteristics		N	%
Race	BIPOC	1	6%
	White	15	94%
Marital Status	Married	8	50%
	Not married	8	50%
Gender	Female	4	25%
	Male	12	75%
Veterans Status	Veterans	11	68%
	Non-Veterans	5	32%
Education	Degree	13	81%
	Some Education	3	19%

## Conceptual model of the impact of deception in mezzo settings





## *Cluster of themes*



# Macro

## Associated Press: POW benefit claimants exceed recorded POWs

April 14, 2009 at 6:54am

[Another prime example for the need for electronic medical/personnel records between DOD and VA.]

POW benefit claimants exceed recorded POWs

By ALLEN G. BREED  
Sunday, April 12, 2009

Prisoners of war suffer in ways most veterans don't, enduring humiliating forced marches, torture or other trauma that may haunt them long afterward. In partial recompense, the government extends them special benefits, from free parking and tax breaks to priority in medical treatment.

Trouble is, some of the much-admired recipients of these benefits apparently don't deserve them.

There are only 21 surviving POWs from the first Gulf War in 1991, the Department of Defense says. Yet the Department of Veterans Affairs is paying disability benefits to 286 service members it says were taken prisoner during that conflict, according to data released by VA to The Associated Press.

## Couple charged with faking military service injuries to receive benefits

Courtesy WBIR



# SCARS™

[www.AgainstScams.org](http://www.AgainstScams.org)

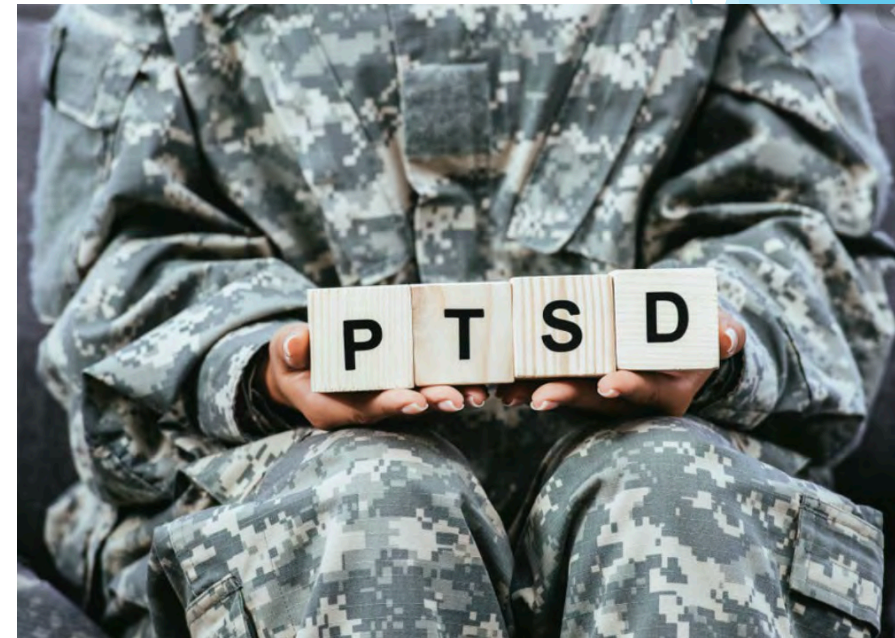
Society of Citizens Against Relationship Scams™



# False Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Third most prevalent service-connected disability for veterans receiving pension benefits
- Indicates service-connected veterans reported increasingly worsening symptoms of PTSD until they reach 100 percent disability
- Importance of accurate PTSD diagnosis from both individual and community perspectives
- Financial need for accurate PTSD diagnosis is critical as PTSD is the most prevalent service-connected mental disorder
- Clinicians should be able to distinguish between genuine and false PTSD to avoid harmful treatment for non-present PTSD
- The study included a 222 percent increase in PTSD for veterans compared with 1999
- The VA compensates at a 70 percent or higher disability rating for PTSD diagnosis

Matto et al. (2019)



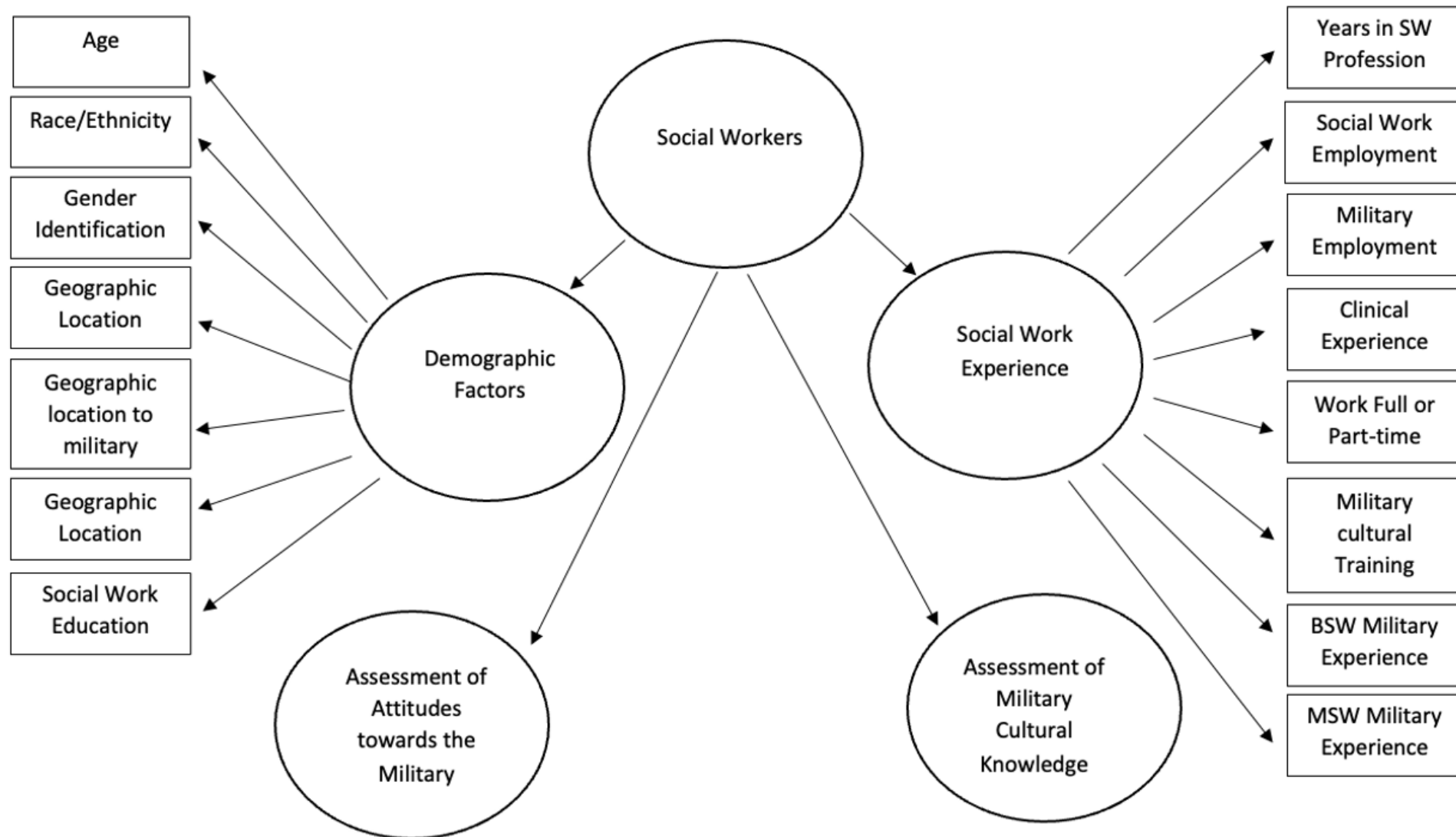


# U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Inspector General, a criminal investigation



- ▶ Timeframe: April 10, 2007, to October 7, 2020.
- ▶ \$5,768,340 of fraudulent claims to seek military service-connected compensation
- ▶ \$2.59 million PTSD or mental impairment

## *Military cultural knowledge in social work macro settings*



### Demographic Characteristics of Sample (n = 255)

Demographics Characteristics	N	%
Age		
<i>Older adults</i>	128	50%
<i>Younger adults</i>	127	50%
Race		
<i>BIPOC</i>	80	31%
<i>White</i>	175	69%
Gender		
<i>Female</i>	230	90%
<i>Not Female</i>	25	10%
Location		
<i>Rural</i>	77	30%
<i>Not Rural</i>	178	70%
Education		
<i>Undergraduate/BSW</i>	30	12%
<i>Graduate/MSW, DSW, PhD</i>	235	88%
Years in the Profession		
<i>11+ years</i>	88	35%
<i>0 – 10 years</i>	167	66%

### Total Knowledge Assessment Results

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	1	.4	.4
	1.00	7	2.8	3.2
	2.00	10	4.0	7.3
	3.00	17	6.9	14.2
	4.00	16	6.5	20.6
	5.00	17	6.9	27.5
	6.00	23	9.3	36.8
	7.00	29	11.7	48.6
	8.00	23	9.3	57.9
	9.00	26	10.5	68.4
	10.00	22	8.9	77.3
	11.00	27	10.9	88.3
	12.00	15	6.1	94.3
	13.00	7	2.8	97.2
	14.00	7	2.8	100
	Total	247	100	



# Are Social Workers Culturally Competent?

- At both the bivariate and multivariate levels, the social workers' gender was the most significantly associated with the assessment of military cultural knowledge
- Female social workers were more likely to have less knowledge about military culture
- 45.6% of the participants indicated they work or worked in a military instillation/DoD setting, the VA, or a military nonprofit program such as Wounded Warriors, DAV, Fisher House Foundation, TAPS, USO, etc.
- 68% of social workers did not take a military social work course in their MSW programs
- 98.8% of social workers reported having a military social work course in their BSW program
- 62% of participants reported not having any post-BSW graduation training on military culture
- 87.7% of participants have some experience with the military either serving in the military, a close family or friend serving/had served, or extended family serving/had served

# Tips for success

- ▶ Cultural Competence
- ▶ Familiarize with Military Culture
- ▶ Don't Rely on Hollywood



Photo courtesy of Summit Entertainment

Hollywood doesn't always pay attention to detail when showing military uniforms. This picture from "The Hurt Locker" is filled with mistakes that are endemic in the movie as a whole, drawing harsh criticism from veterans.

# Recap

- ▶ Stolen Valor Isn't New
  - ▶ Impostors/Embellishers Abuse Resources & Reinforce Stereotypes
  - ▶ Believing Fabricated Story Can Cause Misdiagnosis
  - ▶ Impostor Could Need Treatment
  - ▶ Cultural Competence Can Prevent Deception
- 
- ▶ Raising awareness of Stolen Valor is important to help social workers understand military culture and prevent further deception by a military imposter.
  - ▶ For social workers to empower and target change, they must have a sound knowledge base for understanding military culture.

## Resources

- ▶ Stealing Valor Documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pf8vTmw1w-k>





# Questions