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ABSTRACT

This mixed method, exploratory, retrospective study explores the impact of multiple deployments on military spouses. Previous studies have focused on single deployments while looking at stress, coping styles and stages of deployment. This study is exploring the aforementioned topics with the stipulation that the spouse has to have experienced at least two deployments.

Eighty spouses from all branches of the military, except the Coast Guard, participated in this study. The spouses completed an online survey where they were asked multiple choice, scaling and open-ended questions comparing the first and second/subsequent deployments. The questions were designed to learn more about the stages of deployment, emotions felt during each stage of deployment, and coping strategies used during deployments.

Findings of this study were consistent with earlier studies that focused on single deployments. Spouses reported that there was no change in the perception of the difficulty of deployments whether the spouse had deployed once or multiple times, spouses found the second or subsequent deployment as difficult as the first. Spouses reported that the stage of the actual deployment was the most difficult, and that the spouses felt stress through all stages of deployment. The spouses stated that keeping busy was the main coping strategy used to help them through the deployments. Finally, spouses stated that no matter how many deployments they had experienced, it doesn't get easier.

THE IMPACT OF MULTIPLE DEPLOYMENTS ON MILITARY SPOUSES

A project based on an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of the Master of Social Work.

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To my mother, and children, for their understanding and support as I once again started on a new journey towards personal fulfillment. And to my grandchildren, who waited patiently for the next sleepover and even offered to write my paper for me.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

As of September 30, 2010 there were 1,430,985 individuals on active duty in the United States military. At that same time, there were over 202,100 military members deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) (Department of Defense, 2010). Since October 2001, with the beginning of OEF, and March of 2003 when OIF began (Baptist, Amanor-Boadu, Garrett, Nelson Goff, Collum, Gamble, & Wick, 2011), the military has deployed more than two million men and women in support of OEF and OIF. Of these two million, 793,000 have deployed more than once (Tan, 2009).

In fiscal year 2002, it was estimated that 58 % of the military forces were married (Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, 2002) and in 2010, 56.4% of active duty members and 48.2% of the Reserve and Guard were married (Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, 2010). From this data one could presuppose that approximately 1,160,000 spouses have experienced one deployment and 459,940 have endured two or more deployments. With this many military members being affected by the wars, questions may arise as to how the pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment are affecting the spouses of the service members and their children.

In military families, as with most families, it is the spouse who is left behind to cope with the running of the household, children, and finances when the military member deploys. Depending upon whether the spouse is active duty, reserve or National Guard, the spouse may or

may not have support systems in place to help him/her maneuver during this time. This raises some significant questions about the impact of the deployment upon the spouse at home, such as: How are spouses of the military members managing the deployment and the uncertainty of whether their spouse will be coming home whole? How are local communities dealing with the unique stressors that impact families of service members? Do social workers understand the unique culture of the military family and are they able to support the spouse before, during and after deployment?

Although there have been studies that look at stress within the family during deployment, Sheppard, Malatras & Israel, (2010) reference the fact that there does not seem to be any recent empirical data that looks at the effects of multiple deployments on military families (p. 603). The following articles address the effects of stress within the family during deployments. The first article (Lester, Mogil, Salzman, Woodward, Nash, Leskin, Bursch, Green, Pnoos, & Beardslee, 2011) described how some military installations have implemented FOCUS which is for at-risk populations. FOCUS is based on supporting family communication by developing a shared family narrative. Another article, (Gewirtz, Erbes, Polusny, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2011), focuses on teaching parents the Parent Management Training-Oregon Model (PMTO) program. This program is thought to benefit the family by using a strength based program that will help build resilience, address the family stress and provide strategies that will allow the enhancement of emotional regulation. Many of the articles find a correlation between increased parental stress, child behavior problems and increased risk of child maltreatment during deployments (Gerwartz, Erbes, Polusny, Forgatch & Degarmo , 2011; Lincoln, & Sweeten, 2011; Lincoln, Swift & Shorteno-Fraser, 2008; Sheppard, Malatras, & Israel, 2010; Willerton, Wadsworth & Riggs, 2011).

The few studies that do address the effects of deployment on the spouses (Aducci, Baptist, George, Barros, & Nelson Goff, 2011; Baptist, Amanor-Boadu, Garrett, Nelson Goff, Collum, Gamble, & Wick, 2011; Davis, Ward & Storm, 2011; Padden, Connors & Agazio, 2011; Easterling & Knox, 2010; Wheeler & Stone, 2010; Spera, 2008) are using a single deployment as their criteria. In reviewing one study that was aimed at stress and coping, the subjects selected were female spouses of Active Duty Army who were currently deployed (Padden, Connors & Agazio, 2010). It was found that younger military members who had fewer years on active duty and had younger spouses had more stress and used more emotive and evasive coping skills. These findings were consistent with what had been found in previous research following the first Gulf War (Bell, 1991; Rosen, Teitelbaum, & Westhuis, 1993). Even though there were studies exploring the impact of deployment on the spouses, these studies have criteria that the spouse is currently deployed or has participated in at least one deployment (Easterling & Knox, 2010; Lapp, Taft, Tollefson, Hoepner, Moore, & Divyak, 2010; Merolla, 2010; Padden, Connors & Agazio, 2010; Steelfisher, Zaslavsky & Blendon, 2008; Wheeler & Stone, 2010). There were no studies in which the criteria the impact of multiple deployments on the spouse.

This study is necessary because our nation has been at war for the last eleven years and 459,940 spouses and families have been impacted by multiple deployments; yet, there has been no research which looks at the impact of multiple deployments on the military spouse. Also, without the research, the mental health community is not aware of the issues impacting the spouse of military members.

This study intends to answer the following questions: Do military spouses who have experienced multiple deployments find the second and subsequent deployments more or less difficult than the first? What stage of the deployment (pre-deployment, deployment, post-

deployment) do military spouses who have experienced multiple deployments consider the most difficult? What aspects of these stages are the most difficult? What coping mechanisms do military spouses use during deployments? Did this change due to lessons learned in the first deployment? If so how?

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Since the early 1900's the United States has entered into two World Wars and four major engagements authorized by Congress. These include the Korean War, Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War (Operation Desert Shield/Storm), War on Terrorism (Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)) and Iraq War (Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)). Currently the United States (U.S.) military has been engaged in the longest conflict/war in history (Hampson, 2010). This is also only the second major conflict that the U.S. has been involved in with an all-volunteer force, the first being the Persian Gulf War. This chapter will review the literature focused on previous studies of the impact of deployments and the theoretical basis of such deployments.

Review of Empirical Literature

Researchers have long been interested in the effects of deployments on military marriages (Karney & Crown, 2011). The first study to examine this was done during World War II (Hill, 1949). In examining the research between World War II and today one can appreciate that the whole experience between spouses had drastically changed during the pursuing period. As the deployment during World War II was a common occurrence, there was a draft and most men served. In this current conflict, it is an all-volunteer force without the same numbers of individuals serving and there is not a national focus on the military members.

Many of the studies that were done on military families and deployments were completed in the 1990's (Bell, 1991; Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994; Rabb, Baumer, & Wieseler, 1993;

Rosen, Teitelbaum, & Westhuis, 1993; Rosen, Westhuis, & Teitelbaum, 1994). During this time, the US had just completed Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and most of the military members were deployed for less than six months. Earlier research looked at the Vietnam veterans and their families, but most of the individuals who served during this time only went to Vietnam for a year and very few completed more than one deployment. The current conflicts are the first extended conflicts that have occurred without a draft and with an all-volunteer force. Due to this fact, military members are completing multiple deployments and many are serving over a year in theater. Since this is the first time in history that military members have been called upon to serve multiple deployments, the implications of how the spouses are coping with multiple deployments is unknown. At this time, all research pertaining to how spouses cope with deployment has been relegated to the single deployment criteria.

There have been many studies on the effects of deployment on military members and their families but there is limited research that focuses specifically on the impact of deployments on military spouses. The few studies that have been completed have looked at only single deployments of military personnel and very few studies are looking at both male and female spouses versus wives.

Patterson & McCubbin completed a study of eighty two wives of Navy aviators and support personnel (1984). The purpose of this study was to look at gender role orientation as a coping mechanism and behaviors associated with this coping mechanism. The coping mechanisms chosen were maintaining family integrity, developing interpersonal relationships and social supports, managing psychological tension and strain, believing in lifestyle, optimism and developing self-reliance and self-esteem. The Duke Health Inventory was used to measure the wives' distress. The researchers used structured interviews and questionnaires with both

spouses at three different times and then the data was statistically analyzed. Through this study it was found that if women had an androgynous gender orientation positive coping behaviors were more often seen and wives were better able to manage the deployment and separation. This study was examining Navy deployments in a time of peace so even though the Active Duty member was deployed for months on end, the Navy spouses were accustomed to multiple deployments if the husbands were assigned to sea duty. Questions were not asked about whether or not subsequent deployments were less difficult and if so how.

At this time there have been two studies on spouse's stress and coping in regards to spouses of the National Guard and Reserves. These were completed by Wheeler & Stone (2010); and Lapp, Taft, Tollefson, Hoepner, Moore & Divyak, (2010). The spouses of the National Guard and Reserves face additional challenges as these spouses normally are not affiliated with military bases and as such do not have the resources and support of the military community.

Wheeler & Stone researched the impact of deployment on Army National Guard (ARNG) spouses. There were nine respondents who were all wives of ARNG members whose spouse had deployed in the prior two years. The purpose of this study was to see how the spouses were coping with deployment.

This exploratory study was completed by interviewing the respondents to see if there were unique stressors and coping strategies that these wives used to help them cope with the deployment. The three main stressors found were: troubles that the wives had dealing with their own emotional, mental and physical state; problems with children; and indecision about future involvement with the military. The coping strategies that the wives used were centered on spirituality and religion, expressive activities, support from family and friends, technology for

communication with their spouse, and avoidance. Although this study did address the coping mechanisms used by spouses during deployment, the study did not address the stages of deployment.

Lapp, Taft, Tollefson, Hoepner, Moore & Divyak (2010) interviewed 18 spouses of the National Guard and reserve living in Wisconsin. The purpose of this study was to examine the coping strategies used by spouses during three stages of deployment (pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment).

This was a qualitative study where the researchers interviewed 16 women and 2 men. The criterion for this study was that the participants had to be living in a rural area and had to have spouses who were either deployed or in the post deployment stage. Although this study did address what coping skills were used in each stage of deployment, this study did not address the question of which stage of deployment was the most difficult for the spouses. This study determined that the spouses used keeping busy as a major coping skill in both the pre-deployment and deployment stage. In the post-deployment stage the spouses used patience as a way to cope with reintegration.

Three studies completed by Padden, Connors & Agazio (2010); Allen, Rhoades, Stanley & Markman (2011); and Davis, Ward & Storm (2011) all looked at Army wives and their stress and/or coping during the spouses' deployment. It has been noted that the Army is carrying the largest portion of the deployments as it is the one service which seems to be deploying its service members the most often and for the longest period of time.

Using Lazarus and Folkman's theory of stress and coping, Padden, Connors and Agazio looked at one hundred and five wives with a descriptive correlation design (2011). The purpose of this study was to determine the stress perceived by the spouse, coping behaviors and what

health-promoting behaviors they developed to deal with the stress. These participants were chosen by the post (Army) readiness groups and the surveyors met the wives at a meeting held on post. If the wife chose to participate then the questionnaires were in paper form. The criteria to be included in this study was that the active duty member was to be deployed for at least 5 months, the current place of residence was not a place where either the husband or wife grew up and the individual was not going to move home with relatives for any period of the deployment. The participants were given the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) and the Multidimensional Health Behavior Inventory (MHBI). The data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Two-thirds of the wives reported having experienced a previous deployment yet questions were not asked that were relative to what had been learned from previous deployments and if the coping styles had changed.

The wives were asked questions around their perceived stress about whether or not things were piling up so high they could not overcome them and what behaviors they used to deal with the stress. The wives could choose categories such as exercise, diet, checkups, substance use/avoidance, social behaviors, stress management/rest, safety/environment. The results were that 54% of the wives used recreational activities such as biking, walking, sports or dancing to deal with their stress. An interesting finding from this study was that sixty percent of the wives felt like things were not piling up so much that they were insurmountable and could not be dealt with. This study did not question what stage or aspect of the deployment the wives felt was most stressful.

Allen, Rhoades, Stanley & Markman (2011) conducted a study on three hundred couples who had an active duty Army husband and a civilian spouse. This study was conducted in 2007 and the researchers focused on the level of stress Army couples experienced regarding “combat,

reintegration, loneliness, sexual frustration, difficulty staying in touch, spouse fidelity, death, injury, psychological problems and effects on children” (p 236). The couples were selected from a larger sample that was enrolled in a study of military families and marriage education. In order to participate the couples had to have had a recent deployment, be married, speak and read English fluently, be stationed at Fort Campbell, KY and have not previously participated in a marriage workshop.

Couples were then asked how stressful a number of items were that are related to deployment, whether or not they felt attached to other Army families, the quality of their marriage, number of children and their psychosocial functioning and the perceptions of Army life and the mission of the military.

The results of the study were that couples experienced moderate stress on almost all the items assessed. If the spouse had more combat exposure then the stress level went up for both. Also wives who believed that their children were having more psychological problems reported more stress but interestingly enough the number of children did not increase the level of stress. This study was retrospectively completed after deployment and did not look at coping strategies or stages of deployment but did assess levels of stress which is also part of Lazarus and Folkman’s stress and coping process.

Davis, Ward & Storm (2011) conducted a qualitative study on the experiences of Army wives during deployment and the coping methods used. There were eleven participants and the qualifying factor was that the spouse was currently deployed to Iraq. The themes that were found around coping were positive thinking, self-determination, staying busy and reaching out to others. The wives found benefits also of the deployment and these included a feeling of self-confidence, a process of self-discovery and positive marital changes.

Easterling & Knox assessed the four active duty services, the stages of deployment, the feelings of the wives during deployment and how the wives coped while their spouses was deployed (2010). This was a mixed method exploratory study where the researchers were trying to determine which stage of deployment, (pre-deployment, deployment or post-deployment) do military spouses find the most difficult and what feelings do they experience during each stage of deployment. Qualitative and quantitative online surveys were completed and moderators were used and they shared the survey link and description. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and the qualitative was grouped by themes.

There were 259 wives who participated in this non-random study. Even though many of the wives had experienced more than one deployment, the question, “Do military spouses who have experienced multiple deployments find the second and subsequent deployments more or less difficult than the first?” was never asked. In fact, the questions were aimed at the stages of deployment not analyzing the differences of the first versus subsequent deployments. This study broke down items by stages of deployment and built upon some questions that had been asked in previous studies such as, “During what stage of deployment did you experience challenges of the following situations?” From this the researchers had questions directed towards untrue rumors, discrimination based on rank, difficulty in communicating with your husband, parenting difficulties, trouble with job/school, self-care, asking for help, jealousy and trust problems. It was found that all of these issues were found in all stages of deployment but most being higher in either the actual deployment or were found not applicable to the subjects.

The study then looked at the coping skills used in any stage of deployment. The researchers were looking at specific coping skills such as: employment, talking with friends, family, military wives, shopping, journaling, going home to live with family, participating in

base activities, counseling, volunteering, exercise, alcohol, medications, yoga, and affairs. The wives reported that the most helpful coping strategy was talking with friends, other military wives and exercising.

The researchers also asked about feelings/emotions experienced during the different stages of deployment. The feelings that they were interested in were loneliness, fear, sadness, hopelessness, helplessness, feelings of going crazy, nervousness, independence, strength, and joy. During pre-deployment the respondents said they felt fear, sadness and nervousness. While the husbands were deployed the wives felt loneliness, fear, sadness, and feelings of going crazy. The wives also reported feeling independent and strong. In the post-deployment period the wives reported feeling joy.

In reviewing this study, the challenges, coping mechanisms/skills and feelings can be replicated in my study along with the questions: Do military spouses who have experienced multiple deployments find the second and subsequent deployments more or less difficult than the first? What stage of the deployment (pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment) do military spouses who have experienced multiple deployments consider the most difficult? Did this change from the first deployment? What aspects of these stages are the most difficult? What coping mechanisms do military spouses use during deployments? Did this change due to lessons learned in the first deployment? If so how? And what feelings were experienced during the first and subsequent deployments? Did this change for or as a result of experiencing a previous deployment? If so how?

The last study was completed by Karney & Crown's (2011). This qualitative study was one where the researchers reviewed personnel records to see how many reported a change in status during FY2002 through FY2005 to determine how many service members had a change in

marital status. The researchers reviewed 566,895 records and found that only in the Air Force was the risk of divorce higher for couples separated by a longer deployment. This study did not provide rationale or a hypothesis as to why this occurred. It was determined that for all other services the effects of deployment on the marriage was either beneficial or insignificant.

Stages of deployment

There appears to be multiple models/paradigms of the stages (phases) of deployment. Pincus, House, Christenson & Alder (2001) defined the five stages of deployment as pre-deployment, deployment, sustainment, re-deployment and post-deployment. These five stages seem to be adhered to by military scholars, (Waldrep, Cozza, & Chun, 2004). Later scholars have shortened this to three stages of deployment (Numbers, Osterlund, & Ungvarsky, 2011) pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment. For the purpose of this study I will use three stages: pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment which are readily recognized by all military spouses. Pre-deployment will start at the time of notification of assignment; deployment will be from the actual time the member leaves the family until they touch down again in the states and post-deployment will be from time of reunion until the next assignment comes.

Each stage of deployment has its own unique stressors for both the military member and the spouse. Multiple deployments lend itself to the following questions. What stage of the deployment (pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment) do military spouses who have experienced multiple deployments consider the most difficult? What aspects of these stages are the most difficult? What coping mechanisms do military spouses use during deployments? Did this change due to lessons learned in the first deployment? If so how?

Theoretical Review

The proposed study will utilize two theoretical paradigms to frame the research: ambiguous loss and coping. Below is a review of each of these models, and their relationship to the study.

Ambiguous loss theory: One way to look at how military spouses cope with multiple deployments is to look through the lens of ambiguous loss theory. Boss (2004) developed this theory while investigating family stress and theorizes that this is the most stressful loss because of the uncertainty of who is still a part of the family. With ambiguous loss, a family member can be either physically absent yet psychologically present or physically present by psychologically absent. For military families during deployment, the active duty member is physically absent but kept psychologically present. Also when a member is deployed there is an uncertainty of whether or not the individual is coming back and if the active member does come back, they would have changed. With a clear loss of family members either through death or divorce, there is some clarity and closure that is brought to the family. Yet, when a family member goes to war there is the hope that the member will return yet the family also has to live with the ambiguity of the member returning.

This is particularly relevant when looking at the multiple military deployments through the lens of ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2007). Military families are made up of not only the core family (i.e., mother, father, and children) but there is also a belief that those individuals you are stationed with are your extended family (Hall, 2011, p 34). When individuals are away from home, the sentiment is often, "Home is where the (insert branch of service) sends you." I would often attend craft fairs close to military communities and would find plaques with this statement on it. The military family could also list all the bases where the family had been stationed. For

the military community, the construction of a family may differ in definition or description than what is normally conceived in society. As a result, when the whole unit deploys, the “family” of the military member is gone and for some individuals the return date is unknown. It is then up to the military spouse who is left behind to maintain a semblance of normalcy.

In a military family presented with multiple deployments, the cycle of deployment may be very different depending on the branch of service. For instance, for most medical personnel in the Air Force, the cycle of deployment is every two years and the average deployment is four to five months. Yet for Army personnel, the cycle of deployment is much different and the active member will deploy for a least a year and some deployments are longer. As a result, the active duty member is at home for an extended period of time and then deploys. When the deployment is over the service member reenters the family for up to a year and then deploys again for an extended time. The family has to live with the ambiguity of whether this person is coming back and when they do return what will be different.

Coping theory: The second theory that can be applied is coping theory. To better understand coping theory, coping as it will be used in this research, needs to be defined. Lazarus & Folkman define coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (1984, p 141). In reading Lazarus & Folkman’s development of the coping theory, they surmise that coping is process-oriented (1984, p. 141 & Folkman, Chesney, McKusick, Ironson, Johnson & Coates, 1991, p 242) as it refers to what the “person actually thinks or does and changes in these thoughts and actions as a situation unfolds” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p 142; & Folkman, Chesney, McKusick, Ironson, Johnson & Coates, 1991, p

242). As a result, coping processes within an individual can be changed and or modified by the person through life experiences, therapy and/or education.

It has also been surmised by Lazarus & Folkman and Folkman, Chesney, McKusick, Ironson, Johnson & Coates (1991) that coping can be problem-focused, emotion-focused or a combination of the two. Problem-focused coping is much like problem solving and the strategies used are often related. It has been noted by Folkman, Chesney, McKusick, Ironson, Johnson & Coates (1991) that when situations are amendable to change, individuals rely more on problem-focused coping. Conversely, when situations are not amendable to change, then individuals use emotion-focused coping (1991). As each individual is different, the forms of problem-focused coping that may be used are also different. Some forms of problem-focused coping that may be used are time management, information gathering, advice seeking, and goals setting. For emotion-focused coping there are adaptive and maladaptive forms that an individual can use. The adaptive forms of emotion-coping are minimization of the circumstance, behavioral efforts to make oneself feel better through the use of exercise, relaxation (mindfulness, yoga), meditation, support groups, religion, humor or talking to someone who cares and understands. The maladaptive forms of emotion-focused coping are overeating, substance and/or alcohol abuse (Lazarus & Folkman and Folkman, Chesney, McKusick, Ironson, Johnson & Coates, 1991).

Skinner (2003) writes that the way an individual copes may be fluid and can change or cycle depending on how the individual experience the stressor. This is especially pertinent to my study as my questions are aimed at finding out whether a spouse who has experienced multiple deployments find the second and subsequent deployments more or less difficult than the first. What coping mechanisms do military spouses use during deployments? Did this change due to

lessons learned in the first deployment? So if one agrees with Skinner then one would believe that individuals will cycle through coping strategies and if one does not work, the individual will try a new skill or possibly become paralyzed and helpless (2003).

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Research Design

This mixed-method online survey was created using both multiple choice and open-ended questions on the internet-based research tool, “SurveyMonkey,” to elicit feelings/emotions of military spouses related to their experiences during deployments. This research study was both exploratory and descriptive in order to expand upon studies that speak to how military wives experience deployments and to include military husbands who have not been addressed in prior studies.

The design of this research was retrospective cross-sectional study that looks at how spouses functioned and coped during deployment of their spouses. This study built upon an earlier study completed by (Easterling & Knox, 2010). In the previous study, the researchers looked at three stages of deployment, pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment and then researchers posed questions about how the military wife functioned and coped before, during and after the deployment. In building upon this earlier study, the criterion was that the spouse had to have experienced at least two deployments versus one. In this way, the study could compare how spouses were impacted by multiple deployments and did their emotions/feelings and coping strategies change because of an earlier deployment.

In order to fully understand the terms used in this study, an operationalized definition of each is as follows. Active Duty was defined as full-time duty in the active military service of the

United States. This includes members of the Reserve Component serving on active duty or full-time training duty, but does not include full-time National Guard duty (Gortney, 2010). Active Guard and Reserve was characterized as National Guard and Reserve members who are on voluntary active duty providing full-time support to National Guard, Reserve, and Active Component organizations for the purpose of organizing, administering, recruiting, instructing, or training the Reserve Components (Gortney, 2010). Pre-deployment was the time of training, which could be months, leading up to actual deployment. Deployment was described as the relocation of forces and materiel to desired operational areas. Deployment encompasses all activities from origin or home station through destination, specifically including intra-continental United States, intertheater, and intratheater movement legs, staging, and holding areas (Gortney, 2010). For the purpose of this study the deployment had to be to either Iraq or Afghanistan. Multiple deployments were identified as the military member experiencing more than one deployment. Post-deployment was the period of time when the military member comes back from the combat zone. Military spouse was described as a civilian or military member whose marriage is recognized by the Department of Defense and receive federal benefits. Stressors were perceived events that cause increased reactions due to family separations during deployment. Coping was defined as changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to managed specific demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Sample

Eligibility to participate in this study was determined on the basis of six possible screening questions (Appendix A). Eligibility criteria required that individuals: (a) were 18 years of age or older, (b) able to read and write in English, (c) be married to a current or prior member of the United States Military (includes National Guard and Reserve), (d) the marriage be

recognized by the Department of Defense, (e) currently not be pregnant and (f) have a spouse that was deployed at least twice during their marriage to either Iraq or Afghanistan.

Those not meeting inclusion criteria were excluded from participating. Specifically, anyone who was currently pregnant or whose spouse had not deployed at least twice to Iraq or Afghanistan.

One hundred and forty eight participants visited the survey on line and attempted to enroll in the study. Eighty of these one hundred and forty eight participants met the eligibility requirements for participation as determined by their answers to the initial screening questions (Appendix A). Fifty potential participants were ineligible to participate based on their answers: (a) one was excluded due to being younger than eighteen, (b) five were excluded because they were not married to a current or prior member of the United States Military (c) seventeen were excluded because they were currently pregnant and (d) another twenty six were excluded due to the fact that their spouse had not deployed at least twice to Iraq or Afghanistan. Of the 98 potential participants who passed all the screening questions, 18 did not agree to the informed consent and were, thus not eligible to respond to the survey. In total, 80 participants passed all of the screening questions, agreed to the informed consent and responded to at least part of the survey. Of these, 64 continued to the survey end. However, data from the 80 participants who responded to the survey in some part was useable for presenting the findings of this study. Of the 80 participants whose responses were analyzed in this study, all completed the online survey and were recruited either by email or through Facebook.

Recruitment Procedures

The process of recruitment was begun by using the snowball sampling method. The researcher contacted individuals by email that were known to be currently serving, have served

or are spouses of armed forces who are currently serving or have severed. The email (Appendix B) included information about the study, including the risks and benefits associated with participation, and details related to the purpose and justification for the study. The email also included a link to the online survey. The potential participant was then encouraged to forward the email to other people they may know.

Next, the convenience sampling method was used by posting messages on Facebook and a military spouse listserv created for military spouses (Appendix C) that asked for individuals to participate in the study. The message posted included information about the study, including risks and benefits associated with participation and details related to the purpose and justification for the study. A link to the online survey was included, spouses were encouraged to participate in the study and then forward the link to others they may have known who met the criteria for the study.

Ethics and Safeguards

There were some potential risks of participating in this study. Some of the possible risks included distress from reliving some of the experiences before, during or post-deployment. Participants were also made aware that they may experience uncomfortable feelings in response to some of the interview questions. In the event this occurred, a list of referral sources (Appendix D) was included so that participants could use it to gain support and/or therapy.

There were possible benefits that the participants in this study may have experienced. These include the possibility that the participants might have gained new insight about their experiences before, during and after deployment of their spouse. They might have also gained insight into their personal growth that they experienced between the first and each subsequent

deployment. Additionally, there was a possible benefit in being able to share their experience anonymously without any repercussion from the military community.

As the spouses of military members who have experienced multiple deployments, they provided a wealth of information to not only mental health professionals but also to other military spouses. This had the possibility of benefiting both groups and creating an open dialogue on military installations and in local communities about the experiences of spouses and services that could benefit them before, during and post-deployment.

Participation in this study was voluntary and participants could have refused to answer any of the questions. Participants were able to withdraw at any time before they completed and submitted the survey. As this was an anonymous study, it was impossible for the participants to withdraw from the study once they had submitted their data because it was impossible to identify the participant.

If a participant was found eligible to participate in the survey, then the participant must have electronically signed the informed consent (Appendix E) before completing the survey. This informed consent was embedded in the beginning of the survey and the participant had to check either “I agree” or “I do not agree”. If the participant did not agree, they were automatically disqualified and diverted to a page where they were thanked for their interest in the study. Furthermore, the participants were informed that they have the ability to decide which questions they were going to answer and they could skip any that they chose to.

In order to protect the identity of the participants, participants were instructed to leave out any identifying information about themselves or their spouse. They were informed that if a name was used, it would be substituted for a number. In open-ended questions, the information provided was coded and presented as a group and/or themes. Also, all vignettes or quoted

information was disguised with code numbers. By not using any identifying information, the participant was able to be kept anonymous. The survey software did not collect names, e-mail addresses, IP addresses or any other identifying information. Each participant accessed and completed the survey only after first reading the informed consent which provided the participant with information in order to maintain the participant's anonymity. Data from the online survey will be kept secure for a period of three years as stipulated by federal guidelines after which time it will be destroyed.

A thesis proposal was submitted to the Human Subject Review Board (HSRB) at Smith College School for Social Work. After review, to insure that this study met Federal and college standards for protection of human subjects, the proposal was approved. A copy of the HSRB's approval letter is provided in Appendix F.

Data Collection

All potential participants were directed to a link to the online survey through SurveyMonkey. This allowed for the participants to remain anonymous, as the survey was designed to not collect IP addresses. This survey consisted of multiple choice, Likert scale and open-ended questions (Appendix A). The first portion of the survey was designed to gather demographic information including status of the spouse, i.e., active duty, veteran, retired, and other, branch of service, highest rank of spouse, gender, age, highest level of education, years married, children, number of children, whether participant is or has been member of Armed Forces, and did the participant deploy to either Iraq or Afghanistan. This distinction was made with the question in mind that if the spouse had deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, would their experience of deployment have differed from spouses who had never served?

The second section of questions was grouped around the first deployment of the spouse. Questions were asked as to what stage of deployment the spouse found the most difficult, pre-deployment, deployment or post-deployment. The second question was about feelings/emotions felt during each stage of deployment. The last question asked about coping strategies used at any stage of deployment and whether they were found not helpful, somewhat helpful, helpful or extremely helpful. After each question there was an open-ended question so that the participant could add comments.

The third section of the questions was grouped to elicit responses about the second or subsequent deployment. This section mirrored the second section and the only difference was that participants were asked to answer these questions with the second or subsequent deployment in mind. Again, a space was left after every question to allow participants to expound on each question.

The final question asked was, “Is there anything that I didn’t ask that you feel would be important to know about the impact of multiple deployments on military spouses?” This question was included to gather more information from spouses about their experiences with multiple deployments.

Data Analysis

After a sufficient number of individuals had participated in the survey through SurveyMonkey, the survey was closed. The data was then downloaded onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and sent to the consultant for statistical analysis. The consultant first cleaned up the data, set up a SPSS file, attached frequencies for all variables and provided the descriptive statistics for ratio level variables. The consultant also included all open-ended questions on Excel spreadsheet. The results were then sent back to the researcher in order to review for

errors. Also, the open-ended questions were assessed for individual and identifying information, which was then removed. The final analysis of the information obtained consisted of three parts: descriptive statistics for all demographic information, Likert scale questions and thematic content analysis of open ended responses.

The descriptive statistics used to describe the population that was being researched addressed gender of the spouses, status of the spouse, i.e., active duty, reserve, National Guard, branch of service, rank of military spouse, age, years of marriage, number of children and percentage of spouses who were currently or had been a member of the military. This was analyzed using measures of central tendency and frequency distributions. Frequency was also used to determine which stage of deployment, pre-deployment, deployment, or post-deployment, the spouses found the most difficult. Also, to analyze what emotions were felt by the spouses during the different stages of deployment. The coping strategies used by the spouses were analyzed using frequency distributions and measures of central tendency in order to be able to compare the results to an earlier study by Easterling and Knox (2010).

The qualitative data was analyzed using a thematic content analysis. Each question and response was copied onto a new worksheet within the excel file. This allowed the researcher the ability to read through all the narratives and categorize them according to themes. Each narrative was reviewed and assigned to appropriate categories as themes emerged. After all responses had been reviewed and categorized, the researcher then calculated the frequencies within each theme. Most of the responses had one or two themes associated but a few included more. After this, the researcher selected narrative passages that were consistent with the main themes to include in the findings section.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

Quantitative Analyses

The gender breakdown of the 80 military spouses who responded to this survey were 77 (98.7%) females, 1 male (1.3%) and two who skipped this question. 88.6% of the spouses were Active Duty, 7.6% were reserve or National Guard while, 3.8% were discharged veterans. Of those spouses, the majority, 43% were Army (including reserve and National Guard), 22.8% were Navy, 21.6% were Air Force (including reserve and National Guard) and 12.7% were Marines.

The rank of the spouses was as follows, in the Army the majority of spouses were currently Staff Sergeants (E-6's) (29.4%), the Navy (33.3%), Marines (40%) were E-5's, and the Air Force (41.2%) were E-6's. 67 of the respondents were enlisted spouses, 9 were officer spouses and 3 were the spouses of Warrant Officers.

The average age of the respondents was 29.54 with the median being 29.0. The youngest spouse was 19 and the oldest was 45. 32.9% of the spouses had some college, while 30.4% had a Bachelor's degree. 16.5% of the spouses were married two to three years, while 8.9% were married six years. The mean number of years married was 7.30 and the median was 6.0. The majority, 72.2% had children, with 42.1% having one child, 24.6% having two children and 22.8% having three children. The mean number of children was 2.11 and the median was 2.0.

21.5% of the spouses were currently or had been a member of the Armed Forces. Of these spouses, none had deployed in support of OEF or OIF.

The survey was then divided into the first deployment and the second/subsequent deployment with the intention of determining which stage of deployment the spouse found the most difficult. As noted in Table 1, the majority of spouses found actual deployment to be the most difficult.

Table 1

Stage of Deployment and Difficulty for First and Second/Subsequent Deployments

First deployment	%	Second/Subsequent deployment	%
pre-deployment	28.0	pre-deployment	27.5
deployment	54.7	deployment	53.6
post deployment	17.3	post deployment	18.8

In comparing the emotions felt during each stage of deployment, whether it was the first or second/subsequent deployment, there were some differences in the degree of emotions but most were fairly consistent between the deployments. The one emotion that was consistently in the top three of all stages of deployment whether it was the first or second/subsequent deployment was stress as shown in Table 2.

During the pre-deployment phase of the first deployment, the top three emotions experienced were stress (78.8%), anxiety (72.5%) and nervousness (71.3). In the second/subsequent deployment, the top three emotions experienced were stress (68.8%), and anxiety, nervousness and sadness tied (57.5%). During the deployment phase of the first deployment, the top three emotions were loneliness and stress (83.5%) and sadness (77.5%). In the second/subsequent deployment, the leading emotions felt were stress (78.8%), loneliness (72.5%) and independence (71.3%). During the post-deployment phase of the first deployment

the top three emotions felt were joy (78.8%), strength (55%) and stress (45%). In the second/subsequent deployment the respondents felt joy (72.5%), strength (53.8%) and independence (41.3%). Please see Table 2 for the results of the question “During which stage(s) of deployment did you experience the following feelings/emotions?”

Table 2

Stage of Deployment and Corresponding Feelings/Emotions as a Percentage of the Sample

Emotion	Pre-deployment		Deployment		Post-deployment	
	1 st deployment	2 nd or subsequent deployment	1 st deployment	2 nd or subsequent deployment	1 st deployment	2 nd or subsequent deployment
Anxiety	72.5	57.5	61.3	60	33.8	31.3
Depression	23.8	27.5	55	45	12.5	12.5
Fear	58.8	37.5	71.3	58.8	10	8.8
Helplessness	28.8	27.5	48.8	43.8	8.8	6.3
Hopelessness	13.8	12.5	21.3	15	3.8	3.8
Independence	30	32.5	76.3	71.3	37.5	41.3
Joy	8.8	11.3	10	12.5	78.8	72.5
Loneliness	22.5	25	83.8	72.5	15	10
Nervousness	71.3	57.5	67.5	57.3	2.5	31.3
Sadness	68.8	57.5	77.5	70	17.5	15
Strength	23.8	40	72.5	62.5	55	53.8
Stress	78.8	68.8	83.8	78.8	45	40.8

To better understand how spouses coped with the deployment process, the spouses were asked to rate a series of coping strategies from not helpful at all with a point value of 1, to extremely helpful with a point value of 4. During the first deployment, as shown in Table 3, the coping strategies that the spouses found the most helpful, (mean greater than 3 on a 4 point scale) were keeping busy (greatest mean at 3.63), employment, talking with military spouses, talking with friends, religion, exercise and craft or hobby.

Table 3

Coping Strategies Used During First Deployment

	N=*	N/A answers*	Mean (a)	Std. Deviation
Employment	46	34	3.28	1.026
Talking with friends	63	17	3.02	.793
Talking with family	65	15	2.72	.875
Talking with military spouses	53	27	3.25	.853
Keeping busy	67	13	3.63	.693
Going home to live with family	32	48	2.44	1.190
Participating in base activities	26	54	2.92	.891
Counseling	18	62	2.72	1.227
Volunteering	34	46	2.91	.830
Religion	30	50	3.23	.971
Keeping a journal	22	58	2.55	1.057
Meditation	14	66	2.79	.893
Arguing	35	45	1.11	.323
Crying	65	15	2.25	.771
Exercise	59	21	3.22	.832
Yoga	16	64	2.50	1.211
Shopping	58	22	2.67	.962
Craft or hobby	60	20	3.15	.840
Alcohol	23	57	2.04	.825
Medications	7	73	2.29	1.113
Affair	5	75	1.20	.447

Note: (a) Scale of 1 (not helpful at all) to 4 extremely helpful *N/A answers were marked as “missing” and not included in “N”

During the second/subsequent deployment spouses found the following coping strategies to be the most helpful as shown in Table 4, keeping busy (greatest mean at 3.57), employment, talking with military spouses, religion, exercise and craft or hobby.

Table 4

Coping Strategies Used During Second/Subsequent Deployments

	N=*	N/A answers*	Mean (a)	Std. Deviation
Employment	33	47	3.18	1.014
Talking with friends	62	18	2.87	.914
Talking with family	62	18	2.81	.884
Talking with military spouses	53	27	3.34	.854
Keeping busy	65	15	3.57	.749
Going home to live with family	20	60	2.85	1.309
Participating in base activities	32	48	2.66	.902
Counseling	16	64	2.69	1.195
Volunteering	32	48	2.97	.822
Religion	27	53	3.07	.958
Keeping a journal	21	59	2.52	1.123
Meditation	11	69	2.82	.603
Arguing	30	50	1.07	.254
Crying	60	20	2.37	.780
Exercise	57	23	3.39	.701
Yoga	15	65	2.73	1.163
Shopping	53	27	2.58	.969
Craft or hobby	57	23	3.16	.841
Alcohol	22	58	2.09	.971
Medications	11	69	2.09	1.221
Affair	3	77	1.67	1.155

Note: (a) Scale of 1 (not helpful at all) to 4 extremely helpful *N/A answers were marked as “missing” and not included in “N”

Qualitative

There were open-ended qualitative questions asked also of the respondents. The participants were asked what stage of the deployment (pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment) do military spouses who have experienced multiple deployments consider the most difficult. From the analysis of this question it was determined that the spouses found the actual deployment to be the most difficult. Spouses were then asked, "In what way was it difficult?" This was broken down between the first and second/subsequent deployments.

During the first deployment, those spouses who found the pre-deployment stage to be the most difficult reported the following main themes: the unknown, anticipation of when the spouse would be leaving and not having enough time to spend with their spouse before they departed. One spouse said, "Pre-deployment created a lot of stress, and tension which lead to me picking fights. I felt anxious and fearful of the unknown. Uncertainty about having to be a single parent." Another spouse said that, "The anticipation of your spouse leaving, how difficult it is to understand how overwhelming it may or may not be, not being able to plan your life and spend that time with your spouse." A third spouse said that, "My spouse was always gone doing training, getting ready for the deployment. It was hard because he was leaving and there was no time to spend as a family."

During the stage of the actual deployment, the main themes found of why deployment was difficult were being alone, the unknowns or not knowing and being a single parent. One spouse said,

His first deployment occurred 3 months after we arrived at our new duty station and at the time our children were aged 3.5, 2.5 and 16 months. I felt very overwhelmed trying to navigate a new base, new area and manage the children alone. Additionally, I

contracted pneumonia quite severely soon after he left and had to decline admittance to the hospital because I had no one to care for the children. The most difficult was the overwhelming feeling of being all alone with no support, the base offered no support at all, and we lived off base with only civilians for neighbors, who couldn't understand what it was like.

A second spouse spoke about being alone,

My husband's first deployment to Iraq was at the beginning of the war in 2003. At that time, the war was covered 24/7 by all the news channels. He flies helicopters and several helicopters were shot down with POW's taken. It was extremely stressful and was a completely different experience than anything we were familiar with. Our daughter was only 2 at the time and I felt frightened, overwhelmed and alone.

And a third spouse responded, "The most difficult part was being alone all those months without the support of my family (they aren't in the US) and the stress of having to take care of everything, all by myself."

During the post-deployment stage, the main theme was reintegration of the spouse back into the family. This was made more difficult for some spouses if the member returned with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). One spouse told the story this way,

My husband and I married right before he deployed the first time. He was in Iraq for our first year of marriage, so when he came home, reintegration was really difficult for us. He had PTSD and I was depressed. I had gone to counseling while he was deployed but it wasn't helpful at all, so I was hesitant to try it again. My husband received counseling from the Vet Center. However, we weren't told of all the resources available to us. We felt a lack of support and it was a very dark time for us.

Another spouse stated that,

Post deployment, about a week after the return. I find this to be the most difficult because I have established different routines, taken control of everything, and having to re-establish can be difficult. My husband wants to jump right back in and help out, but it takes time after the honeymoon period of returning home can be difficult. A lot of the emotion of dealing with the deployment also comes out since he has safely returned home. I also tend to be a little defensive of any criticism of how things were done while he was gone versus how he does them when he is home.

A third spouse asserted that,

The transition back home seems the hardest. They are getting used to being home, you are getting used to having someone there again. You have to make them feel a part of the family without pushing them too much. It is exhausting at times.

During the second/subsequent deployments the spouses reported much of the same reasons for the deployments being difficult as the first deployment. In the pre-deployment stage the spouses felt that it was the anticipation, unknowns and the short notice that made this stage so difficult for them. One spouse said,

The pre-deployment was more difficult with the second deployment. The date of him leaving kept changing and on three different occasions I actually took him to the airport only to turn around and come back home. We also had a 9 month old at the time so dealing with the emotions of taking care of a baby while waiting for him to leave was stressful.

Another spouse responded, “The arguing and the unknowns.” One spouse stated that,

My husband has been deployed 13 times overall since arriving at this location 8 years ago and 3 (that I know of) have wholly or partially been to Iraq. Pre-deployment is always an extremely difficult time. In his career field, he usually has a 2 to 3 week notice much of it spent completing necessary out processing paperwork. He tends to cope with the upcoming deployment by becoming distant which is the exact opposite of what I need.

During the second/subsequent deployment the actual deployment was the hardest and the main themes that were reported were being alone, and single parenting. The spouses reported that,

During my husband's second deployment, I gave birth to twins (our second and third children). I had to take care of our children, our home, and our pets all on my own. It was difficult and sometimes just felt like too much to handle.

Another spouse said, "I now have a child and I feel guilty that I'm here while he is missing her growing up. I also feel angry at him for leaving me alone to raise our daughter till he gets back." And a third spouse said,

This was similar to the first and other deployments; the worst part was him being physically gone during the deployment. Leading up to the deployment is difficult because of the suspense, but him actually being gone was by far the most difficult part.

For the second/subsequent deployments the main theme was the reintegration of the spouse and the back to back deployments. A spouse puts it this way,

Our second deployment was longer than our first and (it) was only 2 months after he got back from his first. He had 3 weeks during the time he was home where he was in training for his next (deployment). So by the time he got home, I had become used to it being just me and our dog and it was hard to adjust to him being home. My husband also

seemed to have a hard time adjusting to everyday life and it just put a strain on our marriage to the point we needed counseling. We fought a lot when he got home and he talked to me differently, it was more like I was his friend than wife, the way he talked. He would also get angry which would make me feel like I was doing something wrong and made me depressed. It got so bad that both of us felt like we were walking on egg shells. He began to feel like a horrible husband and I like a horrible wife because we no longer knew how to make each other happy and/or how to talk to each other the right way. But now that were in counseling, we are finally getting back to the way we used to be and learning how to deal with all the stress of deployment.

Another spouse said,

Same reasoning. I believe the first one, I THOUGHT pre-deployment was bad, but nowhere near having your spouse come home a different person, then finding common ground with them again and making sure that you both are handling things well. Learning to give each other space when they come home may seem strange, but it is very helpful.

And a third spouse said,

Anxiety about him leaving again--the stress of not having a continuous routine. He was deploying every other year so there was a constant sense that he was leaving again and never a feeling that we could relax into a normal situation. We always knew that the next deployment was waiting for us just around the corner.

The spouses were asked about the emotions that they felt during any stage of deployment for their first deployment, and then again for their second/subsequent deployment. They were then given a list of emotions to choose from. After this, they were asked an open-ended question, "Were there any other emotions that you felt at any stage of the first deployment that

were not included?" The spouses reported feeling anger, worried, confused, devastated, drained, exhausted, disappointment, excitement, frustration, relief, gratitude, overwhelmed, and pride.

One spouse reported that, "All stages: worried, specifically how the deployment would affect the kids." Another spouse said that,

I felt anger in all three stages. Anger because he was leaving me in such a situation with no help and nowhere to turn to. Anger because he was gone and I was dealing with things by myself, anger when he returned because he wasn't ready to jump right into the role of being a father and just didn't "get it".

A third spouse stated that, "Frustration with the lack of lack of information about what was happening with my husband particularly pre-deployment. Lack of power pre-deployment and deployment because we had lost control (or the illusion thereof) of our lives. Relief and gratitude post-deployment." And finally a spouse reported that,

There is also such an overwhelming sense of pride that comes with deployment. Not that your husband is gone, but that he is fighting for you, your family, and everyone else. Not only that, but realizing that I CAN DO THIS, is about the most amazing thing in the world!

For the second/subsequent deployment, the spouses were again asked, the same open-ended question, "Were there any other emotions that you felt at any stage of the second/subsequent deployment that were not included?" The spouses stated that they experienced emotions of anger, worried, overwhelmed, resentment, relief and joy. For the second/subsequent deployment more spouses reported anger than during the first deployment. One spouse said that,

Angry: pre-deployment and during the deployment. The turn-around between deployments averaged 3 months, but one year he was gone on three deployments. He arrived home in January, left in April, returned in October, and left again in December. There have been many, many years where the deployment rate wasn't much different. I was pretty angry at the base and the base leadership.

Another spouse reported,

Anger during all stages of the deployment. Anger at the Army, anger at the general public for not understanding how different our lives were, anger at the Army wives whose husbands didn't deploy again and again, anger at the soldiers who didn't deploy, anger toward my husband who kept leaving me and our daughter. And, always mind-numbing relief and gratitude during a deployment when I heard his voice on the phone (temporary of course) and intense relief and joy when he returned safely.

A third spouse said that, “overwhelmed at times during deployments with just having to be the all for everyone all the time, and not having enough time for myself or finding it hard to ask for specific help from someone.” And a fourth spouse said, “resentment, actually feeling like he has it easier being gone and only having one thing to worry about when I am at home having to take care of EVERYTHING!”

This study was also looking at coping strategies used to help the spouse through any stage of deployment. The spouse was reminded that coping could be positive or negative, and then given a list that contained both helpful and unhelpful ways of responding. After this portion the spouse was asked, “Were there any other coping strategies that you used during the first deployment that were not mentioned? If yes, please add and explain if they were helpful or not.” The main theme found in this group was continuing education. One spouse said that,

Went back to school for a yearlong program. It was nice and kept me focus. It gave inspiration and made me feel like I was helping my husband when I wrote him letters letting him know of my success.

A second spouse said that, "I continued to go to school (college). This was helpful, because it helped me stay busy and not focus so much on him being away."

There were other coping strategies that the spouses used to deal with the deployments and these were, communication, dancing, movies, eating, forum for military spouses, travel to extended family, laughter, countdowns, prayer, smoking, organizing and planning for the future and starting a new company. One spouse said, "I also joined a website/forum online where I was able to talk to other military spouses. I didn't live on base, so I couldn't interact in person. But the forum was an incredible support system for me." Another responded with,

Communication with your spouse. Through letters, phone calls, messages, etc. Use whatever is available to both of you and remember that you are both in it together. A lot of similar feelings are experienced between couples, but they fail to realize it.

And a third stated that,

We used various countdown strategies to countdown the weeks remaining. The one that helped the most was attaching a picture of my husband high on the wall, and adding a paper ring to it each week; inside the paper we all contributed (as best as the children could) a reason why we loved him. Another very helpful strategy was to discuss him openly and all the time, almost as if he was there, especially at dinner (i.e. "Do you think Daddy would like this meal? Why?"). There was no "being strong" or holding in emotions, and that seemed to help everyone a lot.

For the second/subsequent deployment the spouses reported using the same coping strategies to help them through this time. Again, the most common coping strategy was continuing education but communication with the deployed spouse was also extremely important during this time. The spouses also stated that they used laughter, countdowns, communication, pets, learning a new language, maintaining status quo, living close to immediate family and self-talk.

One spouse reported that, “Always communicating with my husband as much as possible.” And another said, “Talking to my hubby was extremely helpful throughout the deployment.” A third stated that, “going to school - it helped with keeping busy and feeling accomplished.” And lastly one spouse said,

We used variations of counting-down schemes and maintained a policy of openly talking about our thoughts, feelings, fears, and emotions similar to the first deployment, and these things helped a lot. Additionally, sometimes I went back home to visit his or my family. Sometimes this was helpful, and sometimes it was definitely not helpful at all.

The last open-ended question that was asked was, “Is there anything that I didn’t ask, that you feel would be important to know about the impact of multiple deployments on military spouses? Thirty-six spouses responded and one theme that was consistent was it doesn’t get easier. A spouse said, “They don’t get any easier. Each one is different. Doesn’t matter how many you have been thru.” Another spouse said, “It never gets easier. We’ve been through 3 deployments and this is the second to a combat zone. Saying goodbye for 6-8 months is never easy. Saying welcome back makes it all worthwhile!” A third spouse said, “It never gets easier but when you have open communication and trust in the marriage it will make you stronger and make you cherish one another more.” And a fourth spouse said,

It is hard. It does not get easier, even when you think it might. Each deployment is different and changes both of you. Not always for the worst, but everyone changes over time. People change more with stress of deployments. The Family Readiness Groups (FRG) that should be helpful are nothing but groups of gossipers normally. It makes it hard when you think you have a group of people that are sharing the same things, but then bring each other down instead. It can be lonely, but staying positive and busy helps a lot. Not counting days, but weeks is easier. If you ever have any doubt of your relationship, deployment is only going to make it worse. Remember to talk to each other!

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This purpose of this mixed- method, exploratory, retrospective study was to discover the impact of multiple deployments on military spouses. This study explored whether military spouses who have experienced multiple deployments found the second and subsequent deployments more or less difficult than the first. In addition, the spouses were asked, “What stage of the deployment (pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment) do military spouses who have experienced multiple deployments consider the most difficult and what aspects of these stages was the most difficult?” Another aspect of this study was to look at the feelings/emotions felt during pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment and to see if there was a shift from the first deployment to the second/subsequent deployment. This study also inquired about the coping strategies, both positive and negative, that military spouses used during deployments with the intent to learn whether or not this changed due to lessons learned in the first deployment.

Key Findings

Quantitative results

The quantitative results of this study suggest that for these spouses surveyed: (a) the actual stage of deployment was the most difficult for both the first and second/subsequent deployment; (b) spouses felt a range of feelings/ emotions during each stage of deployment from anxiety, nervousness to independence and strength; (c) for all stages of deployment, except the

post deployment of those who had experienced multiple deployments, stress consistently showed up as one of the top three feelings/emotions; (d) spouses used keeping busy, employment, talking with military spouses, religion, exercise and craft or hobby as the major coping strategies to help deal with the deployments.

Qualitative results

The spouses were also asked qualitative open-ended questions in order to elicit more information about their experiences with deployments. The participants were queried about what made each stage of the deployment difficult for both the first and second/subsequent deployments. Seventy spouses responded and for those spouses that found pre-deployment to be the most difficult they reported that what made it difficult was: (a) the unknowns; (b) the anticipation of when the spouse would be leaving; (c) lack of time to spend with military member; and (d) short notice deployments. During the deployment phase the spouses reported that it was: (a) being alone; (b) the unknowns; and (c) being a single parent. For the post-deployment phase the things that the spouses found the most difficult were: (a) reintegration of the spouse back into the family, especially if the military member has PTSD; and (b) back to back deployments.

Secondly, the spouses were asked to report on the feelings/emotions felt during any stage of deployment that was not included in the survey. Twenty three spouses responded and for both the first and second/subsequent deployments the spouses reported feeling: (a) anger; (b) worried; (c) overwhelmed; and (d) relief. Thirdly, this study was also interested in the coping strategies, both positive and negative, that the spouses used to help them through the deployment. The spouses were probed to see if there were any other coping strategies used that were not included in the list to choose from. Eighteen spouses responded and for both the first and

second/subsequent deployments the majority of spouses reported that continuing education was very helpful as was communication with their spouse. Last, the spouses were asked if there was anything that wasn't asked that they felt would be important to know about the impact of multiple deployments on military spouses. Of the thirty six spouses who responded, the main theme was it does not get any easier.

Findings and literature

In analyzing the results and comparing them to the literature, the findings are similar to what was found in the Easterling& Knox (2010) study. In that study, 259 wives were surveyed and 50.7% found the actual deployment to be the most difficult. In this study, 54.7% found the actual deployment to be the most difficult for the first deployment and 53.6% for the second/subsequent deployment. I had hypothesized that due to lessons learned, the spouses would not have found the second/subsequent deployment to be as difficult as the first. This does not seem to be the case, as with every stage of deployment, there is a slight downward variation but not enough to be statistically significant.

Although anger was not an emotion that the spouses could choose, in the open-ended questions, spouses spoke of their anger at all stages of the deployment. For those spouses who have experienced a second/subsequent deployment, the major emotion that they reported feeling was anger. That anger seemed to stem from the fact that the spouses were deploying multiple times with short notifications and turnaround times. This is consistent with the findings of Wheeler & Stone (2009) when they interviewed National Guard spouses. They also found that one of the themes was anger in all stages of deployment. Wheeler & Stone (2009) questioned whether this finding was a result of the spouses currently being deployed. Further research

should include anger in the emotions felt during stages of deployment to better gauge how the spouses are reacting to deployments.

An interesting finding was that spouses reported feeling more nervous during post-deployment of the second/subsequent deployment (31.3%) versus the first deployment (2.5%). Further research should be undertaken to examine if this due to feelings about the spouse coming back having changed or if it has implications for PTSD. This finding could be further researched with open-ended questions that query the degree of nervousness and what specific (or extenuating) circumstances cause the nervousness.

The major coping strategies that wives used in the Easterling & Knox (2010) study were talking with friends, talking with military wives (highest mean), and exercising. Similarly in Padden, Connors & Agazio, the spouses reported using recreational activities such as biking, walking, sports or dancing to reduce their stress. In the Wheeler & Stone (2009) study, wives reported using expressive activities such as journaling and artistic endeavors, spending time with family and friends, religion and technology i.e., the internet and phone. In Lapp, Taft, Tollefson, Hoepner, Moore & Divyak (2010), they found that spouses used keeping busy as a way to get them through deployment.

These previous results were consistent with the findings from this study. In this study for both the first and second/subsequent deployment, spouses used keeping busy (highest mean) as a way to cope with the deployment. Spouses also used talking with military spouses, talking with friends, religion, exercise and craft or hobby during the first deployment. For the second/subsequent deployment the spouses used employment, talking with military spouses, religion, exercise and craft or hobby as coping mechanisms.

Limitations

This study tried to determine the impact of multiple deployments on military spouses by asking the following questions: “Do military spouses who have experienced multiple deployments find the second and subsequent deployment more or less difficult than the first? What stage of deployment (pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment) do military spouses who have experienced multiple deployments consider the most difficult? What aspects of these stages are the most difficult? What coping mechanisms do military spouses use during deployments? Did this change due to lessons learned in the first deployment? If so, how?”

In reviewing the findings, all of the above questions were answered either through the quantitative multiple-choice questions or the qualitative open-ended questions except the final question of “Did this change due to lessons learned in the first deployment?” In retrospect this should have been an open-ended question that was asked of the spouses. As a result, one can only hypothesize that changes were made due to lessons learned but there is no statistical data to back this up. Also, the bias from this researcher was that things would be less difficult with each deployment as processes had been worked out with the first deployment. Some findings that were not taken into consideration were; (a) those spouses that had recently had a permanent change of station (PCS) and had not had time to develop a support system before their spouse deployed (b) those spouses who were pregnant and/or became new parents when their spouse was gone and (c) the effects of an affair or divorce on both the unit and the spouses.

The sample size was small with 80 respondents yet, still diverse with responses from every branch of the service except Coast Guard. This could be due to the small percentage of Coast Guard, 4,370, deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan as of December 2009 (Tan, 2009). Also, even though this researcher tried to reach male spouses, only one male spouse responded. Male

spouses are a hard group to reach albeit, as of April 2012, women make up 15% of the United States military either on active duty, in reserves or National Guard and 225, 000 have deployed in support of OIF and OEF (Drummond, 2012). Due to the small sample size and the fact that this is a nonprobability study, the ability to generalize information about this population is null. Another limitation of this study was that I was not able to recruit individuals who could not read English, were illiterate or who did not have access to computers. Possibly there might have been better success if the researcher was currently stationed or lived close to a military base/post were members were deploying.

Implications

No matter how many deployments a spouse experiences, the collective view is that it never gets easier. As long as the military continues to deploy, spouses will need continuing support through all stages of deployment. It appears that for those spouses who have endured more than one deployment emphasis could be placed on reintegration and how to negotiate new roles or altered roles once a spouse returns. This survey could also possibly be shared with military installations to help develop programs or continuing education topics for spouses who are experiencing multiple deployments.

For those individuals in the civilian community who are unfamiliar with the military culture or who have limited contact with the military this survey would help them to understand the unique challenges experienced by the military spouses. It could be used as a way to work with spouses in the community and to better understand their emotions and coping mechanisms during the deployment cycle.

Conclusion

As spouses continue to experience multiple deployments, this mixed method exploratory study provides both the military and civilian community with more information about how military spouses cope with multiple deployments. It also solidifies the understanding that the main deployment is the most difficult time for the spouses and ways to alleviate their stress and help them through this period would be beneficial. This study also provides insight into the emotions experienced by the spouses during the different stages of deployment and provides a base for building upon when working with military spouses.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Questions

Questions for eligibility - * means ineligible

1. Are you 18 years of age or older?

- Yes
- No*

2. Are you able to read and write in English?

- Yes
- No*

3. Are you married to a current or prior member of the United State Military (includes National Guard and Reserve)?

- Yes
- No*

4. Is your marriage recognized by the Department of Defense? (If dependent, were you issued a spouse ID card?)

- Yes
- No*

5. Are you currently pregnant?

- Yes*
- No

6. Has your spouse been deployed AT LEAST TWICE during your marriage to either Iraq or Afghanistan?

- Yes
- No*

Thank you for your time and interest in this study. Unfortunately your answers to one or more of the previous questions indicate you are not eligible to participate.

You are invited to share this survey on Facebook or by forwarding the survey link via email.

To exit, simply close the browser window.

7. Will be electronic consent

Survey questions

8. Please indicate status of your spouse.

- Active Duty
- Discharged (Veteran)
- Retired
- Other
- Please describe

9. Please indicate to which branch of military your spouse belongs or belonged to when deployed.

- | | |
|---|---|
| Active Duty Army – go to question 10 | Marine Corps Reserve – skip to question 12 |
| Army Reserve – go to question 10 | Active Duty Air Force – skip to question 13 |
| Army National Guard – skip to question 10 | Air Force Reserve – skip to question 13 |
| Active Duty Navy – skip to question 11 | Air National Guard – skip to question 13 |

Navy Reserve – skip to question 11 Active Duty Coast Guard – skip to question 11
Active Duty Marine Corps - skip to question 12 Coast Guard Reserve – skip to question 11

10. What is/was your spouse's highest rank? Then go to question 14.

Private
Private First Class
Specialist
Corporal
Sergeant
Staff Sergeant
First Sergeant
Sergeant Major
Warrant Officer
Chief Warrant Officer
2nd Lieutenant
1st Lieutenant
Captain
Major
Lieutenant Colonel
Colonel
Brigadier General
Major General
Lieutenant General
General

11. What is/was your spouse's highest rank? Then go to question 14.

Seaman Recruit
Seaman Apprentice
Seaman
Petty Officer Third Class
Petty Officer Second Class
Petty Officer First Class
Chief Petty Officer
Senior Chief Petty Officer
Master Chief Petty Officer
Warrant Officer
Chief Warrant Officer
Ensign
Lieutenant Junior Grade
Lieutenant
Lieutenant Commander
Commander
Captain
Rear Admiral (lower half)
Rear Admiral (higher half)
Vice Admiral
Admiral

12. What is/was your spouse's highest rank? Then go to question 14.

Private
Private First Class
Lance Corporal
Corporal
Sergeant
Staff Sergeant

Gunnery Sergeant
Master Sergeant
Sergeant Major
Warrant Officer
Chief Warrant Officer
2nd Lieutenant
1st Lieutenant
Captain
Major
Lieutenant Colonel
Colonel
Brigadier General
Major General
Lieutenant General
General

13. What is/was your spouse's highest rank? Then go to question 14.

Airman
Airman First Class
Senior Airman
Sergeant
Staff Sergeant
Technical Sergeant
Master Sergeant
Senior Master Sergeant
Chief Master Sergeant
2nd Lieutenant
1st Lieutenant
Captain
Major
Lieutenant Colonel
Colonel
Brigadier General
Major General
Lieutenant General
General

14. What is your gender?

Male
Female
Other

15. What is your age?

16. What is your highest level of education?

Some High School
High school/GED
Some college
Associates Degree
Bachelor's Degree
Master's Degree
Doctorate Degree

17. How many years have you been married?

18. Do you have children?

Yes – skip to question 18

No – skip to question 19

19. How many children do you have?

20. Are you currently or have you ever been a member of the Armed Forces?

Yes – skip to question 21

No – go to question 24

21. Did you deploy to Iraq or Afghanistan?

Yes – go to question 22

No – skip to question 24

22. How many times have you deployed?

Once

Twice

Three times

Four or more times

23. Because of your previous deployment do you think you better prepared to deal with your spouse's deployment?

Please explain.

24. What stage of deployment (pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment) did you consider the most difficult during the **FIRST** deployment?

Pre-deployment

Deployment

Post-deployment

25. In what way was it difficult?

Please explain.

26. During which stage(s) of deployment during the **FIRST** deployment did you experience the following feelings/emotions? If you experienced this feeling/emotion at all stages, please mark each stage.

	Pre-deployment	Deployment	Post-deployment	N/A
Anxiety				
Depression				
Fear				
Helplessness				
Hopelessness				
Independence				
Joy				
Loneliness				
Nervousness				
Sadness				
Strength				

Stress				
--------	--	--	--	--

27. Were there other emotions that you felt at any stage of the FIRST deployment that were not included? (Please explain and list stage of deployment.)

28. Please indicate how helpful each of the following coping mechanisms/skills were to you at any stage of deployment during the FIRST deployment.

	Not helpful at all	Somewhat helpful	Helpful	Extremely helpful
Affair				
Alcohol				
Arguing				
Counseling				
Craft or Hobby				
Crying				
Employment				
Exercise				
Going home to live with family				
Keeping a journal				
Keeping busy				
Medications				
Meditation				
Participating in base activities				
Religion				
Shopping				
Talking with family				
Talking with friends				
Talking with military spouses				
Volunteering				
Yoga				

29. Were there any other coping mechanisms/skills that you used during the FIRST deployment that are not mentioned above?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please add and explain if they were helpful or not.

30. What stage of deployment (pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment) did you consider the most difficult during the **SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT** deployments?

- Pre-deployment
- Deployment

Post-deployment

31. In what ways was it difficult?

Please explain.

32. During which stage(s) of deployment during the **second or subsequent** deployment did you experience the following feelings/emotions?

	Pre-deployment	Deployment	Post-deployment	N/A
Anxiety				
Depression				
Fear				
Helplessness				
Hopelessness				
Independence				
Joy				
Loneliness				
Nervousness				
Sadness				
Strength				
Stress				

33. Were there other emotions that you felt at any stage of the **SECOND OR SUBSEQUENT** deployment that were not included? (Please explain and list stage of deployment.)

--

34. Please indicate how helpful each of the following coping mechanisms/skills were to you at any stage of deployment during the **SECOND OR SUBSEQUENT** deployments.

	Not helpful at all	Somewhat helpful	Helpful	Extremely helpful
Affair				
Alcohol				
Arguing				
Counseling				
Craft or Hobby				
Crying				
Employment				
Exercise				
Going home to live with family				
Keeping a journal				
Keeping busy				
Medications				
Meditation				
Participating in base activities				
Religion				
Shopping				
Talking with family				

Talking with friends				
Talking with military spouses				
Volunteering				
Yoga				

35. Were there any other coping mechanisms/skills that you used during the SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT deployment(s) that are not mentioned above strategies that you found helpful that are not mentioned above?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please add and explain if they were helpful.

36. Is there anything that I didn't ask, that you feel would be important to know about the impact of multiple deployments on military spouses?

You have reached the end of this study. I would like to thank you for your interest and time in completing this survey. I would also like to thank you for your service in support of your spouse and for keeping the home fires burning while your spouse is/was deployed. THANK YOU!

APPENDIX B

Email

My name is Renee Rountree and I am a M.S.W. candidate in clinical social work at Smith College School for Social Work. As the spouse of a retired military member who deployed during the first Gulf war and then again to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), I would like to know what **your** experience has been with multiple deployments of your spouse.

I am conducting a study of military spouses who have experienced at least **two** deployments of their military member to either Iraq or Afghanistan in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and/or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). I would like to gather more information about how you coped with the deployments and if the second or subsequent deployment was less difficult than the first. I would also like to know what stage of deployment, pre-deployment, deployment, or post-deployment you found the most difficult and why. This research is being conducted for the completion of Smith College School for Social Work Master's Thesis. This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee at Smith.

Are you currently the spouse of a military member who deployed twice during your marriage?

Are you 18 years old or older and not currently pregnant?

Is your marriage recognized by the Department of Defense?

Are you able to read and write English?

If you answered **Yes** to all of the questions above, you may be eligible to participate in this study.

Please go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Y5C6WS5> to log on to the survey to complete. It will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

If possible, could you also forward this email to other spouses who have experienced at least two deployments?

I would like to thank you for your interest and time in completing this survey. I would also like to thank you for your service in support of your spouse and for keeping the home fires burning while your spouse is deployed. THANK YOU!

For further information please contact:

Renee Rountree at xxx-xxx-xxxx
xxxxxxx@smith.edu
Smith College, Northampton MA 01063

APPENDIX C

Facebook and Military Spouses Listserve

My name is Renee Rountree and I am a Masters candidate in social work at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA. As the spouse of a retired military member who deployed during the first Gulf war and then again to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), I would like to know what your experience has been with multiple deployments of your spouse.

I am conducting a study of military spouses who have experienced at least two deployments of their military member to either Iraq or Afghanistan in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and/or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). I would like to gather more information about how you coped with the deployments and if the second or subsequent deployment was less difficult than the first. I would also like to know what stage of deployment, pre-deployment, deployment, or post-deployment you found the most difficult and why. This research is being conducted for the completion of Social Work Master's Thesis. This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee at Smith.

Are you currently the spouse of a military member who has deployed at least twice during your marriage?

Are you 18 years old or older and not currently pregnant?

Is your marriage recognized by the Department of Defense?

Are you able to read and write English?

If you answered **Yes** to all of the questions above, you are eligible to participate in this study.

Please go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Y5C6WS5> to log on to the survey to complete. It will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

If possible, could you also forward this link to other spouses who have experienced at least two deployments?

I would like to thank you for your interest and time in completing this survey. I would also like to thank you for your service in support of your spouse and for keeping the home fires burning while your spouse is deployed. THANK YOU!

For further information please contact:

Renee Rountree at xxx-xxx-xxxx
xxxxxxx@smith.edu
Smith College, Northampton MA 01063

APPENDIX D

MilitaryOneSource.com
24/7 Response for Military Members, Spouses & Families
Phone: (800) 342-9647
Website: <http://www.militaryonesource.com/skins/MOS/home.aspx>

After Deployment.org
<http://afterdeployment.org/locate-help>

The Red Cross Call 1-877-272-7337 (toll-free).
Active-duty service members stationed in the United States and family members residing with them:

Family members who do not reside in the service members' household, members of the National Guard and Reserves, retirees and civilians: Call your local Red Cross chapter, which is listed in local telephone books and at Your Local Red Cross.

Army Reserve Family Programs
Phone: (866) 345-8248
Email: usarc_wfac@usar.army.mil
Website: <http://www.arfp.org/skins/ARFP/home.aspx>

The Coming Home Project
Dr. Loren Krane at 415-563-3540, or wyloren@yahoo.com.
1801 Bush Street, Suite 213 San Francisco, CA 94109
Phone: (415) 353-5363
Website: <http://www.cominghomeproject.net/>

Deployment Health Clinical Center
<http://www.pdhealth.mil/hss/smfss.asp>

Military.com <http://www.military.com/>

Give an Hour
Barbara V. Romberg, PhD Founder and President
PO Box 5918 Bethesda, MD USA 20824-5918 info@giveanhour.org

The Military Family Network P.O. Box 16366 Pittsburgh, PA 15242
Phone: 1-866-205-2850
Website: <http://www.emilitary.org/index.html>

National Military Family Association (NMFA)
2500 North Van Dorn Street, Suite 102 Alexandria, VA 22302-1601
Phone: (800) 260-0218

Website: <http://www.nmfa.org/site/PageServer>

If you are feeling very depressed or upset you should call

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

Call 1-800-273-TALK

If spouse is Active Duty or on Active Duty status then you may contact your nearest military installation.

SOFAR Strategic Outreach to Families of All Reservists

A Program of the **Psychoanalytic Couple and Family Institute of New England (PCFINE)**

PCFINE P.O. Box 920781, Needham, MA 02492

Tel: 617-266-2611 Fax: 781-433-0510

E-mail: help@SOFARUSA.org

Website: www.sofarusa.org

SOFARUSA information: 1 888 278-0041

PO Box 380766 Cambridge, MA 02238

SOFA Michigan: 1-877-54 SOFAR

SOFARNY 212-561-6702 |

SOFARNY@gmail.com

SOFAR Massachusetts 617 266-2611 |

help@sofarusa.org

Strong Bonds

<http://www.strongbonds.org/skins/strongbonds/display.aspx>

Tricare – for Active Duty and Retired Families

<http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit>

Vet Centers

http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/vetcenter_flsh.asp

Veterans & Families Coming Home

Bobbi Park Executive Director Volunteer

395 South Highway 65, Suite A #167 Lincoln, CA 95648

Phone: (916) 409-0462 Cell: (530) 388-8074

Email: bobbi@veteransandfamilies.org

Website: <http://www.veteransandfamilies.org/home.html>

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD

<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/index.jsp>

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent

My name is Renee Rountree and I am a spouse of a retired military member and Masters candidate in social work at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA. I am conducting a study of military spouses who have experienced at least two deployments of their military member to either Iraq or Afghanistan in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and/or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). This study has been approved by Smith College Human Subjects Review Committee. This study will be presented as a thesis and may be used in possible future presentations to mental health clinicians, researchers or policy makers or publications on the topic.

This survey will ask open-ended and multiple choice questions about which stage of deployment you found the most difficult and why. There will also be questions about what coping skills you used during the first and subsequent deployments. This survey will also include some general questions about you and your spouse. The estimated time to complete this survey will be between 20 to 30 minutes.

Participation in this survey may bring up strong feelings related to your experience of having your spouse deployed. In case you feel the need for additional support after participating in this study, I have provided a list of mental health resources at the end of this survey.

Although there will be no financial benefit for taking part in this study, your participation will allow you to share your valuable knowledge and unique perspective on how you have coped with multiple deployments and which stage of the deployment you have found the most difficult. It is my hope that this will provide mental health providers, and social service administrators with more information and a deeper understanding of how multiple deployments impact the spouses of military members, and will lead to improved services for the spouses.

Your anonymity will be protected in a number of ways as consistent with Federal regulations. You should leave out identifying information about yourself and your spouse from your answers to survey questions. By not including identifying information in your survey responses, you will ensure that your responses will be anonymous since the survey software does not collect names, e-mail addresses, IP addresses, or any other identifying information. Should you need to contact me regarding this study, you will not need to give your name. Once you have submitted your survey, your responses will be password protected and available only to me. My research advisor will have access to the data after any possible identifying information has been removed. In any presentations or publications, data will be presented as a whole to disguise participant identities and when brief illustrative quotes or vignettes are used, they will be carefully concealed. Survey response data will be stored on encrypted, password-protected removable media and stored in a locked and secure environment for three years following the completion of the research consistent with Federal regulations. After this time, the data will be destroyed.

As a voluntary participant you have the right to withdraw from the survey without penalty prior to beginning or before you submit your responses. Further, you may choose not to answer any

question in the survey simply by skipping it. It will be impossible for you to withdrawal from the study once you have submitted your survey, as I will not be able to identify your survey responses among others' responses in my survey.

If you have any questions about your rights or any aspects of this study, you may contact me at RRountre@smith.edu or the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at 413-585-7974.

Electronic Consent:

BY CHECKING “I AGREE” BELOW, YOU ARE INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND THAT YOU HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU VOLUNARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

I agree

I DO NOT agree

APPENDIX F



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

March 19, 2012

Renee Rountree

Dear Renee,

Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee. I must say you did a good job on your revisions! Your project is ready to move forward.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your research project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David L. Burton'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

David L. Burton, M.S.W., Ph.D.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Stacey Novack, Research Advisor