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Males' Spouses Experiences of Deployed Wives

Pamela Morales-Garcia
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Male Spouses' Experiences of Deployed Wives

by

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MS, Texas A&M Corpus Christi, 2011

BS, Texas A&M Corpus Christi, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to determine the psychological and emotional effects of female deployment on male spouses. The current research was designed to study the emotional and psychological experiences of male spouses of deployed women. The research question was focused on understanding the lived experience of the male spouses of their deployed active duty wives. The intent was to describe male spouses' lived experiences, focusing on mental health, physical health, marital problems, caregiving, and other reintegration related problems as well as the role transfer stress experienced by these male spouses of deployed wives. Gender role theory was the theoretical framework chosen for this study to understand role transfer issues faced by the male spouse of a deployed woman. Fifteen male spouses were interviewed in 1-on-1 interviews to gain knowledge of their emotional and psychological stressors related to spouse deployment. The interview data were analyzed for common themes of their lived experiences. The results of the data were greater understanding of the male spouses lived experiences of being a spouse of an active duty deployed spouse, as well as how better to help this population. The study highlights the understanding that the experiences of the spouse of a deployed service member is critically important for the government and society alike. Civilian husbands of deployed military women have unique gender-specific needs which are poorly addressed, leading to unnecessary marital tension for all parties. Implications for positive social change included findings that provided insight needed to assist the male spouse of a deployed woman.

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Dedication

In dedication to all the servicemen and women who fought for my freedom and the families that stayed behind supporting them. To the spouses to who took time to speak to me. To my family and children who supported me during this process. Last, to my husband Mike Garcia who selflessly gave 26 years of his life to the United State Navy.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study	1
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	1
Problem Statement.....	4
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Theoretical Framework for the Study.....	6
Nature of the Study.....	8
Definitions.....	9
Assumptions.....	10
Scope and Delimitations	10
Limitations	11
Significance.....	11
Summary.....	12
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	14
Introduction.....	14
Literature Search Strategy.....	14
Theoretical Foundation.....	15
Literature Review Related to Key Variables	16
Mental Health.....	16
Role Transfer and Caregiving.....	26

Impact on Children	39
Summary and Conclusion	40
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	42
Introduction.....	42
Research Design and Rationale	42
Research Questions.....	42
Central Concepts.....	43
Research Tradition and Rationale.....	44
Role of the Researcher	45
Methodology.....	46
Participant Selection Logic.....	46
Instrumentation	47
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	50
Data Analysis Plan.....	52
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	54
Credibility (Internal Validity).....	54
Transferability External Validity	54
Dependability (The Qualitative Counterpart to Reliability	54
Conformability (The Qualitative Counterpart to Objectivity).....	55
Ethical Procedures	55
Summary.....	57
Chapter 4: Results.....	58

Introduction.....	58
Setting.....	59
Demographics.....	59
Data Collection.....	62
Data Analysis.....	62
Trustworthiness.....	64
Results.....	65
Theme 1: Caregiving and Raising Children.....	65
Theme 2: Issues Encountered During the Deployment.....	67
Theme 3: Support.....	74
Theme 4: Reintegration.....	76
Summary.....	80
Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.....	81
Introduction.....	81
Interpretation of the Findings.....	81
Caregiving and Raising Children.....	81
Issues Encountered During Deployment.....	82
Support.....	83
Reintegration.....	85
Limitations of the Study.....	86
Recommendations.....	87
Implications.....	90

Conclusion	92
References.....	93
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	105

List of Tables

Table 1. Summary of the Demographics of the Participants, Using Their Pseudonym	
Names	60
Table 2. Definitions	63
Table 3. Themes and Codes	64

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The topic of this study was the experiences of nonmilitary male spouses whose wives have deployed. There is a lack of information about the experiences of these nonmilitary male spouses. Although there is information regarding negative and stressful impacts of deployment on the family, children, and female spouses (De Burgh, White, Fear, & Iversen, 2011; Lester et al., 2011; Mansfield, Kaufman, Marshall, Gaynes, Morrissey, & Engel, 2010), more is needed to understand the experience of male spouses of deployed wives. I addressed the gap in literature that pertains to nonmilitary spouses and their wives' deployment.

There are potential social implications of the study. These include that findings have the potential to lead to positive social change by informing the public as well as Navy Fleet and Family services regarding the effects of wives' deployment on male spouses. This public awareness could provide support for these male spouses.

This chapter includes the background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Background

Deployment results in stress for family members. For example, Eastman, Archer, and Ball (1990) explored the impacts of deployment in a study with 785 married male sailors and their wives, whose children were living at home. The authors found that life

stress was lower when wives were assigned to shore duty, compared to being deployed. The level of life stress was positively correlated with family stress and higher stress levels were linked to higher levels of family conflict (Eastman et al., 1990). Difficulties faced during deployment have been linked to family stress. For example, repeated and delayed deployments with unsafe military obligations under stressed and potentially combative relations, resulted in unusual difficulties confronted by military families that influenced the families (Archer & Cauthorne, 1986; Ridenour, 1984).

Impacts of deployed fathers on children have been shown, but there is a lack of studies showing impacts of deployed mothers on children (Lester et al., 2010). For example, Kelley et al. (2001) conducted a study from 1996 to 1998 to determine externalizing and internalizing behaviors before and after deployment. These authors found that children of Navy mothers showed higher levels of internalized behaviors, as compared to children of non-deployed mothers. Results showed that when a mother deployed and Navy children had to face this deployment, the children demonstrated higher levels of internalizing behavior.

Researchers continued to support the conclusion that deployment has a negative impact on the family. For example, Mansfield et al. (2010) found that the time of deployment has been linked with mental health diagnosis. Higher anxiety is found among military families before, during, and after deployment, which can potentially be the cause of mental health problems. Mansfield et al. found the link among anxiety provoking events and the onset or repeat of mental issues, including depression, substance misuse, and bipolar disorder. Children of parents who deploy have been known to have effects

long after the parent returns due to the distress levels of the children and the parent (Lester et al., 2011). Future studies are needed that are designed to provide longitudinal information regarding family adjustment across the deployment cycle and to clarify the timing of adjustment across phases of deployment and reintegration.

Deployment has many psychological impacts on military families (De Burgh, White, Fear, & Iversen, 2011). In order to comprehend the full effect of war, the psychological effects of deployment and the return of active military members, on the spouses and children, needs to be considered. Family members were impacted by the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, “extensive psychological morbidity and social dysfunction have been reported for spouses of military personnel with PTSD” (De Burgh et al., 2011, p. 192). The link between longer deployment and psychological problems for the spouse has also been established (De Burgh et al., 2011). DeBurgh et al. (2011) reported that deployment has psychosocial consequences for these spouses with increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Deployment can also lead to increased marital maladjustment and increased interpartner violence. Spouses of those with PTSD may be at increased risk for these outcomes. In addition, longer periods of deployment have a more negative impact on spouses. Thus, the needs of the military spouses are an important issue and research was needed to determine optimal services designed to help both partners.

The need for the current study is supported by conclusions by Crum-Cianflone et al., (2014). Crum-Cianflone et al. reported that the comprehension of the relationships among service members’ deployments and their experiences with the health and well-

being of their families is critically important for the Defense of Department, Department of Veterans Affairs, and society. In order to ensure optimal assistance for the future military families society needs to understand the challenges of protective and vulnerability factors related to these experiences (Crum, 2014).

Problem Statement

Deployment is said to be documented as being the most traumatic event the military family will have to encounter (Knox & Price, 1995). The problem is that while military deployment has been shown to be arduous and stressful on the wives of male active duty members (De Burgh et al., 2011; Mansfield et al., 2010; Verdeli et al., 2011), a review of the literature revealed that virtually no empirical articles have been published examining the effects of a female deployment on male spouses (Mansfield et al., 2010; Verdeli et al., 2011). There is an abundance of documented research that focused on female spouses and how they cope with the stress of their husband being deployed (De Burgh, White, Fear, & Iversen, 2011; Lester et al., 2010; Verdeli et al., 2011). This research has been helpful in designing programs to support the female spouses. However, there is a lack of such information to assist male spouses whose wives have been deployed (Mansfield et al., 2010). The increase in female military enlistment has resulted in some nonmilitary male spouses being required to take over the role of homemaker and childcare provider. Due to the integration of women in combat roles and the increased likelihood of their deployment, resulting in a male spouse and children being left behind, the needs of this male spouse must be comprehended by society (Kelly et al., 2001). Research studies are needed to understand how the male spouse copes with the

deployment of his wife and how the male spouse handles day-to-day tasks such as helping children with homework, providing transportation to school, and completing housework (Verdeli et al., 2011). More information is needed to understand male spouse anxiety levels when their wife has been deployed to a war zone versus a non-war zone (Mansfield et al., 2010).

The nonmilitary male spouse of a deployed wife often becomes responsible for tasks that Western society considers stereotypical female duties. While it might be interesting to consider additional issues such as whether or not the male spouse is current or former military, there is little information about this and is beyond the scope of the current study. These spouses face these so-called female duties while being part of a military society with stereotypical male gender roles (Deutsch, Lussier, & Servis, 1993; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1992). Female deployment has the potential to result in male spouses being faced with conflicting roles and more information is needed to understand the impact of this gender role reversal. Because there is a lack of empirical qualitative research regarding gender role reversal stress faced by the nonmilitary male spouse of a deployed wife, the current study was needed to fill this gap in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to determine the psychological and emotional effects of female deployment on male spouses. Specifically, the purpose was to describe male spouse experiences with mental and physical health, marital problems, caregiving, and other reintegration related problems as well as the role transfer stress experienced by these male spouses of deployed wives. For

this study, the research question was: what is the lived experience of male spouses of deployed active duty females?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework for this study was gender role theory. Gender role theory posits that each individual is socially identified as either a female or a male and each has a specific role within the social structure that defines them. With this gender role comes specific expectations about behaviors and attitudes and even skills or skill development. Men and women will be socially driven to develop these different skills, attitudes, and behaviors with gender role theory. This theory predicts how a man or woman will communicate and behave (Shimanoff, 2009).

Bussey and Bandura (1999) noted that human differentiation on the basis of gender affects nearly all aspects of a person's daily life. The gender conceptions are developed from experiences and they guide gender-linked behaviors throughout the life course by social cognitive theory of gender-role development and functioning posits that. The couples learn to behave in a manner consistent with their biologically assigned gender with gender role theory (Boundless, 2015). The environment causes males and females to develop specific attitudes and behaviors. Thus, the impact of socialization which involves the transferring of norms, beliefs, values, and behaviors to males and females when using gender role theory. Alternatively, the social structure alone that leads to the development of gender behaviors and behavior that is sex-differentiated, is guided by the division of labor between individuals within the society of social role theory. In accordance with social role theory, it is this division of labor that develops gender roles

and gendered behaviors (Boundless, 2015). According to Connell (1985), the social theory of gender is implied and can be practically applied in research. Types of gender role theory include those that focus on attitudes and social expectations based on sex roles and those that focus on power relations between men and women. There is also the issue of cultural and natural differences that must be considered when exploring gender roles.

Regardless of the focus considered in gender role theory, consistent findings found that male and female behavior is directly linked to social and cultural norms that are dictated by society. Thus, the gender roles for individuals are clearly defined very early and are maintained well into adulthood. There are multiple influential factors that define gender roles and these include family structure, environment, and the media. These factors inform children about how they are to act and what is accepted for a individuals (Calhoun & Taub, 2014). Men learn standards of masculinity and must adopt or resist these standards in their development and acceptable of the male gender role (Calhoun & Taub, 2014; Connell, 1987, 1995).

Gender role theory can be used to understand how individuals act in different situations (Eagly, 1987; Eckes, 1996). Men and women consider the rules associated with their gender role and act accordingly. Women are associated with domestic roles and men are linked with nondomestic roles. While categories are becoming blurred depending on the situation, research findings show that roles tend to be more restrictive for men (Eckes,

1996). A study was needed to determine how gender role expectations influence the impacts of deployed wives on male spouses.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I used a qualitative phenomenology method to explore the research topic, because my goal was to gather detailed information about the lived experiences of the participants. I used the phenomenological approach to identify the phenomena and related perceptions of participants. Specifically, phenomenology was an appropriate approach for this study because my goal was to explore the lived experiences of male spouses with deployed wives. According to Van Manen (1997), phenomenological research begins with the formulation of the phenomenological question: what is the lived experience that the researcher is attempting to explore? For this study, the phenomenological question was: What is the lived experience of male spouses of deployed active duty women?

I conducted one-to-one interviews lasting up to 2 hours with the research participants. Participants were selected if they were: (a) not affiliated with any branch of government services, (b) married to an active duty women, (c) had a child under the age of 3 years old, and (d) their wives were deployed in areas that are not accessible areas to family members. Nonmilitary male spouses' experiences were gathered through the use of open-ended questions asking about experiences with mental health, caregiving, and other reintegration related issues. The questions asked in the interviews explored the effectiveness and availability/awareness of programs that aim to help spouses of deployed service personnel with these issues as well as potential experiences regarding

role transfer stress. For the phenomenology research design, stages and processes included: formulating the phenomenological question, the investigatory stage, the interview process, data gathering procedures, the reflection process, data management strategies, and data analysis procedures.

Definitions

Caregiving: For the purpose of this study, caregiving is operationally defined as childcare duties of the male spouse of a deployed female (Chandra, Burns, Tanielian, Jaycox, & Scott, 2008).

Deployed Female: For the purpose of this study, deployed female is operationally defined as a woman who was deployed at least one time, to include any type of deployment (active duty or reservist) (Lane, Hourani, Bray, & Williams, 2012).

Mental Health Issues

Mental health issues: Operationally defined as perceived stress and mental health issues (Lane et al., 2012).

Nonmilitary Spouse

Nonmilitary spouse: Operationally defined as a male spouse of a deployed wife (Crum-Cianflone, Fairbank, Marmar, & Schlenger, 2014).

Reintegration issues: Operationally defined as issues faced by the return home of the deployed (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011).

Role Transfer Issues: Operationally defined as role transfer stress perceived by the male spouse assuming typically female roles of caregiving (Chandra et al., 2008).

Assumptions

For this study, it was assumed that the participants had the same experience as deployed females. Accuracy of self-reporting was also assumed. This accuracy was important to derive meaning from the study. I also assumed that I was aware of any prejudices or viewpoints regarding the phenomenon investigated. To ensure data quality and the recognition of researcher bias, bracketing was used. I bracketed out any presuppositions in order to identify themes from the data in a nonbiased manner. All my worldviews were suspended when analyzing data. Further, all findings were returned to the participants to ensure that these statements and data were accurate and reliable.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to determine the psychological and emotional effects of female deployment on male spouses. Specifically, the purpose was to describe male spouse experiences with mental and physical health, marital problems, caregiving, and other reintegration related problems as well as the role transfer stress experienced by these male spouses of deployed wives. I specifically addressed whether male spouses of deployed wives experience mental and physical health and marital problems, caregiving and other reintegration related problems and role transfer stress. There is a lack of information about these issues in this population and it is important to understand them that is why is specific was chosen. Boundaries of the study included the male spouses of deployed wives. These included the husbands of women who were deployed at least one time. Inclusion criteria included

being married to a women, no affiliation with the military, one child under 3 years of age, and a wife deployed to an isolated duty.

Delimitations for this study included the use of the phenomenological method using one-on-one interviews for assessment of the lived experience of the male spouse of a deployed women. This may not reflect all of the experiences of all male spouses of deployed women. There is a lack of information in the literature regarding the experience of this population and that is why I chose to focus on this. I chose gender role theory to help understand what these male spouses face as they take over the female role in the family.

Limitations

The sample selected for this study was from an available volunteer population; therefore, results of this research may not be generalizable to individuals from all geographical locations. Qualitative research focuses on extensive interviews with a small sample size. The sample for the current study is 15 participants. A small size was an additional limitation to the study. Because the phenomenological study was qualitative in nature and yielded narrative data, findings were descriptive in nature. The participants provided detailed information, but it may not be transferable to other populations. Self-reporting issues of accuracy were dealt with by ensuring anonymity of the participant.

Significance

This study is significant because it fills the gap in the literature regarding the effects of female deployment on male spouses. Specifically, study findings revealed male spouse experiences with mental health, caregiving, and other reintegration related issues.

Additionally, study findings provide new information regarding the role transfer issues experienced by these male spouses of deployed wives. These findings are significant because this information is needed to understand how to help these male spouses cope with the stress they experienced during their wives' deployment. This information is important because, while there is a growing awareness in the military of the unique needs of husbands, the spouse support system is still geared toward helping only wives (Verdeli et al., 2011).

This study is of particular significance because I explored the experiences of nonmilitary male spouses on naval bases to determine if these spouses experience issues related to mental health, role transfers and caregiving, and reintegration. The study results are significant because this formation will assist military installations in their effort to develop programs and assist male spouses of deployed wives. Findings are also socially significant because they will lead to positive social change in that information can be used to inform the public about the effects of wives' deployment on male spouses. This public awareness will aid in the support for these male spouses. Positive social changes resulting from study results include public awareness of the specific effects on the family of the deployed wife, with increased public support for these family members.

Summary

This chapter was an introduction to the study with a discussion of the background, problem, study purpose, research questions, theoretical context, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and study significance. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature to provide support for the study. Chapter 3 includes

additional information of the research method used for the study. Chapter 4 contains the data collected from participants. Chapter 5 includes the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for the findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

While military deployment may be arduous and stressful on the active member, little is known about the effects of a female deployment on nonmilitary male spouses (Mansfield et al., 2010). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to examine the lived experiences of nonmilitary male spouses to determine the psychological and emotional effects of deployment on male spouses. The following chapter includes the literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, and a synopsis of the current literature regarding topics of deployment impacts on male spouses, namely mental health (impact on mental and physical health, impact on marriage and spouses), role transfer and caregiving (role changes and caregiving, impact on children), and reintegration. The chapter concludes with a summary and conclusions.

Literature Search Strategy

I gathered articles mostly within the last 5 years from databases that included peer-reviewed journals such as ProQuest and online resources. Key words that I used for the search included: *deployment impact, male spouse, mental health, caregiving roles, gender-role stress, reintegration, and male and female spouse deployment stress*. The scope of literature review included an initial search with dates from 2010 onward, followed by a search of all years to further explore the issues examined using the gender role theory. There was a lack of information available regarding impacts on the male spouse of the deployed partner, which supports the need for the current study. Findings revealed information regarding the impact of deployment on the children and families,

with some information about impacts on the spouse and marriage of the deployed veteran. These literature findings all support the need to gather more information regarding the impact of deployment on the spouse, with a focus on the impact of the male spouse in the home.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for this study is based on the gender role theory. Each individual identifies as either a female or a male with related roles within a social structure and that these roles define the person by using gender role theory (Calhoun & Taub, 2014). There are also specific expectations by society related to these identities regarding attitudes, behaviors, and skills. Gender roles for individuals are clearly defined early in childhood and impact the development of the child (Calhoun & Taub, 2014). Men learn standards of masculinity and women learn standards of femininity and each must adopt or resist these standards as they develop an identity (Calhoun & Taub, 2014; Connell, 1987, 1995). Gender role impacts each aspect of a person's life and gender role theory can be used to predict how an individual will perceive events, behave, and communicate (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Eagly, 1987; Eckes, 1996; Shimanoff, 2009).

Connell (1985) noted that it implied that social theory of gender can be practically be applied in research. For example, Fox and Pease (2012) explored military deployment, masculinity, and trauma. These authors reviewed the literature related to deployment trauma to further understand the trauma experienced by veterans. Fox and Pease reported that in order to understand trauma, it is important to consider social influences and social

relationships as well as the role of masculinity. Masculinity roles impact the veterans' experiences of their deployment and the resulting trauma.

According to Fox and Pease (2012), it is not enough to comprehend that veterans experience PTSD, because this diagnosis is unrelated to gender roles. While these authors focused on the need to consider the role of masculinity to understand the male veteran, the principles apply to considering femininity to understand the experience of the female veteran. Fox and Pease brought up the need to consider gender roles in the study of deployment impacts. The study supports the need for a study to determine how gender role expectations influence the impacts of deployed wives on male spouses who remain in the home to care for children.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

The following provides a review of the current literature that includes studies related to the study constructs. The key issues that I addressed in this study were: mental health, role transfer and caregiving, and reintegration. The topics presented are consistent with the issues of deployment impacts on male spouses: mental health (impact on mental and physical health, impact on marriage and spouses), role transfer and caregiving (role changes and caregiving, impact on children), and reintegration. This discussion is followed by a summary and conclusion.

Mental Health

Impact on mental and physical health. There are researchers who explored the impact of deployment on the mental and physical health of the deployed veteran and family members. For example, deployments have been shown to increase divorce rates

(Negrusa, Negrusa, & Hosek, 2014). Negrusa et al. (2014) reported that not only can deployment lead to increased risk of divorce, but the length of deployment, hazards during deployment, expectations, and female deployment are all factors involved in this risk for divorce. De Burgh et al. (2010) reported that deployment results in poor psychological consequences for military personnel and their families. Findings support the conclusion that deployment has a negative impact on the soldier and the spouse.

The prevalence of mental health indicators and perceived stress among both reserve-component and active-duty military personnel based on deployment status was investigated by Lane, Hourani, Bray, and Williams (2012). The authors examined data from the Department of Defense Health-Related Behaviors surveys. These surveys gathered population-based data from 18342 reservists and 16146 active-duty personnel. Lane et al. found that after adjusting for sociodemographic and service differences, similar or less work and family stress, anxiety and depression symptoms were reported by reservists, compared to active-duty personnel. However, deployed reservists reported higher rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, compared to active-duty personnel who had been deployed. Deployed reservists also reported higher rates of PTSD symptoms, compared to active-duty personnel and reservists who had not been deployed.

Martin, Ghahramanlou-Holloway, Lou, and Tucciarone (2009) reviewed U.S. military and civilian suicide behavior. These authors noted that suicide is a major public health concern in the United States military. Suicide is found to occur before, during, and after a deployment or service. There are many factors that impact suicide, and these may or may not be directly related to deployment. Mental health counselors need to be trained

in order to better identify suicide risk early in order to reduce the risk. It is important that counselors understand the similarities and differences regarding suicide risk and protective factors for civilian and military individuals. This is particularly important for counselors who work with Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) active-duty personnel, veterans, and their family to better help these families. Findings from a review of the medical and psychological databases for terms related to suicide by military service members were that two commonly reported emotional reactions are anxiety and hopelessness. Martin et al. pointed out that the management and treatment of those with suicidal ideation or suicide attempt behavior requires careful consideration of complex factors and the need for hospitalization.

There is a health risk for nonmilitary army spouses: being overweight or obese (Fish, 2013). While the risks for being overweight and having poor health are similar to those faced by the general public (Savage, 2008), it is important to study this issue because, while there can be multiple factors related to being overweight, specifically, an impact of deployment, related distress, and perceived social support can cause overweight in some of these individuals (Fish, 2013). According to Fish, over half of U.S. Army active duty soldiers' spouses are overweight or obese. In the United States, nearly a half million people die each year due to problems related to being overweight or obese. This problem is costly to the military because \$1.1 billion are spent yearly on problems related to active duty military personnel, retirees, and their family members being overweight or obese.

To explore this issue, Fish (2013) analyzed the 2008 Active Duty Spouses Survey (ADSS) data. Multiple and logistic regression analyses were conducted using data from 1863 U.S. Army spouses, to examine the link between deployment status within the last year (not deployed, deployed but not to a combat zone, and deployed to a combat zone) and weight status (BMI scores; healthy weight versus being overweight). Independent variables included age, gender, race, soldier rank, education, psychological distress, and perceived social support. Fish reported that deployment status and weight status were not significantly related; however, deployment can result in psychological distress, which was related to weight status. Three-quarters of the male spouses and half of the female spouses were overweight or obese. Being overweight and obese was more commonly found in spouses of soldiers in the enlisted ranks (E5 thru E9), minority spouses, and those without at least a 4-year college degree. Increased age and psychological distress with decreased perceived social support led to increased BMI. Fish concluded that risk factors associated with being overweight or obese include: minority status, male gender, E5 thru E9 ranks, less than a 4-year degree, increased age and psychological distress, and decreased perceived social support scores (Fish, 2013).

The impact of deployment, distress, and perceived social support on the weight status of nonmilitary Army spouses, considering age, rank, and gender was also explored by Fish, Harrington, Dellin, and Shaw (2014). Fish et al. examined these relationships with 1863 Army spouses. The authors hypothesized that spouses of deployed soldiers would have a higher BMI, compared to spouses of nondeployed soldiers; spouses with higher psychological distress scores would have a higher BMI, compared to those with

lower distress scores; and spouses with low social support scores would have higher BMIs, compared to those with higher social support scores.

Fish et al. (2014) conducted a secondary analysis of data from the 2008 Active Duty Spouse Survey. While findings were that deployment status and weight status were not significantly related, other factors such as psychological stress and support were related to weight status. As psychological distress increased along with age, and perceived social support decreased, being overweight increased. In addition, relevant to the current study, male spouses were more likely to be overweight or obese, compared to female spouses, to a statistically significant degree. These findings were similar to those presented by Fish (2013), but new information was that male spouses were more likely to be overweight or obese than female spouses.

There are physical and mental health problems experienced by military veterans and their spouses (Fish, 2013; Fish et al., 2014; Lane et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2009). Lane et al. (2012) reported that there are mental health problems and perceived stress among both reserve-component and active-duty military personnel due to deployment status. Work and family stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms were reported by reservists, but were less than those reported by active-duty personnel. Deployment may have more of an impact on reservists that differs from the impact on active-duty members. Martin et al. (2009) also presented a discussion on U.S. military and civilian suicide behavior. These authors found that two commonly reported emotional reactions related to suicidal ideation and attempts are anxiety and hopelessness.

Fish (2013) and Fish et al. (2014), over half of U.S. Army active duty soldiers' spouses are overweight or obese. These authors found that deployment status and weight status were not significantly related, but male spouses were more likely to be overweight or obese, and psychological distress, age, and lack of perceived social support decreased were related to being overweight. While more information is needed to fully understand the impact of deployment on mental and physical health of the veteran and the spouse, findings support the conclusion that there are problems that require solutions.

Impact on marriage and spouses. There are fewer researchers who explored the impact of deployment on marriage and spouses. These studies focused on issues of divorce and the notion that female deployment leads to higher rates of divorce than male deployment (Negrusa, Negrusa, & Hosek, 2014; Pawlyk, 2014). Findings support the conclusion that deployment has a negative impact on the male spouse of the deployed and the couple's marriage. One of the factors involved is role conflict experienced in long deployments. This finding supports the need for the current study of impacts of female deployment on the male spouse and caregiver.

Impact on divorce. According to Pollard (2008), military individuals, tend to get married more than civilians, and military men are less likely to get divorced while serving, but military women are more likely to get divorced. Upon exiting the military, veteran men and women both have higher divorce rates than civilians. The issue of divorce in the Air Force was discussed by Pawlyk (2014). According to this author, deployments, war, and constant upheaval have negative impacts on marriage. Divorce rates have increased each year in the Air Force since 2011, and the Air Force has the

highest divorce rates compared to other services. By 2013, the divorce rates for enlisted airmen were 4.3% and for officers' rates were 1.5%. Divorce rates are highest for enlisted women (Pawlyk, 2014). There is a direct correlation between cumulative time spent on deployment and likelihood of divorce. While chaplains have been available to help couples, more is needed. The Marriage Checkup pilot program is currently being tested at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio and Wilford Hall at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland. The goal is to implement the program Air Force-wide.

Gambardella (2008) conducted a qualitative case study to determine the effectiveness of using Role-Exit Theory concepts in counseling to help military couples with marital discord due to long deployments. Gambardella (2008) explained that Role-Exit Theory was first developed by Helen Ebaugh in 1977. For this theory, Ebaugh defined role-exit as the "departure from any role that is central to one's self-identity" (1988, p. 149). Ebaugh presented four stages of the role-exit process and these include first doubts, seeking alternatives, encountering turning points, and creating the ex-role (Ebaugh, 1988). According to Gambardella, Ebaugh described these stages as follows:

1. First doubts: Individual experiences doubts about the role occupied.
2. Seeking alternatives: Individual looks outside current role toward other roles.
3. Turning points: Events or behaviors trigger a decision to leave the role.
4. Creating the ex-role: A new identity is created through a new role. (p. 172)

Gambardella (2008) conducted a study with 10 military couples were involved in the study. Following treatment, six of the couples reported improvement in their marital

relationship. Role-Exit Theory based counseling has the potential to help couples who experience marital discord due to role issues. This study is relevant to the current research since the goal is to determine impacts of female deployment on male spouses with a focus on role changes. Gambardella noted that during long deployments, role conflict within the couple's relationship is a source of marital discord and it is this focus in counseling that helps the couple to improve their relationship.

Deployments increase divorces (Negrusa, Negrusa, & Hosek, 2014). According to these authors, due to armed conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. military members have experienced high rates of overseas deployment. Negrusa et al. (2014) used longitudinal individual-level administrative data gathered from 1999 to 2008 to explore this issue. Data were from the Defense Manpower Data Center's Proxy Perstempo (personnel tempo) file of 462,444 enlisted service members. They investigated whether an additional month in deployment led to increased risk of divorce in military families and whether this impacted females the most. The authors hypothesized that the degree to which shocks are anticipated when a couple gets married and predicts outcomes such as divorce. Negrusa et al. found that there was a significant shift on divorce from pre-9/11 deployments to post 9/11 deployments showed that there were increases in the risk for divorce as compared to pre-9/11 deployments. The authors found that there was a larger effect for couples married before 9/11, who expected a lower risk of deployment, compared to what they actually faced post 9/11. Issues such as length of deployment, hazards during deployment, and expectations are all involved in risk for divorce. A final issue described was the fact that female deployment led to greater risk for divorce. This

finding implied the importance of needing to understand the impacts on the male spouse of deployed females.

Impact on spouses. The impact of deployment spouses of military personnel was explored by De Burgh, White, Fear, and Iversen (2010). There is a large volume of research on the area of impact of husband's deployment on their wives. (De Burgh et al., 2010). Overall, these deployments were to Iraq or Afghanistan and according to these authors, deployment results in poor psychological consequences for military personnel and their families. Psychological morbidity and social dysfunction have been found among the spouses of deployed military personnel. Those deployed to combat zones such as Vietnam, ended up with problems for spouses of military personnel who came home with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). De Burgh et al. conducted a review of the relevant literature published between 2001 and 2010. Findings from 14 US-based studies were reported. Results were that longer deployments, deployment extensions, and PTSD in those deployed, were linked to psychological problems for the spouse. There were many methodological differences across studies, which limited direct comparisons. However, findings led to the conclusion that the needs of spouses of military personnel must remain a focus and the impacts on spouses of veterans who were deployed has implications for both partners.

The impact of a sense of community on the psychological well-being and resilience of military spouses was explored by Wang, Nyutu, Tran, and Spears (2015). The authors sought to determine factors that increase this psychological well-being of military spouses with regard to environmental mastery. Wang et al. hypothesized that

social support from family and friends would be a factor that influenced this psychological well-being since it would lead to an increased sense of community with the military culture. The study included 207 female spouses of active-duty service members. The Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being, Social Support Behaviors Scale, Modified Brief Sense of Community Scale, Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, and a questionnaire were used to gather data. Mediation effects were analyzed using MEDIATE. Wang et al. reported findings that social support from friends and a related positive affect predicted a sense of community, and this was related to increased feelings of psychological well-being. The authors concluded that a perceived sense of military community helps the military spouses feel more in control in their ever-changing environment. This study supports the need for support for military spouses of deployed partners (Wang et al., 2015)

Key findings in the literature are that deployments can potentially lead to divorce. For example, Pawlyk (2014) reported that divorce rates are high and are highest for enlisted women. There is a direct link between cumulative time spent on deployment and likelihood of divorce. Gambardella (2008) determined that the use of Role-Exit Theory concepts in counseling to help military couples with marital discord due to long deployments, was helpful. This is important since it pointed out the need to consider role conflict faced by couples during deployment. Negrusa et al. (2014) also reported that deployment can lead to increased risk of divorce and these authors also noted that length of deployment, hazards during deployment, expectations, and female deployment are factors involved in risk for divorce.

Another key finding from the literature is that deployment impacts the spouse. DE Burgh et al. (2010) reported that psychological morbidity and social dysfunction are found among the spouses of deployed military personnel. Spouses face hardships during deployment and problems when the partner returns home with mental and physical conditions. Longer deployments, deployment extensions, and PTSD in those deployed, were linked to psychological problems for the spouse. Wang et al. (2015) found that a sense of community for the spouse results in increased psychological well-being and resilience. Thus, findings support the conclusion that deployment has a negative impact on the spouse of the deployed and the couple's marriage. Since female deployment leads to higher rates of divorce (Pawlyk, 2014), this implies the need to further understand impacts of this female deployment on the male spouse.

Role Transfer and Caregiving

The impact of deployment of the female is widespread across family members. When the mother is deployed, the male spouse faces changes in roles and this influences caregiving of the family and children. Thus, the impacts of this change on the family and children are noted to help understand and assist the male spouse of a deployed female.

Role changes and caregiving. There are many researchers who explored the impact of deployment on the family as caregiving roles change when a spouse is deployed (Committee on the Assessment of the Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families; Board on the Health of Select Populations; Institute of Medicine, 2013; De Burgh et al., 2010; Wang et al, 2015). These studies focus on children and family in general and consider influences of active versus non-active

deployment. However, the studies do not specifically focus on issues faced by the family when a mother is deployed, and the father remains in the home. This supports the need for the current study of impacts of female deployment on the male spouse and caregiver.

Deployment influences the mental, emotional, and social well-being of military family members, to include the spouse, children, and caregivers (Committee on the Assessment of the Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families; Board on the Health of Select Populations; Institute of Medicine, 2013). More than two-thirds of active-duty and reserve officers are married, and more than half of enlisted active-duty service members and those in the selected reserve are married (Committee on the Assessment of the Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families; Board on the Health of Select Populations; Institute of Medicine, 2013). Women serving in the military are less likely to be married, compared to males and women are also more likely to be married to other service members. Divorce rates are increasing in the military and marriages of women in the military fail more often than those of men in the military. This divorce rate is in part related to family caregiving responsibilities (Committee on the Assessment of the Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families; Board on the Health of Select Populations; Institute of Medicine, 2013).

More than half of active-duty and selected reserve members have family responsibilities which means that they are married or have children. Of the active-duty enlisted service members, Army-enlisted soldiers have more family responsibilities compared to enlisted members of other active-duty service branches (63.5% for Army

enlisted, 53.0% for Navy, 46.3% for Marines, and 55.7% for Air Force enlisted). Of the selected reserve across reserve components, half to two-thirds have family responsibilities except for Marine reserve families (27.1% have family responsibilities). Most active-duty single parents are male service members, but there are more female service members who are single parents. Regarding children of active-duty members, 42.6% are 5 years old or younger, 30.7% are 6 to 11 years, 22.4% are 12 to 18 years, and 4.3% are 19 to 22 years old. Children of selected reserve members tend to be older (Committee on the Assessment of the Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families; Board on the Health of Select Populations; Institute of Medicine, 2013).

Many studies have been conducted to explore the impact of deployment on the deployed (Committee on the Assessment of the Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families; Board on the Health of Select Populations; Institute of Medicine, 2013; Lane et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2009; McFarlane, 2009). Less have been conducted to examine the impact on the spouse of the deployed and even fewer have investigated the impact on the male spouse of the deployed (De Burgh et al., 2010; Fish, 2013; Fish et al., 2014; Pawlyk, 2014; Wang et al., 2015). Findings from several studies have provided empirical data to show that the spouse of the deployed faces the challenge of maintaining a household with one adult present (Angrist & Johnson, 2000; Aronson & Perkins, 2013; Chandra et al., 2008; Committee on the Assessment of the Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families; Board on the Health of Select Populations; Institute of Medicine, 2013;

McFarlane, 2009). Findings from these studies are that the spouse of the deployed parent must provide all care for the children, all management of maintenance, repair, and financial income and employment, and all considerations for medical care. When deployment is long it can result in communication problems with the spouse and problems with the household, care, and childcare issues. Findings from studies are that the spouse of the deployed faces problems helping their children deal with life with only one parent, spending enough time with the children, and helping children with homework. When deployment results in moving and children needing to change schools, this presents even more stress for the caregiving parent (Committee on the Assessment of the Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families; Board on the Health of Select Populations; Institute of Medicine, 2013). While studies do provide some insight into the challenges faced by the spouse of the deployed, more information about role changes and related stress is needed.

The impact of military deployment on children and family adjustment was explored by McFarlane (2009). As noted by this author, warfare brings a psychosocial toll that extends to serving members of the armed forces and their families. McFarlane reviewed relevant literature and reported findings that approximately 700,000 children had a parent who was deployed since September, 11, 2001. The deployment of a parent to a combat zone has the most impact on the children and families. This type of deployment results in one of the most stressful experiences that a child can face and it is equally stressful for the spouse of the deployed parent. The parent who stays home is responsible for the care of the child and may face decreased coping resources to deal with

developmental challenges and stresses. The child and at-home parent must deal with the lack of care from the deployed parent and the stress and fear regarding the danger that the deployed parent faces. The family may need to detach emotionally and take on new roles and responsibilities, and then deal with a reintegration of the returning parent when that time comes. This means that old roles and models of discipline and caretaking may be changed.

McFarlane (2009) also reported findings that there was a lack of systematic research in the area. A summary of findings also revealed that some veterans develop posttraumatic stress disorder after their deployment experience. This condition presents with an additional hardship for the families of returning veterans. When the deployed parent returns home, he or she may not be able to provide the intimacy and nurturance their family needs. The returning parent may be irritable, numb, and withdrawn. McFarlane reported that all families and children face ambiguity and anxiety while the parent is gone and a mother's anxiety has the greatest impact on the children of deployed fathers. Thus, it is important to understand how to help the remaining parent cope with the stress of deployment and the return of the parent to the home. According to McFarlane, a focus on family adjustment is needed for optimal mental healthcare for veterans and their families.

The impact of deployment on children and families was also explored by Chandra, Burns, Tanielian, Jaycox, and Scott (2008). These authors presented findings from a pilot study of participants of Operation Purple Camp. Chandra et al. noted that Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF and OIF)

are characterized by repeated and extended deployments. Service members involved experience significant stress during these deployments and many have resulting mental health problems. In addition, spouses, children, and other family members of the deployed person also experience significant stress related to the deployment. The extent that the family is influenced remains unclear. According to Chandra et al., more information is needed to understand the impacts of deployment on children, adolescents, and families and the spouses or caregivers at home during deployment. Impacts of deployment for families of active component versus reserve component personnel are also unclear.

Chandra et al. (2008) reported that to add to the knowledge base and assist children of deployed parents, the National Military Family Association (NMFA) developed Operation Purple Camp (OPC). This is a free summer camp program for children with a deployed parent. Chandra et al. stated that for this pilot study, families attending this camp were surveyed to learn more about the deployment experience. The authors conducted surveys at five camps in five states. An initial on-site survey of children and their caretakers was administered prior to camp activities beginning and at the end of the camp. Follow-up surveys were also mailed to these children and their caregivers. All surveys assessed "current health, behavior and functioning, experience of potentially stressful life events, communication with the deployed parent, views on the impact of deployment, and reasons for attending the camp" (p. 4). The ending survey assessed camp satisfaction.

Chandra et al. (2008) noted that while the sample was small, 192 initially and 110 for follow-up, findings revealed that caregivers reported higher levels of child emotional and behavioral difficulties, compared to those reported by parents or caregivers in the general population based on findings from the National Health Interview Survey of 2001. Active component caregivers reported higher levels of challenges regarding child behavior, compared to that reported by reserve component caregivers. Thus, findings imply that caregivers from active component families may need help dealing with child behavioral and mental health needs while reserve component caregivers may need more help regarding their own mental well-being, since this group reported higher levels of personal mental health difficulties. Reserve component caregivers also reported higher levels of child disengagement and more financial challenges. Active component caregivers reported more responsibilities related to childcare.

Chandra et al. (2008) also presented findings that the children reported that the deployment altered the typical behavior of their home caregiver. Children from reserve component families reported more problems with parent readjustment once the deployed parent returned home. Children of active component personnel reported more anxiety related to their home caregiver during deployment and they also reported having trouble with school work. Children of reserve component families reported problems with peer and teacher interactions who did not understand what they were going through.

Chandra et al. (2008) concluded that both children and caregivers reported interest in the camp since it allowed them to meet other military children and take part in recreational activities. Children and caregivers reported the camp to be highly beneficial

and most wanted to return to camp in the following year. Children and home caregivers both had problems dealing with deployment and this program helped them cope. The authors also concluded that more information is needed to fully understand the needs of the family members of the deployed parent.

There are challenges faced by military families. Aronson and Perkins (2013) reported on these challenges, with a focus on United States Marine Corps school liaisons. According to these authors, while there are many services and supports offered to military families, many are not willing or able to use these services. If a family is geographically far from the services, there can be difficulties gaining access to these support resources. Aronson and Perkins noted that there is school liaison programs (SLPs), that were developed by the military in order to help the children of military personnel. These SLPs were designed to develop local partnerships to enhance the academic success of the children. For the current study, 20 Marine Corps school liaisons (three males, 17 females) reported the frequency and severity of stressors that were experienced by the Marine family. The data were gathered to test the hypothesis that SLs would find that families are faced with many challenges, beyond academic challenges.

A discussion of military families and children experiences during operation Iraqi freedom was presented by Cozza, Chun, and Polo (2005). According to Cozza et al., most of the public has become interested in the health and well-being of the children and families of the military service members. However, due to this popular focus, there are many false conclusions, misunderstandings, and bias which come about due to a lack of understanding of the military community and related vulnerabilities of this group. To

help overcome these misconceptions, Cozza et al. presented a review of the strengths of the military family along with the challenges they experience. According to these authors, parental deployment, and parental injury and death are unique stresses faced by these military children and families. However, while these potentials are faced, media presents with information that escalates the fears of the children and family. While less than 1% of deployed family members are actually killed, children of the deployed parent live in fear of much greater odds. When a deployed parent is injured or killed, the family suffers greatly. They may be forced to move away, back to other family, and lose military support. When a deployed parent returns home, there are other problems to face due to physical and mental injuries. The family is disrupted and faces emotional turmoil. Studies show that father absence during non-wartime deployment increases anxiety and depression in children and pathological responses result from maternal psychopathology and other family stressors. Information regarding impacts of mother absence were lacking. While Cozza et al. proposed to present the strengths of the military family, it appears that instead, the problems faced by these families were noted.

There is a need to work with military families through deployment and beyond that period. Laser and Stephens (2011) presented a discussion of this need with examples of types of treatment and support services necessary to help the military family. According to Laser and Stephens, the military family experiences a large amount of stress, with long periods of separation, and changes in the family system due to this separation. Those who help these family members must understand their anticipation and the stages of deployment and impacts on the family and couple. There are stages that

include pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment and each presents with specific issues. Clinical interventions and support for the family and the couple are needed at each stage, with individual, couples, and family therapy. These services must deal with issues of domestic violence and PTSD as well as separation, lack of communication and care, and the trauma of deployment. These issues support the importance of understanding impacts of deployment on the male spouse.

Lester et al. (2012) presented an evaluation of a family-centered prevention intervention designed to assist military children and families who face wartime deployments. This Families Over Coming Under Stress program, provides resiliency training to improve family psychological health. The authors conducted a secondary analysis of the program evaluation data. The data were collected between July 2008 and February 2010 from 11 military installations in the United States and Japan. Baseline data were for 488 families (742 parents and 873 children) and pre-post outcome data were for 331 families. Demographic questionnaires, and scales to include the PTSD Checklist-Military and the PTSD Checklist-Civilian, the Brief Symptom Inventory, the Global Assessment of Functioning, and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire-Parent Report were used to gather data.

Lester et al. (2012) found that family members reported high levels of program satisfaction and a positive impact on parent-child indicators. Compared to community norms, psychological distress levels were higher for service members, the civilian parent, and the children in the program. After the program, scores were significantly improved across all measures for all parties. Findings showed that this strength-based and trauma-

informed military family prevention program was able to result in increased resiliency which mitigated the impact of wartime deployment stress. This program was helpful for military families and provided an example of the need to help families increase resilience. The need for the current study is supported since male spouses of females deployed may present with unique issues that need to be dealt with in order to increase this resilience.

In a pre 911 study of the use of family systems therapy to help families following Operation Desert Storm (ODS) was conducted by Ford, Chandler, Thacker, and Greaves (1998). Although there may be shifts in the impact of deployment after 911 this early study demonstrates an intervention attempt to address familiar responses to deployment. The authors conducted a quasi-experimental trial of a time-limited family therapy provided for veterans and families of veterans who served in Europe. These veterans served outside the war zone. Family systems therapy was provided individually and conjointly to couples or families during the postwar readjustment period. The intervention included methods from strategic, structural, behavioral, and intergenerational family therapies, used to help resolve stress. Results of the treatment were that veterans were able to resume functioning with psychosocial adjustment and the risk of long-term psychosocial impairment was reduced. The authors concluded that family systems therapy should be considered to help veterans and families cope with coming home.

The impact of deployment on U.S. military families and what needs to be considered for future research was reported by Sheppard, Malatras, and Israel (2010). These authors noted that the impacts of deployment are far reaching for the veteran, his or her family, and even society. Families are unable to maintain stable routines and

veterans suffer from mental and physical health problems. Sheppard et al. pointed out that future research must consider the definition of deployment since it may or may not include active duty, which impacts outcomes. In addition, some deployments are short and others are longer, and there may be multiple deployments, which all impact outcomes. Deployment impacts children differently depending on age and other family factors. Spouses of deployed veterans are also impacted differently. The authors concluded that "more attention should be given to understanding the effects of deployment on service members, families, and children" (Sheppard et al., 2010). This conclusion supports the need for the current study, which will help fill the gap in the literature regarding impacts of female deployment on the male spouse. In the meantime, efforts are needed to help ensure that soldiers and their families receive the support they need.

The military is urging communities to make efforts to improve access to health care for soldiers' families (Vogel, 2014). Colonel Russell Mann, director of Military Family Services, reported that literature findings validate that the spouses and children of soldiers face many difficulties in obtaining the care and support they need since they are forced to move from one health system to another (Vogel, 2014). The Colonel stated that his staff is to conduct a major program review to ensure different resource allocations in order to better support these families. The need for provinces to cooperate across borders to improve continuity of care for these families was also noted. According to Mann, "families are forgoing routine exams and care because of this lack of continuity and that's leading to chronic care issues" (Vogel, 2014, p. E15). Cooperation is needed across

borders to help deal with assessments, waiting lists, and the use of electronic medical records.

There are many researchers who explored the impact of deployment on families. For example, McFarlane (2009) explored the impact of military deployment on children and family adjustment and noted that there was a lack of systematic research in the area. A summary of findings revealed that some veterans develop posttraumatic stress disorder following deployment, and all families and children face ambiguity and anxiety during deployment. However, parent distress had the greatest impact on the children, supporting the need to fully understand the impact of deployment on the spouse. Chandra et al. (2008) also reported on the impact of deployment on children and families with similar findings that: service members experience significant stress during deployments and many have resulting mental health problems; and spouses, children, and other family members also experience significant stress related to the deployment. Chandra et al. (2008) concluded that more information is needed to fully understand the needs of the family members.

The impacts of deployment differ for the male and female spouses (Angrist & Johnson, 2000). When a mother is deployed, this can lead to risk of divorce, and when the father is deployed, this can result in financial problems (Angrist & Johnson, 2000). As noted by Aronson and Perkins (2013), many families of deployed veterans are not willing or able to use support services offered due to geographic location. However, these families need the services to deal with deployment-related stress. Cozza et al. (2005) reported on the need to fully understand what a family faces during deployment since the

media may present with false information that exacerbates distress levels. Laser and Stephens (2011) reported on the need to work with military families through deployment and beyond in order to help them adjust and Ford et al. (1998) and Lester et al. (2012) reported that a family-centered intervention can provide resiliency training to improve family psychological health. As concluded by Sheppard et al. (2010) and Vogal (2014), these soldiers and family members need support and it is up to the military to provide it. More information is needed to fully comprehend what the family and children of a deployed veteran experiences as caregiving roles change. This supports the need for the current study of the impact of deployment on male spouses.

Impact on Children

There are researchers who explored the impact of deployment and coming home on the veteran and their family. Doyle et al. (2008) found that related themes included: posttraumatic stress, positive relationship adjustment, implicit relationship adjustment, negative impact on the relationship, omission of information, trauma recognition in self, and trauma recognition in the other partner (p. 1). However, there were also many who reported high levels of satisfaction in marriages, and communication was an important related factor. Hinojosa and Hinojosa (2011) reported on the importance of considering members of a military unit, particularly those during armed conflict, as an important resource to help the family reintegration process. Huebner et al. (2009) reported that it is important to consider a community capacity model to support the military family and service members. These studies focused on the need to, and how to, help the returning

veteran and the family. This implies the need to fully understand impacts of deployment on the spouse, in order to help with reintegration.

Summary and Conclusion

Major themes in the literature were that deployment has negative impacts on children, families, and the deployed veteran. Study findings are that children of all ages are negatively impacted by deployments. An important finding related to impacts on children is that the at-home parent's distress level mediates outcomes. The impact of deployment on the spouse is an important factor related to all family outcomes. Studies also showed that deployment leads to risk for divorce and this risk is highest in female deployments. However, female deployment does not tend to result in financial hardships for the family, compared to those faced by female spouses of deployed males. In male deployment situations, the female maintains the role of caretaker. Alternatively, female deployment can result in male spouses being faced with conflicting roles, and more information is needed to understand the impact of this gender role reversal. There is much information regarding the impacts of deployment on these individuals, but there is a gap in the literature regarding the impact on male spouses of deployed females. The need persists to explore these impacts, with a focus on issues such as role conflict, caregiving, and other reintegration problems.

The present study fills this gap in the literature and extends knowledge in the discipline regarding impacts of deployment on male spouses. Specifically, I explored what male spouses of deployed female spouses experience regarding mental health problems, the caregiving of family members, other reintegration related problems, and

role transfer stress. In addition, I explored how the needs and roles of the male spouses of deployed wives differ from female spouses of deployed spouses. Chapter 3 is a presentation of the methodology used in the study to include an introduction, research design and rationale, methodology and procedures, and data processing and analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Little is understood about the effects of a female deployment on male spouses (Mansfield et al., 2010), which supports the need for the current study. Male spouses who face the deployment of their wives also face the need to take over the role of homemaker and childcare provider. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to determine the psychological and emotional effects of female deployment on male spouses. My goal was to explore the lived experiences of nonmilitary male spouses of deployed wives. The purpose of the study was to describe nonmilitary male spouse experiences with mental and physical health, marital problems, caregiving, and other reintegration related problems as well as the role transfer stress experienced by these male spouses of deployed wives. This chapter includes the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. The chapter also includes the data analysis plan, issues of trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and summary.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

One-to-one interviews lasting up to 2 hours were conducted with the research participants. The experiences of these spouses were gathered through the use of open-ended questions asking about experiences with mental and physical health, marital problems, caregiving, and other reintegration related problems as well as questions that explore the experience regarding role transfer stress. For the phenomenology research

design, stages and processes included: formulating the phenomenological question, the investigatory stage, the interview process, data gathering procedures, the reflection process, data management strategies, and data analysis procedures. For this study, all interviews, were audio tape recorded and transcribed all audio tapes. The content of the transcribed data was analyzed by underlining, looking for code themes, and identifying patterns related to the research questions (see below for further data analysis procedures). The following research question guided the research study:

What is the lived experience of male spouses of deployed active duty females?

I chose this research question because it reflects the goal of the study and the phenomenological question to be answered. Specifically, the goal of this study was to further understand the experience of the male spouses of deployed active duty women. To gather information to help fill the gap in the literature regarding the experience of these nonmilitary male spouses I chose this particular research question. While there is information about negative and stressful impacts of deployment on the family, children, and female spouses (DeBurgh et al., 2011; Lester et al., 2011; Mansfield et al., 2010), more is needed to understand the experience of male spouses of deployed wives.

Central Concepts

The central phenomenon of the study were the experiences of male spouses of deployed wives. These experiences included: being married to deployed active duty women, mental health problems, physical health problems, marital problems, caregiving of family members, other reintegration related problems, and role transfer stress.

Research Tradition and Rationale

Research design. For this study, a qualitative phenomenology method was used to explore the research topic as the study goal was to gather detailed information about the lived experience of the participants. The phenomenological approach was used to identify the phenomena and related perceptions of participants. Phenomenology was an appropriate approach for this study, because my goal was to explore the lived experiences of male spouses with deployed wives. According to Van Manen (1997), phenomenological research begins with the formulation of the phenomenological question of what lived experience the researcher is attempting to explore. For this study, the phenomenological question was: What is the lived experience of male spouses of deployed active duty women? For the investigatory stage, I explored the lived experience of the study participants in depth using methods such as observations or personal interviews. Data were analyzed as they were collected, employing the hermeneutical approach.

Rationale. Phenomenology was the most appropriate approach for this study because this area of inquiry is still relatively new and specific and detailed hypotheses would be difficult to generate. I did not choose a quantitative approach because it requires comparison of groups generated on previous research which was not possible in this case. Of the major qualitative research designs to choose from, phenomenology was

the most consistent with study goals of learning more about the lived experiences of male spouses.

Other approaches such as ethnography, grounded theory, and the case study were less appropriate for this study. For example, ethnography, designed to understand a group was not chosen since the study goal was not to understand the culture of a group and their behaviors. Grounded theory was not considered since this approach allows for the generation of a theory, which was not the study goal. The case study was also not considered because it allows for a focus on cases in their natural setting, which was not the study goal. Instead, I chose phenomenology because the study purpose was to seek an understanding of the experiences from another person's point of view (Creswell, et al., 2013).

Role of the Researcher

I interviewed participants and gathered and analyzed the data. No prior professional relationship or power over the participants was established. Any researcher biases were managed by returning all findings and conclusions to the participants for verification. Participants were in a position to confirm results because it is their perspective that was sought. This established credibility and helped ensure that study findings reflect the perspective of the participant instead of the researcher (Trochim, et al., 2008).

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Participants of this study were the husbands of women who were deployed at least one time. Inclusion criteria included being married to a woman, no affiliation with the military, one child under 3 years of age, and wife deployed in an isolated duty station. Research findings revealed that there is a higher level of anxiety found among military families before, during, and after deployment (Mansfield et al., 2010) and the children of parents who deploy have been known to exhibit responses long after the parent returns (Lester et al., 2011). The need for the current study is supported by Crum-Cianflone et al. (2014), who reported that understanding the experiences of the spouse of the deployed, with regard to the health and well-being of their families, which involve childcare responsibilities and potential role reversals for the men, is critically important for the Defense of Department, Department of Veterans Affairs, and society. This supported the inclusion criteria of being married to a woman, no affiliation with the military, and wife deployed to an isolated duty station were met for my study. The inclusion of having at least one child under 3 years of age was based on the study goal of understanding issues of childcare and role reversal faced by this man. More than half of active-duty and selected reserve members have family responsibilities, are married, and have one child or more (Committee on the Assessment of the Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families; Board on the Health of Select Populations; Institute of Medicine, 2013). More information is needed to fully comprehend what the male spouse of the deployed woman experiences as caregiver roles change. This supported the need

for the inclusion criteria of at least one child young enough to require child-care living at home. The need to understand this role reversal stress is supported by the literature and the theoretical framework, gender role theory.

Following study approval, participants were recruited through the Operations Officer with approval from the Commanding Officer. Participants were not nor ever had been in the armed forces. All criteria are based on the participants self-reports. All participants were volunteers and I kept their identity confidential. All participants were aware of the study purpose and that an interview would be conducted to gather data for this study for Walden University. The sample included a maximum of 15 participants. This number was derived at based on Mason's (2010) report that the smallest number of participants necessary to reach saturation is 15 to 20.

Instrumentation

One-on-one interviews were conducted for this study. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. I did not take notes or keep a journal during or after the interviews. I developed an interview protocol to use for these interviews. Based on the phenomenological approach, the interview protocol used broad questions. The research questions below were obtained from extensive literature review in the areas of deployment, marital problems, caregiving, role transfer issues, reintegration, and psychological and physical adjustment.

Interview protocol. Interview questions were guided by the following items:

1. What is your experience regarding being a male spouse of a deployed active duty woman?

2. What is your experience regarding mental health issues?
3. What is your experience regarding physical health issues?
4. What is your experience regarding marital issues?
5. What is your experience regarding caregiving of family members?
6. What is your experience regarding other reintegration related issues?
7. What is your experience regarding role transfer issues?

Questions regarding gender, age, ethnicity/race, education level, and other inclusion criteria of the participant were asked and responses were recorded. Other questions were used to guide the interview, such as, “Could you tell me more about that?”

The question items were based on the issues facing families that are understudied. While there is information regarding negative impacts of deployment on the family, children, and female spouses (De Burgh, White, & Iversen, 2011; Lester et al., 2011; Mansfield et al., 2010), there is a lack of information regarding the plight of male spouses of deployed wives. Items were not gathered from other studies that used similar questions for female spouses or from instruments used in other studies. Instead items were based on study goals and research questions.

Because the protocol items were developed based on study goals and research questions, this established content and face validity. The process used to develop the items consisted of consideration for the literature and the study purpose. Specifically, the study purpose was to describe male spouse experiences with mental and physical health,

marital problems, caregiving, and other reintegration related problems as well as the role transfer stress experienced by these male spouses of deployed wives.

There are many studies that reported the negative impact of deployment on the family as caregiving roles change when a spouse is deployed (Committee on the Assessment of the Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families, Board on the Health of Select Populations; Institute of Medicine, 2013; De Burgh et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2015). Deployment impacts the mental, emotional, and social well-being of spouse, children, and caregivers (Committee on the Assessment of the Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families, Board on the Health of Select Populations; Institute of Medicine, 2013). However, the studies did not specifically focus on issues faced by the family when the mother is deployed, which supports the need for the protocol items regarding impacts of female deployment on the male spouse and caregiver.

Literature findings are that higher levels of anxiety are found among military families and their children before, during, and after deployment (Lester et al., 2011; Mansfield et al., 2010) and there was a need to further understand these mental health and other experiences (Crum-Cianflone, et al., 2014). De Burgh, White, Fear, and Iversen (2010) reported that deployment results in poor psychosocial consequences for military families. There are also physical health risks for this population (Fish, 2013). Pawlyk (2014) noted that deployment, war, and constant upheaval have negative impacts on marriage. When females are deployed the male spouse must face role changes which can lead to stress.

The items regarding role reversal is consistent with the theoretical model, gender, role theory. Gender role theory posits that each individual is socially identified as either a female or a male with a specific role that defines them, and specific expectations about behaviors and attitudes and even skills. Within this theory, males and females communicate and behave in a specific manner (Shimanoff, 2009). As noted by Bussey and Bandura (1999), this impacts many aspects of a person's daily life and males and females learn to behave in a gender-defined manner (Boundless, 2015). Men learn standards of masculinity (Calhoun & Taub, 2014; Connell, 1987, 1995) and act differently from females in different situations (Eagly, 1987; Eckes, 1996). A study was needed to determine how gender role expectations influence the impacts of deployed wives on male spouses, which led to the protocol item about this gender-role stress.

All interview protocol is consistent with the research questions, which establishes content and face validity. All transcripts were reviewed by the dissertation committee chair, Salzer. To further ensure reliability and validity of the protocol items, each participant reviewed their transcripts and reported their accuracy. Modifications were made to the interviews if they were needed, based on the participant's responses.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Permission was sought and a list of potential participants by contacting the Captain, Commanding Officer, and Operations Officer, via telephone or e-mail. All participants were assured that they will remain anonymous. The Operations Officer provided permission to seek willing participants through the Leading Chiefs Petty Officers. A letter was mailed with information regarding the study to the Lead Chief

Petty Officers asking for volunteers; all interested male spouses were asked to contact me. Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) study approval, all interested participants were contacted via telephone or e-mail, to determine if the potential participant met inclusion criteria. An initial sample size of 15 to 20 was sought. At that time, the participants were assured that all information will remain confidential and only the interviewer would have access to this information. If the participant met inclusion criteria, he was asked to meet at a designated time and place for two, one-on-one interviews. At the time of the first 1-hour interview, a letter of consent was distributed and collected before the interview took place. The interview protocol was used to guide the interview process. The interview was audio-taped using a Sony ICD PX333. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed the data with qualitative analysis. The interviewer is the only one with access to the digital recording, which was destroyed after the interview was transcribed.

Following this analysis, the participants were contacted regarding a second interview in order to discuss and confirm the validity of findings and conclusions. All participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and they could have withdrawn from the study or ask questions at any time. They were informed that confidentiality regarding the participant will be maintained and all names were to be replaced with identification numbers. If fewer than 15 participants volunteered, the interviewer was prepared to contact the Leading Chiefs Petty Officers regarding a second letter to be sent to any potential participants. All participants were debriefed after the interviews; they were allotted time to ask any questions at this time. Each participant was

provided with the interviewer's e-mail and telephone number. There was no compensation for participants other than the gaining of knowledge related to the topic.

Data Analysis Plan

The program ATLAS ti 7 was used to help in breaking down complex, large data such as text and audio. The program assists in finding codes, similarities, and evaluate their significance. Open, axial, and selective coding were used to analyze the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The transcribed interview data were analyzed to address the research questions, without using statistical software. Specifically, I used open coding and read through the data several times and then summarized data in chunks based on meanings that emerge, providing codes for each of these chunks of material.

Axial coding was also used to identify relationships among the findings or connections among the findings. Selective coding was also used to determine core issues among the data coded as related to the research questions. The interviewer read through the transcribed data and underlined all pieces of information relative to the research topic and research questions. Next, each underlined portion was abbreviated with a code. Following this, each of the codes was counted. For example, narrative data regarding the question "What is your experience regarding role transfer issues" was expected to yield findings that the husband needs to fill female roles. In this instance, fill female roles were underlined and coded with FEMROLE. This process continued for each response to determine new information, relationships among information, and findings related to research questions. Data analysis procedures included the following steps as discussed by Pearson Education (2010)

1. The examiner transcribed all audio-taped interview data.
2. The examiner read all transcribed data and identified all themes, relationships among themes, and basic themes related to each research question.
3. The examiner examined the documents as a group, coding any themes identified in each. Coding strategy included the use of abbreviated terms reflecting themes obtained from the transcribed data, related to research questions.
4. The examiner examined this coded data to search for patterns between the themes and address the research questions.
5. The examiner made notes regarding any themes that do not appear to be related to the research questions.
6. The examiner drew conclusions based on the findings that identify patterns of themes across documents.
7. The examiner returned all conclusions to the participants and ask for their feedback regarding the validity of results.
8. The examiner made any appropriate adjustments to findings based on participant feedback to establish the validity of findings.
9. The examiner related all findings to preexisting research from the review of literature in Chapter 2.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility (Internal Validity)

Appropriate strategies are needed to establish credibility. These methods include triangulation, prolonged contact, member checks, saturation, reflexivity, and peer review. Trustworthiness involves establishing the credibility of the study and findings. To establish this trustworthiness or credibility, all results and conclusions were returned to the participants for their input regarding accuracy, which provided verification of results (Loh, 2013; Trochim, 2008).

Transferability External Validity

Appropriate strategies are needed to establish transferability. These include the use of thick descriptions and or a variation in participant selection. For this study, findings reflect the participant's lived experience and provide thick descriptions, that may be transferred to other like individuals. Study findings provide insights regarding information that can be transferred to others (Loh, 2013; Trochim, 2008).

Dependability (The Qualitative Counterpart to Reliability)

Appropriate strategies are needed to establish dependability. These methods include audit trails and triangulation. Study rigor was established by using the phenomenological approach as applied by Van Manen (1997). Established phenomenological procedures for data collection, management, and analysis were used and all findings were validated with participant feedback (Loh, 2013; Trochim, 2008). Thus, for this study, dependability was established by returning all findings and

conclusions to the participants for their input. This input was used to adjust findings in order to ensure reliability and validity of conclusions.

Conformability (The Qualitative Counterpart to Objectivity)

Appropriate strategies are needed to establish conformability, such as reflexivity. Conformability strategies must ensure objectivity. These strategies must examine the conclusions and processes to confirm that these results and interpretations, as well as any recommendations are supported by the data (Loh, 2013). For this study reflexivity was used to ensure conformability. I systematically attended to issues such as effects on the participant during the interview process. I sought to establish trust and rapport during the interview by learning the interview protocol prior to the interview so that more of an engagement process could take place during the interview. This allowed the interview to proceed more like a conversation than a question and answer session. The tape recorder was placed away from the interviewee so it does not interrupt the process. To further confirm that objectivity was a factor in all data analysis and interpretation, I returned all findings to participants for verification. This process helped overcome any researcher bias or effects (Loh, 2013).

Ethical Procedures

In accordance with APA ethical standards related to research with human subjects, issues of informed consent, respect for privacy, and confidentiality were dealt with as described below. There were not multiple roles involved. I also consulted with and used the Belmont Report to ensure ethical procedures were followed (Smith, 2003). Study permission and a list of potential participants was obtained from the Captain, the

Commanding Officer, the Operations Officer, and the Leading Chiefs Petty Officers. IRB approval was gained before any data collection took place. Ethical issues regarding the treatment of human participants included those related to recruitment materials and processes and plan to address these issues. These ethical concerns also considered data collection activities and issues such as refusal to participate or early withdrawal from the study, or any other potential adverse events, with a plan to address these issues.

For this study, these ethical issues were addressed because I provided the participants with full information about the study to include the study purpose, use of the interview to gather data, and the intended use of all data. I obtained signed letters of consent from participants. The letter of consent ensured that all participants were fully informed about the study and that they provided voluntary consent for their participation. There was no deception or methods that could harm or cause pain to the participants. Any negative emotions uncovered during the interview process were dealt with; I informed the participant that he could have asked questions at any time and at the end of the interview to avoid any confusion, risk, or harm. The name and phone number of a Licensed Clinical Psychologist was provided to the participants. The sample was not from a vulnerable population. All participants were also be informed that they could have withdrawn from the study at any time with no consequence. All participants were informed that anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy of the participant will be maintained with the use of identification numbers rather than names on all data. All data will be kept in a secure place and only I will have access to this data. Study participants were informed that there

was minimal risk expected from their study participation and they will benefit from a new level of understanding of the study topic and related issues.

Summary

This chapter presented the study methods. The research design and rationale, role of the researcher, and methodology were discussed. For this study, a qualitative phenomenological research design was used to gather detailed and in-depth information about the topic. This research design allowed me to explore the phenomenological question regarding: What is the lived experience of husbands of deployed wives? The methodology section reviews participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, and data analysis plan. The intent was to recruit participants for personal interviews that would be analyzed and coded in order to reveal common themes to address the research questions. In addition, issues of trustworthiness, with ethical procedures, were discussed. Returning results and conclusions to participants for verification helped findings to be trustworthy, dependable, and credible.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to determine the emotional and physiological effects of female deployment on male spouses. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to explain and discuss the experiences of the male spouses with mental and physical health, marital problems, caregiving, and other reintegration related problems, as well as the role of transfer stress experienced by these male spouses of deployed wives. This chapter of the study includes the results of the interpretive phenomenological analysis applied to a series of 15 interviews that I conducted with male spouses of military women who either had experienced or were currently experiencing a deployment.

The main research question in this study was:

What is the lived experience of male spouses of deployed active duty woman?

The results of the study revealed several codes including: caregiving to children, support from relatives, mental and psychological issues, raising the children, financial issues, lack of time together, other challenges, intimacy and sex, pursuing the husband's personal dreams, role transfer issues, reintegration issues, making the marriage work, and other institutional support. Based on these codes, four themes emerged including: (a) caregiving and raising children, (b) issues encountered during the deployment, (c) support, and (d) reintegration.

Setting

The 15 participants were selected from different naval stations. The choice of different naval stations allowed the setting of the study to have a diverse range, making generalizability of the results of the study more probable. Of the 15 participants, none of them were located in the duty station at the time I conducted the study. The participants of the study were selected if the wives were deployed in areas that are not accessible to family members. The participants of the study were recruited through the Operations Officer with approval from the Commanding Officer.

Demographics

The participants were volunteers and were assured that they had the option of refusing any questions and terminating the interview at any time. All 15 of the participants at one point or another asked that an issue be truncated and that questioning cease on that particular issue. All of the participants completed the interviews, which lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes each. I anticipated that each of the one-on-one interviews could last as much as 2 hours but it proved unnecessary in all but two cases to go 60 minutes before concluding the interview session.

Table 1

Summary of the Demographics of the Participants, Using Their Pseudonym Names

No.	Name of Participant	Age	Employment	No. of Children	Profession
1	Carlos	29	Employed	2	Teaching
2	Joaquin	26	Employed	2	Manager
3	Chris	Not specified	Employed	1	Civil Servant
4	Mike	44	Employed	Not specified	Legal assistant and university student
5	Jordan	20	Not employed	Not specified	Full-time student
6	Michael	34	Employed	2	Entrepreneur
7	Lou	36	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified
8	Jeremy	24	Not employed	2	Part-time community college student
9	Bob	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified
10	Heath	12	Not specified	2	Not specified
11	Philip	28	Employed	2	Contractor
12	Ray	55	Employed		Civil Servant
13	Lance	Not specified	Employed	3	Rancher
14	Danny	Not specified	Not specified	2	Not specified
15	Dexter	Not specified	Employed	3	Lead software engineer

All 15 of the subjects were men, ranging in age from 24 to 55 years old, with most falling in the age range between 26 and 36. Five subjects did not provide their age during the interview. Each of the subjects indicated that they had at least one if not more children in their home. Two of the subjects indicated that some of the children in their homes were from previous marriages and three subjects indicated that their current marriage was not their first marriage. Younger spouses tended to have younger children in the home. One spouse indicated that he was caring for his wife's children by a previous marriage. Each of the 15 subjects indicated that at some point members of one or both spouses' families provided assistance with respect to child care.

Educationally and professionally, the sample was quite diverse. One subject indicated that he was a rancher by profession, one indicated that he was a business entrepreneur, several stated that they were involved in contracting, teaching, or retail sales, and one subject stated that he was a civil servant. Several stated that they had undergraduate and graduate degrees while two subjects said that they were full-time students at the present time.

Ten of the 15 subjects provided information about their own family constellation. A total of seven subjects indicated that they had been reared in two-parent family settings while three of the subjects stated that they were cared for by single mothers. Those individuals who were raised in two parent households tended to say that they grew up in close family settings. For example, Lance, a Texas born rancher, said that "I had a very active life and a great childhood. Life was great growing up. My parents were in love

until the day my mother went to meet the Lord.” Heath said that he was “pretty much raised the Southern way, respect and consequences. We were raised the right way.”

Data Collection

The permission to interview the participants and a list of potential participants have been obtained by contacting the Captain, Commanding Officer, and Operations Officer, via telephone or e-mail. All participants were assured that they will remain anonymous. If the participant met inclusion criteria, he was asked to meet at a designated time and place for two one-on-one interviews. At the time of the first 1-hour interview, a letter of consent was distributed and collected before the interview took place. Following this analysis, the participants were contacted regarding a second interview in order to discuss and confirm the validity of findings and conclusions. I carefully transcribed the data collected. There was no compensation for participants other than the gaining of knowledge related to the topic.

Data Analysis

The results of the study revealed several codes including: Caregiving to children, support from relatives, mental and psychological issues, raising the children, financial issues, lack of time together, other challenges, intimacy and sex, pursuing the husband's personal dreams, role transfer issues, reintegration issues, making the marriage work, and other institutional support.

Table 2

Definitions

Codes	Meaning
Caregiving to children	The spouses of the females deployed had to assume the role of caregiving to the children.
Support from relatives	The spouses of the females deployed sometimes appreciated the support received from relatives in caregiving and raising the children.
Mental and psychological issues	There were several mental and psychological issues encountered by the spouses of the females deployed.
Raising the children	The spouses of the females deployed had to assume the role of raising the children.
Financial issues	There were several financial issues encountered by the spouses of the females deployed.
Lack of time together	One of the issues encountered is the lack of time together for the married couples.
Other challenges	Other challenges include raising a family that is different from the traditional notion of a family.
Intimacy and sex	There were participants who emphasized the difficulty of having intimacy and sex, coupled with the paranoia of possible infidelity.
Pursuing the husband's personal dreams	Some husbands had to sacrifice their personal dreams in order to raise their children after their wives have been deployed.
Role transfer issues	Role transfer issues were encountered since the fathers had to perform the roles traditionally performed by housewives.
Reintegration issues	There were some difficulties encountered when the deployed female was reintegrated with the family.
Making the marriage work	Making the marriage work was a common challenge for the participants.
Other institutional support	Other institutional support includes support from the families and church, to give an example.

Based on these codes, four themes emerged including: (a) caregiving and raising children, (b) issues encountered during the deployment, (c) support, and (d) reintegration.

Table 3

Themes and Codes

Emerging Themes	Associated Codes
Caregiving and raising children	Caregiving to children Raising the children
Issues encountered during the deployment	Mental and psychological issues Financial issues Lack of time together Other challenges Intimacy and sex Pursuing the husband's personal dreams Role transfer issues
Support	Support from relatives Other institutional support Support from military institution
Reintegration	Reintegration Making the marriage work

Trustworthiness

The results of the study are credible. It is noteworthy that all results and conclusions were returned to the participants for their input regarding accuracy, which provided verification of results. The results are likewise transferrable. The findings of the study reflect the lived experiences of the participants after the deployment of their spouses. The results of the study are likewise dependable since phenomenological procedures for data collection, management, and analysis were used and all findings were

validated with participant feedback. It is easy to confirm the results of the study since the researcher has systematically attended to the issues, including the effects on the participants during the interview process. The process employed by the researcher helped in the elimination of research biases.

Results

Four themes emerged from the analysis of the data: (a) Caregiving and raising children, (b) Issues encountered during the deployment, (c) Support, and, (d) Reintegration. These themes shall be discussed in this section.

Theme 1: Caregiving and Raising Children

Caregiving to children. The spouses of the women deployed had to assume the role of caregiving and raising the children. The responsibilities of caregiving and raising the children range from providing food, educating the children and even giving their emotional and other needs.

Carlos acknowledged that caring for the children, working and going to class could be stressful and that many people in his family “ask what type of mother would leave her children” He sees this as a response from a “typical Mexican family,” and says, “we laugh it off.” Joaquin, a 26-year-old manager of a sporting goods store who cared for children ages 5 and 3 years old when his wife deployed, stated that “my experience being married to my wife well has not been what I expected. I was thinking we would get married and have a family. A traditional family. It did not happen.” According to Jeremy, caregiving is challenging because “the kids do not always understand why mommy is away.”

Heath mentioned the difficulty of ensuring that he is available to chauffeur the children to their extracurricular activities even though he commutes 1 hour to work each way on a daily basis. Time management appeared to cause stress in his life, as his youngest child had been diagnosed with oppositional defiant disorder and was in counseling. He attributed the problem to genetics and the child's birth father, who did not appear to be involved in the child's life. The two boys appeared to have two different fathers, but both present problems because their fathers do not care appropriately for their children as is evident in the fact that Heath has guardianship while the mother is deployed.

Raising the children. A major disagreement between Lance and his wife centers on the amount of independence the children should have and whether or not they should be rewarded for getting good grades. He said they resolve these issues by compromising and that the children themselves are the reason that he now spends deployments on the ranch rather than traveling from place to place. "Lance" acknowledges that it might have been more difficult had one of the three children been a daughter who would have needed a mother. The children are being home schooled thus far and when his wife retires they will begin attending the local public school system.

Ray indicated that raising his daughter was difficult because he had to cope with issues of puberty which as a man he did not fully understand. Most significantly, "Ray" was not particularly forthcoming about any of the differences between being the deployed spouse versus being the spouse who remains in the home during a deployment. Since he was previously in the military and had two wives before marrying his current spouse,

“Ray” could have provided insight into the differences between the two situations. Given that his first two marriages failed because of what he called “incompatibility” and “associated absences,” it is possible that deployment issues have negatively impacted upon his life over a fairly long period of time.

Much of the commentary from Heath seems to have focused on issues regarding parenting, parenting style, and coping with caring for children who are not one’s natural children. It appears that this places unique stresses on the military husband that may not be identical to those experienced by military husbands whose children are their own natural offspring. One would therefore need to consider the nature or the family constellation before coming to any conclusions regarding these issues.

Theme 2: Issues Encountered During the Deployment

There likewise several issues encountered by the spouses which include mental and psychological issues, intimacy, role transfer issues and other challenges. These issues were equally faced by the different participants in the study.

Mental and psychological issues. Carlos states he has no major mental, psychological or physical issues in his life other than worrying “for her safe return home.” Like other military husband, he worries about possible cheating, but did not indicate that this had been a problem during his 5-year-old marriage. Joaquin also stated that thus far his wife had only had one deployment and that he does experience periods of sadness “when mommy deploys or has duty” because “the hardest part is not being able to talk to anyone about my feelings.” While he presented himself as healthy and experiencing no physical concerns, and as having a marriage that was “solid” he did

express the fact that life had thrown him “a curve ball and I am glad it did.” He felt challenged by role reversal issues because he had to do many of the things that traditionally were done by women.

Chris did not indicate that he had any significant physical problems but acknowledged that he experiences difficulties with a long-distance relationship and that he wants “my wife every day.” Mike did not identify any significant mental health issues but did say that he often is very tired and lacking in energy and tends to take care of his needs last. “Mike” said that arguing seemed to be more common when his wife was deployed and that “there may be a little resentment because of the fact that you are alone. When things go wrong you want to blame your wife because she’s gone.” He does have issues regarding caregiving and fears of what would happen to his children should he be in an accident or become hospitalized.

Dexter indicated that he has not had personally any experience with mental health issues but that his wife has battled depression for some time and is now receiving treatment and medication for the condition. He says that he is fit but notes that his wife has multiple health issues including back problems and the side effects of a hysterectomy.

When questioned about mental health issues, Lance first said, “we don’t have mental health issues” and then said that actually “we just don’t advertise them for everyone to hear about.” He worries about his wife’s safety when she is deployed and finds that living in a small town means that everybody knows his business even though they are supportive. His health is excellent and he is physically active on his ranch which serves as the center of his life.

Ray said that he did not experience any major stresses mentally but “I do drink alcohol hah that is probably a result of stress.... As it relates to being separated from my spouse during deployments or when being responsible for the care of our children I don’t feel any unusual stressors.” However, “Ray” has multiple physical health issues ranging from high blood pursuer and high cholesterol levels and Type 2 diabetes. Philip says that he does not have much of a support system. Physically, he works quite hard and experiences pain but does not have any medical diagnoses of importance. The biggest challenge for him is that separation disrupts the family life and has necessitated a total reconsideration of what his role as a parent and a husband must be.

Financial issues. Carlos stated that his life was challenging when his wife deployed after having the children and during her first deployment after their marriage. Their early issues – when they had two separate households – centered on finances: “We had two households at the beginning and it was financially stressful. However, once she moved back this got a lot better.” Financial issues were stressful on occasion but overall Joaquin indicated that he had overcome the embarrassment that he initially felt when he was seen carrying a diaper bag or functioning as the primary caregiver in the home.

Mike grew up in a very traditional home where “the man works and the woman stays at home and tends to the children and house duties.” He recognizes that the experience of being a man married to a deployed military woman is difficult but also described “horror stories” about women whose husbands are deployed who run up debt, party every weekend and leave their husbands.

Lack of time together. For Joaquin, marital issues centered on prolonged separation, a lack of time alone with his wife, and the daily challenge of balancing his own work and caring for the couple's children were prominent. What is most difficult for Philip is being away from his wife and having to do everything for himself. He indicated that his type of marriage is difficult and that he believed "you have to be of sound mind to make it through a deployment." He often cried himself to sleep during deployments which he sees as inherently stressful. Like others, he acknowledged that "the mind has a funny way of bringing up feelings a macho man does not divulge to anyone until your wife deploys. It is even harder when you have no one to talk to."

Intimacy and sex. No significant marital issues were identified with respect to intimacy. Jordan stated that "we were so young when we got married but being Catholic I do not believe in divorce so when we said I do it was forever.... She has been the better and I have been the worse. My poor wife got a defective husband." One suspects that for Jordan, the combination of early marriage and parenthood and disappointment in the course of his life and career do represent mental health issues.

According to Danny, He indirectly indicated that his relationship has been challenged by infidelity, stating, "the only health issue related with a spouse being deployed is the occasional contraction of an STD." Sexual infidelity was very much on his mind as a major marital issue impacting upon his relationship and that of other military couples. He said that it was all too easy to allow oneself to become suspicious which would "lead you down the road to infidelity and distrust." Danny commented that "military spouses worry more about being humiliated than the well-being of the

significant other.” He said that “it’s their job to die, but being humiliated, that’s a moral sin. That will kill your soul faster than a bullet.” He was extremely preoccupied with this issue, even pointing out that during his first deployment he spent more time worrying about his wife’s sexual fidelity than worrying about caring for their child.

Lou acknowledged sometimes feeling a sense of paranoia and skepticism and his conviction, without proof, that his wife was unfaithful to him. He said that “deployment is freaking stressful on a family” and that he has been “depressed at times when she left” which gave rise to negative feelings and fears of marital infidelity. Unfortunately, he said further that he and his wife did not discuss these issues with their children early on and that as a Hispanic, he has a number of physical problems that trouble him. According to Bob, in terms of his marriage, he acknowledged that “we have a great sex life.... We have our differences of opinions and we are both stubborn.” He further stated that he sees his experience thus far as “a roller coaster ride.”

Pursuing the husband’s personal dreams. There may be issues on difficulties encountered for the husbands to pursue their own dreams. Jordan wanted to join the Marines but medical issues made that impossible, and this remains a major source of frustration for him today. It is particularly difficult because his wife, whom he married when she became pregnant during high school and joined the Navy immediately after graduation. “Jordan” put it this way, “it still stings a little being married to a sailor instead of being the sailor... It was supposed to be us wearing the uniform not just her.”

Dexter suggested that his wife’s career was ultimately responsible for preventing him from advancing into upper management in his own field. He seems to have resented

the assumption that strangers make that he was the service member and to have been uncomfortable explaining that he was not the active duty person. To cope with his frustrations, Dexter progressed academically which gave him a great sense of personal achievement as does volunteering in an elementary school and training for an Ironman competition.

Philip mentioned that he gave up on his dream of becoming a psychologist to be able to care for their children and raise them. Ray's conflict was related to the fact that he knew himself to be "in the prime of my working life" and the feeling that he was "not contributing to the household in a meaningful financial way."

Role transfer issues. Chris said that role transfer issues were problematic because "I had to learn how to do everything and prioritize the order they get done." He anticipates that it will be difficult to give up responsibilities and transfer roles when his wife returns. For this particular military husband, stresses appear to center on having to acculturate himself to a life role that he did not any point anticipate and which appears on balance to be more demanding than he wishes.

Mike felt that even though the former wives' clubs are being redeveloped as spouses' clubs and more and more husbands stay behind, he is still part of a small minority of military spouses based on gender. Among the stresses that this subject introduced were challenges of being "both mom and dad" as well as the sadness of coping with a wife who may be absent for months on end. He indicated that as a man he was always concerned about who his wife "was hanging out with" and whether or not she was safe during deployments to the Middle East.

For Jordan, the hardest part of his wife's deployment is the fact that "she is one that is deployed. I do have a problem with that and the fact that I could not be out there defending our great country." This young man says that he was extremely sad and depressed when his wife employed, that there is a great deal of stress being a single dad, and that he does not talk much about the situation because "I do not want to be known as the 'wuss' who couldn't be in the Navy so now I'm whining about having to stay behind." The situation makes him feel like less of a man even though he knows pulls his weight in the marriage.

For Danny, role transfer issues were clearly significant for this young man whose entire life plans were changed because of a sports injury in high school. Jordan said "I sound like a whining spouse. This is hard work. I do not know how any person does it." At the same time, Jordan appears to be coping quite well with stresses that include coming to terms with the dramatic change in his own plans for his career.

For this military husband, role transfer issues were not important. He expressed no concerns regarding taking up responsibilities that were traditionally those of the wife or turning them back over when she returns. He said "when she's gone I don't attempt to replace that value. This way, upon their return, that value is much appreciated and not compared."

Michael indicated that "I was very quick to return her role as mom back to her. The kids seem to accept her back in her role quickly as well." Of the subjects, "Michael was generally less forthcoming with details or willing to go into any depth regarding emotions and feelings. He did not indicate whether or not he and his currently deployed

wife had any children together but seemed to suggest that she was the “mom” for his children from his first marriage.

Other challenges. According to Chris, the most challenging part of his wife’s deployment was “everything. Everything has been difficult and challenging” and there is nothing positive about his wife’s deployment. His wife has elected to leave the military after her current deployment and Chris said, “I am not cut out for this military life.” Further, he stated that he was depressed and that at times his emotions “go from happy to sad within minutes simply by watching a commercial” and particularly on special dates such as his child’s birthday and holidays.

Dexter said that it has been very difficult being the male spouse of a deployed active duty female because “the military and the marriage changes a lot of things for a dependent male.” He pointed out that military couples must cede certain aspects of decision making to the military which means that “the dependent male spouse has to take a back seat and allow many things to be dictated to them” while the wife is immersed within “a male dominated military culture.”

Theme 3: Support

To combat the challenges encountered by the couples, support is required from the relatives and different institutions. It bears noting that the participants received different kinds and levels of support.

Support from relatives. Carlos recognized that he relies upon the support of her parents and his mother and sister, but it is clear that his wife’s deployments are at times troubling: “There are times when my wife has to leave for workups and it can get lonely

and depressing.” Carlos did emphasize that his life is made much easier by the fact that his mother lives with him and his family and has since the children were born. This was mentioned several times in different contexts. He also stated that were his wife to be reassigned to a different duty station, “My mother would move with us.” A great deal of familial support seems to be a key factor in facilitating this family’s capacity to cope with a deployed mother of toddlers.

Jordan continues to struggle with the consequences of high school football injuries and stated that “I can barely walk much less go to the gym.” He depends on his mother for assistance but acknowledges that his marriage is complex because “the odds were against us from the beginning.” He worries about his wife when she is deployed but says that when she is gone he is not overly stressed “because I have all my family in the area to help.” On the contrary, Chris did not have any immediate family assistance but can depend on neighbors whose husbands are deployed.

Support from the military institution. Carlos also acknowledged that the military provides little support for husbands of servicewomen. He said he does not have bond with other spouses because “I am a man.” While he did not appear troubled by his wife’s career – and stated that staying in the service was totally her choice and he would support any decision she made – he acknowledged that for many family member, the family dynamics were seen as untraditional. Ray said that he did not give much attention to questions regarding psychological problems related to his wife’s deployment other than his need to feel that he is contributing financially to the marriage.

Other institutional support. Lance was one of the few subjects who indicated that church and religion play a significant role in his family's life. He appears to be a fairly traditional husband and father who values his home and his family and is looking forward to his wife's retirement from the military when she can return to being a full-time mother and wife. His was the most positive of all the interviews with respect to the marital relationship and the lack of any significant challenges or stressors related to caring for dependent children during his wife's deployment.

Theme 4: Reintegration

After deployment, the couples also had to address issues on reintegration and ensuring that the marriage between the couple's work.

Reintegration issues. Adding to Joaquin's stress are such things as working full-time, going to school full-time, and being a full-time single parent for prolonged periods. He expressed frustration with reintegration issues because it took time to become accustomed to having his wife home; he also said that at times he had been jealous when the children paid attention to his wife, but he is learning to "let her be involved with the children when she can be and I take a step back."

The family of Chris has not yet experienced reintegration but anticipates that it will be difficult "because our daughter will have to learn about her mother." Reintegration issues for this subject centered on ceding control to his wife when she returns from deployment. Mike said "I am accustomed to doing everything myself. The kids are so used to coming to dad to solve their problems or even just hold them. I know it has to be hard because she has to slowly work herself back into the family." With

respect to role transfer, he said that he always tells people that while his wife is on deployment and he works for a living.

Mike said “saying my wife is deployed is kind of hard because I’m the man and in traditional roles it should be me. I would say it’s kind of taking away my masculinity in a way.” Thus, for this subject, reintegration and role transfer issues appear to be most significant. Each of the men that were interviewed indicated that role transfer – which emerges as a two-way street – is particularly challenging. As Mike noted, the first challenge is adapting to the traditional wife’s role and the second challenge is retreating from exclusive occupation of that role when the deployed wife returns.

According to Dexter, was difficult because the children had to adjust to their mother’s frequent absences and the changes in routines and discipline that occurred when she returned. Dexter said “in my opinion, reintegration seems to be harder on the adults when the kids are smaller” but it is still difficult when they get older. Danny also indicated that he no longer feels this way but did suggest that reintegration can go one way or the other: “you either know it’s over or you are happy to see each other.” He stated that resumption of intimate relations after deployment can eliminate any discomfort that a couple might feel.

While the family has moved often, this was the first major deployment and Lance is looking forward to reintegration. He indicated that role transfer has not been a problem because “I was very self-sufficient, and I’m used to doing things for myself.” He appears to have great respect for his wife’s efforts in raising her two children from a previous marriage and to regard these children as positively as he does his own son. He said that

he has been buying land for each of the boys should they wish to be ranchers when they grow up.

Other marital issues emerged during reintegration. Lou is critical of himself for gaining weight and letting himself go but says that sex is not one of their problems and reintegration is “usually a great experience typically consisting of rekindling.” As a Hispanic male, he said that he “took a lot of crap” because of his wife’s career but ultimately his father, brothers, and mother were very supportive. Because he works in banking and handled finances, he feels that role transfer was not as hard as it could have been. Jeremy said that reintegration issues from deployment are problematic. He said it is awkward when his wife returns and indicated that he did to have any major problems with role transfers because of the way he grew up. He put it this way: “I used to feel embarrassed but after a while I did not care. Those are my kids that I need to be taken care of and it is me or my wife’s responsibility to do it.”

Making the marriage work. According to Joaquin, with respect to maintaining the marriage, this military husband indicated that he and his wife make a concerted effort to write to each other, speak frequently, use Skype, and maintain a strong marriage. Jordan seems to be coping effectively while acknowledging the existence of his frustration and benefitting from the support of his mother. He said that “I am her super hero,” indicating that his wife is very appreciative of his efforts on behalf of their family while she is deployed.

Dexter commented that he and his wife came close to divorce twice and even counseling did not fully resolve the issues that emerged during deployments and

unaccompanied duty tours. Multiple attempts at counseling and participation in a marriage boot camp have appeared to put the marriage back on track. He received support from his mother and her mother and was able to work from home when their children were young. Dexter was one of the more negative subjects with respect to his feelings regarding deployment and its effect on his life and the family. Nevertheless, the family has survived 20 years despite two periods of contemplating divorce. This subject was quite forthcoming and seemed to be very willing to discuss his feelings. Perhaps because of the multiple attempts at counseling he has become accustomed to a level of disclosure that is not commonplace.

Reintegration after the first deployment was difficult and Philip felt that he and his wife might divorce. Counseling has helped the couple to “strengthen our marriage and communication problems.” His wife is on her second deployment and he hopes that homecoming will be less stressful for them both this time. During her first deployment, his mother was of enormous assistance but during the second deployment he says he has been totally on his own which has made him appreciate his wife more than during the first deployment. Jeremy was quite forthcoming with respect to the fact that both he and his wife have been unfaithful and have both been through counseling. He said that “it takes a lot of work and dedication to make this kind of marriage work. We are working on it. It is hard but we are both committed to making it work. I love her and our children.”

Summary

Deployment has been documented as being the most traumatic event to military families because of the disruption in the traditional notion of families. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology research study was to determine the psychological and emotional effects of female deployment on male spouses. The main research question of the study is "What is the lived experience of male spouses of deployed active duty females?" Based on the data analysis, four themes emerged including: (a) Caregiving and raising children; (b) Issues encountered during the deployment; (c) Support; and, (d) Reintegration. The spouses of the females deployed had to assume the role of caregiving and raising the children. There were likewise several issues encountered by the spouses which include mental and psychological issues, intimacy, role transfer issues and other challenges. To combat the challenges encountered by the couples, support is required from the relatives and different institutions. After deployment, the couples also had to address issues on reintegration and ensuring that the marriage between the couple's work.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

In this study, I used a qualitative phenomenological method to determine the emotional and physiological effects of female deployment on male spouses. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to explain and discuss the experiences of the male spouses with mental and physical health, marital problems, caregiving, other reintegration related problems, and role transfer stress. A limited number of demographic questions were asked, revealing that the selection of 15 subjects created a somewhat heterogeneous sample in which most subjects were between the ages of 24 and 36. Not all of the subjects were employed outside the home and their education levels varied significantly. Despite their demographic differences, these men shared some key experiences that were directly related to their marriage and the responsibilities they acquired during their wives' deployment. The main research question in this study was: what is the lived experience of male spouses of deployed active duty women? Four themes emerged from the analysis of the data: (a) Caregiving and raising children, (b) Issues encountered during the deployment, (c) Support, and (d) Reintegration. These themes shall be discussed in this section.

Interpretation of the Findings

Caregiving and Raising Children

The spouses of the women who were deployed had to assume the role of caregiving and raising the children. The responsibilities of caregiving and raising the children ranged from providing food, educating the children, and even giving their

emotional and other needs. Findings from several studies have provided research data showing that the spouse of the deployed faces the challenge of maintaining a household with one adult present (Angrist & Johnson, 2000). The findings in the available literature are related to the results of this study as the husbands of military women deployed admitted that they had to assume the role of raising the children alone (Angrist & Johnson, 2000). Findings from these studies are that the spouse of the deployed parent must provide all care for the children, all management of maintenance, repair, and financial income and employment, and all considerations for medical care (McFarlane, 2009). The available literature was also affirmed in this study. The role of the husbands includes making sure that the children have their basic needs met, including food and educational needs. When deployment is long, it can result in communication problems with the spouse and problems with the household, care, and childcare issues. Findings from studies are that the spouse of the deployed military woman faces problems helping their children deal with life with only one parent, spending enough time with the children, and helping children with homework. The participants of this study also stated that most of them needed support from family members and even other institutions for help raising their children.

Issues Encountered During Deployment

There were several mental and psychological issues encountered by the spouses of the women deployed. One of the issues encountered was the lack of time together for the married couples. There were several financial issues encountered by the spouses of the women deployed. Other challenges include raising a family that is different from the

traditional notion of a family. Some participants emphasized the difficulty of lacking intimacy and sex, coupled with the paranoia of possible infidelity. Some husbands had to sacrifice their personal dreams in order to raise their children after their wives had been deployed.

Weinstock (2016) and Wilson (2015) asserted that failing to examine the critical concerns of spouses is ultimately detrimental to the well-being of the military itself. Satisfied spouses who feel that they are given support when needed and that their needs are acknowledged as legitimate have helped deployed personnel cope with their own issues. Many of the subjects in this study indicated that ensuring that frequent contact between the deployed spouse and the family at home was vital to their well-being.

Many military families find it difficult to cope on the salaries and benefits of the service member alone (Committee on the Assessment, 2013). While many men who are married to military women do work, it is often difficult for them to simultaneously work outside the home and provide care for dependent minor children. While this issue was not explored in any depth herein, it is one of the issues with which the military itself must come to terms going forward. Certainly, this study reveals that many men who are married to military women experience career related frustrations.

Support

To combat the challenges encountered by military couples, support is required from their relatives and different institutions. It bears noting that the participants received different kinds and levels of support. The spouses of the women deployed sometimes appreciated the support received from relatives in caregiving and raising the children.

Other institutional support possible includes support from the families and churches.

Some 14.6% of military spouses today in the United States are male, and most of them are significantly lacking in duty post support groups and communities (Dyer, 2017).

There are therefore several stressors that are not addressed by the military and which in and of themselves place enormous burdens on all members of military families.

Dyer (2017) also argued that as military women progress through the ranks, they are more and more likely to divorce, creating additional concerns regarding child care. Based on the literature and the results of this study, gender appears to be a significant determinant of the lived experiences of military spouses (Weinstock, 2016). This study revealed a number of critical concerns that civilian spouses of military women must address. While many of these concerns are common in families where the civilian spouse is female, there is no doubt that women left behind during a spouse's deployment do not face some of the challenges that men do (Mansfield, 2010).

The 15 men who participated in the present study may represent a relatively small sample of civilian men married to military women. However, as Verdelli (2011) pointed out, there is a growing awareness in the military of the unique needs of husbands but thus far there does not appear to be any broad scale effort to create duty post support networks that specifically address the needs of male spouses. This study provided information that can be useful in assisting military installations in their efforts to develop programs targeting male spouses of deployed wives. Researchers including Dyer (2017) claimed that more and more men are finding that they are in a position similar to that of the participants of this study and it is therefore incumbent upon the military to develop a

proactive response to the needs of these individuals. Certainly, spouses' clubs need to be reorganized to include men and gender specific programs need to be developed that target the unique needs of male spouses.

These kinds of efforts would certainly be of great value as the military comes to terms with the ongoing increase of women in the ranks and the corresponding increase in the number of male spouses left behind when women are deployed. As Weinstock (2016) suggested, families in which the deployed spouse is female are no longer truly invisible in the various U.S. military services.

Reintegration

There were some difficulties encountered when the deployed women was reintegrated with the family. Role transfer issues were encountered because the fathers had to perform the roles traditionally performed by women. Making the marriage work after deployment was a common challenge for the participants. Reintegration issues also emerged as somewhat significant, particularly with respect to sharing responsibility with the once absent spouse. Most of the men indicated that there were some challenges experienced with respect to returning wives and intimacy issues as well. For the most part, these men seemed to find it difficult at best to stand by as children received more attention from their mothers than the men did from their wives. While the men acknowledged that they understood this, they nevertheless suggested it was difficult to accept the transfer of attention from themselves to the mother by their children.

Calhoun and Taub (2014) and DeBurgh et al. (2011) noted that deployment often results in poor psychosocial consequences for military families. Children in such families

are likely to experience anxiety some resentment regarding the absent parent. Frequent moves are also challenging for all family members, but especially so for the spouse and children who remain at home. The men in this study appeared to be looking forward to the time when their spouse left the military. Mansfield et al. (2010) noted that this is a common emotion among both male and female spouses who find prolonged careers to be challenging at best. Several of the men indicated that their wives were planning on resigning after a current deployment, suggesting that this is an issue of significance in shaping the lived experiences of men married to military women.

Limitations of the Study

The sample selected for this study was from an available volunteer population of 15 individuals. The results of this research may not be generalizable to individuals in other geographical locations. Qualitative research focuses on interviews with a small sample size. The sample for the current study was anticipated to be 15 participants. Because this study was qualitative in nature and yielded narrative data, the findings were descriptive. Thus, the results were not as specific and precise as the results of quantitative studies. Issues of accuracy of self-reporting were dealt with by ensuring anonymity of the participant. The delimitations for this study included the use of the phenomenological approach, which focuses on one-on-one interviews for assessment of the lived experience of the male spouse of a deployed women and these may not reflect all of the experiences of all male spouses of deployed women. Although the results may not be reflective of all the experiences of the male spouses, the phenomenological method allowed for a more in-depth analysis of their experiences. I chose this focus because there is a lack of

information in the literature regarding the experience of this population. I chose Gender role theory to help understand what these male spouses face as they take over the female role in the family.

Recommendations

Two sets of recommendations emerged from this study. The first set of recommendations discusses issues regarding further research. The second set of recommendations focuses on the kinds of actions, policies, and programs that are likely to be beneficial to men who are married to deployed military women. Both sets of recommendations derived from the literature review and the phenomenological analysis conducted by the researcher.

In Chapter 3, I noted that a relatively small sample of subjects was included in the research design. Van Manen (1997) stated that a relatively small sample of 15 to 20 individuals tends to be common in phenomenological analysis. While this is methodologically correct, one must nevertheless acknowledge that in light of the fact that 14.6% of American military spouses are male (Dyer, 2017), 15 men as subjects remains a much too limited sample to achieve anything other than broad generalizations regarding the research question. What is needed as a potential next step is the development of a series of phenomenological studies in which inclusion criteria become more rigorous.

The present study could easily be repeated with a sample of civilian male spouses who have experienced multiple deployments, a sample of such individuals who are homogenous in terms of age cohort membership or some other demographic variable, and a study of men whose children are no longer living in the home and who are therefore

freed of child care responsibilities. Constructing replications of the present study with well and narrowly defined populations would allow for a more nuanced analysis of how different attributes, variables, and issues impact upon the target population.

Future research that moves away from the phenomenological approach and uses other methods is also valuable. Surveys provide an opportunity for assessing much larger populations than do interview-based studies. Developing multi-item survey instruments based upon the results of this study would be a beneficial task particularly as the military begins to develop programs targeting male spouses.

There are any number of studies that have been conducted that are focused on female spouses of male military service members (Mansfield, et al, 2010). The studies that have been conducted with this population could be modified somewhat to address the unique gender specific needs of men. This kind of research is something that can be done by military social service personnel. It can be specific to a particular duty station, a branch of the service, or any demographic cohort that appears to be particularly vulnerable to some of the problems identified herein.

In this context, a study of the differences between male and female civilian spouses would be interesting. The literature is replete with multiple studies focused on female spouses and lacking in studies of male spouses. A study comparing the lived experiences of men and women in this situation would be quite valuable. Such a study would require the matching of sample members to ensure that both groups were relatively similar if not exactly identical.

The second set of recommendations include programs, policies, and actions that appear to be indicated in order to provide assistance to males who are married to military women. Much of the foregoing discussion in the Summary and Conclusions section of this Chapter introduced suggestions regarding such efforts. The most pressing need as described by Dyer (2017) and many others is the creation of support groups specifically for male spouses of deployed military women. Many men feel distinctly uncomfortable in support groups that mostly exclusively cater to women. Either changing those groups or establishing support networks targeting men only appears to be a necessity.

A second set of recommendations for policies centers on creating educational and training programs for male spouses of deployed military women. Many of these men appear to lack some of the necessary child care and parenting skills that are traditionally viewed as women's skills. Most men before marriage have relatively little experience in caring for young children. Many men find role reversal to be extremely difficult. Given that these men often wear "multiple hats," providing educational opportunities for skill development is certainly desirable.

A final thought as to what the military can do to ease the stresses of deployment is the provision of pre and postdeployment counseling. Many of the men who participated in this study indicated that they were genuinely not prepared for the life changes that would occur after their wives were deployed. It is likely that many of the wives felt much the same way, especially when they were required to leave very young children. Mandatory counseling could help improve reaction to deployment and ease reintegration.

These recommendations speak to concerns regarding the potentially negative impact of military deployment on the marriages of military personnel. With more women choosing to pursue careers in the military, it is reasonable to conclude that there will be more male spouses facing deployment issues in the future. One should add that counseling should also be provided to the children of deployed military women. These children are also required to make adjustments to difficult situations. Their needs were not the focus of this study but could in fact serve as a focus for further research.

Implications

It bears noting that the results of the study will have tremendous impact in ensuring that the family life of couples with deployed military women will be able to address certain issues that are commonly encountered by people in similar situations. Further, the findings of the study will also be helpful and beneficial to the institutions that are expected and mandated to provide institutional support to families encountering the deployment of military women where men had to assume the role of raising children and caregiving. Overall, this study adds to our understanding of the concerns of civilian spouses who must cope with reimagined lives when their partner deploys. It is important to provide the kind of assistance discussed herein in order to reduce tensions for military families and to enhance the coping abilities of the caregiving spouse, regardless of that spouse's gender. This study highlights some of the tasks that should be addressed as the military goes forward. More and more women are pursuing careers in the military and as women move into combat roles it is highly likely that some of the concerns discussed herein by their spouses will be exacerbated. Many military husbands are legitimately

worried about the safety of their spouse and while this is an issue that military wives also face, men seem to be singularly unprepared for this issue.

Divorce emerged as a very real possibility of the stressors that are associated with marriage to a military woman. Somewhat more challenging is research that has as its focus a sample of former spouses of military women. Although this particular group might be more difficult to access, it would be interesting to determine if the frustrations discussed herein are instrumental in disrupting military marriages. A number of the men in this study indicated that their responsibilities as the primary family caregiver negatively affected their careers and education. To reiterate, the military can be of enormous help in providing career counseling to these husbands. Given further that many military duty posts hire substantial populations of civilian workers, male spouses of deployed women could be given precedence in hiring for these positions. When this is accompanied by on-post child care services for preschoolers and older children after school, it is quite possible that many of the stresses that these men face will be reduced.

Despite its limitations, the present study provides new insight into the situations of civilian men married to military women. The male spouse experience is one that deserves to be heard and understood. Anyone entering military service can legitimately expect several deployments over their career and military spouses of both genders are well advised to accept the inevitability of deployments as a factor in their lives. That said, developing the programs and policies that are needed to reduce deployment related stressors emerges as an important task for the various service branches.

Conclusion

There has been an increase in female military deployment which has resulted in husbands and male spouses needing to take over the role of raising children and childcare. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology research study was to determine the psychological and emotional effects of female deployment on male spouses. The study followed the qualitative phenomenological method. The main research question in this study was:

What is the lived experience of male spouses of deployed active duty females?

Four themes emerged including: (a) Caregiving and raising children, (b) Issues encountered during the deployment, (c) Support; and (d) Reintegration. Understanding the lived experiences of these male partners will help couples and families better cope with deployment by helping them to set reasonable expectations of married life and prepare for the challenges encountered in raising the children in this unique context. It is also possible that military institutions themselves will have the opportunity to be more effective by offering support to the male spouses before, during, and after, deployment as they better understand their lived experiences.

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Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Date: _____

Location: _____

Participant: _____

Researcher: _____

First Interview

1. What is your lived experience being a male spouse of a deployed active duty female?
2. What is your experience regarding mental health issues?
3. What is your experience regarding physical health issues?
4. What is your experience regarding marital issues?
5. What is your experience regarding caregiving of family members?
6. What is your experience regarding other reintegration related issues?
7. What is your experience regarding role transfer issues?

Second Interview Protocol

Date: _____

Participant: _____

1. Now that you have had some time to think after our initial interview, do you have anything to add or explain any of your first answers?
2. Has your status changed in any way since our last meeting (i.e., has there been any significant changes in your life)?