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**COAST GUARD FAMILIES
EXPERIENCING DEPLOYMENT:
STRESSORS, COPING STRATEGIES AND
SUPPORTS**

by

Maureen Casey Finley

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Social Welfare in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Social Welfare,
The City University of New York**

2004

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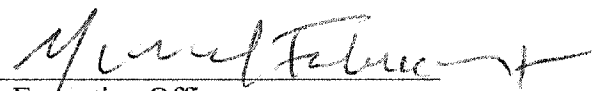
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Abstract

COAST GUARD FAMILIES EXPERIENCING DEPLOYMENT: STRESSORS, COPING STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

by

Maureen Casey Finley

Adviser: Professor Michael J. Smith

A qualitative study of married male Coast Guard personnel and wives experiencing short-term shipboard deployment cycles (two months at sea, two months homeport) utilized separate focus group interviews for men and women. Home management, housekeeping, children's everyday needs, safety issues and gossip were explored as stressors affecting spouses during deployments. The establishment and implementation of routines eased the feelings of loneliness and stress associated with deployments. Parents found that children coped well with deployments when mothers established routines and maintained a positive attitude, while taking on the responsibilities of the temporarily absent spouse. Adjustment to separation was also made easier through communication between spouses. The evolution of e-mail has provided the means for daily communication with family members.

Support systems for wives include informal support networks of friendships, relatives and wives clubs (also known as deployment support groups). Friendships

among wives residing in base housing were found to be a valuable source of support to wives. Wives' clubs were perceived by many to be 'cliquish' and 'gossipy'. Residence in base housing positively affected families' feelings of safety during deployments and increased the ability to develop friendships among wives. Coast Guard personnel and their spouses primarily viewed the more formalized Coast Guard support systems negatively. Respondents cited poor dissemination of information and referral sources. Employee Assistance Programs seem to be growing in favor among families, since the limits of confidentiality exceed those of Coast Guard support systems, while offering more varied services.

Respondents generally maintained a positive attitude toward the deployment lifestyle. Husbands enjoyed the camaraderie of shipmates and became more appreciative of their families as a result of deployments. Wives developed more independence and self-esteem as a result of deployments. Although disruptive to routines, short-term deployments appeared to result in less loneliness and less opportunity for the build-up of daily stressors, than is evidenced in the literature on long-term (6-months or more) deployments.

It is recommended that social workers be assigned, with more services provided to help families adjust to deployment, including coordination of information and provision of linkages to local resources.

*In loving memory
of my father*

William J. Casey, Jr.

*I know you're watching me with pride.
Miss you, Pops!*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

PURPOSE OF STUDY

Military personnel and their families usually experience stressful situations that are unique to the military family lifestyle. The two stressors that are discussed most frequently in the literature about military families are frequent moves and frequent separations from the military spouse due to deployment. This study focuses on the stressful effects of deployment on military spouses, as well as coping strategies and support systems utilized by spouses and families. Deployment is defined as the placement of military personnel on a duty assignment away from home. This study focuses on United States Coast Guard personnel who are deployed on ships for a three-month period of time.

A significant number of researchers have studied the stressful effects created by deployment of a spouse and the effectiveness of coping strategies employed by families during this time. However, in large part, the literature ignores the subjective feelings the families experience as a result of the military member's deployment. This is because much of the research is quantitative in nature, utilizing close-ended questionnaires to determine stressors and coping strategies. Quantitative studies cannot explore the emotional experience of deployment in depth. Neither are they designed to discover additional stressors, coping strategies or support systems utilized by families experiencing deployments. The concerns

and subjective experiences of the military member himself during deployment have been researched least of all.

This study was designed to determine how each spouse experiences the stressors created by deployment of the husband, as well as the coping strategies and support systems utilized by each. Focus groups were utilized to gather much of the data. These interviews assisted in the discovery of any additional stressors, coping strategies and support systems that have not been addressed in the literature. Through exploration of the emotional experience of deployment, it is hoped that the military will develop programs that better address the emotional needs of both marital partners and their families during this stressful period. Discovery of previously unexplored coping strategies and supports utilized by family members during deployment would be especially useful to researchers and program developers. Coping strategies and supports could then be maximized through the development of programs, which rely upon and expand on these strategies.

WIVES AS 'CAMPFOLLOWERS'

Women weren't always left at home while their military spouses went to 'work'. Prior to the 20th century women followed their husbands into battle. They became known as 'campfollowers', working alongside the soldiers as cooks, laundresses, nurses, and even as prostitutes (Trustram, 1984). In their book, *Campfollowing*, Alt and Stone (1991) describe wives' acts of heroism during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, including riding into battle, firing muskets and cannons. Even the famous Martha Washington was known to follow husband

George to his various encampments, including a stay at Valley Forge. She assisted in feeding and clothing soldiers and their wives, as well as caring for the wounded (Alt & Stone).

Those wives that followed their husbands to various encampments endured many hardships, especially the wives of enlisted (non-officer) personnel. Many had to follow their husbands' regiments on foot while carrying heavy loads. Housing for wives and families was virtually non-existent before the twentieth century. Families lived in tents, lean-tos, sod houses, adobe huts or made a home out of whatever shelter was available (Stone and Alt). Once housing was made available on a very limited basis, it was usually reserved for officers and their families. Despite the hardships women encountered, many continued to accompany their husbands through the wars of the 18th and 19th centuries and onto the American frontier.

A MILITARY WITH ATTITUDE

One may be left with the impression that the military of the 18th and 19th centuries maintained a more egalitarian view of the military wife than today's military. However, despite the evidence that military wives worked alongside their husbands, many soldiers viewed these women as nuisances and liabilities in the war effort. Trustram (1984) reports that some British officers in the Victorian army considered the wives to be a bad influence on the soldiers, and were good for not much beyond washing and sewing. Some referred to the wives as "useless sloths" who interfered with soldiering (Ibid, P. 40). In the latter half of the nineteenth

century an officer stationed in an American western outpost, Duane Merritt Greene, "...thought the two worst influences around an army post were whiskey and officers' wives. Greene felt the ladies monopolized the time of their husbands and bachelor officers and that discipline was most lacking at posts where there were a great number of wives" (Alt and Stone, pg. 59). Throughout the nineteenth century, soldiers planning to marry had to first obtain permission from their commanding officers (Alt & Stone; Trustram). Permission was not usually granted easily, forcing many to marry in secret (Trustram). For those civilian males who were already married in Victorian era Britain, the promise of freedom from the responsibility of supporting a wife and children was used as a recruitment incentive for those who felt married life to be burdensome (Ibid).

World War I became the first war during which men went to training camps and were shipped overseas without their wives. "No longer was the wife needed to cook, sew and nurse for the army in battle; her place by the side of her military husband would be relegated to peacetime activities only." (Alt and Stone, p. 79) Eventually the military wife was to become a 'waiting wife' during peacetime as well, while her husband was sent on training missions, to remote stations or on shipboard deployments for weeks or months at a time.

The attitude that marriage and the military 'just don't mix' continued throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The common saying among military officers was, "If we had wanted you to have a family, we would have issued you one" (Halloran). However, Reuben Hill, in his study of military families during World War II, noted that families were more thoughtfully considered by the

military during wartime than during times of peace. This more thoughtful attitude was most likely due to the military's need to retain large numbers of personnel during wartime, whose morale was greatly affected by the wives and families left behind. In 1947, the military reverted back to their old attitude by establishing a ruling that stated, "No man with a wife shall be enlisted in peacetime without special authority." (Alt & Stone, p. 110) The Korean and Vietnam wars maintained a large pool of military personnel through the use of the draft, so it wasn't entirely necessary to soften the attitude toward the dependent wife and family.

Following the Vietnam War, the attitude toward spouses and children of military personnel underwent a change. The military became an all-volunteer force with the ending of the Vietnam War. Recruitment and retention of qualified military personnel became the priority. By this time, more than fifty percent of military personnel were married (Bowen). "Military wives' attitudes about military life have been shown to play a significant role in recruitment and retention decisions..." (Thoresen and Goldsmith; pg. 545). In order to retain qualified personnel, the military had to meet the needs of their families through providing better housing, financial coverage and benefits, as well as supports throughout frequent moves and deployments.

Family service centers were developed on military bases to address some of the unique needs for support that these families experienced. The primary goals of family service centers are to educate families in order to prevent future problems and to provide supportive interventions (Knox and Price). Family service centers provide educational classes and seminars in managing finances, childcare, parenting

skills, etc. Family and individual counseling are provided as well in many centers (Ibid). Support for families during deployments may also be offered in the form of self-help guides, classes or support groups. The support that family service centers provide varies with the size of the military base, availability of community resources and the perception of need. Following the Persian Gulf War, the military's focus on recruitment and retention of personnel became history. Throughout much of the 1990's, the focus became reduction of armed forces, something that the U.S. military had never experienced on a large scale. As part of the reduction plan, recruitment of new personnel as well as re-enlistment incentives were scaled back considerably. Attitudes against military personnel marrying reared again:

In 1993, Gen. Carl Mundy Jr., the Marine Corps Commandant, attempted to limit recruitment of married people. While Mundy was within his policy-making authority, his proposal was rejected by Navy secretary John Dalton. On the floor of Congress, the Commandant was ridiculed by Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D. Colo), who asked if he "had taken leave of his senses."

Santoli, May 28, 1995, Pg. 5

Military base closures, de-commissioning of ships and closing of military family housing complexes became commonplace. Knox and Price (1999) discuss the deterioration of resources to military families in the 1990's, including housing, health care benefits, access to commissaries (military sponsored grocery stores) and exchanges (military sponsored department stores). My own family experienced a move from one New York City borough to another brought on by the closure of family housing in Brooklyn. My children had to adjust to a new home and school,

with my husband sent on a six-week deployment during the crisis in Haiti (September, 1994) three weeks after the move. In the Spring, prior to this move, a preliminary study was conducted with Navy wives experiencing deployment (to be discussed in the following pages). Permission to conduct this study was granted by the ship's commanding officer, as long as the rumors regarding the possible base closure were not discussed. The Navy base was closed three months later, requiring hundreds of personnel and families to relocate.

As a consequence of military downsizing, research studies on the needs of military families experiencing deployment seemed to be nonexistent during the middle and late 1990's. Military studies were no longer driven by the need to support families in order to retain personnel. The horrific attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 and the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq will create another shift in the attitudes toward military personnel and their families. The costs and benefits to military families of these grim events are yet to be seen.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

STRESS IN MILITARY FAMILIES

The very nature of the military, which requires readiness and preparedness for missions that could be crucial to national security, is stressful for individuals and their families.
(Bowen, pg. 459)

A limited number of researchers have studied the stressful circumstances considered to be unique to the military family. Stressful circumstances affecting military families include low pay, limited housing, frequent moves, deployment of a spouse and retirement of the military member (Rodriguez, 1984). Kathryn Brown Decker (1978), in her study of Navy wives, described deployments as being the most stressful periods that families will experience during the military member's career. Indeed, in addition to the daily demands that the 'deployment widow' must face alone, she may also need to cope with the financial strains brought on by low pay or with lack of available adequate housing. She may even have to plan and execute an entire household move by herself while her husband is away. However, even if financial and housing difficulties were not present, the demands of daily life gradually build up stress and anxiety over the course of the deployment (Carlson and Carlson).

DEPLOYMENT STAGES

In many of the major empirical studies on military families experiencing deployment, the experience of stress varies according to the sequences of the deployment cycle. In his classic, in-depth study of families separated during World War II, Reuben Hill (1949) referred to the 'roller-coaster' patterns of emotions and adjustment associated with the cycles of separation and reunion. Although researchers vary in their terminology when describing the stages of deployment, four distinct cycles of deployment emerge.

Preparation for Departure: This term refers to the last weeks and days prior to the military member's deployment. In the handbook, *Charting Your Life in the United States Coast Guard*, O'Beirne (1983) refers to this as the 'protest against loss/departure' stage. In this stage O'Beirne reports that, "Wives talk of feeling tense, selfish, unpatriotic and generally guilty about not wanting their husbands to go" (p. 65). These feelings are made more intense by the large amount of preparations that need to be made before the spouse leaves, and the resulting exhaustion. Anger and arguments are typical at this stage. Logan (1987) describes this period of 'detachment and withdrawal' to be the most difficult phase of deployment. Spouses realize that this is their last chance to enjoy each other, but engage instead in behaviors that will separate them emotionally due to the fear that the point of separation would be too painful without this emotional distancing. Researchers have largely neglected this important stage in the deployment cycle, leaving us with little information as to the impact of pre-deployment stressors.

Departure and Adjustment: This is the stage in the first few days or weeks of the deployment, which Logan refers to as the period of 'emotional disorganization'. This is when, "...old routines have been disrupted and new ones not yet established" (Logan; pg. 44). Hill (1949) found that the immediate reactions of the families ranged from excitement to feelings of calm indifference. Those who overreacted to the departure had a more difficult time adjusting to the separation itself, while those who met the departure with indifference usually had more difficulty when they were reunited with their spouses. Carlson and Carlson (1984) conducted a study of 44 Navy couples experiencing peacetime deployment of a spouse. Wives reported feeling relieved and 'liberated' immediately following the departure of their husbands. Husbands, for the most part, reported being too busy to think about home much.

Relief and liberation are quickly replaced with feeling overwhelmed by the responsibilities that a wife must face alone. Wives are described as being withdrawn, depressed, and frustrated (Logan). This is the stage when loneliness and despair can be the most prominent (Carlson & Carlson, Decker, Hill, Logan). Carlson and Carlson report that, although most of the husbands kept busy to ward off loneliness, a few described missing their wives and children so much that they could think of little else. Carlson and Carlson further report that those men most affected with loneliness were also the most vocal about their intentions to leave the service in the near future. Hill reports that, for the most part, families who adjusted well to separation worried less, kept themselves busy through this phase and eventually overcame the difficulties involved in the initial adjustment.

Recovery and Stabilization: O'Beirne (1983) refers to this as the 'detachment' stage during which the family reaches "...a state of relative calm and confidence in handling day-to-day living" (p. 65). Families become more comfortable with the shift in roles and responsibilities (Logan). Wives cultivate their independent selves. Hill found that, "The best adjustment to separation was made by those families who partially closed ranks and re-distributed most of the husband's responsibilities among the remaining members" (p. 250). Those that made the best adjustment also maintained communication with their husbands through letters over the course of the separation (Hill). However, Carlson and Carlson found that the social circumstances of daily life gradually built up stress and anxiety for wives. These 'deployment widows' were alone in a social world of married couples creating a social "twilight zone" for wives during deployment (Ibid; p.44). McCubbin and Patterson (1982) refer to the pile-up of demands in families that can become crises. Due to the hardships that deployments impose on families, stressful situations that may have been coped with when parents were together, can then become crisis situations. Families may then revert to the previous phase of disorganization that immediately followed the husband's departure.

Reunion: The anticipation of homecoming can be exciting as well as anxiety-producing. Will the spouse's feelings have changed? Will the children recognize their father? Carlson and Carlson noted that certain ceremonial rituals performed before and during the homecoming eased the strain involved. These rituals may involve meeting the ship at the dock, having a reunion party or taking a second honeymoon. Hill notes that, "Immediate reactions were primarily those of joy,

which might be considered disorganizing in a nondestructive sense” (P.252). In other words, routines that had been longstanding during separations were happily disrupted to welcome the service member home again

In the recovery phase of the adjustment to reunion, families must learn to restructure their roles and responsibilities in order to readjust to the return of the spouse and parent (Hill, Logan, O’Beirne). Because husbands, wives and children have changed as a result of the deployment experience, families must then return to what O’Beirne refers to as a ‘new normal’. In an article that focused on the stressors affecting the families of service members who had served in the Persian Gulf War, Charles Figley (1993) noted that family members’ could be disappointed over each person’s ‘homecoming fantasies’. Family members often had expectations that competed or conflicted with those of the returning service member. The service member may want to relax and enjoy “the world” again, whereas the spouse and children want to see him devote himself to making up for lost time with the family (Figley). However, this stage of disorganization is usually only temporary, as Hill notes:

The drop comes when the honeymoon is over and the family must reorganize to meet the exigencies of daily life, but the drop is not a steep one and recovery is much quicker than the recovery from the separation crisis. This is probably due to the fact that the family is now not so much exploring uncharted fields (as in the attempt to get along without a husband) as it is attempting to reestablish a way of life that in most cases was pretty well worked out before the husband left. Hill; pgs. 254-255

Families who adjusted well to separations were usually found to make a good eventual adjustment to reunions (Hill). Families generally do go back to normal routines and relationships after the initial adjustment. However, Logan

suggests that families that experience short-term deployment/ home cycles (i.e. three months at sea, 6 weeks home) may never get the chance to get past the reorganization process. Families may not get to reach what Logan refers to as 'stabilization' period following deployment. Neither empirical or qualitative research studies were found that explored the effects of short-term deployment cycles on families.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

Early in your new role as an Army wife you must understand that your husband's "duty" will come first – before you, before your children, before his parents, and before his personal desires and ambitions.
(Shea, 1941-1966, p. 1)

The stereotype of the military marriage presents a picture of the dependent, somewhat helpless wife of the macho, domineering militaristic man. This stereotype may be based in large part on the nature of the military's goal: to defend in the instance of war. However, it may also be rooted in the frequent mobility and deployment demands of the military, requiring the military wife to make the adjustment to her husband's work requirements before meeting her own needs. Besides frequent moves, some to isolated areas, military couples may live separate lives for more than fifty percent of their married lives (Stone & Alt). In her article on military careers and the family, Janet Kohen presents the disruptions and sacrifices made in a military marriage:

The impact of the service member's unlimited commitment to the military is to limit the commitment of the military wife. Her life plans and goals become temporary and interruptible because she cannot expect her husband's help on a regular basis, nor can she depend on where she will live from year to year.
(Kohen, pg. 404)

But does this lifestyle make for a dependent, helpless wife who follows her military man unquestioningly around the globe and sits wringing her hankie until hubby returns to her side? Perhaps a bare few fit the stereotype, but most military wives develop more independence and adaptive skills due to the unique nature of the military marriage. In a study of Navy wives experiencing deployment, Patterson and McCubbin (Feb., 1984) noted that wives who adjusted best, "...coped by (a) accepting the lifestyle and being optimistic and (b) by developing self-reliance and self-esteem" (p. 95). The authors define acceptance of lifestyle as the wives' perception of their husbands' employment in a positive manner.

Independence seems to positively affect the wife's self-esteem, and should positively affect the marriage itself. Conversely, several studies have found that women who are engaged in very dependent marital relationships have tremendous difficulty coping with the separation created by deployment (Carlson & Carlson; Hill; McCubbin et al; Patterson & McCubbin). Carlson and Carlson found that wives who dwelled on their husband's past presence or spent a great deal of time hoping for their return were the least able to adapt to the deployment. McCubbin and Patterson (1983) found wives that scored lower on self-reliance and self-esteem scales experienced much more distress during deployments. Stone and Alt (1990) noted some extreme cases of husbands who attempted to control their wives while

they were on deployment by telling them they could not socialize with others while they were gone, taking the wife's identification card with him on deployment or having her 'watched' by others while he's away.

Although cases of such dependent marital relationships present a more dramatic picture in the literature, research suggests that these relationships are the exception among military marriages. In a study of 664 Air Force families, the majority of couples reported high marital satisfaction and positive communication patterns with their spouses (Bowen, 1985). In a study comparing military couples to non-military couples, Schumm and Hammond (1986) found that their "...results do not support any notion that military families are necessarily dysfunctional,...at least relative to the civilian communities in which they may be residing" (p. 393). Divorce rates among military marriages do not appear to be any higher than the rate in the civilian community (Ursano et al; Dec., 1989). Overall, military husbands and wives may have more opportunities to develop mutually supportive and independent lifestyles within the marriage than those of their civilian counterparts.

The military's expectations regarding the marital status of personnel varies according to rank. Officers are expected to marry in order to move up the promotional ladder since, "...being married is one indicator of being well-adjusted, 'squared away'." (Carlson & Carlson, p. 18) Carlson and Carlson found that 87% of the officers in the squadron studied were married, while 56% of enlisted personnel were married. The authors found that officer marriages were more traditional, with the husband as head of the household. The majority of officers' wives did not work outside the home. Instead, officers' wives are under pressure to

support their husband's career advancements by becoming active in military social networks (Segal; Kohen). Officer wives are expected to maintain positions in wives' clubs, assist families in their military community and maintain a social profile supportive of the military in accordance with their husbands' rank.

Carlson and Carlson found that enlisted couples maintained more egalitarian marriages. "They [husbands] seemed quite proud of their wives' abilities to hold paying jobs and stand alone during the deployment" (Carlson & Carlson, p. 93). Enlisted wives are not as pressured to engage in the social and community activities that support their husbands' careers. However, they are "...encouraged to stay out of trouble...and avoid doing or saying anything that could damage their husbands' careers" (Rosen and Moghadam; 1989; p. 193). This attitude reflects the military's history of reluctance to accept marriages of enlisted personnel.

The loneliness couples experience during deployment is common ground for military couples, no matter what rank the military member holds. Another area of common ground was becoming a temporarily single parent to children. However, how families coped with loneliness, children and the demands of everyday life during deployments could differ across ranks. This will be explored in a later section on supports families utilize during deployments.

CHILDREN

Another woman, explaining the pros and cons of being raised in a military family, said, "Well I may be neurotic, but I'm an open-minded, bilingual neurotic."

Long, 1986; p. 37

Even in mainstream, two-parent American households most families would agree that raising children is difficult and challenging. Add on the stress created in military families by frequent moves and spousal separations, and child-rearing becomes a greater challenge. Because the military is a profession that is entered early, with retirement possible by the age of forty, most families experience frequent moves and deployments during the early child-rearing years (Broadhurst et al, 1980). Deployments leave the mother as a temporary single parent. In her book, *Military Brats*, Mary Wertsch writes:

It is extremely difficult to be a single parent under any circumstances, but it may be impossibly difficult when everyone knows the situation is temporary.

(Wertsch; p. 68-69)

The children's ability to adjust to the deployment depends a great deal on the mother's ability to adjust to the separation (Applewhite & Mays; Hill; Rodriguez, Wertsch). Patterson and McCubbin (1984) argue that the wife's ability to assume aspects of her husband's role during the separation can greatly enhance her ability to cope with the stress created by deployment. Those women who maintained an androgynous gender role orientation (taking on aspects culturally defined as both male and female) tended to cope better with separation. This theory returns us to the previous discussion of self-reliance versus dependence in the

marital relationship. As a temporary single parent, independence on the part of the military wife becomes essential to child-rearing.

The stage in the development of the family has been found to have great impact on the kind and amount of stressors the military family experiences. McCubbin and Lavee (1986) refer to these as life-cycle stages in their study of military families coping with relocation. They found that families with pre-school and school-age children experienced the greatest amount of strain upon moving to a new location. The pile-up of demands as well as poor internal and external resources contributed to the difficult adjustment.

For young children deployment of a parent can be particularly difficult. "Often too young to understand why their parent has gone, they feel deserted" (O'Beirne p. 142). "Some kids worry about fish swallowing daddy or daddy getting lost on the ocean" (Halloran, N. Y. Times). Very young children may not remember a parent over the course of the deployment, and can be frightened or uncomfortable with the parent's return. However, videotapes and letters from the deployed parent can help to keep the parent's memory alive and ease the reunion phase (Halloran; Long; O'Beirne).

Adolescents experience the stress of deployments differently. Adolescents often take on adult responsibilities while the parent is away, and may have trouble giving up these responsibilities when the parent returns. Wertsch also finds that adolescents can take advantage of their mothers while their father is away. "The kids know it is just make-do until the father comes back, and the mother's authority may accordingly be undermined" (Ibid; p. 69).

There is a great deal of debate in the literature as to the mental health and well-being of children brought up in the military. Patricia Long refers to Don LaGrone's study comparing frequency of behavioral disorders in military children to civilian populations as a negative perception of military children. He coined the term 'military family syndrome' in 1978 when he discovered more behavioral disorders in military children than in civilians. Werkman (1992) agrees that children of military parents "...are particularly at risk for becoming regimented by imposed dress codes, social and cultural activities, and schooling choices" (Terr (Ed.); P. 985). Wertsch gives a particularly bitter account of the negative psychological effects of being a "military brat". The tone of her book is significantly affected by her personal experiences of growing up with an abusive father. However, even parents themselves in Bowen's (1985) study of enlisted air force personnel maintained some negative attitudes toward rearing their children in the air force environment:

In fact, fewer than half of air force husbands and wives (41 and 46 percent, respectively) with children saw it as a "good" environment. When asked why they felt negative about the air force for rearing children, most said that the transient and disruptive nature of the air force life-style made child rearing difficult because it did not give children a stable, secure environment. (Bowen, p. 462)

Wertsch reports that a father's absence during deployment particularly affects a child's school performance, physical health and emotional well-being. In a 1989 study of 50 Canadian military families by Doucet, over 54% of families reported that deployments created problems for the family (in Hiew, March, 1992). Some problem areas noted were children's reactions to father absence, such as

missing their father, getting sick more often and becoming more susceptible to altercations with other children. Doucet also noted, "Increase in parental stress because of the mother balancing double roles of household management and parenting" (Hiew; p. 211). In another article on Canadian military families, Freeman (1994) relates the beliefs put forth by B. Malarcyk in a 1988 publication, "She believed that there was a connection between the absence of the father and [scholastic] under-achievement, though she had no data to support this assumption" (Freeman; p. 87).

Although most researchers agree that children of military parents meet with stressors unique to military families, many strongly disagree with the assumptions that these children have more psychological and social problems than their civilian counterparts:

Assumptions about psychopathology in military children and families should not be based on presupposition, misattribution, or bias. Instead, understanding the problems of military families should be done... "by the numbers." Our numbers indicate, thus far, that children of military families are normal.

(Jensen (Terr, Ed.); 1992; p. 986)

Patricia Long, in her article *Growing Up Military* (1986), reports on Orthner's study in 1985 of 2400 military and civilian adolescents. He found military children were more likely to become involved in extracurricular activities and sports and were also more conscious of getting good grades than their civilian counterparts. Long also reports on psychologist, Edna Hunter's view that many military children are more polite and well-behaved, belying the myth of military 'brats'.

Hiew relates a study conducted by Finn in 1987 of 50 Canadian military families in which positive affects of deployment were found. Finn found that

“...about 60% reported that their children became more self-sufficient, cooperative and responsible at home” (Hiew; P. 208). In Hiew’s (1992) own study of 66 Canadian military families and mothers, he found that children maintained better overall classroom adjustment, including fewer learning problems and fewer acting-out behaviors, when children and mothers accessed social support networks during deployments, such as friendships groups and extracurricular activities.

Studies of children in military families are extremely limited, giving rise to more myths and speculation as to how children fare in the military family environment. Access to children for empirical studies severely limits the ability to conduct direct studies of children’s adjustment. Long-term studies of adult children of military parents would be extremely helpful to determine the long-term effects, both positive and negative, of growing up in a military family.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Support systems are crucial to the family’s capacity to cope with the stressors of military family life. Much of the literature on military families discusses available support systems as well as the lack of support systems. Both internal and external systems of support are discussed in the literature. Internal support systems include personal and family resources utilized during deployments. External supports are more extensively addressed in the literature. These include social support networks and supports provided by the military system itself. The lacks in these support systems will be discussed as well.

Internal supports: The military family must often rely on internal strengths and resources when coping with deployments, since they are often residing in transient areas away from friends and relatives.

The family becomes the primary support system for itself. Because the military wife is left with the responsibility of being "on call" for the family and because the wife is usually the emotional provider for the family, she becomes the central motivator, morale booster and confidante with few sources of help from outside for either family problems or her own.

Kohen; Sept., 1984; p. 407

The wife's attitude and ability to cope with her husband's deployment can greatly influence the family's ability to adapt to this stressful event (Hill; Kohen; Rodriguez; Wertsch). In Boss, McCubbin and Lester's (1979) study of corporate wives coping with routine work-related separations from their husbands, three scaled items indicating independence and self-sufficiency related positively to the wife's adjustment during separation: "Believing that this is our style of life and I should enjoy it", "keeping problems to myself" and "establishing a routine that is not dependent upon my husband's being around" (Ibid; p. 83) Hill found that democratic families (families in which children and parents are involved in decision-making) in which wives were encouraged in 'self-development' and self-sufficiency made excellent adjustments to separations and reunions. In their study of wives coping with deployment, McCubbin and Patterson (1984) found that, "Nondistressed wives scored significantly higher than distressed wives on two of the five coping patterns: (a) acceptance of lifestyle and optimism; and (b) developing self-reliance and self-esteem" (p. 100). These studies suggest that wives

who are accepting of deployment as part of the military family lifestyle should make a better adjustment to the separation and reunion. The wife's ability to be self-sufficient and act independently appears extremely important to making a good adjustment to separation.

Good adjustment to separation also depends on how all the family members adapt to the separation. Hill discovered several basic ingredients for success in families, no matter what the family type or structure:

These ingredients appear to be: The recognition of interdependence of all members upon one another, the satisfaction of playing one's roles in the family whatever they are, the sharing of home management duties among all members, the flexibility of the family when facing new situations, the adequacy of intra-family communication, and the opportunities for growth and development in the family milieu.

Hill; 1949; p. 322

Lavee, McCubbin and Patterson's (1985) study of military families facing relocation lends support to Hill's discovered 'ingredients' to family success. They found that families who maintained a unified cohesive unit, who developed a supportive communication system and who maintained flexibility within the family system were better able to adapt to the stressors experienced. The 'ingredients' for success listed by Hill could most likely be found in any successful family structure, military or otherwise. However, it becomes more important for military family members to recognize and utilize their various skills to get through the stressful time of deployment.

Although it is important for the wife and children to become more self-reliant as a temporarily single-parent family, it is equally important to maintain ties

with the absent spouse. Several authors find that communication (i.e. letters, videotapes, phone calls) between the deployed spouse and his family eases the adjustment to separation and reunion (Black, Carlson & Carlson, Figley, Hill, Long, O'Beirne). Hill found that good adjustment to separation and reunion was positively related to the quality and quantity of letters written. Letters should be written (or taped) not only to maintain the marital relationship, but to help children communicate special events or messages to dad (Black; O'Beirne). Communication with the military spouse/father can also help to dispel rumors created by the community or the media, especially during times of war. In his article on families coping with the Persian Gulf War, Figley writes "...it is found to be helpful if families can decrease unrealistic perceptions about the trooper's safety by maintaining contact with the trooper, including writing letters to the trooper and others to express feelings and emotions" (Figley, 1993, p. 61).

Social Supports: Social support networks are important to the military family, and can enhance the family's ability to utilize internal resources to cope with deployment. As McCubbin states, "The development of interpersonal relationships outside the family system appears as an important coping pattern and contributes to self-development and the wives' self-esteem" (McCubbin; 1979, p. 240). In his study of Canadian children and parents experiencing deployments, Hiew (1992) found that the greater the social support networks for parents and for children, the better the school and home adjustment for these children.

Social support networks, such as friendship groups, wives' clubs, and deployment support groups appear to be utilized more often by officers' wives than

by enlisted wives. Rosen and Moghadam (1989) found that officer wives had much stronger social support networks than did enlisted wives. Carlson and Carlson found Officer Wives Clubs to be more successful in providing peer support during deployments than were Enlisted Wives Clubs. Since the publication of the Carlson and Carlson study Officer Wives Clubs and Enlisted Wives Clubs have been collapsed into general 'clubs' that include wives with husbands of all ranks. Deployment support groups have replaced these 'clubs' on many bases where military units deploy regularly. However, wives of officers and high-ranking enlisted personnel continue to comprise the main participants in these groups (Rosen and Moghadam).

Several factors appear to contribute to the limited use of social support groups by enlisted wives. Because many enlisted wives work outside the home, they have little time to develop social support networks outside of work (Carlson & Carlson; Knox & Price). Also, wives of lower-ranked enlisted personnel have historically been denied on-base housing if shortages exist, requiring them to seek off-base housing away from the support system of the military community (Bowen; Carlson & Carlson; Knox & Price). Many authors reported that enlisted families accessed relatives as their first source of support (Bowen; Carlson & Carlson; Hill; Rosen & Moghadam). However, Carlson & Carlson found that enlisted wives felt that their jobs provided personal, social and financial support. Working mothers also reported having less difficulty coping with children while their husbands were away than did those wives who remained home (Ibid). In his study of World War II families, Reuben Hill (1949) even found that most of the wives who worked while

their husbands were away enjoyed their work. Besides helping them to “keep busy”, it also gave women a sense of independence and self-sufficiency.

Military Supports: Based on the recognition that retention and recruitment of qualified personnel for an all-volunteer military force depended in large part on how well spouses and families were accommodated, the military has taken steps to address family needs. On many bases family service centers (FSC's) were established to meet some of the unique needs of military families (Knox & Price). FSC's can offer a range of services that may include counseling services, family enrichment classes, family advocacy, financial advisement, employment assistance, relocation assistance, and deployment programs (Bedics & Doelker). The amount and kind of services offered by an FSC depends on the size of the base and the type of needs on a particular base.

Little information as to how FSC's provide services to families experiencing deployment is available in the literature. Holly Hall (1987) discusses one well-attended program developed for Navy families at the Norfolk Navy Family Services Center. Called the ‘Return and Reunion Program’, Navy personnel and their families are prepared for their reunion. “Days before the family is reunited, social-service professionals work with spouses on shore, while others sail to meet and accompany returning ships” (Hall; p. 16). In Jensen et al's review mention is made of support groups and family therapy programs that have been offered to military families coping with deployment. They also cite Chandler's (1981) discussion of a program in which the Navy allowed, “...children to accompany their fathers aboard ship for a portion of the return trip home” (Jensen et

al; 1986; p. 231). Charles Figley (1993) notes that several projects sprung up to provide assistance military families during the Persian Gulf War. These projects primarily utilized private community-based agencies and mental health professionals to provide support to families while their husbands were away, as well as during the reunion phase. One unique program established by the Tallahassee Police Department installed free security systems and provided extra surveillance to local homes belonging to military personnel and their families. However, although we can assume that these programs were developed to meet the needs of particular military communities, the literature is devoid of empirical studies that can measure the actual effectiveness of deployment assistance programs.

The military has made some attempt to provide programs to families, but much of the literature notes that there remains a serious lack in supports and resources for military families. Notable is the severe lack and poor distribution of mental health services to military families (Jensen et al). Military communities were found to have a shortage of psychiatrists, social workers and other mental health professionals to address the needs of military children and parents (Ibid). Figley also comments that, "...military...mental health programs focus on the individual serviceperson, with little attention to family members or their relationships" (p. 52).

Military wives themselves express disillusionment with the services offered by the military system. Freeman (1994) points out some views of military members and their families in his presentation of the following study:

Popoff, Truscott and Hysert (1986) established that 60% of Canadian military personnel believe that their relationship with the Armed Forces is not reciprocal, and 62% of those individuals who are married to serving members believe that the Canadian Armed Forces are lacking in support for Canadian military families.

(Freeman; 1994; p. 87)

Carlson and Carlson also determined that pre-deployment briefings offered to the Navy families in their study were largely ineffective, because most wives "didn't bother to attend" (p. 39). In his dissertation study of military wives, Louis Henning (1986) found that discussions with wives usually came back to their feelings that the military was not sensitive to their needs once their husbands were sent overseas. "In essence many of these women felt like second class citizens" (Ibid; p. 142). These perceptions of the military's offered services should essentially limit the effectiveness of these services. The military needs to find a way to make services more appealing and less stigmatizing to military members and their families.

DISCUSSION

Although a good number of empirical studies have explored the effects of deployment on military families, qualitative research in this field is quite limited. Only Hill's study of World War II families and Carlson and Carlson's 1984 study utilized open-ended questionnaires in part. Qualitative studies would gain more insight into the emotional experience of deployment, as well as assist in discovery of unexplored stressors or coping strategies.

All of the current literature that was found on deployment cycles described deployments of six or more months. Studies need to be made on families experiencing short-term deployments of six weeks to three months in duration. One needs to determine if the cycles of deployment remain the same or change during the course of short-term deployments. Logan (1987) suggests that families may not achieve the recovery and stabilization stage (as outlined in the literature) during short-term deployments. One may hypothesize that, during a three-month deployment, families may not spend enough time in the recovery and stabilization phase to reduce the stress created in the other three stages of deployment. In addition, it can be hypothesized that the sequence of deployments for Coast Guard personnel (3 months deployed, 6 weeks home) may also cut short the reunion phase of deployment, forcing families back into the stressful 'preparation for departure' stage.

Researchers have found that wives who are independent and self-reliant, adapt better to the deployment of a spouse. I believe that the current study supports the research in this aspect. This study should also agree with the findings that the majority of wives are independent and self-reliant, with women in dependent marriages in the minority.

Much of the research on deployments studies the effects on wives, but does not usually incorporate the feelings or opinions of the deployed spouse or the children. It is understood that access to deployed husbands/fathers can be difficult due to the nature of their jobs. Conducting studies with children also present ethical problems as well as difficulties regarding studying young age groups. However,

more empirical studies of children's school performance, coping strategies and adjustment to adulthood need to be done. This study will explore some of the strategies parents employ to help children cope with deployments.

Exploration of the social support networks utilized by military families could be expanded, including exploration of the differences in utilization between officer and enlisted wives. This study finds that the communication systems utilized during deployments by both husbands and wives do not differ across ranks. Those supports offered to families by the military are reported in the literature to be insufficient and underutilized.

CHAPTER III

STUDY DESIGN

This study was designed to determine how Coast Guard families experience the stressors created by deployment of the husband/father. A qualitative study enabled the exploration of the emotions attached to the deployment cycle, as expressed by both husbands and wives during extensive interview sessions. The qualitative focus also assisted in the discovery of additional stressors and/or coping strategies that have not been addressed in the literature. The effectiveness of formal and informal support systems was also examined.

RATIONALE

Very few studies have utilized qualitative methods to study military families experiencing deployment. This study is designed to utilize qualitative methods in order to better explore the emotions families experience around the deployment cycles, as well as to discover new stressors that have not yet been explored. Another objective is further exploration of two stressors discovered during the preliminary study: safety issues and gossip.

Two important elements that have not been sufficiently addressed in previous research studies became a part of this study design. The deployed spouse has rarely been included in former research studies. Does he experience emotions and concerns similar to those of his wife during the deployment? What is his level of awareness of the stressors experienced by his spouse? These questions drove the inclusion of the deployed husband/father in the present study.

The second element that seems to be largely unexplored in the literature is the occurrence of short-term deployments. In the case of this study, a short-term deployment is a three-month peacetime deployment of U.S. Coast Guard personnel. Logan (1987) suggests that families may not reach the 'stabilization stage' in deployment, when they settle into a routine with the spouse/father, due to the short-term nature of these deployments. This study takes a step in the direction toward answering these questions:

- 1) What are the effects of short-term deployments on marital and family relationships?
- 2) Do short-term deployments seem to be more disruptive to the family than long-term (six or more months) deployments?

Through exploration of the emotional experiences associated with deployment, it is hoped that the military will develop new ideas for programs that will better address the needs of all military family members during this stressful period. Inclusive of a preliminary study of Navy wives experiencing deployments (Finley, 1994), several researchers have found that families perceived the military to be largely unresponsive to their needs for support (Bowen; Patterson and McCubbin; Carlson and Carlson; McCubbin et al; Jensen et al; Knox & Price). Military Family Service Centers (FSCs) were designed to offer support through counseling, deployment support groups, information and referral services, and the like. (These services in the Coast Guard are now administered largely through the Work/Life office in Washington, D.C., although other military installations still retain the concept of FSCs.) The question arises as to whether the FSCs (or Work/Life offices) base services on perceptions of the stress factors and coping strategies determined by quantitative research studies, or on the emotional needs

voiced by the family members themselves. By 'listening' to the emotional voice of military members and their families, the Coast Guard may be able to develop more comprehensive programs that address these emotional needs.

Through the discovery of additional stressors that may not have been addressed in the existing literature, future researchers may begin to assess the scope of these stressors and the extent of their impact upon military family members. The development of programs that help families to cope with these stressors would be a significant outcome of the current and future studies.

Discovery of previously unexplored coping strategies utilized by family members during deployment would be especially useful to researchers and program developers. These coping strategies could then be maximized through the development of programs, which rely upon and expand upon these strategies.

By determining the usefulness of current formal and informal support systems, as perceived by the respondents in this study, programs can be designed or redesigned to better serve the needs of Coast Guard personnel and their families. Future researchers could be encouraged to examine the reasons behind the successes and failures of certain support systems.

At the very least, this study will serve to supplement and further validate prior studies that have addressed similar needs and issues.

To summarize the rationale for pursuing this study, the following is a list of basic research questions and issues to be explored:

1. Is the Coast Guard deployment cycle (3 months at sea, 6 weeks home) more stressful than traditional six or eight month deployment cycles? In other words, do families reach a period of stability in which they settle into regular routines during short deployment cycles?
2. Do wives find that they become more self-reliant and independent in the marriage as a result of deployments?

3. Will particular stressors be discovered that have not been acknowledged in the previous literature?
4. Will particular coping strategies be discovered that have not been acknowledged in the previous literature?
5. What are the similarities and differences between the emotional experiences of husbands and wives during deployments?
6. What social supports are perceived as most effective for military husbands and wives experiencing deployment?
7. What is the perception of military sponsored support systems? What new ideas for military support systems are offered?

DESIGN

In order to gain the perceptions of both the military member (husband/father) and the dependent spouse (wife/mother) about the stressors and coping strategies associated with deployment, a qualitative study was designed. Emotions, stresses, coping strategies and support systems were explored during focus group interviews that were separated into gender groups. Married male Coast Guard members were interviewed in focus group sessions, separate from groups of Coast Guard wives who were experiencing deployments. Separation of interviews into 'husband' groups and 'wife' groups, was considered to be extremely important to the study's design. This enabled the interviewer to compare similar and contrasting perceptions between husbands and wives. Out of these interviews, categories emerged that delineated similarities and differences in perceptions between husbands and wives.

Focus groups were utilized due to the dynamic interchange created by a small group atmosphere. Patton (1990; p. 17) quotes from Brown et al to emphasize how group dynamics are important to the outcome of the study:

Groups are not just a convenient way to accumulate the individual knowledge of their members. They give rise synergistically to insights and solutions that would not come about without them.

In the preliminary study participants expanded upon and verified the emotions, stresses and coping strategies experienced by each member. Individual interviews would not provide the group exchanges necessary to the process of this particular study. Through years of personal experience as a Coast Guard wife, as well as through discussions with personnel and their families, I believe that military personnel and their wives may not be as open and forthcoming about themselves without the support and validation that their friends and colleagues provide in a group situation. Focus groups also made it easier to determine what perceptions and experiences were common among members of each homogeneous group.

INSTRUMENTS

Two questionnaires were developed around the core question: "What does each spouse identify as the stresses and coping patterns associated with the deployment of the military member?" (Appendices C and D). Each questionnaire contains open-ended questions and probes that were utilized in the intensive focus group interview sessions described above. The questions were formatted sequentially according to deployment stages. This provided consistency to the data gathered regarding emotions, stressors or coping strategies that occur at each stage of the deployment.

A form requesting demographic data (Appendix B) was distributed to each group member at the interview session. The forms assisted in analysis of the

responses and their relationship to demographics, such as personnel status, gender, amount of education, age, etc.

Post-discussion questionnaires (Appendices E and F) were distributed and completed at the end of each focus group session. This close-ended questionnaire was designed as a quantitative supplement to the qualitative data received on the practical issues of deployment. The questionnaire is kept very short, since it follows a two to three hour group session.

SAMPLING PROCEDURES

Initially, contact was made with the United States Coast Guard's Work/Life Office in Washington, D.C. A staff member in that office kindly obtained general permission to conduct the study from the Office of Public Affairs. However, the ultimate decision to allow interviews of ship's personnel is left up to the ship's Commanding Officer. The Work/Life office then provided the names and telephone numbers of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutters (ships), their Commanding Officers (CO) and ombudspersons.

The ombudsperson is the wife of an enlisted Coast Guard member who is assigned to a particular ship that engages in deployments. The ombudsperson is a volunteer who acts as a liaison between the military command, its personnel and their spouses. For example, she may bring questions the wives have regarding the deployment (i.e. when the ship leaves/returns, verification of rumors, etc.) to the Commanding Officer of the ship and bring back answers to the wives. The ombudsperson can be extremely helpful in assisting the researcher to gain permission to attempt the study. She is also the person who provides the first connection in obtaining a sample. The ship's ombudsperson was one of the first contacts made to begin this study.

Initial access to military wives in the preliminary study (Finley) was gained through the ombudsperson's invitation to a social function held by and for wives and children of the ship's personnel. From the initial gathering, a snowball or chain sampling method of a sort took place (Patton, 1990). Wives accessed in the first interview were willing to host focus groups that would include other wives of the ship's personnel. This procedure worked well in accessing varied groups of individuals.

For the current study, an initial telephone call was made to a ship's ombudsperson. She was informed of the study's purpose and design, as delineated on the recruitment script (Appendix A-1). She was then e-mailed the recruitment scripts for husbands and wives (Appendices A-1 & A-2), as well as a copy of the 'Consent for Study Participation' (Appendix G). She, in turn, e-mailed copies to the ship's CO. This process was repeated with the second ship's ombudsperson and CO, when recruitment began with that ship.

The sample was drawn from two USCG cutters with a homeport on the Northeast coast of the United States. Each 270-foot cutter maintains a crew of 100, approximately 15 officer and 85 enlisted personnel. For the purposes of this study the ships will be referred to by the fictional names of the USCGC Garfield and the USCGC Roberts. These ships usually have two-month deployment cycles, with two months at sea and two months in port. However, the time at sea or in port may be extended or shortened by several days or weeks, dependent on the changing needs of the Coast Guard. Most personnel are stationed on these ships for a three-year tour of duty. Every few nights, while the ship is in port, personnel are required to remain on the boat for overnight duty. Permission was gained from the cutter's

CO, who also granted dates and times for interviews. Groups of married male personnel were interviewed on board following an invitation 'piped' to the crew over the loudspeaker. Service members first gathered in a common area, where they received a description of the project and the interview, as delineated in the recruitment script (Appendix 1-B). Service members who were interested in being interviewed went with the interviewer to a designated room. The study was described to them and they were presented with the 'Consent for Study Participation' (Appendix G) and 'Audio Tape Recording Release' (Appendix H) forms for signature. Five groups of husbands were interviewed, totaling 19 individuals. Access to husbands proved easier than anticipated. Personnel on duty seemed to welcome the distraction that the focus group offered. Demographic data sheets (Appendix B) were completed prior to the focus group sessions. Short post-interview questionnaires (Appendix F) were completed at the end of each session.

Accessing wives of Coast Guard personnel proved to be much more difficult than anticipated. The ombudsperson attached to the Garfield was kind enough to e-mail a list of names and phone numbers of Garfield wives who would be interested in holding or participating in focus group sessions. These wives were then e-mailed the recruitment script (Appendix 1-A)). Three wives volunteered to host focus group sessions at their homes. The three groups consisted of three, three and four members, respectively. Wives were also presented with consent forms (Appendices G and H) for signature. Demographic data sheets (Appendix B) and post-interview questionnaires (Appendix E) were also completed.

The groups were made up of both Garfield and Roberts wives. All the families interviewed resided in military housing. Two separate military housing compounds within approximately 40 minutes of the ships homeport accommodated these families. The housing compounds were themselves approximately 40 miles apart. Each housing compound houses families from several military units, including other services (i.e. Navy, Army).

Attempts to set up groups through each ship's ombudsperson were initially met with some enthusiasm. One ombudsperson holds weekly potluck dinners with some wives during deployments, and agreed to discuss with the others the possibility of setting up an interview for that time. However, attempts to confirm a date and time received no response, only to find out at a later date that the group had declined to be interviewed. Other attempts at establishing groups either met with no response, or family emergencies prevented them from participating.

Of the eight groups that were held, both male and female, the participants were verbal and engaged in lively discussion of the various topics. Separating the groups by sex seemed to enhance the comfort level for discussion among the focus group members and enabled a comparison of viewpoints on all the issues discussed. Their gracious acceptance of this interviewer onto their ships and into their homes was greatly appreciated.

DATA COLLECTION

As described above, each focus group member was asked to fill in the demographic data at the beginning of the interview session (Appendix B). Each demographic data sheet was coded with a number (i.e. H1 or W1) to correspond

with a particular respondent. These codes were utilized throughout the data collection process in order that responses may be attributed to particular respondents. Patterns which distinguished certain respondents, then emerged in the data.

The interview guides (Appendices C and D) were utilized to structure the interview session. The guide also provided assurance that all topics were covered at the interview session. However, the guide was not strictly adhered to in order to allow any new issues to emerge as part of the focus group process. It was this flexibility that allowed for two very important issues of safety and gossiping to emerge in the beginning session of the preliminary study. The current study allowed for new information to emerge in the areas of communication and support systems, which will be discussed in the data analysis section.

Each session was tape-recorded. Permission from focus group members was obtained in advance (Appendix H). Tape recording is essential to the focus group interview, in that responses from several participants are frequent and exceptionally difficult to record in writing. The quality of the group interactions is also preserved very well through audiotapes.

Process notes were also recorded at each session as extensively as possible. Impressions were recorded as well as responses. Both impressions and responses utilized the established coding system to coordinate with the respondents. All taped information was then transcribed into written format in order to begin the data analysis stage.

At the end of the session the Post-Discussion Questionnaires (Appendices E and F) were distributed. Each focus group member completed them and returned them at that time. These questionnaires were kept very short, and were about practical issues of deployment. Otherwise, group members may have been reluctant

to complete questionnaires following such lengthy, in-depth interview sessions. All data from these questionnaires was coded to the respondents, as described above.

DATA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Following transcription of data, the qualitative analysis included arrangement and rearrangement of the data into descriptive categories. The categories developed in the preliminary study served as a cornerstone in the development of new categories for analysis. The stressor of deployment was looked upon as the independent variable in this study, with coping strategies as the dependent variables. The qualitative analysis focused on the emotional experiences and opinions of husbands and wives, as well as upon the discovery of new issues and coping strategies. In some ways, the focus groups served as a sort of cross-case study (Patton), in which the experiences and ideas of two homogenous groups (husbands and wives) were compared and contrasted. Furthermore, an inductive analysis and interpretation of the categories provided meaning to the study. Observational data was also incorporated in the descriptive and interpretive analyses.

Quantitative measures were also incorporated into the analysis of the demographic and qualitative data in order to provide further support to the findings. Quantitative data was gathered from the post-discussion questionnaires. Mean scores gathered from Likert-scaled questions, were compared and contrasted with qualitative responses obtained during focus group interviews. . The main purpose of these questionnaires was to provide quantitative support to the qualitative data that emerged on the practical issues families face during deployments. However, these quantitative measures cannot address the depth of the emotional experience that qualitative measures can so richly explore.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

DEMOGRAPHICS

The selection criteria required for the study were that all participants had to be married and all had to experience at least one short-term (3 months or less) deployment through the Coast Guard. Of the 19 husbands interviewed, the length of marriage ranged from 1 year to 15 years, with the majority in the 8 to 11 year range (47.4%). Mean years of marriage for the husbands was 7.4, with a median of 8 years of marriage. Of the 10 wives interviewed, the length of marriage ranged from 4 to 17 years, with 50% of the wives married 4 to 6 years. The mean score for wives' years of marriage was 7.7, with a median of 6.5 years. Of the 19 husbands, two did not have children. The others reported 1 to 4 children, with 57.9% having 1 or 2 children. Husbands had an average number of 2 children each. One of the wives had no children. The other wives had 1 to 4 children, each with an average of 2.2 children.

Male participants ranged in age from 23 years through 41 years, with a mean age of 31.4 years and a median age of 31 years. Wives also fell into similar age ranges, from 25 through 42 years. The mean age for wives was 31.1 years. Median age for wives was 29.5 years.

In a preliminary study (Finley, 1994) a comparison was made between the perceptions and cohesiveness of officers' wives and enlisted wives. In this study

the participants were primarily of enlisted status. Of the 19 husbands interviewed, only 2 (10.5%) were of officer status. Officers and enlisted members participated in groups alongside each other, with no discernible discomfort in discussing and arguing issues amongst each other. All of the wives interviewed were married to enlisted personnel.

Several of the study participants were unsure as to how to answer the last question on the demographic data sheet requesting the number of deployments. According to many participants, they had experienced so many deployments that they had lost count. In cases where participants experienced more than 10 deployments, they were instructed to place a 10+ on the demographic sheet. Most of the study participants, both husbands and wives, experienced a minimum of 10 deployments. 68.4% (13) of the husbands experienced more than 10 deployments, while 80% (8) of the wives experienced 10 or more. One female and one male participant had been through only one deployment.

THE MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

Before presenting some of the separate variables that impact families experiencing deployment (i.e. safety issues, gossip), it seems important to first explore how each partner is experiencing the marital relationship during the deployment cycle. Of those researchers who have explored the feelings and stressors in the marital relationship attached to deployment, most refer to the wives' experience (Logan, O'Beirne, Carlson & Carlson). The husbands in this study

offered their own perspectives on the marital relationship throughout the phases of deployment.

Pre-Deployment – Husbands spoke of the tension they experienced in their relationships during this time that Logan (1987) describes as, “anticipation of loss”. Husbands reported becoming ‘irritable’ and ‘antsy’, during those last few days before departure. The tension sometimes built into arguments between couples, when each partner might say hurtful things:

Everybody gets irritable the last two or three days.

Usually I’ve aggravated my wife enough that she’s ready to get rid of me for a couple of months.

The last week it’s more antsy. You sit around the house. I’d much rather just get underway and go. Like, they’re moving us back another day now. We’re leaving another day later. That’s aggravating.

Sometimes before you get underway things are real tense and you’re at each other’s throats all the time. It’s like, ‘Hey, I’ve got to leave. I don’t need this. She says, ‘Well, you’re leaving. I don’t need this [either].

I know for me it’s about 10 times worse, because a month after we return from this trip, we’re transferring. So, for me it’s a matter of getting the stuff together [before deploying].

Sometimes it seems like my wife is always saying, ‘You’re leaving again!’

As some of the husbands pointed out, circumstances such as impending transfers, or delays in the ship’s departure schedule can compound the tension and feelings of frustration before deployment. However, the tension seemed to be

expected in the final days before departure, and most couples try to enjoy the short time they had together before the ship deployed:

...sometimes it's tense and other times it's okay. We've got to spend as much quality time as we can together, because I'm leaving.

We spend as much time as possible together, without getting mad or yelling...at each other. ...We try not to let the tension interfere with how we really feel. We just try to enjoy what time we have.

It seems that the tension the day or night before you're leaving seems to be resolved by the fact that, tomorrow you're leaving. At least in our case, it seems to smooth out a little bit.

Beginning and Mid-deployment – Responses from husbands about their initial feelings toward the relationship the first few days of deployment were somewhat varied. Some talked of feeling a sense of loss, while others spoke of a sense of relief that the irritability and tension just prior to departure had eased. The feelings that the service member experiences when he first gets underway can also depend on the circumstances occurring when he leaves home. One husband spoke of the time he had to leave a sick wife at home:

There's also concern. Once I left and she was sick, with three kids that are difficult to handle anyway. The kids take real advantage.

However, several husbands reported that they didn't dwell on thoughts of their wives when they got underway. Most husbands spoke of the ship's routine as a way to keep from brooding over being away from family:

For me, it's pretty easy. Once we leave, it sounds pretty cold to say, but I don't think about my wife and kids when I leave. I don't do it, because I see people who get caught up

in it. It's not going to help the situation if you get aggravated...because you're not going to get home any sooner. I'll sit down and write them e-mail and talk to them when I can, but I don't dwell on it. I mean, I miss them, but you create more of a problem by [dwelling on it].

I won't say you don't think about your family, but you keep busy. I remember one guy who put pictures all around [his work area] of his family, and he'd get so homesick. You don't want to forget your family, but you don't dote on the fact that you're missing them if you're out dealing with the seas.

The first few days you're too busy [to think about wives.]

It seems that those husbands who immersed themselves in thoughts about home would become more anxious and depressed on deployment, which one could predict would affect their work performance, as well as the marital relationship.

However, even those who felt a real sense of loss those first few days at sea spoke of the ship's work routine as a way of coping with those feelings:

The first day is like, 'This freaking ship! I hate this. I don't want to do this again. This is crazy. And you basically have to settle into a routine.

The first day or two, it's rough. You're trying to get into a routine. If you have a job that isn't keeping you actively engaged, you might have more time to think about it. In my job...[I've] always got to be running... I'm busy the first couple of days, so it doesn't give me a lot of time to think. And by the time I get everything situated there, we're about 5 or 6 days into it.

Once you break into a routine, it kind of moves along.

Once husbands are at sea for a few weeks, they tend to encounter frustration when they hear about problems at home that they can't do anything about:

It's frustrating when my wife calls me and says, 'This, this and this is going on. I'm pulling my hair out!'

My only response is, "What would you like me to do? I'm 4000 miles away."

You have no control over the situation. You're 1000 miles away, and what can you do? She'd say the kids have been horrible, but what can I do? Spank them by e-mail? It's frustrating. You know they're trying their best.

Why tell me, because I can't do anything about it.

Final Days/Homecoming- Husbands reported that they were eager to be home, with some anxiety about the eventual reunion, wondering what chores would be there waiting for them.. They experience what military families often refer to as 'channel fever', the anticipatory anxiety that both husbands and wives feel as the deployment draws to a close. Many husbands talked of the feeling that time was slowing down, and that they were waiting forever to get off the ship and go home:

You go on the caffeine and nicotine diet, because you don't want to eat at the mess hall anymore.

People not sleeping in anticipation of getting home.

You're so close, but you're not there yet. Things seem to go slower.

What do I want to do or accomplish at home (even though you knew that 90% of the stuff wasn't going to get done anyway).

How long's the honey-do list going to be?

At times the ship's arrival would be delayed past the date originally planned, exacerbating the symptoms of 'channel fever':

This last deployment seemed like a longer one, because not only were we out on a routine patrol, but we had to show training availability. That just put 3 more weeks onto a regular deployment for us. That happens about once a year.

...it's another burden, if you're due back on another day, and something happens that you get diverted and have to stay out longer. That's even more stressful. Everybody wants their time. They want to go home. They just decided to go home and now we've got to do something else. It becomes a whole big stressful situation for everybody on the boat, the families.

Upon arrival home, husbands were happy to reunite with their families, but often spoke of feeling awkward about starting over again. Several husbands spoke of feeling exhausted their first few days in port. They reported being in need of 'down time' to sleep or just relax, whereas their families may have had many activities planned:

When I get back my wife says, 'All right, let's do this and let's do that.' I want to sit on the couch. I want to be able to sit in the living room with my shoes off. I can't do that on the boat. I want to hold the remote, watch what I want to watch, and just relax. I don't want to be all dressed up and going here, or going to the mall, walking around all day.

I don't want to mow the lawn when I get back. I want to relax. I'll do that on my own time.

I just want to sleep. When I get home I want to just dive right in that bed.

Naturally, you're overjoyed to see your spouse and your children. But you're cooped up on this floating prison for 60 days. I found myself wanting some time to myself. I know that, for 60 days, my wife has been changing all the diapers...

One husband reported that, although exhausted, he has difficulty falling to sleep when he first gets home. He attributes this to a change in work schedule and to the need to re-familiarize himself with his own bed. Being a father of a 9-month-old most likely contributes to his sleeplessness as well. Although he was the only one

who spoke of sleeplessness, many husbands talked of 'interrupted routines'. The routines that had been established during deployment by both husbands and wives were disrupted by the homecoming. Time had to be taken to re-establish routines that included both partners:

You come back and she's in a whole other routine. I'm used to eating dinner at 5:30. When we're together we don't eat till 8:00.

When we're gone [my wife] really works a lot. When I get back, it's hard for her to get out of that routine. She gets tired, but she feels like she...wants to get things done. But for us, it just kind of falls into place. She's at work and that gives me the day to do whatever I want and try to get some things done. And she comes home and I'm energized and ready to go.

Sometimes it's a problem if you get home and disrupt the routine. My wife will say, 'Look, I handled [everything] for the last 2 months. I can handle it the next two.' I say, 'Okay, fine.' It's to be expected, though.

Eventually families would settle down to their former routines. Many husbands seemed to expect the ups and downs of the deployment cycle. One husband expressed a good, simple philosophy for coping with the homecoming phase of deployment:

It's sort of a time to relax. Hang around with the wife and kids. Go out for lunch. Go out for dinner. Something simple. Relax.

Wives: Because the phenomenon of deployment places each marital partner in a different life environment, it should be expected that wives and husbands will differ in their emotional experiences of deployment. Simply put, husbands are experiencing life as an employee on a ship, having no direct contact with or responsibility for their families. Wives continue on with the responsibilities on the

home front with one dramatic change in their environment – the experience of ‘temporary singleness’. Wives expressed both similarities and differences from their husbands when describing the emotions surrounding the marital relationship throughout the cycles of deployment.

Pre-Deployment – Similar to the husbands, wives reported that the few days prior to deployment can be tense. Couples would become irritable and argumentative with each other. Wives reported that it somehow seemed easier to think about husbands going when they were angry with them. Another wife spoke of thinking about having to do everything by herself (as a temporarily single parent) once her husband goes on deployment:

I know I had a lot of anxiety before he left.

Tensions get really high and you start snipping and snapping about things that don't really matter. It's easier for him to go if you're mad at him.

If you're mad at him, it's easier to just say, 'Just go. Just go. And if you come back, fine. And if you don't, that's fine, too.' And then weeks later you're e-mailing him, 'When are you coming home?'

You see my problem is I start to get mad at him. I know it's not his fault that he's leaving, but...

...You sit there and think that he's going to be gone for 2-1/2 months. You think of everything you have to do by yourself. You have no other means of support in your home. I have to take her to the doctor and do the horrible shots. I have to take care of the animals all the time. Whatever's around the house, you have to do.

I used to get angry. There would be a lot of things that, 'Okay, you didn't do that, so now I have to do it.' Not really angry because he didn't do it. Just angry. You didn't put the garbage out last week. Now I have to do it.

Beginning and Mid-deployment – Like some of the husbands interviewed, some wives also experienced a sense of relief during the first few days after his departure. Besides feeling that some of the tension and anxiety prior to departure had faded, wives seemed to feel freer to ‘do their own thing.’ They would enjoy meals that they wouldn’t normally make, go out with friends or engage in other activities that they felt their husbands wouldn’t be interested in:

Well, it’s peaceful for me. It’s crazy the last week or two. Then when he goes, it’s kind of calm.

Space. You had space. You had nobody demanding anything of you. That was the really good point.

For the first week or so you really, really savor it and enjoy that. It’s just doing {things} your way and not pleasing somebody. You can eat what you want. Go buy what you want. Make the dishes and eat the dishes he never likes.

Leave the dishes in the sink overnight and no one will complain about it.

The wives get to get together. We have our play dates.

Rent all the chick flicks you can.

My friend always had the good DVDs. She always came to my house.

It’s a lot of time just for yourself, too. And that’s when you can do the things that you enjoy doing. You don’t have to worry about somebody yelling or screaming or wanting to do this or wanting to do that. So, it really is girl time.

Of those wives who experienced depression when their husbands first left, their feelings of sadness and loss seemed much more intense than those experienced by the husbands. This may have been due to the fact that the wife’s environment

and routines remain relatively unchanged, so the loss of one's husband in that environment is more keenly felt. The deployed husband, on the other hand, is fully immersed in another environment with a different set of demands and responsibilities that keep him from dwelling on home. A few wives found the beginning of deployment to be the most difficult:

When they first leave, it's always the hardest.

It's hard when they go. The first week's the worst. After that week, though, things got easier.

Then you're going through a depression. You're trying to get back onto a schedule.

One wife was very descriptive of these intense feelings of depression, but also describes her ability to pull herself out of the depression after a couple of days:

I go through a depression. For about the first 2 days I'm depressed. I don't do housework. I don't want to go anywhere. And after about the third day I get the whole house cleaned up, because I'm sick of it. And then I'm calling Mary, and we're heading [out of town] or whatever we can do. We're getting together for dinner once or twice a week and we start having Tupperware parties, candle parties. Anything we can do to make the time pass.

Mid-deployment: Although a few of the wives found the beginning of deployment to be the most depressing time, many of the wives found that mid-deployment was the most difficult time for them. This seemed to be due in part to simply missing their husbands and, in large part, to the gradual buildup of every day stressors. McCubbin and Patterson referred to this 'pile-up of demands' that can lead to crisis situations. Every day demands, as well as crises, must be handled by women who are temporarily single, without the support their husbands could have offered the month before. Wives spoke of being somewhat angry with their husbands, feeling

depressed and indulging in a certain amount of self-pity during the middle of deployment:

That's when you start feeling the stresses, in the middle of deployment. You're over the happy feeling... Now you're at the point where, it's like, *come on*.

It's about time for Prozac then.

You're counting down the days. And that's when stuff really starts falling apart. Some things go wrong.

I just miss him like crazy.

And you get mad at him. You just feel kind of left out. That's when you get to your self-pity stage.

All people encounter stressful situations as an ongoing part of life, but the stress is compounded by the factor of deployment for these women. A couple of wives described situations that became extremely difficult due to the absence of their husbands. The second wife finishes her story by describing the painful helplessness that her husband also felt while at sea:

I had to plan our whole wedding while he was gone...and that was hard. That was very hard.

When I was pregnant with [my second child], it was in the winter. I went through a week of hell with [my toddler]. He was sick. He had this virus he couldn't shake. I was the only one to cope. I was 7-1/2 months pregnant. I had to take care of him. I wasn't taking care of myself. I wasn't eating. Finally, he was well, and guess who got sick? I got sick. I'll never forget the day. I was so weak. I just got him off the bus. I went upstairs to bed and I just collapsed in bed. I brought the phone with me. I called the pastor's wife and said, 'Pray for me.' She said, 'Mary, call the doctor.' So I called the doctor, but in the middle of that, [my husband] surprised me and called from [another country]. He could hardly hear me, because I was whispering. I was so sick. They put me in the hospital,

because I was dehydrated, and I was pregnant. He was really upset about that, because he was in [another country]. He couldn't do anything.

Wives who worked were asked if it became more difficult to juggle responsibilities of work and home while their husbands were deployed. Except for one wife who cited child care issues as the reason that she would have to stop working after her child's birth, the wives who had worked during deployments did not feel that their work life was affected negatively in any way. Wives who worked at home found that the work became easier when their husbands were gone. Overall, wives maintained a positive attitude toward work:

I'm a home baker. It was actually simpler to have him away doing that in the house, because there wasn't somebody to work around. It was: I do it this way. This gets done. This gets done next, and there's nobody working around me.

I babysat my friend's kids, because her husband was on the ship, too. When he was underway I would have to babysit for her 4 nights a week. And it was good, because I got a good Christmas tree discount, too. So it worked out when [My husband] wasn't home, because the kids would just go in the playroom and play. They were older children, so it was real easy.

I worked. I had a girl come into my house to watch the kids while he was gone. Really there was no difference when I was working, whether he was home or away. It was still basically the same thing. Of course, it helped that it was a family member that came in. She would cook dinner for me and have it ready. Oh, I'm very spoiled. So, it was nice.

The job was the easiest part. He didn't really have anything to do with the job. That wasn't part of the life together. But all the other stuff really became harder and more involved.

Final Days/Homecoming – Like the husbands, wives spoke of feeling excited and nervous in anticipation of their husbands' return. Some wives planned surprises for their husbands' arrival. They were busy making 'Welcome Home' banners or planning a husband's favorite meal. Wives also focused on what one wife referred to as 'getting pretty', as preparation for their husbands' return:

Shave your legs. New skirt or new blouse.

We went to Victoria's Secret. Bought some sexy lingerie.

You do little things like that. You want to look special for him.

Almost all of the wives felt the most stress about getting the housework done those last few days before their husbands' arrival. It seemed that most wives began frantically cleaning the house, worried that their husbands wouldn't find an immaculate house when they came home. One woman voiced that she knew he wouldn't be critical of the housekeeping when he got home, but she would 'freak out' about cleaning the house, anyway. Some reported that they cleaned the house because they wanted their husbands to be able to relax when they got home, instead of feeling that they would have to help with the housework:

You get the house picked up. I mean, even if you keep it straightened up, you still want it to be really special. So they won't come home and say, 'Ohhh, I've got to help pick up the toys, mop the floor, wash the dishes.'

You want it to be relaxing the first few days they come home.

The housework [is the most stressful]. You keep your house clean, but before they come home you want it spotless. So, you're going over the nooks and crannies. You're going through the papers and trashing them.

Cleaned real fast, real hard.

Making sure you've got your list done and accomplished before he comes home.

The biggest stress would be making sure. Is my house going to be clean? I'd start freaking out about that. He's going to divorce me if he comes home and it's not. I mean, I freak out like that. He wouldn't come home like that. He wouldn't look around. He'd give me a hug and give the kids a hug and he's like, 'Okay, I'm home. No cleaning. We're not doing anything.' It would all be in my head.

When the husbands first arrive home, wives spoke of both the thrill and the relief they feel. Some wives, especially newlyweds, enjoyed going to the pier to meet the boat upon arrival. However, even after the boat docked, it would sometimes be hours before the personnel were released from duty. Many wives reported that they stopped going to the dock when they heard the ship would be pulling in, with most stating that it was no longer feasible once they had children:

When they pull in you freak out that day. You go and stand on the pier for 6 hours in the snow and rain.

I get butterflies in my stomach. I get so excited.

I used to be faithful dropping him off at the pier and picking him up when he pulled in. Now I'm not quite as faithful at it. It's whatever's best for the kids. And if he's coming in really early, then I'll just drive up there in my pajamas.

When it's time to pick him up, that's great. Except you wait for 3 hours for them to get off the freaking boat. That's why I don't like to go pick him up now. 'Call me when you're completely done and ready to go.' Instead of watching the boat pull in and sitting for 3 hours. You can't do that when you have a child.

In the previous section husbands had talked about feeling exhausted when they came home and wanting some 'down time' to relax, while their wives wanted them to go out and do things with them. Most wives acknowledged they are aware that their husbands are tired and in need of time to relax. On the other hand, wives are excited about having their husbands available once again to participate in the family activities that they haven't been a part of for two months. Most wives seemed understanding of their husbands' need to relax. Both husbands and wives acknowledged that it takes time to readjust their lifestyles to fit each other's needs and schedules again:

When my husband leaves, it's kind of peaceful. And then I have to get myself busy going places and visiting friends. And then he comes back, and it's like I just sit at my house with him. After a while I'm pulling my hair out. I want to do something!

They just want to rest. They're tired. They just want to sit.

I'm planning all these things like little trips for us to do. And he's just like, 'Let me sleep till noon.'

They're not as ready to go as we are.

Because they've been going.

And we've been sitting there waiting for them to get back so we can go do family things. They're not quite as into it as we are. It's not that they don't want to be with their families.

It's just hard to get in sync, because your lives are so different.

The first week or so after the husbands arrive home is reportedly the 'honeymoon' period when marital partners are enjoying getting to know each other again. They experience a great sense of relief that the deployment is over and,

'Another one is finally behind you.' But like the husbands, wives spoke of their husbands' re-entry into the home as disruptive to the routines they've established. Wives have been used to running a household as a single adult. Since the husband is stepping back into a household that has managed a system for two months without him, he is the one who is expected to make the adjustment to the established routines. This can be a frustrating, tense time for both husbands and wives:

I think it was like a second honeymoon type deal. Everybody's on their best behavior for the first week. Then it's back to a routine.

Most of it's relief {that husband is home}. But you still have that little, 'Okay, I've done this by myself for 60 days. I've got this routine going and now they're going to come and mess it all up.'

Mostly it's good anxious, but at the same time you've got this tiny little anxious part that [makes] you tell him, 'Okay. Dinner is at five. Bath is at seven. Bed is at eight. Don't mess it up!'

... You have your set way. You're the only adult. Everything is your way, because there's nobody else. And then they come home and they make a mess. Put stuff where you don't normally put stuff. You have to adjust to having two people in the house again.

It's trying to get him to fit into the routine again.

He's trying to follow our routine that we've set.

Then the arguments start, because you just get so frustrated.

Once husbands and wives have re-adjusted to being together again, they seem to encounter the same ups and downs that one would expect of most married

couples. Wives seemed to have the same complaints about their husbands as might be heard from any American household:

After they've been home for a couple of weeks, it's like,
'You want me to do what? I've got to do dishes?'

He's like, 'Give me 10 minutes on the computer, and then he stays there until 1 o'clock in the morning. Then he wonders why he's tired when he gets up because the baby's crying. I just tell him, 'You know, I had one kid when you were gone. Now I have two.'

I tell Rob, 'I'm not a married mom of 3. I'm a single mom of 4.'

Wives issued these complaints with a hint of humor. They seemed to be accepting of their husbands faults for the most part, as were the husbands accepting and understanding of those of their wives. After all, couples need to have a sense of humor and some depth of understanding in order to cope with the emotional roller coaster that is created by frequent deployments.

CHILDREN

Raising children in a Coast Guard family can be especially challenging to the parents who experience routine deployments. As mentioned in the literature review, the military is a profession entered into early (late teens to early 20's) and exited early (late 30's to mid 40's). Therefore, deployments usually occur during the child-rearing years. Of the 19 husbands interviewed 17 (89.5%) had children ranging in age from a few months old to seventeen years old.

When asked to describe, in general, the most difficult aspect of deployment, many husbands reported that being away from their children was the most difficult for them. Deployments created gaps for the husbands in the experience of parenthood. They would sometimes miss crucial developmental steps or events in their children's lives, such as baby's first words or steps, birthdays and school or sporting events. Missing pieces of their children's lives created sadness and frustration for the husbands. However, husbands also spoke of the thrill they experienced seeing their children again. One husband noted that when he's home he notices and appreciates the small changes he does see in his child more, since he is keenly aware of what he missed:

I think [deployment] has some negative effects, as far as all those activities you couldn't get involved in, because you were away.

I was underway for my first child and by the time she was 9 months old, I'd seen her 2-1/2 months, so it was like I missed the whole child thing. By the time I got back she was already a full-blown toddler and now I'm doing it again and I'm just on a different schedule where I'm seeing my daughter we just had at different points. It's kind of weird, like 'I don't remember this.'

It's hard for me, because I have a 9-month-old. The last deployment I came home from, my son didn't even recognize who I was. So, that was kind of depressing. So, I tried to play with him, and he wouldn't like to be around me, or he would cry or something like that.

I've been through that, though. Because I'm near the end of my tour here. So, when I got orders here my wife was pregnant. The baby was born, and 10 days later I was underway. I missed the whole beginning, because we didn't get back until the end of March. And it was even longer before they came up to Cape May, because they had been living someplace else. I sympathize. I went through the same thing. And I can tell you that it takes about a year

to a year and a half, and it will be a lot easier with the recognition. The first time that my daughter recognized me standing on the pier by talking or when she could visually see me, it was really fantastic! And my wife and her came on the boat and she saw me and she yelled, 'Daddy!' And that was good, because then I knew that there's a connection, even when I'm gone. That she still remembers who you are. It'll take a little bit of time. It's difficult to deal with, though.

In the beginning, when we first got there, it kind of discouraged me from playing with him a lot, because I would play with him, and he wouldn't want to. He'd just want to go to his mother. And I'd get frustrated and just give him to his mother. It was like, 'Just take the baby. He doesn't want me'. I threw my own temper tantrum. It's going to be harder this patrol, because these last couple of weeks he'll lay down with me. He'll put his head on my chest and go to sleep. He'll reach for me. And so, I know that he knows I'm Daddy now, because I'm constantly around. But now I'll be gone for a couple of months, so I have no idea what to expect. I don't even want to go through the whole thing again.

I'd say the negative is the positive. Separation stinks. You miss the kids. You miss the family, but let me tell you how much you appreciate them when you come back. And the little things you miss from day to day. You don't see the facial changes, the body changes, the personality changes. When you're gone on deployments you really pick up on that. In the same breath, it also stinks, because you miss it.

Fathers recognized some of the effects that routine deployments have on their children. Other than the stranger anxiety experienced by the child of the service member mentioned above, infants were not seen to be as emotionally affected by their fathers' deployment as Daddy himself is. As one father states, "The baby is just harder on me." Young children (3 to 5 year olds) reportedly had an incomplete understanding of their father's deployment. Fathers reported that children of this age became more 'clingy' with Daddy when he was getting ready to

depart. Once he departs they have difficulty understanding that 'they just can't come back [to the boat] and get him'. Young children's concept of time is not fully formed, so they could expect to pick up Daddy from work or expect him to walk through the door every day. During one focus group the fathers had a discussion about the importance of being home to assist in child-rearing once the child reaches three years old. (Coast Guard members are usually stationed on deploying ships for three years, and then are sent to a land-based tour of duty, where they don't deploy.) These husbands expressed the feeling that, even though it was difficult for them to be away while their children were infants, it was better to be home for the children once they reached the age of three:

I was upset when I got a boat when she was pregnant, but then I thought, I'd rather do it now, while he's young. So, those first three years it's going to be like unhhhh. But at least I have some input, not a whole lot. But after that, I call them the crucial years, because after 3 they're just wandering around.

Three and below they're not into much.

Yeah. And after that is where you want direction. They need a serious father figure and I want to be there for that. So, this is like a sacrifice to me. I'll do the 3 years so I won't have to get underway later.

That's my same philosophy. I'd rather do it now in my child's life than the following tour.

Several fathers bemoaned missing school, scouting and sports events that their school aged children were involved with, but there was little discussion of any difficulties that school age children may have encountered due to the temporary absence of their fathers. Although one of the husbands who had no children

remarked, 'I can see what these guys go through with older kids. School age kids seem to act up more in school...', the fathers in the group did not pick up on this thread in the conversation. Instead they continued discussing the effects deployments had on younger children.

Older children (pre-teens and teenagers) were generally seen as being too involved with school, sports and friends to be greatly affected by their father's deployments away from home. Some fathers reported that transfers (moves) affected older children much more than deployments. If they lived in military housing, not only would their own family move every three years, but their friends would also be moving away:

It makes it difficult for the kids, because sometimes their friends, if they're older, they're getting transferred out. So they could have their best friend there, and a year later they're transferred out.

Most of the husbands with older children found that their children were able to help out around the house more during deployments. They felt that their children developed maturity and responsibility as a result of deployments.

Although the parents often felt that most children can cope relatively well with a father's deployment, the few children that have special needs can be much affected by the frequent deployments of their fathers. Children with emotional disabilities may be especially affected by the instability that is created when a father figure is continually in and out of his or her life. One father's description of his stepson's struggle with bipolar disorder provides a poignant picture of the effects deployments can have on a child with emotional needs:

I have a bipolar stepson (he's 14), and dealing with the break of non-consistency. I'm there for 2 months. I'm gone for 2 months. Every time as I'm getting ready to leave or getting ready to come back, it really throws him off kilter. As most people know, with someone who's bipolar, it's consistency that keeps him going. So, it really sets him off more when I'm getting ready to leave. Especially since I've been helping him out while he's trying to involve himself in civil air patrol. I'm the one military person to come to about 'How's this? How's that?' And with me not going to be there, he's in kind of a turmoil. That's the only individual thing with the kids that has set things off kilter.

Husbands also expressed concern for the difficulties their wives experienced as temporary single parents. This concern was further expressed in the post-discussion questionnaire (Appendix F). Husbands were asked to rate five areas that could be sources of stress for their wives during deployments: gossip; cooking and cleaning; safety; home management (i.e. paying bills, car repairs); children's everyday needs. They scored each area from '1' as the least problematic to '5' as most problematic. 'Children's everyday needs' obtained the highest mean score of all the categories (Figure 1). The mean score was 3.55 with the most frequently occurring response (42%) being a '5'. During the focus group sessions several husbands voiced concerns about their wives being pulled in many different directions by children's school and outside activities. Some also felt that the children might 'act up' more while Dad is away:

She's got to constantly deal with school, the homework, doctors, braces. It's a lot of work for her.

With young kids they'd {scouts} expect my wife to be there, but she has two little ones at home she can't leave.

My wife is only one and can't be everywhere. Even making {family} meals is difficult.

{Before leaving} I'd give the speech to the kids, 'Be nice to your mom. Don't give her a hard time.'

One father had to leave his teen-age sons with their new stepmother, who then created difficulties for her and their deployed father:

When my twins lived with me that was really hard, because the twins did everything in their power to make life terrible for my new wife when I wasn't there. My twins are from my first marriage. No matter what communication I had with them, they basically shut communication off. They wouldn't talk to me when I was away. They were 15.

Homecoming for the fathers brought with it great joy at seeing their children again. They would often come bearing gifts from various ports-of-call. One father reported that he felt like a 'Santa Claus every two months'. But once home, fathers again spoke of routines that were disrupted for their children as well as for their wives as mothers. Routines such as bedtime and meal times for children would be disrupted, requiring readjustment by fathers, mothers and children.

The discipline of children seemed to require the greatest amount of readjustment once the father was back home with the family. Some husbands felt that they didn't want to step back too quickly into the role of disciplinarian, so as not to be seen as the 'bad guy'. Others spoke of having to take over establishing firmer guidelines for their children when they arrived home, with the implication that their wives had been too 'loose' with the structure and discipline of children while her husband is deployed. As one husband points out, this can create a tremendous amount of stress and tension among family members. Most agree that

everything settles back into a more normalized family routine, at least until the whole deployment cycle begins again:

My kids are older and they all ready have their routine.
When I come back I'm the disruption to their routine.

The kids, the routine that she's made. She's even outright told me that I disrupt the way she has things going. Outside of that, to find out what new is going on that they haven't told me over the last 2 months. Pretty much, I just re-familiarize myself with the family real quick... and go throw the kids around the yard.

If you find out they did something wrong, you don't want to be the bad guy for the first couple of weeks.

Now they have to get used to the way dad does it, instead of the way mom does it. 'Sorry, you can't sleep in the bed. It gets a little crowded.'

Change of routine. My wife would put my daughter to bed at different times. I want her to go to bed at a specific time. She sometimes starts fussing wanting to stay up later.

I guess what I see is she loosens the reins on the kids. Then when I come home I'm seen as the bad guy, because I make them toe the line and follow the rules, and your mom says you can't do this. Then I get, 'Well, Mom never acts like that! It only happens when you come home!' And then when I'm getting ready to leave I'm still saying toe line, do this. But it's not as bad, because now they're used to it. Then I leave and then it starts all over again.

I'm the enforcer when I'm home. So, me coming and going... I come home. I'm enforcing the rules again. The kids yell, holler and scream and don't like me anymore. Things mellow out as I'm here and I leave again and it starts all over again. So, it does cause a lot of stress in the family. And that stress affects the relationship between me and my wife, because I am a stepparent. These are her children, and when it causes stress with her kids, it causes stress with her and it causes stress between both of us.

Wives: While husbands missed out on being with their children, the wives became the constant in their children's lives. Of the ten wives interviewed, nine wives had between one and four children. Children's age groups ranged from infancy through teen-age years. Wives seemed to have a good understanding of their children's reactions to Daddy's deployment. They found ways to help their children cope with Daddy leaving in accordance with their age and level of comprehension. Mothers try to keep low key about Dad leaving. Fathers will explain to older children that they'll be back soon. Once fathers leave, most children reportedly handled it well. A few mothers found that their children initially reacted with sadness or defiance when their father left, but eventually adjusted to his absence. With infants and toddlers, mothers would show them pictures of Daddy or play a tape of Daddy's voice as a reminder. Older children would draw pictures for Daddy or e-mail him to keep in touch. Mothers and children would maintain busy routines, so they did not dwell on a father's absence:

It's so hard for them, so you don't bring it up. You just make sure he leaves and don't make a big to-do about it. When she was younger (she's 2 now) it was okay to go to the boat and drop him off and do the whole ritual. Now that she's older and realizes that he's leaving, it's easier for him to leave while she's asleep. I just try and explain to her, 'Daddy's on the boat. He'll be back.' That seems to work better then.

My kids were always like, 'Daddy's leaving today? Okay.' It didn't really phase them. I mean, the baby felt it, I thought. Especially this is his last 2 times he went out. I was afraid that the baby was going to not know him. You know how some babies, when they don't see someone for a long time, and they come back and they scream, 'Oh, who's that stranger?' He'd jump around, get excited, laugh. And after a month that he's been gone, my son is

like, 'When's Daddy coming? Where's Daddy? When's he coming home?'

The kids acting up, because they know Daddy's gone. Even though my son is almost 9 years old he sort of understands Daddy's going on the boat and Daddy won't be back for a while, they don't really understand why. 'Why is it my Daddy goes away and this kid's Dad goes to work in the morning and he's back by 5.'

The kids go through a depression.

He'd wake up in the middle of the night crying for Daddy. Even for a couple of weeks he was like that. Even at his age (16 months).

My daughter goes through a defiant period. 'I don't want you. I just want my Daddy.'

We talk about it a lot, but I wait for him (my 4-year-old) to bring him up, because I don't want to have to make him sad if he doesn't have to be. We look at pictures a lot. We make plans for when he's going to come home. He tries to be busy. We try to see family. Or go {on a trip}. We try to do something big, so we're not just sitting here waiting for him to come home.

It's different with a 2-year-old, because she doesn't get as upset as H. does when her Daddy's gone. She misses him and she asks for him. But she's usually pacified by, 'Daddy's on the boat.' Or 'Daddy will call later'.

As difficult as the beginning of deployment may have been for some of the children, the impending return of Dad in those final days of deployment was an exciting and busy time for children and moms. One mother commented that her children behave better, which she partially attributes to keeping them busy with preparations for homecoming. Mothers help children to prepare for homecoming by making posters or banners for Dad, getting them to help clean house, and planning surprises or outings for the whole family:

Both my kids, their father is the center of their existence. They adore him more than anything. So, they're freaking out and all excited when their father's going to come home: 'Is it time yet? Is it time yet?'

'When the sun comes up.'

'Well, the sun's up. Is he there?'

'No. Next time the sun comes up.'

The kids are excited. Especially the older ones. You'd say, 'Daddy's coming home. Let's get the rooms cleaned up.'

Actually I think everybody was just so excited. And even the kids picked up on the fact that Daddy's coming back. They were excited, too. They cause less trouble, especially if you get them into the planning.

It's usually about a week before they come in that we start talking about it more. 'Daddy's coming home.' We've got to get this ready for Daddy.' Anything to get them excited about it. With [my daughter], 'Daddy's bringing you a gift.' So she's thrilled even more. He brings something home for her, or he tries to every time he leaves. Probably where the term 'military brat' comes from.

Some of the husbands had noted that children became more mature and responsible as a result of deployments. Some wives also noted that their children became more mature and 'stronger' as a result of having to adapt to the changes in family life brought about by deployments. However, one group of mothers felt that they became too dependent on their children for support and assistance during deployments. They expressed that their children were pushed to grow up too soon. One wife related her own experience as a service member's child, and the expectations that she would be more mature. This experience seemed to help her to realize her own child's need to engage in activities that a 9-year-old boy would enjoy. Her quote is part of a whole discussion in answer to a question of how deployment has affected mothers relationship with their children:

I depend on my 8-year-old more than I ever realized. He is my little man.

That's the sad thing. I mean, my daughter's only 4, but still I depend on her. She helps me with her little brother. I mean, everything. Things that she shouldn't even have to really do.

I never realized how much I depended on {my child} until he broke his arm. You have a tendency to treat them like they're a little more mature than what they actually are.

I depend on my baby. I have somebody to play with.

That's like when I was growing up, everybody was saying, 'Oh, you're so mature. You act so much older than everybody. My father was in the Air Force. My mother treated me like I was more mature. I see I'm doing it to my son the same way, so I have to make sure I tell him, 'You know, why don't you go outside and play? Why don't you turn the video on for a while?' Because if I didn't he'd be a little adult. He'd be all grown up. And he's too young for that, you know.

On the post-discussion questionnaire wives rated the care of children's everyday needs as the second most problematic issue during deployments (Figure 1). Ratings ranged from 1 as the least problematic issue during deployment, to 5 as the most problematic. With a mean score of 3.30, wives ratings were similar to that of husbands (mean score: 3.55), with a mean difference of .26. Sixty percent of wives rated children's needs as a 4 or 5 (5 being the most problematic). However, for the most part, the qualitative data does not support the quantitative finding in this instance. One would expect that the pile-up of demands on the wife as temporary single parent would result in much discussion about the stress created by children's needs. Husbands had spoken about the stress their wives experienced

while handling school issues, outside activities, doctors' appointments and family meals as a single parent. Perhaps wives had discussed these everyday stresses with their husbands, contributing to the development of these concerns on their husbands' part. But with few exceptions, wives issued very few complaints during the interview sessions about the everyday demands of children during deployments.

One can assume that the raising of children is not stress-free, but these women did not generally verbalize feelings of stress or anxiety about child-rearing issues. This could be due in part to the routines that were quickly established after their husbands' departure to provide a sense of normalcy and order for the children and themselves. Their support systems may have also helped them to cope (to be discussed in a later section). The short-term nature of the deployments may also lessen the buildup of demands that caring for children alone may present.

Two wives presented stories about the stress they felt while caring for their children in their husbands' absence. Their experiences provided a notable exception to the limited discussion about the stress created by children's everyday needs. In both cases these parents were coping with the extraordinary issues presented by children with special needs. In the first story a mother relates her difficulty dealing with a child in the 'terrible twos', whose problems are compounded by a diagnosis of ADHD. As with the child described earlier who was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder, a child with emotional issues can be much more affected by the deployment of his father. As this mother notes, her child was able to finally toilet train very shortly after the return of his father. However, aside from the difficulties encountered during that one deployment, this wife felt that she

encountered few problem issues with her children during deployments. Her initial response of 'Not with my kids.', was in answer to a question as to whether problems or issues came up with their children during deployment:

Not with my kids. We had one deployment when my son flipped out. He was 2 and my husband left. He was in the middle of being potty trained and he was in the middle of being diagnosed with ADHD. I would literally sit outside my house every day and cry, because I couldn't stand being in the house with him. He was just completely uncontrollable. He just lost it and he would be horrible. He would pull his diaper down and poop on the porch and hide it, until somebody went out there and noticed that it smelled pretty bad out there. Or he would go in his room and poop in his room and smear it everywhere. I mean, I was literally at my wits end and ready to commit myself somewhere, because I could not take it. My husband came home. Within 3 days he was potty trained and no problem.

The wife with the second story encountered inordinate stress while having to cope with a severely handicapped son during deployments. Despite the extreme nature of the difficulties she encountered, she presented as a strong woman with an extraordinary ability to manage her son's needs. Both women will have a lot more to say in a later section on support systems:

I've got a severely, profoundly handicapped son. His condition is so rare that it's not named. There's nobody else like him on the face of the earth. It's actually an extra piece of chromosome on one chromosome. It has messed up his whole system. He's actually 15 years old and he stands about that tall {toddler's height} and weighs about 40 pounds. He's been through 12 surgeries. He's been through the wringer. He's been hospitalized more times than I can count.

When it comes to separation that is a whole different issue, because of his medical care. When he goes out to sea it really is a lot different than the normal stress of a husband going out to sea, only because you've got the

medical care, you've got the educational care, you've got it all on your plate. Everything's on you. That was probably one of the hardest things to deal with when he went out to sea. Just the medical issues, because he was so sick. He didn't really become stable until he was about 8 or 9, where we weren't running to the emergency room every couple of days. So it was a struggle. They told us he wasn't even supposed to live till he was 2, life expectancy, 2. When he goes out to sea it is the hardest thing. Plus, I had 3 other kids at home.

Whether wives encountered special circumstances or not with their children, most did not deny that it was 'harder' to experience deployments once children are a part of the family. Juggling household tasks and outside obligations with children can present quite a challenge.

A couple of wives harkened back to the 'easier' days before children were born, but also reported that they would never want to go back to a childless marriage. One wife had been childless for approximately ten years of marriage, and now has a one-year-old child. Although she reported that their lives were more carefree, she also reported feelings of loneliness and depression during deployments before she had her child. She did not work outside the home and had to find ways to keep busy. She discusses this at two different points during the interview:

Well, I thank God for kids, because when he first went out to sea I didn't have a child. And my God, I was going crazy pulling my hair out, finding things to do. And it's like I need something. Thank God for my son, because he keeps me so busy, I don't think about it.

Well, it was very lonely when he was gone. I had to find things to do. When he came back we were free to do anything we wanted. We went to the movies all the time. There was no pressure, but I'd never go back, because he's more of a blessing than he is a curse.

The one wife in the focus groups who did not have a child provided the view that she did not want to have a child while her husband had to deploy, because she did not want to raise her child as a single parent. In the focus groups with husbands, one of the two husbands without children presented a similar view:

My personal preference would be to not have a child while I'm underway. A lot of times you can't get away from the boat. I don't know how these guys do it.

However, in the wives group, although another wife understood this wife's point of view, she also reported that she would not go back to a childless marriage, despite the difficulties of raising a child through deployments:

I really don't want kids now. I don't want to have to deal with him being gone all the time. I don't think I could raise a kid on my own.

I said the same thing. I was 29 when I got pregnant. I was never, ever going to have kids. I told his whole family. I told my family. I was married before, no kids. One day we just said, 'Yeah, I want to have a child.' Don't get me wrong. It hasn't been easy, but I wouldn't trade her for anything. But it's not easy and it's not something to be taken lightly.

It appears that some married couples do make a conscious decision to postpone parenthood, because of the nature of the job. However, in this study the overwhelming majority of Coast Guard husbands and wives, whether by choice or circumstance, were parents that were without regret for bearing children despite frequent deployments.

Before leaving the discussion of children we must again return to the issue of disrupted routines when the husband returns home. Wives were the ones who had established those routines for the two months that Daddy was gone, and the

disruption to these routines could be very frustrating to wives. For most families, the disruption involved a loosening up of children's routines and schedules when Daddy first gets home. Some wives complained that they were seen as the 'bad guy' when they attempted to maintain the rules and schedules that had been in place while Daddy was gone. During one discussion wives expressed a hint of jealousy that the children only wanted Daddy, ignoring Mommy during the excitement of the first few days in the homecoming phase. It becomes a difficult task to re-establish routines once Daddy has been home for a few days:

When they're gone I have a certain schedule for the baby.
Then when they come back, forget it. It's gone.

They completely change it on you.

Heaven help you to try to get the baby back to sleep,
because he does, 'Daddy's home. I'm not going to bed.'

As soon as they get home it's, 'What do you need? Let's
go play. You don't have to go to bed yet.' Mommy's got
to be the mean one, you know.

The discipline of children is a big thing, too. You have
your set way. You let them do what you're used to having
them doing. Daddy comes home and he doesn't like that.
Or he wants to do it this way.

Or he's like, 'I want them having fun.' They just want
everybody to be happy the whole time they're here.

When they come home they don't want to be the bad guy,
because they've been gone.

The messing up of the kids; schedules. They've got school
the next day. They're still out of bed at 9:30. They don't
want to get up in the morning. That's because Daddy was
home. 'Daddy said we could stay up.' I've got an 8-year-
old and a 5-year-old, and they've both got school. I've
said, 'Dinner at 5, baths at 7. We read 7:30 to 8 o'clock.
Eight is bedtime.' Daddy comes home and it's, 'Well, you

can stay up for a little while longer.’ And you’re over there giving him *the look*.

This is one thing that I hate. You go to the store. You know he has to be in the cart or the stroller. Daddy comes home. We go to the mall. He lets him out of the cart, lets him push the cart. Then we go to WalMart. He lets him get out of the cart. He lets him run up and down the aisles, touching everything in his mother’s name. And I’m sitting there going, ‘Now I’m the bad guy.’

And it’s like pulling you hair out. It’s like, ‘Honey, you’re undermining me. He’s not going to listen to me when you leave. You’ve got to remember that I’m his constant. Stop doing it!’ ‘You’re right. I’m sorry.’ He’ll say that, but you know what, the next day it’s the same thing.

Of course, the baby. All he wants is Daddy. He doesn’t want me anymore.

The whole time he’s gone it’s Mommy can you get me a drink.

Now, it’s Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy.

Most problematic for wives during deployment.

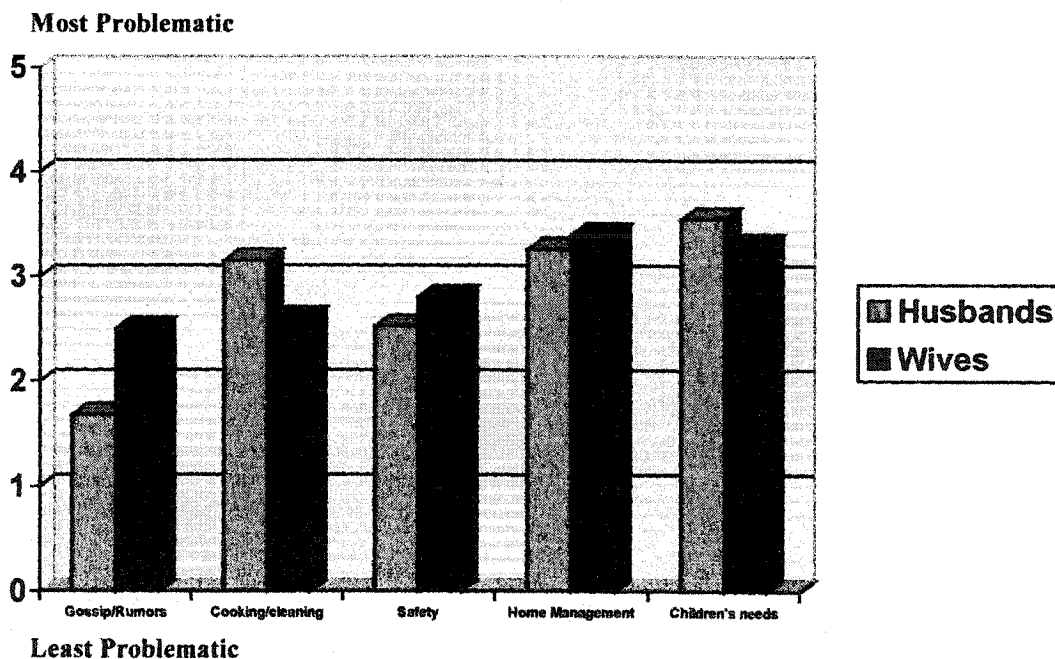


Figure 1

HOUSEHOLD ISSUES

Household issues include coping with home management tasks, such as paying bills, household repairs and car maintenance. Also included are general housekeeping tasks, such as cooking and cleaning. On the post-discussion questionnaires (Appendices E and F) cooking/cleaning was rated separately from home management issues. On the husband's questionnaire, home management issues received the second highest mean score (3.26) of the five categories (Figure 1). The husbands rated home management as the second most problematic area for their wives to deal with in their absence. ('Children's everyday needs' was rated as the most problematic category). The mode response from husbands on 'home management' was a '5', with 36.8% of husbands considering home management to be the most problematic issue for their wives.

In the focus group interviews, husbands were concerned that the bills were paid, insurance was up-to-date and the car was in good working order before they left on deployment. Some husbands also mentioned obtaining power of attorney for their wives to utilize while they were on deployment. 'Power of attorney' grants wives the temporary capacity to replace their husbands as signatory on legal transactions, such as buying a house.

The main concern seemed to be for car maintenance. Car care seemed to be the husband's area of expertise, and they wanted to leave their families with a car that would not become a problem while they were gone. Most of the husbands lived in base housing, so they felt comfortable with the fact that any home repairs

would be done by maintenance crews on base. One husband who lived in the community did express concern for the issues that his wife would have to deal with alone in an old house:

I usually make sure that the car's squared away as much as possible. Get that done, like the tires, air, water, all that stuff. I explain to her about the boiler or heater to make sure she doesn't pile things around that. Little things like that. But normally she's pretty good about all of that. Plus, on [base], where we are, if they need some work done around the house they can call the maintenance guy.

If something goes wrong with your house, like the sink or the toilet, you can call someone to fix it. They might not fix it right away, but you know it'll get done.

Yeah, that's my biggest thing, because we don't live on [base]. We just rent a house and it's kind of an old house. We've got a fuse box with the old fuses and all that stuff. If that thing goes it's not like tripping a breaker where you can just flip it back. She didn't know once when the fuse blew and I wasn't home. That's when the e-mail and the neighbors came in handy.

On the post-discussion questionnaire, husbands obtained a mean score of 3.15 in the area of cooking/cleaning, again with '5' being the most problematic (Figure 1). This mean score indicates that husbands found this issue to be significantly problematic for their wives while they were deployed. There was little discussion during the focus groups as to specific tasks that created stress for wives during deployments. However, as mentioned in the previous section, they were concerned that their wives had to handle the burdens of everyday tasks and childcare alone for two months.

Wives: When wives rated home management issues on the post-discussion questionnaire, they achieved a mean score of 3.40, the highest mean score of all the categories rated (Figure 1). The mean difference between husbands and wives in this category was the most minimal of all at -.14. This indicates that wives were also very concerned about issues such as finances and car maintenance, but very little of the discussion during focus groups related to these specific issues. Some wives reported that they took care of the finances in the house at all times, so that was not disrupted when their husbands left. There was even less discussion regarding car service issues, which could mean that this domain was left to their husbands to cope with before they left and after they returned. Before deployments wives counted on their husbands to do heavy lifting and other tasks that they needed a 'man' for. Wives reported relying on other husbands in the neighborhood to help out with these tasks when their own husbands were deployed. When there was no one of this gender available, wives would get together and attempt to complete the tasks as a group. They were not ashamed to say that there were some things to be done that you needed a man for:

Right now my husband's the only one home, so he's the neighborhood husband right now. We search around, 'Where is there a man?' It's whoever is around. But if need be, all the women will get together and do it. Like when we put the bed together. If we have to do it, we will do it. It's good to have that kind of support. But you sit there and think before they leave of everything that could go wrong that usually goes wrong when they're gone. What if I get a flat? I'm not going to be out there changing a flat on my mini-van. I'm going to need, sorry to say it, a man to do that for me.

Like if a groundhog has babies in your yard. I knocked on every door and there was no husband anywhere to be

found. I put them in the woods. We have these disgusting groundhogs that are everywhere here. They're really big and they're scary. They have big teeth and everything.

I came home from vacation and my whole back fence was down, because we had a really bad windstorm. The fence is something that we have to maintain ourselves. My husband was out. Nobody was home. Nobody was around anywhere. So, finally I had to have J's husband come after he was better a week later. I propped things up against it from the outside in the meantime, because I couldn't fix the stupid fence.

Wives obtained a mean score of 2.6 on the post-discussion questionnaire in the area of cooking and cleaning (Figure 1). Wives seemed to be somewhat less concerned about cooking and housekeeping issues than the husbands believed them to be. In the focus group interviews, cooking was not seen by the wives to be a problem. In fact, as discussed earlier, some wives felt freer to make foods that they liked when their husbands were not there. The housekeeping tasks were discussed by wives as a general part of all the daily tasks they must perform. With a great sense of humor, one group of wives referred to their multiple 'jobs' as keepers of the castle:

Not only are we homemaker, but I think we have other jobs, too. We're counselor. We're provider.

Nurse, maid, butler.

Secretary.

Financial advisor. We have all these jobs, but we don't get paid for it. That ain't fair!

SAFETY ISSUES

In the preliminary study of Navy wives experiencing deployment (Finley), the ability to feel safe during deployments was discovered to be a factor that contributed to the stress experienced by some wives while their husbands were away. As a result of this discovery, questions about safety issues were added to the interview guides (Appendices C and D) and the post-discussion questionnaires (Appendices E and F). In the husbands' post-discussion questionnaire (Appendix F) a mean score of 2.52 (5 being the most problematic) was obtained on the question of safety (Figure 1). This indicated that safety seemed to be an area of moderate concern for the husbands. Concern about their wives' safety was also expressed by some of the husbands in the focus group interviews. A couple of husbands claimed to worry in general about their wives' safety, while others did not feel that safety for their wives was a problem at all.

Some husbands expressed that they only worried when their wives traveled long distances to see relatives in other states. Husbands in different groups noted fears resulting from hearing about a rape that had reportedly occurred at a rest stop near the military housing complex. Husbands seemed to leave explicit instructions for their wives when they feared for their safety:

The only time I'm concerned is when they're transiting from Cape Cod to Pennsylvania.

Especially this time of year when there's snow and ice.

Well, that even adds to the stress. What I heard first hand here is one guy had a serious problem. His wife was raped at a rest stop. It was somewhere in this local area. Ever since then I'm like, 'If you're going to stop someplace, stop at a motel. Don't sleep in the car.' And also, like you said, the weather. But if you have a newer vehicle that you have confidence in and you maintain it, the safety thing gets put on the back burner.

Two patrols ago when we were off {a Caribbean Island}. Word hit the boat that somebody's spouse on base had been raped. So, I didn't really hear about it till my wife told me on the phone. It just puts a deep fear in your mind that this is happening {near} the base where you feel you're protected. My wife is the one who told me, so that put a big fear into me. ... When you're sending e-mails and when you get to talk on the phone, 'Watch out for this. Watch out for that. Be careful. Make sure you know this...', you're trying to build this protective wall from far away.

On the other hand, one husband who lived in housing away from the military base noted that his wife sometimes felt nervous, because she didn't live on base:

She gets nervous about [living off base]. We have a big dog and that's one good thing. She's always talking about getting a gun or something like that. The dog is very secure, though. I always tell her, 'If you're going to get in the shower before you go to work, don't let the dog out. That way, if he's barking and maybe someone's trying to get in or something. Make sure the doors are locked when you get in the shower. That way when you get out and you're getting ready, still keep the dog in the house, because he's going to make a lot of noise if somebody's trying to get in.'

Base housing is usually comprised of several blocks of houses or apartment that are within the confines of a military compound. Despite the fears expressed above, many of the husbands felt that base housing provided a secure environment for their wives and families while they were away. They further noted that one of

the positives that came out of the 9/11 tragedy was the increase in security on the base. Prior to 9/11 the gates leading into the base had remained unmanned. Now, 24-hour security is provided by the National Guard. This made some husbands feel that their families' safety is even more secure:

Safety of the base is something. My wife feels pretty secure. I'm pretty fortunate.

If I'm on a vessel I'd prefer to live in government housing just for the security reasons. I know my wife's gonna be a lot safer on a military base than if she's living here in downtown [city].

I think we all understand that's why many of us live on the base. You know that your kids can ride their bikes and things and be safe. ... Where I used to live I had to make sure the car was always locked and don't leave anything out. Here, I've left my wallet or checkbook on the dashboard.

My wife always leaves her purse in the car. Sometimes I get upset about it, and she says what are you talking about?

My wife likes [base housing], because it's like a big, gated community.

Especially now, since 9/11, we have the extra security. Prior to 9/11 anybody could drive on.

Since mid-September, 2001 I've felt a lot better about my family being over at over at [base housing]. The National Guard's at the gates, whereas the gates never used to be manned at all.

Right now I feel much more comfortable that I did prior to 2001. Before that, it caught my curiosity that there's gates, but they're not manned. Then I find out that it's pretty much owned by the Coast Guard, and they don't have the manpower to man the gates. They just have roving security at night. Now they have that plus the Army National Guard.

Wives: In the post-discussion questionnaire wives also rated safety issues as a moderate concern. The mean score of 2.80 was only slightly higher than that of the husbands (2.52) with a mean difference of .27 (Figure 1). During focus group sessions, some wives felt that safety was a minimal issue. They would leave doors open all day long, but made sure they locked up at night. Two wives had dogs, which made them feel very secure. A couple of wives mentioned that they become frightened easily, but felt more secure living on a base where they could call on neighbors if they were worried.

All of the wives who participated in focus groups resided in base housing. Some had resided in off-base housing in the community when their husbands had been stationed with different units. These wives reported feeling far less secure in off-base housing. One wife felt that there was far less understanding of the needs of a wife whose husband was frequently deployed away from home. Living on a base where other wives and families were experiencing (or had previously experienced) deployment as a part of family life made these wives feel secure and supported by their neighbors:

The first transfer station he was at, was on the boat. We weren't on base. We were in off-base housing. We were on the third floor of some creepy apartment. I wouldn't vacuum. I wouldn't run bath water. Especially at night, because I couldn't hear if somebody was coming in the door or something, without locking every window and door in the house.

We used to be stationed in [a remote area]. And we were in the middle of nowhere, miles from the next house. So, here I feel like we all live in the same house. There's just a little bit of grass between us. So I don't feel scared at all. I couldn't live now without neighbors. That was scary [in the remote area].

It's definitely different when you live on a base. When we were in [another state] we never lived on a base. And nobody around you is military, so they don't understand at all. They just think you have a gun. Here, these guys all know [each other].

That's the real reason that I chose to live on a base, knowing that my husband was going on a boat, because I feel safer in a community where everybody's feeling the same way and experiencing the same things. It's your own support system. If I was out there in an apartment complex and my husband was underway, I wouldn't go anywhere, probably. I'd be afraid to, because who knows?

A lot of people don't like living on a base, but I find it more secure. I'm lucky with the neighbors that I have.

Despite the safety that is provided by on-base housing, many wives spoke of feeling less secure when their husbands are gone. They explained that they didn't necessarily feel that they were in any real danger, but just felt less secure without that other adult in the home. This insecurity would often affect sleep patterns. Wives reported an increase in restlessness when they slept. Some wives allowed the children to sleep in their beds while the husbands were away, in order to make themselves and their children feel more secure. Wives also found that some children feel less secure when Daddy was away. Wives reported that they were able to sleep much better once their husbands were home:

I don't think you ever get over that feeling of insecurity when they're gone. You really don't. And I think that just comes out in the way you sleep. I know when he's gone, I sleep on the couch. I don't even sleep in the bed.

I sleep in the bed. But I sleep in the bed with all the kids, because they all come to my room. It's the community bed when Daddy's not home.

And I don't think the kids feel as secure, either. Because mine had a lot of problems feeling safe while he was out of the house. Even though I was there, it still wasn't the same.

I never have a sound sleep when he's gone. I'm not scared for my safety or anything. I have a dog. One night in [another city] when he had duty and he was gone, we had a fire. We lived on the eighth floor of an apartment building. [The fire was] in the building in the apartment right across the hall from me. Ever since then I haven't been able to sleep. I think that my worst problem is not being able to sleep when he's gone.

I don't get a good sound sleep. I sleep, but I wake up a lot.

While they're back, it's [time to] catch up on my sleep.

I sleep a ton when he's home.

Yeah, I do too. But I don't think it's because I'm afraid of sleeping without him. It's just having him there.

I just feel more secure. I mean, I don't sit around thinking every day that I'm going to be raped or killed or whatever. I just feel more secure when there's another person in the house with me. It's like, my child, what's she going to do? There's not much she can do at 2.

GOSSIP

In a former qualitative study of Navy wives it was discovered that several of the focus group participants '...were quite vocal about the problem with gossip.' (Finley, pg. 17). This prompted the addition of the problem of 'gossip' to the current study. Because husbands are deployed away from home for two months at a time, rumors have some time to develop and grow within the small community that

exists on board ship or in military housing. In the post-discussion questionnaire, husbands rated 'gossip' as the least problematic of all five categories. A mean score of 1.68 indicates that husbands felt gossip was mildly problematic for wives while they were away (Figure 1). This may have been because the other categories (children, home management, cooking/cleaning and safety) represent crucial needs that must be met daily. Gossip then becomes a less problematic issue in comparison to the crises that can develop with children or home. Despite the indications in the post-discussion questionnaire, in the focus group interviews husbands did express that gossip can be destructive. The most damaging rumors that circulate during deployments seem to revolve around infidelity. A few husbands reported that they had witnessed the break-up of marriages due to gossip. One husband relates the story of a co-worker on a former ship about whom rumors were being spread by a group of wives back home regarding suspected infidelities on board ship:

We were deployed to [another state] and they were spreading rumors all around up in [housing]. Some wives took it very seriously, and it caused one guy to get a divorce. She was listening to the family support group and their rumor control, and she believed it. She took it upon herself to get even with him without knowing all the facts. She cheated on him and ran up all the charge cards and other stuff. He found out when he got back, because she told him.

The above story also illustrates how informal support groups (to be discussed at greater length later in the section on support systems) and military housing complexes can be a haven for gossipers. Many husbands found that rumor mills were rampant in military housing. One husband found that the gossip network

was untenable at a smaller base where only families associated with one ship were housed, so he chose to live out in the community. The network of rumors seems to be strengthened when families live as well as work together daily. The housing complexes where most of the families in the current study are housed also accommodate families from other Coast Guard facilities and other branches of the military. The base community was very large and diverse, so one would expect that rumors would be mollified by the diversity. Still, some reported that they made a choice to stay out of military housing altogether, primarily due to gossip. Even some of those who chose to live in military housing for the security reasons discussed in the previous section, stated that they would not choose to live in military housing if they were not on a tour of duty that deploys away from home:

I think that's a double-edged sword in military housing. It's always been a cesspool for gossip. It's great to have that support network when people are going through life situations, but in the same breath it's a double-edged sword. As much as they're there to help you they quickly can turn and pass [gossip].

They can exaggerate the truth so easily.

I made a conscious decision in my career not to live in military housing, because of that.

We would never live in government housing if I'm not on a vessel. If I'm on a vessel I'd prefer to live in government housing just for the security reasons. But other than that, I would not want to live on the base for just that reason.

I was on the cutter, M____ before. That was all one ship, with one housing unit. They had a lot of problems. My wife and I decided we weren't going to live in that little gossip network. We lived out in the community. But here, because there's so many people living here from all over the area, I don't see it as a big problem.

As further verification, two husbands who resided off base did not seem to experience the same problems with gossip that the others reported. One husband reported that his wife usually spends time away at relatives during much of the deployment, so she avoids much of the rumor mongering that goes on. Couples who kept to themselves or kept busy did not seem to be as affected by gossip:

My wife's working and busy. She stays away from all that.

Luckily, my wife is away from all that, because we live in [another city].

... While we're gone, she's away for 3 weeks to a month, and then she comes back and re-establishes the connections she needs, and by that time I'm home. So, it's worked out fairly well. So, the gossip on shore I don't find a whole lot of, but there is a lot of crap that goes on around this boat.

As the last husband alludes to, gossip among shipmates can also be a problem during deployments. There is gossip among shipmates about supposed infidelities or incidents that may or may not have occurred 'back home', but much of the gossip that was problematic for the husbands was around the ship's schedule. When ships depart, where they pull into ports, and when they return home is dependent on many variables, including Coast Guard need, security issues and mechanical snafus. Though cutters are generally on a two-month schedule, any of these factors may influence departure and arrival dates. The lack of firm knowledge about these dates and the wait for information can be difficult for both service members and their families. Rumors as to when and where departures and

arrivals will occur can circulate, adding to the stress and confusion. Husbands find that crewmembers get a thrill out of starting and spreading rumors on the boat:

The big rumor going around right now is, when are we moving, or are we moving? There's a lot of undue stress to put on dependents, as well as on active duty. Are they letting us know now, next week, next year?

From the day you're leaving, you'll hear, "You're leaving tomorrow, in a month. Gossip's gossip. It's going to happen.

Unfortunately, some people say," What rumor am I going to start today?", intentionally.

Some people thrive on starting rumors. There's one person here whose whole job is to start stories. "Oh, this is going to happen. Oh, we're headed here' or 'We're going there.' 'Oh, we're pulling in this place!' Just to get people riled up.

We've got one person in particular... We're coming half way through the deployment and he's sitting there saying, "Hey, did you hear the news? We're going here or we're going there." Or "We're not going home for another month." He's just trying to stir people up to get a reaction for his own thrills. It's his way to amuse himself.

A lot of stuff you really just can't say much about anything, because of the security issues. But there are people who will say stuff anyway, whether they intend to or not. It's happened through my tenure on the ship, and it's probably going to continue to happen, no matter what unit you're at. Someone's always going to end up saying something without thinking.

The rumors can escalate to the point that a high ranking enlisted member or an officer (often referred to as the 'Command') steps in. Those personnel in a supervisory position may deny or confirm rumors that crewmembers have been hearing. At other times they may have to impose restrictions on crewmembers that may be spreading damaging gossip. One high-ranking enlisted member describes

an incident during which he had to intervene between one crewmember who was known to spread rumors and another who had been a subject of these rumors. These two had apparently reached the point where they would have come to blows without intervention. Due to the ranking system in the Coast Guard, the 'Command' has the power and authority to exert control in the prevention of the damage that rumors can create:

They get brought up to the XO and then squashed or confirmed pretty quick.

The Command tries to quell the rumors. My department head will get in front of everybody and say, 'Has anybody heard any rumors?' They'll try to yea, nay or, 'I can't say anything about this.' So the Command is really trying to quell the rumor mill, because it can be as destructive to a person as anything.

Well, you have to deal with it, because there's a lot of it that might affect your people. I know being in a supervisory position, people ask you, "Hey, is this really happening?" You just tell your people, 'If there's a change to your schedule, they'll tell us.' They might tell us the day before, but they'll tell us. Unfortunately, most of us who have been in a while believe only half of what we see and a tenth of what we hear.

We had a gossip problem on the ship. It almost ruined this other guy's marriage. I knew where it was coming from. This guy and his wife were big gossipers. There were claims the guy was making. He would talk to her and she would spread rumors back home and he would spread them on the ship. I took them in a room and discussed it with them and prevented it from escalating to physical violence, and kept it from having to go to the Command.

There comes a point when you say, 'You know what, it's time for you to stop. Or, it's time for you to stop whining and things will happen when they happen.'

Wives – In their post-discussion questionnaire, wives also ranked gossip as the least problematic of all five categories. However, a mean score of 2.65 indicates that wives found gossip to be moderately problematic (Figure 1). All of the wives interviewed lived in base housing which, as one husband described above, can be a ‘cesspool for gossip’. Unlike their husbands, gossip can spread unchecked throughout the community, since there is no authoritative ‘Command’ to restrict the spread of rumors. Wives also reported that they hear much more gossip living in base housing than they had when renting in the community. One wife reported that she had been ‘petrified’ to move into military housing due to some of the ‘urban legends’ that she had heard about. One urban legend that seems to circulate around many military bases and throughout many branches of service (with slight variations) is about the aircraft carrier or ship that leaves port on deployment. Apparently, all the wives have all their boyfriends move in. The husbands’ aircraft carrier breaks down and they return early to catch their wives ‘in the act’. This wife had heard this story along with others, and expected to find extramarital affairs to be the norm on base:

I was petrified to move on base, because of ...stories [my husband] has told me of Navy bases and wife-swapping. I was petrified to move there. And [stories about] the wives cheating on the husbands. I heard the story of the aircraft carrier pulling out and the boyfriends moved in. And you hear about things about what’s going on in this person’s family. You can’t help hearing about things when you’re living on a base. But I also knew a lot of people who kept to themselves.

Despite her initial fears, the above wife seemed comfortable with the friendship and security the base offered. In fact, none of the wives reported that

they regretted living in military housing. Even living on base, wives who were busy with their own lives did not listen to rumors. The wife who is raising a seriously disabled child reported that she was too involved with her son's care to hear any rumors:

I didn't put up with a lot of gossip, because when [my husband] was on the [ship], I was pretty much focused on J., so I didn't have a lot of socialization time or anything. I didn't really get together with the wives, because between work and J., I didn't have any time. So, I didn't really hear any gossip. I was out of the loop, because I was in my own little world.

Common rumors were about infidelities or when and where the ship may be docking next. Much of the gossip that was occurring on the ship also circulated among the wives at home. In fact, many of the wives claimed that most rumors began on the ship. The gossip would travel via e-mail or phone calls home. Wives mentioned that husbands living in close quarters with little to occupy themselves after the work day would have more opportunity to gossip. Wives discussed their differing styles when it came to dealing with the gossip they would hear from husbands. Some wives would just ignore it or 'leave it alone'. Others would discuss it among close friends. Still others would question their husbands about the information they were bringing home. One wife convinced her husband that a rumor about a friend of theirs just could not be true, based on the evidence available. Another wife was told by her husband that a rumor was circulating about himself and a female friend of theirs, so that she wouldn't hear these rumors through the rumor mill:

The biggest gossip would start on the ship. Especially with the e-mail.

Nobody tells me [anything] at all. Whatever I hear it's from my husband, either by e-mail or when he's here.

In e-mails he'll tell me what guys are doing and things. There's nothing that I would say to anybody else. I wouldn't dare say if it was _____. I wouldn't say, 'My husband said your husband said this.'

The guys on the boat, they hear so much gossip, because they're all shoved in one boat together. [They] run around each other and {gossip}. So, they think we hear what they hear. I don't know how they think that. They're telling us gossip like, 'This is the strict story. Blah, blah, blah, blah.' 'Okay, I didn't hear anything about it.' I don't hear from other wives on my husband's boat in gossip. If I hear anything, like I said, if it's something that my husband has told me and I choose to share it with one of my friends... Most of my friends are not on the same boat.

Well, I get most of my gossip from my husband, anyway. I kind of leave it alone a lot. Somebody spreads it on the boat and he tells me what he's heard and I don't really go anywhere else with it. One rumor we heard was about a guy he was friends with. I said to my husband, 'I'm sorry. I can't believe that, because if it were true this, this and this would happen and it didn't happen. So, I'm sorry. I'm not going to believe that.' And he'd be, 'Yeah, you're right.'

One of the last times my husband came home, there was a rumor. He was hanging out with this one girl who I also know. She's fine. We've all gone out together. He said this other girl, who I also know, was starting a rumor about him and this other girl. It was totally ridiculous. It's just stupid. This one girl was trying to draw attention away from her, and blame it on somebody else. So he came home and said, 'Oh, there's this going on and that going on and blah, blah, blah.' I was like, 'Pshaw. Whatever.' But he came and he was the one who spread it to me. {If he hadn't told me} I would have gone straight to him and said, 'What is this?' And he would tell me and that would be over.

This wife felt that gossip couldn't hurt couples who had good communication with each other, and those who were insecure in their relationships

were more affected by gossip. On the other hand, she believed that there was an element of truth to most of the rumors that were started. In other groups wives were less ready to look at the element of truth in rumors. They found many of the rumors to be ridiculous and unbelievable, as some of the wives above revealed. Nevertheless, wives agreed that rumors can be hurtful and destructive to individuals and families.

COMMUNICATION

Up until two to three years ago, communication between shipboard husbands and their families during deployments was infrequent and unpredictable. Husbands would have to wait to call until they were in a port. The ship could be at sea for several weeks before they could pull into a port. Mail was also sporadic at best. During two-month deployments mail had been known to arrive on board the ship after the husbands had returned home. The advent of computerized technology in the form of e-mail has revolutionized communication for families during deployments. Husbands can maintain daily communication with their wives and children, and sometimes get a response within a few minutes.

Before continuing the discussion about e-mail, a word about communication over the internet utilizing 'instant messaging'. Instant messaging can be defined as a 'conversation' two (or more) parties can have across the internet by typing dialogue that receives an immediate response from the other party. During the discussion about e-mail in the first focus group with husbands, the question was

asked as to whether 'instant messaging' is utilized to communicate with families. One of the husbands in the group had a great deal of expertise in this area of technology, and had been serving as the 'e-mail manager' on the Coast Guard cutter. He explained, "It's not secure enough. It's an open portal, like chat rooms." Instant messaging creates the risk of a security breach that can be dangerous, especially in these internationally turbulent times. Some husbands reported having access to instant messaging when they were stationed on smaller vessels that did not engage in high security missions. This accounts for the majority of the 63% of husbands who reported in the post-discussion questionnaire that they have utilized 'instant messaging' as a form of communication during deployments. However, the two Coast Guard cutters drawn from in this study do not have instant messaging capabilities, leaving e-mail as the communication method of choice for the husbands.

Systems of Communication

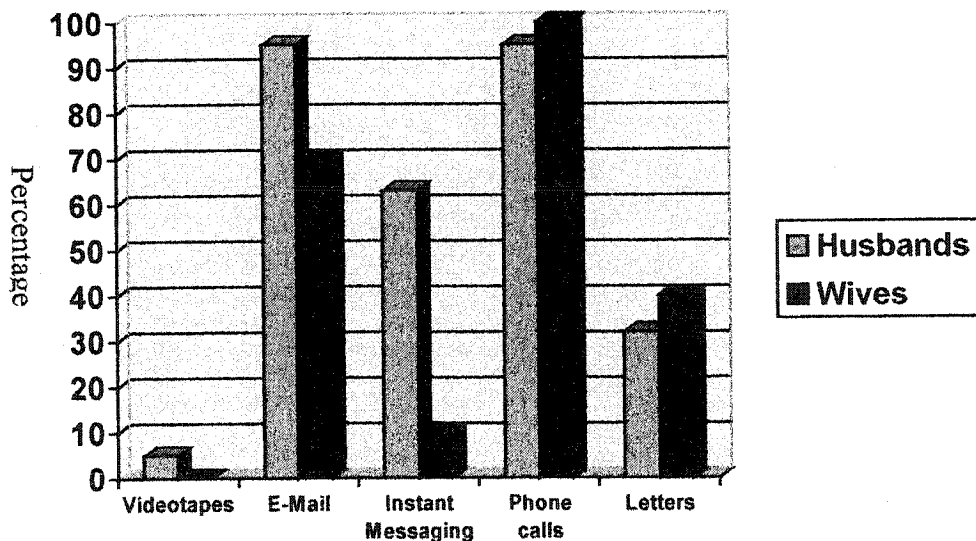


Figure 2

On the post-discussion questionnaire, 95% of husbands reported that they utilize e-mail to communicate with their wives and families (Figure 2). Only one of the 19 husbands surveyed did not utilize e-mail to communicate with family. This husband had been in the Coast Guard for many years, and was not going to be based on a ship for the remainder of his career.

Husbands talked enthusiastically about e-mail when asked about what helped them to cope with separation from their spouses and children. Husbands who had been on shipboard deployments prior to the advent of e-mail spoke about the frustrations with not being able to speak to their families for several weeks at a time. Those who experienced deployments only after e-mail became common had difficulty imagining life away from their families without that daily connectivity. Through e-mail husbands could maintain the connection with their wives and children on a daily basis. Just being able to follow the daily routines of their families seemed to ease the feelings of loneliness that occur during deployments. Also, if wives have questions about practical issues, they are assured of getting a response from their husbands that day:

It's a lot better now than it used to be, because of e-mail, which is so easy to get. It used to be that you couldn't get any e-mails. You had to wait on letters. You may get 5 letters at the end of your patrol, because they were slow in getting there.

It's not as bad now for me as it was 3-1/2 yrs. ago when I didn't have e-mail or anything available to us. That helps out for those of us that want to stay in touch with family.

I was on the boats before e-mail, and not being able to talk to your children or your significant other for 3 to 4 weeks at a time.

My wife's just happy to hear from me. Before, when I was deployed she didn't hear from me for about 3 weeks. Now, this is a lot better for her.

Technology has also made it easier for deployments through e-mail. We can have that connectivity every day.

I think e-mail eases a lot of that {depression and loneliness}. On the last cutter we didn't have it. You had to wait the whole trip sometimes, or till you get into port to contact family.

The e-mail is awesome. You can e-mail the wife, and it will be like, 'Hey, what the heck's going on back home?' You can keep up to date on everything.

If there are problems, that's where e-mail comes in. She'll e-mail me that, 'Hey, I'm having this. She'll know how to identify the problem. She may not know how to correct it, but she'll know that there's definitely an issue to be dealt with. I give her the best advice that I can give out in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

E-mail is definitely helpful in that situation. It doesn't help with some of the situations that you might run into, like a burglary, but as far as general maintenance around the house. Like, 'Who can I call to mow the yard? I don't have time to do it.'

I just got on board, and I don't see how people did it without e-mail. I can't fathom that, because if I don't hear from my [wife] every day, I go crazy.

Connectivity works!

Fathers found that e-mail helped their children maintain a better connection with them throughout deployments. Older children could write their own letters to Dad, while younger ones would relay their internet messages through Mom. One father e-mails his children at school, which gives them a sense of importance with classmates. The accessibility and availability of e-mail makes it easy for husbands to communicate with the family. They can even arrange a time to 'meet' at their

respective computers, so e-mail messaging can come as close as possible to instant messaging:

My wife will send an e-mail and my son will sit down and dictate to my wife, and she'll send me a letter from my son. I'll send one back to him.

It's about the same with me. My daughter, mostly, will dictate to my wife. My son once or twice a deployment will send something. Otherwise, she {wife} always tells me what's going on.

Now there's 24 hr access, and people can pick up their own e-mail. Some tell families they'll e-mail at a certain time, and get a response.

Of course, even the miracle of modern technology can have its drawbacks.

By hearing about their wives' frustrations with home and children every day, husbands feel frustrated and helpless themselves. In the previous section on marital relationships, husbands had expressed that they felt frustrated when they heard about problems that they couldn't fix from a distance. Even so, one group of husbands agreed that it was better to hear a little problem every day than hear about the whole lot during an infrequent phone call:

The down side is that you hear from them every day and they tell you what's going on and you feel helpless, because you hear about things that you can't really control.

They're expecting you to help out and I'm out here in the middle of the ocean.

They'll e-mail you about something stupid, like you need to cut down a tree.

But at least now you can talk to them everyday, whereas before you'd call them on day 14 and then they would unload a whole month's worth on you.

Another side effect of frequent communication through the internet is the ability to rapidly transmit and embellish rumors. Discussions between husbands and wives could be misconstrued by one of the parties. Husbands also joked that wives knew information about their whereabouts or about their next move before they themselves did. During deployments that include missions that are supposed to remain secret for a time, daily contact between husbands and wives could create a breach in security:

I think even the e-mail. You could be saying something to your wife that can be misinterpreted.

That's a problem with the e-mail, because you're trying to tell your wife where you went and what you did, but she all ready knows. She could probably tell you more about your evening than you know.

There's some cases on the ship that spouses find out almost as soon as they happen. We're sitting here, pretty much with our thumb in our mouth, saying that we honestly don't know or that we can't say anything.

Telephone calls also remain a favored form of communication during deployments. Again, 95% of husbands reported that they use 'phone calls' as a method of communication during deployments (Figure 2). The majority of telephone calls can only be made when the cutters pull into a port-of-call. If they dock in an American port, they are able to use personal phone cards to pay for calls. When the ships pull into foreign ports, telephone calls can become expensive and

difficult to make. Phone cards are not always usable in foreign ports, especially in smaller, underdeveloped countries. Utilizing the service provided in certain countries can add up to hundreds of dollars. Personal cellular phones are allowed on certain boats, with allowances for use at certain times. The two ships in this study did allow for cellular phones, with some restrictions on use, but most cellular phones lose service once the ship is out to sea. Ship-to-shore calling through use of the ship's radio service can be utilized during emergency situations. If the situation is not an emergency, ship-to-shore service can be paid for, but it is too costly to be practical.

Despite the difficulties that can be encountered with phone calls, husbands still make calls whenever it is practical to do so. Although e-mail is the cheapest and most frequent source of contact with families, spouses still like to hear each other's voices. One husband sums up the concerns about phone calls, as well as the reason that phone calls are important:

There was a guy on the boat making phone calls to his fiancé and when he got home he had a \$900 phone bill. My wife's concern is, 'How much is it going to cost to call?' So, any country that has Sprint I get the access codes so I can call her. E-mail doesn't always suit her. She wants to hear my voice, and I want to hear hers, too.

The remaining two modes of communication listed on the post-discussion questionnaire are 'videotapes' and 'letters'. Only 5% of husbands reported using videotapes as communication (Figure 2). 'Videotapes' was part of the checklist, because Navy wives had sent videotapes of family activities to their husbands to view during long-term deployments (Finley). During short-term deployments

videotapes do not seem as necessary or practical. In the focus group sessions, husbands made no mention of videotapes as a method of communication.

Only 32% of husbands reported in the post-discussion questionnaires that they send and/or receive letters (Figure 2). The only mention made of letters in the focus group interviews was related to the delays in getting letters on past deployments. It is suspected that letters by 'snail mail' to deployed personnel are becoming an increasing rarity, just as they are becoming in the general population.

Wives –On the post-discussion questionnaire 70% of wives reported that they utilize e-mail to communicate with their husbands (Figure 2). Although this is 25% less than the husbands' report of 95%, the majority of wives do make use of their computer's e-mail capabilities. During focus group interviews, most wives echoed the husbands' enthusiasm about e-mail. They marveled at the fact that they could now communicate daily with their husbands, while remembering that they would communicate with their husbands only every two weeks or less via telephone on earlier deployment cycles. Wives felt that their long-distance marital relationship benefited from e-mail. As some of the husbands discussed, wives also felt that they could get immediate answers to household, financial or repair problems from husbands through the use of e-mail:

With the internet it's amazing that we can still keep in touch.

But, thank God for e-mail on ships now. It's not like when we were dating. It was snail mail. Or, 'I'll call you when I get to...'

[I was] on the computer constantly e-mailing him. Now that's the main thing. It makes such a huge difference to have. We were on a boat when we were first together for 2 years. We were on land for 5 years. And now we're on a boat again. So it's just real different. Before I might get a call in 2 weeks, if the line's short enough {for the pay phone}.

Thank God for e-mail! As long as you've got e-mail, you've got a computer, you've always got a relationship.

You can't hear the words, but you can have a conversation.

Especially if you have a situation coming up where you need an answer from him. Even if it's something dumb like, I can't find that piece of paper. You don't have to wait until a month later to get a call. You can e-mail him and hopefully he knows where that piece of paper is that you're looking for.

Wives also commented on the down side to communication by e-mail. It seems that wives come to expect almost daily communication from their spouses via the internet. If they haven't heard from their husbands in a timely manner, they can become very anxious and upset with their husbands. One wife (whose husband was an 'e-mail manager' on the ship) would hear complaints from other wives about a lack of contact from their husbands. She expressed the opinion that these husbands should have been contacting their wives instead of pursuing their own shipboard hobbies:

I was lucky, because on the ship my husband was one of the e-mail managers. So, I always knew what was going on with the computers. And if one person's husband hasn't written her she's like, 'M____, are you getting e-mail?' Everyone would call me, 'Are you getting e-mail?' I was like, 'Yeah, I'm getting e-mail.' Come to find out, their husband's on the rack reading, playing video games. They're not writing their spouses when they should be.

As long as you're hearing from them, it's great. But those times when you don't...Oh, my God!

Then you're e-mailing them, 'Where are you? What's going on? Why aren't I hearing from you?'

A few wives also acknowledged that they tend to complain about everyday problems to their husbands via e-mail or the telephone. The build-up of stressors at home during the husbands' time away leads wives to vent about problems to their husbands who are at sea. As discussed previously, husbands then feel frustrated and helpless when they hear problems from a thousand miles away. One wife told her story of learning to stifle the tendency to complain to her husband about everyday issues while he is at sea. As part of her recovery from clinical depression, her therapist taught her how to communicate more effectively with her husband over the internet and by phone:

That's another hard thing, too. When they make land and they're able to call you, you don't want to sit on the phone and complain. 'The kids did this. T___ isn't listening to me. This is going on.' And that's the hardest thing. They don't want to hear that. There's nothing he can do He's stuck out in the middle of the ocean. What can he do? I had to change the tone of my e-mails. That's what my therapist showed me to do, too. By the time one gets shipped off to him and he replies, you can get in a big communication mess, so we talk about other things besides the kids. Unless it's something like T___ got suspended or this one's sick... That's different. But when it's like, 'The kids aren't listening to me again.' You try not to make them too complaining. You try not to make them complain at all. And when they call you, too. Because that can make them, I think, feel down. He's said to me a couple of times, "What am I supposed to do? I can't do anything. What are you telling me this for?"

All of the wives (100%) noted on the post-discussion questionnaire that they relied on phone calls as a means of communication with their deployed husbands (Figure 2). Although cell phones could only be used at certain times and when close to shore, some wives reported that they were happy to have another means of communication with their husbands. One wife, whose husband recently left the ship to go to a land-based station with retirement in mind, reported that they had never communicated by e-mail. He would usually make a brief phone call to her when he got to a port. She spoke of the feelings of sadness that hearing his voice would elicit. Phone calls can sometimes remind wives of how much they are missing their husbands:

We never used e-mail. He used to pick up the phone and call me when they pulled in. His conversations were always short and sweet. "Everybody okay?" 'Yup'. 'Okay, see ya later.' Boom. We're done. That was it. He doesn't talk on the phone. So, there were no extended conversations. But, if you hear him talk about it, he talked *forever* on the phone. I think the phone calls really hurt, because you hear their voice for a couple of minutes. And I don't think it really helped. I think it hurt more than it helped.

Knowing that they're not there. Even if they're in [another country], they still sound close.

Of the three remaining modes of communication listed in the wives' post-discussion questionnaire, wives reported their use of these as follows (also see Figure 2):

Videotapes – 0%

Instant Messaging – 10%

Letters – 40%

Obviously, none of the wives had sent videotapes to husbands during deployments. Only one wife reported using 'instant messaging', which one can guess was utilized when her husband was deployed on a smaller vessel, that was equipped with the means for instant messaging. Although 40% reported that they sent and/or received letters, no mention was made of letters as a means of communication during the focus group sessions. E-mail and phone calls are definitely the preferred methods of communication for both husbands and wives during deployments.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

As discussed in the literature review, families' ability to cope with deployment can be very dependent on the support systems available to them. The external systems that provide support to families will be explored separately here. These sub-categories include relatives, friends, work, 'wives' clubs' and formal Coast Guard supports. Internal supports will also be reviewed, including routines, self-sufficiency and communication. Most of the literature addresses these support systems, at least minimally. However, the literature only makes reference to how wives and children are supported in their attempts to cope with the deployment of a spouse. No reference could be found that addressed the support systems husbands utilize while shipboard during deployments. It seems obvious that the husband's morale during those two months away can also affect his relationship with his spouse and family. Therefore, the question about supports utilized shipboard was asked during focus group interviews with husbands. Most of the supports explored

in this study were those provided to the family while the spouse is deployed, but a brief discussion of shipboard supports seems warranted.

Shipboard Supports – During deployments, crew members are housed in very close quarters with many days at sea. To offset some of the tension and boredom this creates, the ship's Command provides personnel on board ship with activities termed as 'morale' events. For example, a pizza party is provided mid-way through deployment or the ship may spend an extra day in a port that has extra activities. Satellite television, video and board games are also provided on the ship for evenings. Some husbands take advantage of these facilities to relax after a busy day on the ship. Others report that they like to find some quiet time for themselves in the evenings, either reading or e-mailing their wives. But finding quiet time away from one's shipmates can prove to be a difficult task on a 270-foot ship with over 100 personnel on board. As mentioned in the section on marital relationships, the daily busy work routine also helps them cope with being away from home. Most husbands seemed to find their own way to cope with the long days at sea away from their families:

Of course, everybody's different in how they want to deal with certain things or even the whole situation in general. I just sit down and beat through however many books I can get through in 6 weeks. Other people get together about every place there's a television and watch sports out the tailpipe.

I just watch movies or read books.

Daily activity. You work till 4, and you might have duty till 8. If you don't have duty you go and relax for a little bit, eat chow and just try to find a spot to hang out.

You want to just sit and relax. Sit and watch the TV. Maybe get some games going on the mess deck. Card games, board games, chess.

You get time to write an e-mail. Sitting around thinking. Just trying to relax and clear your thoughts.

The boat is pretty busy. Trying to find a place on the boat to be by yourself is kind of hard.

Everybody has their own 2.7 feet.

Many husbands also reported gaining support from their peers on the ship. Personnel often develop friendships with workmates in their particular 'shop' or 'office' on board, or with roommates in the berthing area. One Chief (highest ranking enlisted status) found that mealtimes in the Chiefs' mess hall provide a means of camaraderie and support from peers. Chiefs maintain their own dining room separate from the often noisy and crowded mess hall attended by enlisted personnel. Wherever on board that they found friendships with peers, the husbands were able to discuss thoughts and ideas, as well as 'vent' about problems with work or home. As one husband states, "Everybody's going through the same thing." He's referring to the fact that all of the shipmates are away from home and family for two months and have to cope with that separation:

For me, it's just in the office. We just talk in the office.

We talk about things. We get up on our own soapbox.

I think everyone does that in their little shop. Like, we do that in our office. I mean we have about 8 of us now in there. We talk amongst each other. Every department has their connection.

And then our berthing area. We all sleep in the same berthing area. We do the same thing down there. It's like a family down there when we're underway.

I have the guys I work with down in the engine room. We're all supportive.

I think shipboard for me it's always been my peer group. I think one of the best experiences I had was as a 1st class on the 210. There were 9 of us that were very tight. I mean we had no choice but to be close to each other.

You usually have 1 or 2 good friends. I had one guy I could bounce things off of. He could tell me what he thought of things.

What I find useful for me on the ship is my peers. The rest of the Chiefs on the ship. We all sit down at the same time around the table and we're able to talk. We're fortunate that we're able to do that.

I might gripe to the fellows.

And sort of vent. That helps.

...Everybody on the boat is going through the same thing. He's missing his family. I'm missing my family. Some people show it more than others, but everybody's going through the same thing. It doesn't matter how old you are or how long you've been in. You're still gone. Gone is gone.

Support Systems

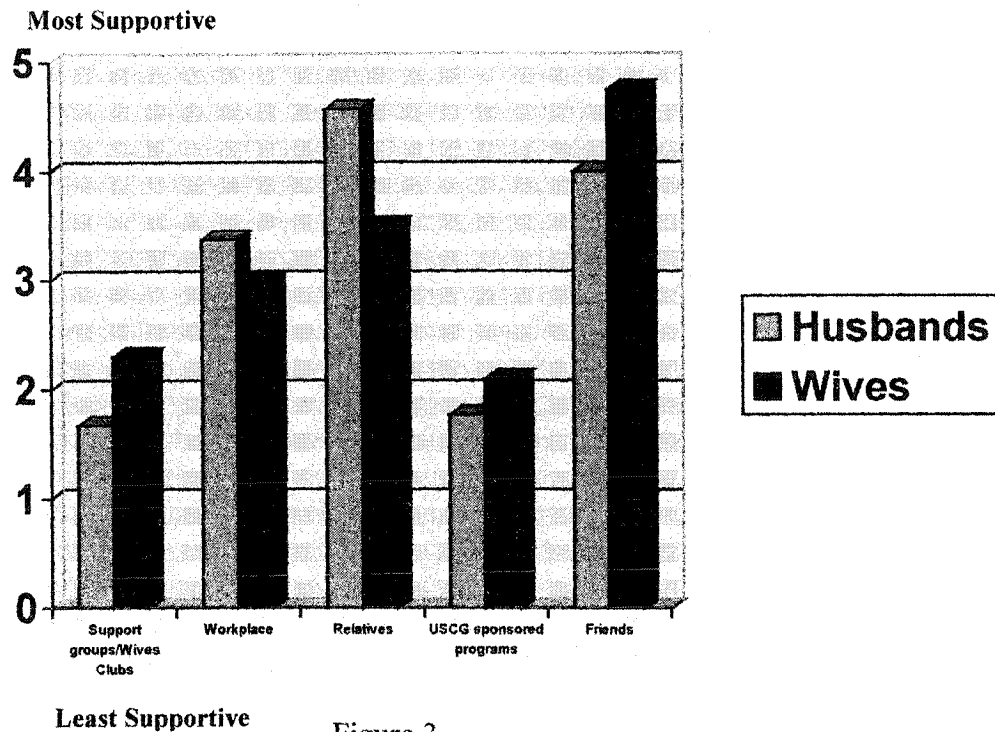


Figure 3

Relatives – Of the five supports that were surveyed in the post-discussion questionnaire, husbands rated ‘relatives’ as the most supportive to wives and families during deployments, with a mean score of 4.57 (Figure 3). During the focus group interviews husbands spoke of parents and in-laws as being supportive. A few wives were fortunate enough to have family living fairly close by, but this can be a rarity for Coast Guard personnel and their wives. Some husbands reported that their wives and children would take a trip to his or her parents’ home during the deployment. Wives would stay with family members for several days to several

weeks while husbands were away. One husband commented that his wife would have been bored if she had stayed home during the whole deployment:

I think we were fortunate because we had family around, hers and mine. Also my sister was a Navy wife so they'd help each other out.

I have family that lives in the area, so that supports her.

Maybe once or twice in a deployment, she'll take the 6-hour trip back home. She'll stay with family for a few days to a week, depending what's going on with the kids at school.

Fortunately, her parents are 40 miles away. So, she can go there and visit a little with the kids, let them babysit a little bit, so she can do what she wants to do.

My wife doesn't work. But what she'll do, once she gets things situated (like all the bills and stuff like that) she takes a block of time (between 2 and 3 weeks) and visits her parents in [another state]. Then she tries to go down to [city], where I'm from, and spends a couple of days with my mom, and then with my dad, because my parents are divorced. So, everybody gets a little chance to see the grandchild. Then she comes up here about 2 weeks before I'm ready to come in. Again, she situates all the bills and stuff like that. I know she gets pretty bored up here.

In the wives' post-discussion questionnaire, 'relatives' were ranked second most supportive of the five support systems analyzed. Although the mean score of 3.50 indicates that 'relatives' were considered to be a good support system to wives, 'relatives' ranked well behind the top-rated support system of 'friends' (4.75 mean score) (Figure 3). Also, of all the support systems rated, 'relatives' obtained the greatest mean difference between husbands and wives. The mean difference of 1.1 (although not statistically significant) represents the differences between the husbands' perception that relatives provide the greatest support to wives during

deployment, and the wives actual experience of support received during deployments.

During the focus group interviews, some wives spoke of receiving support from families during deployments. When talking of support from extended family members, they most often referred to parents or in-laws. The wife who had the most praise for parents and in-laws in the supportive role was the wife with the seriously disabled son. She found them to be always available in times of need or crisis, even though they didn't always live nearby. Perhaps when serious and extraordinary needs arise, family can be the most reliable resource, as well as the easiest to ask.

My family was a Godsend. Only because I had J____ and there were certain things I had to do for him. My mom and dad were actually my mainstay. They were great. We didn't see a lot of them unless we needed something, and then they were there like that {snaps fingers}.

However, in most cases, although wives felt some sense of long-distance emotional support from parents via the telephone, parents were not able to provide assistance with tasks or problems that required someone who lived in close physical proximity:

Family's an important part emotionally, but they're not physically here to help us in any way.

They can send money. They can listen to you cry and whine on the phone.

Friends – 'Friends' was not initially listed on the post-discussion questionnaires as a distinct sub-category. Instead, a sub-category of 'Other' was listed under support

systems, with a request for participants to specify that other support system (see Appendices E and F). Of the 19 participants who filled in the 'Other' category (8 of 10 wives; 11 of 19 husbands) 18 wrote in 'friends' or 'neighbors' as a support system. (Only one husband wrote 'children' in as a support system.) Considering that the answer was a fill-in and that several participants across several different groups wrote in essentially the same response (and placed a high value on that response), 'friends' were discovered to be a very important informal support system for wives. What began as a design flaw in the post-discussion questionnaire, (A write-in response should not be a part of a numerically rated questionnaire.) became the discovery of a support system that was viewed by many as their most important source of support during deployments. The support system category of 'friends' is defined here as women who reside in military housing who have formed friendships informally with neighbors or with other wives from the ship who reside in the local area. Friends in this category are distinguished in the above way from friendships developed at work or supports from acquaintances developed in deployment support groups or wives' clubs.

As mentioned above, of the 11 husbands who responded to the 'Other' category, 91% wrote in 'friends' (or 'neighbors') as a support system. With a mean score of 4.00, husbands rated 'friends' as a strong source of support to their wives during deployments (Figure 3), ranking a close second to 'relatives' (mean score of 4.57). In the focus group interviews some husbands mentioned friends as a source of support for their wives. One husband noted the 'difference' that developing friendships made for his wife. After making friends in base housing, his wife was

apparently happier and better able to cope with his frequent deployments. Another husband pointed out the importance of developing friendship networks so that some system of support is in place during deployments:

My wife started hanging around with 3 or 4 women and she'd go nuts if she didn't have those wives to hang around with. The first couple of months we were here she didn't know anybody, and when I talked to her on the phone you could see how tense she was and she really didn't like it. But now that she has these friends, you can really see the difference.

I think it's part of the support system you have to set up for yourself. Every time you make a move you get to know your neighbors, you network, and you get into the community so you have that support system set up, so that if you're not there they have that to take care of them.

Other husbands, though they felt that their wives drew support from friends on base, pointed out some negative aspects to establishing friendships in a base housing community. One of the problems touched on previously involves frequent moves that affect the development and longevity of friendships on base. A few husbands also spoke of the divisiveness that can occur in a large housing community between families of differing rank (officers versus enlisted) and differing services (i.e. Coast Guard, Navy, Army, etc.). The husbands seem to feel that this can create cliques that may exclude families from developing friendships with some of their neighbors:

That exact same thing is you're just getting comfortable with one group and they get transferred and you start making new friends and some of them get transferred. You're like, 'Okay, I've got one more year...' but then you're gone. Then you have a whole new setup again and you have to have the same thing all over again. And if you have to move twice on a boat, it makes it twice as hard.

She'd have probably developed friendships wherever she was. It might have been even easier if she wasn't on the base.

You also get out of the 'separateness'. It's not bad in the Coast Guard, but a lot of our families live in other services' housing and it's very much a separatist society, where these people can associate with these people, and so on and so forth. If he's [an officer], he only associates with those people in his group.

The wives were much more upbeat and positive than the husbands when discussing friends as a support during deployments. Almost all of the wives spoke in glowing terms of good neighbors and the friendships that developed among wives in base housing. There was no concern about their husband's rank or service interfering with the development of friendships. In fact, one wife jokes that her friends' husbands all worked for each other, due to their varying ranks. Another wife spoke of her time living on base in Hawaii. No matter what rank or branch of service, wives were able to develop strong friendships on this small island.

Well, I had great friends, too. I had a good friend support system. There were three of us. Everyone calls us the 3 amigos. All our husbands worked for each other. One was a chief, one a first class and one a second class. B___ lived in my house. It's just that I had kids and she had [her husband]. We were pregnant at the same time. If it wasn't for her... And she says if it wasn't for me... She wasn't there for that first hard year, but she was there the 2nd and 3rd years, and I was there for her the 1st and 2nd years. The boat still deploys. B___ slept over my house a few times. So, I think having a friend support you. Even though I had family, that was different. They were there, but they weren't. What an outlet having friends over was! You have to have a support with friends!

We had good friends. When we were in Hawaii we had some very good friends that were there. Their husbands

were all Coast Guard, but not on the same boat, not in the same area and not doing the same thing. Being on an island, to begin with, in the middle of nowhere, it was great to be able to make such good friends.

Friends provide practical assistance to each other, such as caring for children during emergencies and helping with household or shopping tasks. Wives received tremendous emotional support from friends, due in large part to the fact that they were going through (or had gone through) similar experiences involving deployed husbands. Wives also enjoyed the social outlets, relaxation and simple camaraderie that friends provided:

I've gotten to where... My daughter goes to school twice a week. So, on one of the days that she goes to school my son goes to the sitter and I have a friend that I spend the entire day with. We don't do anything but vege out, watch movies and talk like adults.

When my older son fell, I just had a new baby. I ran over to [my neighbor's] and said, 'Here, take my baby. I've got to go to the hospital.' And she's like, 'Oh, okay.'

Well, I had an outlet, too. I go bowling. I have my women's league. Even when the boat went out, my Mom would come over every Monday night and I'd go out bowling with the girls. I lived for Mondays. That was good.

We have that support system, which not everybody does. But we're lucky to have good neighbors that we've made.

We were all able to make good neighbors and we all have some kind of support system. If I heard that somebody needed help with something or whatever, I'm going to go help them. I think that's just how I am. I think there's a lot of people that way on the base. More than you would go to your neighbor on the outside that's a civilian, 'Hey, my husband's gone. Can you help me out?' You feel like you're putting them out more than you would somebody who understands you.

{Friends were the most helpful}, because we know what we're going through. We're going through the same thing. I mean, in different ways, but we're going through the same thing and it's like a little support system. I mean, without friends you don't have anything and you might as well just grab a noose {half jokingly – laughs a little}. I mean, it does feel that way, though. I mean, it really does.

A couple of wives echoed the husbands' sentiments about the difficulties presented by the short-term nature of friendships in a military community. They were reluctant to begin friendships that they would not have time to build on. It can become painful for wives to develop a close bond with another wife, only to have to leave that friendship behind when it comes time to transfer:

I didn't really have a big network of friends [for] support. I don't make friends real easily. Not real close friends. I'm more the type for acquaintances. I mean I'll say hi to you and everything, but I don't get close to a lot of people. Maybe because I know we're going to move. You really don't have time to build the kind of relationships that you would like to build. There's just not the time.

I think it's harder to make good friends. I just think you get attached and you have to leave, so you don't want to make as many friends. You don't want to be as attached in the military.

In general, wives expressed great enthusiasm for the support of friends on base. This was reflected in the post-discussion questionnaires. Eight of the 10 respondents in the wives' groups filled in the 'Other' section on the question about supports. One hundred percent (100%) of the eight respondents filled in 'friends' as their response. They also rated 'friends' as the most supportive of all the support systems. The mean score of 4.75 placed 'friends' slightly below the top score of '5' for support systems (Figure 3). 'Friends' also outranked 'relatives' mean score on

the questionnaire by 1.25. Relatives were not considered to be a very close second to friends as a support system, mostly due to their unavailability as a daily support.

WORK- On the post-discussion questionnaires support for wives at the 'workplace' came in third for both husbands and wives. Sixteen of the 19 husbands rated 'workplace' supports. Three of the husbands had always deployed during times when their wives did not work outside of the home. The mean score of husbands who rated the 'workplace' as a support was a 3.37 (Figure 3), indicating that these husbands found the workplace to be a moderate support to their wives while they were away. However, during the focus group interviews, few husbands brought up their wives' job as a support during deployments. Those that did spoke of the routine of work that kept their wives busy, so that they did not dwell on their husbands' departure. One husband found that work was a 'savior' for his wife during deployments, but really interfered with their time together when he was home:

On my last ship she was working and that's what she relied on to get her stress out. She worked a lot, so it kept her mind off of me being gone.

For my wife, her job {is her support}. It's a killer where she's at. It's a savior when I'm underway, because it gives her something to do. She works a lot of hours, I've got to say that, but when we're back in port it's a killer. It again is a double-edged sword. Back in port she wants to spend time, but she's got to go to work. I'm getting off, and then she's getting upset, because she's not spending the time together that she'd like to.

Wives also rated the 'workplace' as a moderate support on the post-discussion questionnaire, with a mean score of 3.0 (Figure 3). As was noted in the section on marital relationships, wives enjoyed working. Jobs ranged from working part-time from their homes to part or full-time work outside of the home. Like the husbands, some wives spoke of the work routine as helping them to keep busy, so they didn't dwell on their husband's departure.

A couple of wives spoke of the difficulties involved in maintaining a job outside of the home during deployments when children are involved. Both of these wives worked evenings, and ran into difficulties with child-care. Although they enjoyed working, it became difficult to balance work and childcare. Raising children is a more than full-time job in itself, especially when one experiences temporary single parenthood:

For a while I had a really good friend who used to watch the kids for me. But after I had this one, things changed. This one will not wean. I can't find a babysitter who will watch them and bring her in to be nursed. So, while my husband's home I'm going to finish up working there. I've got to quit my job, stay home with the kids, because the support has gone. So, things change all the time.

There's so many times when I've had to call work and say I'm sick or I can't go, because my husband's gone and there's no one to look after my kids. Before I had kids I was never sick. But now that I have kids and my husband's called away at the drop of a hat, I'm always worried, 'Are they going to fire me this week? I have to go in.' I used to be a full time nurse. Now I have to work pretty casual. When I can work is when I'm going to work. That was when I had to lose my job, because I had to call in too much.

Wives' Clubs/Deployment Support Groups – 'Wives' Clubs' and 'Deployment Support Groups' are used as interchangeable terms here. These terms refer to gatherings of wives whose husbands are deployed (usually on the same ship). These gatherings usually come in the form of meetings, potluck dinners or parties that have been arranged by a particular ship's ombudsperson. As described previously, the ombudsperson is a Coast Guard wife whose husband serves aboard a particular ship. She volunteers to act as liaison between the wives and the ship and may also develop a sort of wives' club that gathers while the ship is away. These gatherings are developed to provide support and information to wives during deployments. They can also help wives who are newly transferred to make friends and develop resources in the community. The ombudsperson may also have the ear of the ship's Command at times, when housing or ship issues are affecting the well-being of the families attached to that ship. They may also disseminate information about the ship's return to port, if the Command feels it is appropriate to release this information. The USCG Cutter Roberts had an active ombudsperson who organized pot-luck dinners for wives at least twice a month during deployments. The ombudsperson from the USCG Cutter Garfield moved to a new station shortly after beginning data collection, and was not replaced over the course of the focus group interview sessions.

Based upon the described intent of wives' clubs/deployment support groups, it is expected that they would provide an important role in helping wives and families at home cope with the deployment of a spouse. Contrary to that expectation, husbands rated 'deployment support groups or wives clubs' as the least

supportive of all the support systems on the post-discussion questionnaire.

'Deployment support groups/wives clubs' obtained a mean score of 1.67 on the husbands' questionnaire (Figure 3), indicating that husbands felt wives clubs to be minimally supportive to their wives during deployments. Comments from husbands during focus group interviews reflected this low score. However, it must be noted that the husbands who commented negatively on wives clubs were affiliated with the USCGC Garfield, which did not have an active ombudsperson during that time. Many of the Garfield husbands were also referring to experiences at other Coast Guard stations and ships, as well as to their more recent experiences affiliated with the Garfield.

The Garfield husbands felt that wives clubs served as rumor mills. An example is the story one husband related in the section on gossip about the couple who divorced based upon rumors the wife had heard from the 'family support group' attached to her husband's ship. Husbands also spoke of cliques that formed in the wives clubs that served to ostracize some wives. One husband had heard that these 'gossip clubs' formed cliques around whoever had the juiciest rumor to tell. Another husband felt that some wives used their husbands' rank to keep others out of their particular clique. These husbands had formed negative opinions of wives clubs, based on what they had heard from their own wives, colleagues or their colleagues' wives:

My wife will have nothing to do with the wives' club, because it's nothing but rumor mills and gossip. She said it's worse than a bunch of hens. They get into their little cliques. She said there's little groups of about 6 or 8 people that will sit around together and all they do is gossip. She said that she didn't fit into any of them and she

didn't want to. She couldn't stand it. It got that bad, that she got tired of hearing about people's concerns.

From what I understand, the wives club is basically a gossip club. Who can outdo who. It's not so much of a support as a... Certain people walk in. Certain other people just completely blow them off and go the other way. At least that's what I've heard. It's a matter of who has the most accurate information about the ship at this point. About things the guys are doing on the ship, or whatever. It's more of a 'who can slam who the hardest with rumors', from what I've heard.

My wife doesn't go to those functions. She saw what they were after about the first 2 or 3 times, and said, 'Nope, no more. I'm not going to be a part of that.'

I don't consider that the Wives' Clubs are doing something for the families, because every place I've been I've heard nothing but complaints about the wives clubs being nothing but, either rumor mills or little clannish get-togethers, that if you don't belong to this group, they don't talk to you. I've heard that some of the spouses use their husbands' or wives' rank. 'Well, my husband's a Commander. You can't talk to me that way.' That's not how to support a family's needs. You don't carry your husband's or wife's rank with you when you're a spouse. You're all on an even plane. That's caused problems on other boats.

Until you get rid of the cliquish mentality, you're not going to get the support that wives can give to each other. Other than the phone trees, it still becomes a gossip session, and they want to stay away from it.

It really depends on a good person behind a support group. I really haven't seen too much of a support group yet. Maybe it'll change down the road. I don't know.

Husbands from the USCGC Roberts didn't have too much to say about wives clubs as a support system. One husband did praise the ombudsperson's pot-luck dinners as a way to help wives cope with deployment:

Now, the spouses themselves, our ombudsman tries to hold pot-lucks or little parties, little gatherings, which I think is fantastic. You know, trying to get the wives together, and trying to deal with the deployment.

Others in the same group found that the ombudsperson did a 'good job' notifying spouses about their husbands impending return through use of a phone tree network. Other than that, there were no comments, negative or positive, about wives clubs as a support system by husbands on the Roberts.

Wives also did not have too much to say during the focus group about wives clubs or deployment support groups as a support system. They spoke more of friends and family when asked about support systems utilized during deployments. One wife did view wives clubs as an organized group of friends, even though her experience with wives clubs was limited:

I think the best programs would be the Coast Guard wives associations. I'm not [into it] here, but to be into something like that. That is a big group of friends. They're just organized.

One wife attached to the USCGC Garfield made mention of the fact that the wives from the Garfield didn't participate in activities together, because there was no ombudsperson at the time. However, she was mentioning this fact in answer to a question about whether gossip was a problem among the wives, not as a way of bemoaning the lack of a wives club:

We never do things together with the other boat wives or anything. We never see them, except when we're on the pier. We don't have an ombudsman right now, so we don't ever do anything. So, we never hear anything.

Although wives did not rate the category of 'deployment support groups or wives clubs' as low on the post-discussion questionnaire as did the husbands, they still rated 'deployment support groups/wives clubs' fourth out of the five support systems presented. With a mean score of 2.3, wives found wives clubs to be less than moderately supportive during deployments (Figure 3). Most of the wives interviewed were attached to the Garfield. The wives who participated in the potluck dinners had declined to be interviewed. The only wives interviewed were those who were not participating in any wives' club activities, which may have affected the results on the post-discussion questionnaires.

Coast Guard Sponsored Support Systems – Most of the services and supports for families of Coast Guard personnel are provided through the Coast Guard's Work/Life office. The Work/Life office administers and/or provides linkages to programs and resources for Coast Guard families. Work/Life maintains a main office in Washington, D.C., with satellite offices in the five regions of the United States that the Coast Guard terms as 'Districts'. Some of the larger Coast Guard bases also have Work/Life personnel in place. Work/Life is an entity that seems to have replaced the Family Service Centers (FSC), at least within the Coast Guard. (They may still be in existence in other branches of the military.) Work/Life provides services such as pre-deployment seminars, 'Welcome Aboard' packages for families transferring in to new stations and a telephone resource network. They also administer the 'Special Needs' program for families with children who have those special needs. Also, counseling services and referrals are offered through the

Work/Life office. Other programs that are indirectly affiliated with the Coast Guard, including the Employee Assistance Program and the on-line Coast Guard spouses network, will also be described and discussed in this section. Another crucial element that will be discussed is the ship's 'Command', and how those in charge on the ship influence and impact upon the services families receive.

Before entering into a presentation of the more specific programs and issues associated with them, a presentation of the respondents' general opinions of Coast Guard sponsored support systems is warranted. Both husbands and wives rated 'Coast Guard sponsored programs' poorly on the post-discussion questionnaires. Of the five support systems, husbands rated 'Coast Guard sponsored support systems' the second least supportive. The mean score of 1.77 was only .10 above 'deployment support groups' (mean of 1.67) that was rated as least supportive (Figure 3). In fact, 47.4% of the husbands provided a rating of '1' for Coast Guard sponsored supports, indicating that almost half of the husbands surveyed found Coast Guard sponsored systems to be the least supportive of all to families during deployments.

This negative perception of Coast Guard sponsored supports was reflected in many of the comments made by husbands during focus group discussions. Some husbands felt that the Coast Guard doesn't have any concern for the families of their service members, while others felt that the Coast Guard tried to provide for families, but the efforts were 'misguided'. One group discussed the lack of prevention and 'pro-active' services, even though the Coast Guard is effective after a 'catastrophic' event happens:

It seems that the 3 years {stationed on the ship} is a never-ending battle. It seems it comes down to, you just have to deal with it. You've got 3 years. Just deal with it. There's no help, no intermediary. It's just, excuse my language, but, 'Tough shit'.

I was told by my instructor when I first got in, 'If your marriage is a casualty, then so be it. You signed up, so it's what you do.'

That's the basic line out there. There's programs out there, but that's the basic mentality.

You can't rely on the Coast Guard to take care of your family. You've got to rely on yourselves.

You have to take from the Coast Guard, because it won't give you anything. When it comes to your family, you have to take it and you have to be aggressive with it.

I think the Coast Guard does very, very little for the spouses or the families during deployments. It might be nice for us to pull into Jamaica for 3 days. I'd rather pull in for 2 days, if they could take the money that it's costing them to have the boat there a third day and do something for the families back home. They get nothing.

I've been on 4 different boats. Overall, on the average, I see little to nothing really done for the families during a deployment.

I've been in 8-1/2 years, and pretty much through my whole experience, the Coast Guard support programs, for anything, have been next to useless. At one station my wife was trying to get set up for WIC for her and the baby, who was at the time my oldest child. She calls one Coast Guard help center. She gets the phone number. She gets phone numbers from each of about a dozen places, and the last one puts her on a round robin back to the beginning. So far with the Coast Guard, certain areas have had just different issues with me. Fend for yourself is the interpretation I've gotten. I've had a problem of one sort or another in each unit I've gone to.

I think the CG makes an effort, but I think some of their programs are misguided. As far as support, it's the same

ones you have whether or not you're in Coast Guard. It's family, friends...

I think the organization is great about being there when things are falling apart, but...

I have to go with you, but I think it's because we've dealt with so many catastrophic events that we've gotten really good at dealing with that. But, it's hard to help you in the interim. It's either okay, really bad, and the Coast Guard is willing to help you with one of them, but if you're in the middle...

I think the Coast Guard is reactive to problems and not proactive. They don't get in there and try to prevent things.

Then when something happens, they say, 'Whoa, that shouldn't have happened! We'll help you out now.'

They're real good at picking up the pieces, but with the other. I remember when we first got married, for the first 3 years, I had two days on, 2 days off. I pretty much could see my wife and son every day. I went from that to being deployed. Even though they had the pre-deployment program, it's like a band-aid on a gunshot wound. It really doesn't prepare you for anything you're going to go through psychologically. But, once everything falls apart, they're very good, the Work/Life staff's good. I've seen horrific things, and they're very good with helping to pick up the pieces.

I just think it's a sad state of affairs when you have to let it get to that point before you rectify it.

Yeah, because the damage is done. I mean, they try and fix it, but it's already broken.

Although several respondents expressed negative opinions of Coast Guard sponsored programs, one group of husbands engaged in a friendly argument about the resources available through the Coast Guard. Some, including a few of the husbands making the above quotes, believed that the Coast Guard did not provide

adequate programs to service personnel and their families. One husband felt that the Coast Guard needed to supply more programs that provided basic knowledge about family finances and the like. Other group members believed that many programs and resources were available to personnel and their families. They found that Coast Guard personnel were not 'paying attention to' or making good use of these resources. Along with this idea is the opinion that the Coast Guard is a job, and, like other jobs, is not obligated to care for one's family. Essentially, the Coast Guard may provide services, but it is the husband and family's responsibility to seek and utilize services. There was lively discussion around these differing opinions:

I got to say that, organizationally, our job is not here to foster your relationship. We're here to make sure your mission is complete and be as facilitative to your family as possible.

But see, that's the key, to be facilitative enough. They're not. There's a lot of things they could do a lot better in a lot of cases.

But our programs are in place, and now you need to go do it.

There's just a lot of the programs that they could do that could give people the knowledge, especially about family life. Just the basics, especially for the new people. If they start doing a few educational things about finances, how to save, how to look at long-term goals, IRAs, etc. They'll pay attention to a lot of that.

It comes back to, you have to depend on yourself...
Yeah, because the Coast Guard's not going to do that for that.

The Coast Guard's not here to run your family, though.
You've got to rely on your family.

This is a job. This is not your family's job. This is your job. Yes, your family's attached to it. What you have to do is be as passionate about your job as your family, because any situation that comes up. I've made this decision in my own head, which is, 'You know what, if my family needs me that bad, I'll find a way off this boat, and I'll deal with the fodder after.'

I agree.

I think the Coast Guard's very good about supplying resources. The members have to make a decision whether they're going to utilize those resources. I think most of the items you just talked about, there's a program that exists for it. It's your choice.

A lot of times it's the members of the Coast Guard that aren't paying attention to the resources that are out there. I saw the people sleeping through a lot of the Work/Life presentations. Again, 70% of what you spoke about was in that presentation. I mean, we go through a lot of this training, a lot of that stuff. It's there, but it's you as the member who needs to see if that resource is there. If he sleeps through the process, then it's lost to him.

Another husband countered this last argument with his own argument about issues of confidentiality when seeking assistance from Coast Guard affiliated staff. When staff that hear complaints or provide counseling are affiliated with the Coast Guard, their first obligation is to the Coast Guard and its Command. Knowing this, Coast Guard personnel may tend to be less revealing of issues around family or colleagues. Problems among personnel residing in close quarters for two months on the ocean are sometimes unavoidable, but personnel may be reluctant to discuss any problems with anyone affiliated with the Coast Guard, as their obligations to the Coast Guard may supercede confidentiality:

There's also the apprehension about, if I ask for help, what's my supervisor going to think? What's the Coast

Guard going to think? That whole genre is there, but let's face it. The first thing the guy tells you is, 'Hey this is confidential between you and I.' And the second thing he tells you is, it's confidential till blah, blah, blah. I understand that the man has a certain job he's got to fulfill, and I understand that he's got a certain commitment to the Coast Guard, but anyone who says they've never gotten angry on this boat is a liar. Anyone who's said they didn't feel like beating the shit out of somebody is another liar.

Confidentiality was a major reason that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) received high praise from husbands. The EAP provides counseling, drug/alcohol intervention, workshops and other social services to military and federal employees and their families. These services are offered free of charge by contracted agencies and individuals. In other words, EAP service providers are not direct employees of the Coast Guard or any other military service. The EAP is a fairly recent addition to services for Coast Guard families and has only been available for approximately the past two years. Those husbands who utilized services from the EAP seemed very satisfied with the program. One husband reported receiving a home visit from an EAP provider, and planned to utilize their counseling services to assist his wife, who had difficulty coping alone. Husbands were happy with the cost-free, confidential service that EAP provides. Husbands and their families seemed to feel more comfortable about issues of confidentiality when speaking to a 'civilian', rather than to a Coast Guard affiliated employee:

Well, I think the EAP program's fantastic. Having to deal with it a couple of times, I think it's good. And I think it's one of the smarter things that the Coast Guard or the federal government has done for their employees. If you need to utilize service, it's free, and I highly recommend it.

We just got visited by EAP (Employee Assistance Program), so we're going to start using them. Because my [wife] really doesn't have anybody to talk to. She doesn't have friends. We're going to start using that (EAP) for counseling and maybe that will help with other things that go wrong in the house. Us guys, we don't see the signs that women throw off, so I might be missing something. So, maybe if she talked to somebody...

The good thing about EAP is that, when you call it you're not talking to a Coast Guard person. You're talking to a civilian, and it's free and confidential.

It's all confidential.

The 'Welcome Aboard' package is another very useful resource available to Coast Guard members and their families. The Welcome Aboard package is a packet of information given or sent to the Coast Guard member several weeks or months before transferring to a new station or ship. This package contains information and phone numbers about housing, schools, medical care and other resources available in the community that the Coast Guard member and his family will be moving to. Unfortunately, husbands report that they have seldom received 'Welcome Aboard' packages from the stations that they were (or are) transferring to. One husband blames this lack of consistency in sending out the much-needed packages on the division of the Coast Guard into 'districts', covering different parts of the country. One district may deem it important to send out Welcome Aboard packages, while another may not routinely send out packages. This same husband, although he received a Welcome Aboard package for this current ship, found that it took some effort on his part to get them to send one. Husbands feel that, without

these packages, the transfer to a new station becomes much more difficult and stressful for wives and families:

My first [station], my second one and the one I'm going to never sent out a Welcome Aboard package. This one did. For this one I actually had to take the step and say, "I've gotten absolutely nothing. What's going on?" If it's service wide, then it should be following you in form pattern, but it's not, because you've got a different office for each different district or each different group as far as the Coast Guard is concerned. You've got the Coast Guard in general standard and each district or group will put their own little standards in there. They don't have to send this Welcome Aboard package, so you're sitting there pulling your hair out, or what's left of your hair out trying to figure out, 'Who do I talk to? How do I find these people?' Trust me. I know with this last one {laughs}. In this case, once I got a hold of a couple of people, it seemed as though it was going to be a little more helpful.

I haven't seen much of family support. When I moved up here, I didn't even see a 'Welcome Aboard' packet or anything like that. My wife didn't receive a phone call or anything to welcome her into the Coast Guard family {or particular ship}. It was a little awkward, just stepping in and saying, 'Well, I'm going to report to the boat the 21st, and I'll see you whenever I get back.' There wasn't any communication [from the Coast Guard].

Another program administered through the Work/Life office is referred to as the 'Special Needs' program. This program services families who have children with special needs. Families must register their child with the Special Needs program, providing medical and other documentation as verification. Families are then supposed to receive special consideration regarding frequency and locations of transfers. Personnel in the Special Needs office also serve as liaisons for families with schools, agencies and medical services in the area where the family is stationed. The husband who previously spoke of his stepson with Bipolar Disorder,

had registered his child with Work/Life's Special Needs program. He found that Work/Life was helpful in providing important contacts for his wife regarding their son, but they fell short when it came time to transfer to another station. He blamed much of it on the lack of communication between the 'Command' (that handles transfers) and the Work/Life office:

I've dealt a lot with work/life. They're supportive for my wife. When we found out that we would be moving to California, Work/Life gave her phone numbers to every housing office, e-mail addresses, web sites. They were really supportive to her in that way, but getting the Coast Guard to deal with them when it comes time for transfer season and stuff, it never happens. I have a special needs child, because he's bi-polar, and that's why they're involved in our lives, because of his medical condition. Last time when I was supposed to transfer, I had doctors saying that my son needed a consistent life. Me going out to sea was not giving him a consistent life. I'd had 3 years straight on board this ship and I was told, 'You're either going to do another year on that boat or 3 more years on another boat. Come to find out, they never even talked to work/life. They never looked into this special needs case. The Coast Guard is supposed to deal with Work/Life. So, yeah, it supports the wife in getting information and stuff, but in dealing with our whole situation, Work/Life is part of the Coast Guard, but it's not part of the CoastGuard. If they had worked together, instead of one ignoring the other.

The above might also be an example of the needs of the Coast Guard coming first, with families as a secondary consideration. But, as one husband comments, 'half' of the personnel on board a ship will (most likely) be married, and the Coast Guard needs to make services more accessible to their families. He felt that, if the Coast Guard is going to provide a service to families, then they should not leave it to families to do the outreach for that service:

There's a hundred people on the boat. Half of them are going to be married, so there's 50 people out there that are doing the same thing I'm doing. It should be brought up when you get stationed on a boat. Work/life should make contact with your spouse, and say, 'You know what. Once a month we'll meet here, blah blah blah. Take the kids down. We have kids' days..' Whatever. Rather than my wife calling up a couple of other people and saying, 'Let's do something.' It should be brought to them {wives} rather than you having to search it out. If they're going to label it as a service, that this is a service we provide, well then you should provide it. Not make someone seek it out.

Wives rated 'Coast Guard sponsored programs' as the least supportive of all five support systems on the post-discussion questionnaire. A mean score of 2.1 (Figure 3) placed Coast Guard sponsored supports just below 'wives clubs' (mean score of 2.3). Forty percent of wives gave 'Coast Guard sponsored programs' a '1' rating, indicating that they felt that Coast Guard sponsored programs provided the least support during deployments. Wives often have more direct experience with the frustrations of dealing with Coast Guard sponsored supports than their husbands, since they are the ones who have to contact and rely upon these supports while their husbands are away. During focus group sessions wives related comments and stories that ranged from general frustrations with the system to stories about serious problems that could have been prevented by adequate intervention.

In general, wives expressed disappointment in the Coast Guard's lack of adequate support and services. Wives found that the services that were 'advertised' through the Work/Life office were rarely a reality. Apparently, the Coast Guard would inform families that helpful services and information would be available

through the Work/Life office. Out of all the groups, only one wife found accessing services through the Work/Life office to be 'quick' and easy. Like some of the husbands reported, she felt that, "It's just a matter of accessing it and doing it." However, most wives complained that they rarely received 'Welcome Aboard' packages, were never invited to deployment seminars and often received the 'runaround' from Work/Life and other Coast Guard offices when they called for assistance. One wife implied that staff in the Work/Life office only pretended to be trained professionals, and did not have enough knowledge to provide any assistance:

There's not a lot of Coast Guard support for wives for things that we may need help with.

Work/life doesn't do poop. I'm sorry, but they don't. I don't even know if they have that here on base. I think you have to go to [another base].

They're all talk, no action. Even for the military personnel. I mean, forget it.

'Oh, call us if you need help. We can help you.' You call and they're saying, 'Oh, we need this, this, this and this.'

[My husband] was on [another ship]. I was a first-time mom 1000 miles away from home. They say, "Oh, call Work/Life. They can help you." They don't do anything. If you don't have friends, you're stuck. They say, 'Oh, Work/Life is such a wonderful program.'

They don't have [deployment seminars]. That's a big joke. They all say they have those things, but they don't.

I haven't gotten a 'Welcome Aboard' package. I never got one.

What 'Welcome Aboard' package? There really is a big lack. And Work/Life is no better. They don't have a lot of information.

They get somebody with maybe just a certificate to go in there and act all professional, and they don't do anything for you.

Some other wives found that they didn't know who to ask for assistance with housing or medical issues. One of these wives had been paying for private medical insurance for years before she found out that medical was provided through the Coast Guard. Another wife found that the housing department on base only responded to a serious electrical problem when her husband and his ship's Command intervened. This story emphasized the feeling wives had that Coast Guard personnel did not listen to them when they requested services they were entitled to:

We've been here a year and a half and we still haven't put in a claim for [damages] when we moved, because I don't know who to go to. I've called people. I've gone to people. They just give me the runaround about everything. And he doesn't know, because it's here on base and different from the boat. I'm like, 'What do I do?' He's like, 'Oh, just forget it.' I don't want to just forget it, but I don't know what else to do. Nobody will help me.

Even medical for me. I've been here 7 months. They sent me a book, but I don't hear about the stuff {that's close by}.

I didn't know about TriCare either. I was paying for Blue Cross insurance for 4 years until I met these guys, because I didn't know about TriCare. Nobody told me about anything. I didn't know about [Local Clinic] until I had my 2nd child. We went to the little medical guy in the building down there and sat and looked at him and talked to him. And he couldn't help us. He didn't tell us.

Things like, when we moved in here. We were sitting down to dinner and the lights exploded all over us. Glass

was everywhere and they wouldn't do anything. I was like, 'They have to do something about this. Housing won't do anything. They're not listening to me.' He called and told his XO on the boat. The XO freaked out, I guess, and called District, and within 5 minutes I had 8 trucks on my front lawn. They listen to him. But the spouses aren't taken seriously, I guess, on most bases. I don't know. We haven't lived on a lot of bases. This is the only base we've lived on. If a wife calls with an issue, it's not a big deal. If a husband calls with an issue, then it's more of an issue. They'll get on it more than if just the spouse calls.

Most of the wives were annoyed and frustrated by the lack of information and services from the Coast Guard, but the families whose members have special health or emotional needs may suffer serious consequences if appropriate services are not in place for them. One wife's poignant story of her struggles with clinical depression and attempt at suicide illustrates her disillusionment with the lack of support when it was desperately needed. She admits partial responsibility for her slide into deep depression, because she did not immediately seek out proper care when she moved to a new station. However, she found that the Coast Guard did not take her special circumstances into consideration when they moved the family to a new location that included frequent deployments of her spouse. When she became desperate for assistance, immediate intervention was not provided. Now, in part as a result of her diminished faith in the Coast Guard's support system, she remains on a health plan that does not use military health and mental health services:

When we lived up in Maine I was diagnosed with severe clinical depression and my son had a big speech problem. [My husband] was definitely going to go to a boat, and he could have gone to a boat in New York. We told Work/Life. Work/Life was in touch with my doctors, in touch with my psychiatrist and my psychologist, and they all wrote out statements, 'Do not move them. They are not

ready to be moved. They need to be in a stable situation.' They moved us. I had had a bad history with depression and suicide and stuff. [My husband] went on his first patrol. That very first one. Even though I was around family, it didn't help. And [my son] had backslid, because he got out of the proper school that he was in. I didn't get in touch with the proper people down in the [nearby base] that I should have been in therapy like that {snaps fingers}. I didn't, so I kind of went in the wayside, and I ran up our bills pretty good. When he came home, he wasn't home 2 days from the deployment, and I OD'd. He called Work/Life. I was in touch with Work/Life right before he got home, trying to get some help. It happened to be Thanksgiving weekend. I didn't know services around here. I didn't know anything. The poop hit the fan. He came home. We went to the base's children's Christmas party. We came home and I went in the bathroom and I just did it. It was all the stressors. I didn't have any help. Then after that I said forget Work/Life, and I got my own help. So, I don't even deal with military doctors anymore. I have Uniformed Services Family Health Plan. I don't go to any military doctors or anything. I just won't.

The wife whose son had serious handicaps also told stories of her experiences with the Special Needs program. She was one of the first to register with this program when it was in its fledgling stage. This mother has received some assistance from the Special Needs program over the years, but she felt she had to be very aggressive and demanding to receive the appropriate assistance. The family always accepted new assignments without complaint, although they knew that it would have been best for their son if they had remained in one stable community that offered the best services. The family did receive a 'hardship transfer' at one point in her husband's career that placed them in closer contact with extended family members, as well as in closer proximity to the appropriate medical and educational facilities. ('Hardship transfers' are rare transfers given to personnel

who have serious family needs that can only be met in certain communities or locations.) However, a transfer to another state became a nightmare when it came to obtaining services from the new state's school system. The special Needs program did intervene for the family, but not until J and his mother went through a great deal of anguish and frustration:

Washington has heard a lot from me about their Special Needs program. We were one of the first people enrolled in it. [Director's name], at that time who was head, was the one who contacted everybody. They only had one person at this time. Now they've extended it, and it's gotten bigger. The woman hates me. She hates me. I always have something to say. I can always tell her, 'Look, you're not taking care of the needs of the people. This is what they need. This is what we need you to do for us. This is what counts.' And they don't like me, because I'm very outspoken and I speak my piece. Because I've been through so much stuff moving from community to community with this child. This is a child that really does need to be in one community. He needs to stay in the same environment. He needs to have the same people working with him, but we've never asked that. We've always taken our orders. Whatever you give us is fine. We'll work it out.

They let us move from [one state] to [another state], because my parents were there to give us the support. It's the hardship transfer. The doctor down there wrote and said, 'Look...' We were traveling almost cross-country to get specialists for him, because they couldn't handle him anywhere else.

We did have problems in [State]. We had severe problems in [State]. I was on the phone with Special Needs just about every day. I asked them, 'What are you going to do for me? What do you mean you can't do anything? You need to do something. You put us here. The Coast Guard put us here. The Coast Guard needs to take care of us.' I was on the phone with Washington. I was on the phone with everybody. There is not a person that I did not contact, because I was hot. Well, we had a lot of problems with the school district. The school district didn't want to

give J any services. 'He doesn't need speech. He doesn't need occupational therapy. He doesn't need physical therapy (PT). We took him and had him assessed at Children's Hospital. They said, yes, he needs 5 hours of PT. He needs 5 hours of this. He needs 5 hours of that. They said, 'Well, we're not going to provide it for him'. Meanwhile, I go through CHAMPUS to try and get services for him. They say, 'No. We're going to turn you down. You can't have home-based services.' Then I got a hold of Special Needs. It was approved in 5 minutes. That they did do for me.

Both of the above wives spoke of what could have been done differently by Work/Life or the Special Needs program to ease their transition to new stations. They felt that services and resources should have been made available immediately upon transferring. According to J's mother, the Work/Life office should have housing and school information available, but they don't seem to 'follow through' with any of the appropriate information:

I got the letters from my doctors that said, 'Don't move them.' Now they're moving us they should have said, 'Well, we have to move you, so let's see what services are available for you, so you'll have them on board right away.'

This is one of the things I dealt with the Special Needs Dept. on and it would fall into work/life or anything else. When they set these programs up, the programs are really good to help the dependents. The problem is there's no follow through on the programs. They have a chart of my son's handicapping conditions and what he requires. We're assessed to update it all the time. So then when we get transferred somewhere, they should have a list of services that are available through the state. We should be able to get a waiver on any waiting list, because we're coming in [on orders]. When we went to [State], any services for Jeffrey had a 3 to 5 year wait. By then we're gone. What area do I look do get a house in? Which one has the best special education for my child? They can't tell you. They don't have a clue.

Wives did find support and assistance from an unusual source, the ship's Command. The ship's Executive (XO) and Commanding (CO) Officers were kind and responsive to families in crisis, according to several wives. Officers seem to take the well-being of their personnel and families seriously. They can develop close relationships with a staff that they have gotten to know over the course of their assignment to the ship. The Work/Life office does not have the same opportunity to know and understand the needs of a ship's personnel. Commands also have the authority to make allowances or demands that may benefit the families of their crewmembers. The wife whose light fixture exploded found that the housing maintenance personnel 'listened to' the XO on her husband's ship, and only then took immediate action. Another wife tells her story of finding out that her unborn child may have Down's Syndrome. When she called her husband on the ship, the Command sent him home to deal with the crisis. J's mother found that the Commands at every station they lived at were caring and responsive when crises occurred with her son:

When we were in Maryland, I was pregnant with [my son] and I called the boat myself. I didn't even bother with the ombudsman. I had received a phone call from the doctor's office. I had had 2 miscarriages before my husband got in the service. I had gotten pregnant with my other one the first time. And one of the children had brittle bone disease. The AFP test had come out high and they had called me and that's when we found out. My first son was fine. My second son, they had the dates wrong. Well, at that point I didn't have any proof that they had the dates wrong, so they kept telling me my dates were fine. They called me to tell me my son was going to have Down's Syndrome. I was 21 and my husband was underway. The doctor said, 'You need to come in. Your son's going to have Down's Syndrome. We need to do more tests.' Not, "This is a possibility.' Nobody told me that the AFP test was wrong

the majority of the time. Nobody told me anything. I called the cell phone right after that. 'The baby's going to have Down's Syndrome. I don't know what to do.' Within 3 hours he was on a small boat sent to shore, and {they} gave him a train ticket home.

Well see, I was very lucky, because of J. [My husband's] Commands have always taken care of us, whether it be shore duty, sea duty, whatever. When he was on [another ship] I had the Captain's number. So, if something happened, I didn't go through anybody else. I called the Captain. The Captain notified [my husband]. They were great with us. If I needed my husband, there was no question about me getting my husband. The Captain gave me the number to call his cell phone. He said, 'Any time, day or night, you can call me if you need me.', if he was underway.

One group of wives brought up a resource that had been very helpful to them when transitioning between stations or just for advice during deployments. This was an internet website for Coast Guard wives. This website had been set up through another website called 'Fredspace'. Fredspace was originally set up by a Coast Guard retiree to provide news and events coverage that was relevant to Coast Guard personnel and retirees. The site became very popular, and an offshoot was developed by and for Coast Guard spouses. One wife in the group reported that the website was recently closed down, due to a problem with gossip between wives on the site (The site had a live chat room). The other wives in the group were very disappointed to hear that it had closed down. Wives reported that they were able to 'hook up' with spouses at stations they were planning to transfer to, and receive information about schools, housing, medical information, etc. Ironically, the website had information about Work/Life programs for spouses, but Work/Life did not have information about the website as a resource:

The {best} program that they've had was 'Our House', the spouse's [inter]net. You could go on and you could say, 'Help me.' They closed, because of the fact that there were too many women that didn't have enough to do that gossiped and got offended by what somebody else posted.

They had a thing called 'Our Town'. When we were going to move I found all kinds of links to get to housing.

But this was done by a civilian {retired Coast Guard}.

Anyone could have gone on CGSpouses.net, but there were a lot of women on it because they had live chats. So they would help. I could hook up with someone [say] in Cape May.

I went and registered to give information on wherever we were living. So I've had a lot of people e-mail me and ask me, 'What's in the area? What are the best school districts?' That kind of thing.

I had blueprints e-mailed to me. When we got here I got the school information. I got stuff mailed to me.

It was such a good tool.

But there is nothing set up within the [Coast Guard] system. This was something that was outside. So, if you're a new Coast Guard spouse and you have no clue, you have no information.

They had information about Work/Life on the web site.

But a lot of spouses didn't know about it.

POSITIVES OF THE DEPLOYMENT LIFESTYLE

Although this is generally a study of the stressors associated with deployments, focus group participants were asked about the positives of a lifestyle that included deployments. After all, these men had chosen a profession in which deployments played a major role. Most husbands had no trouble thinking of ways

that the deployment lifestyle enriched their own lives, as well as that of their spouses. Being a crewmember on a ship as a member of the United States Coast Guard, husbands felt that they were performing an important and rewarding function. Some joked that, in hindsight, they really enjoyed their lifestyle on board ships. Husbands spoke of the 'camaraderie' and friendships that they were able to develop on deployments. They also enjoyed going to different ports and buying gifts for loved ones:

I've been on land for a while, and when they said you're going on a ship, I said, unhhhh. I can't handle it. I've got this going on and that going on... But, I get here and the crew is great. The ship is decent. The stuff we do, I sometimes have questions about that, but I like it a lot, and I'm glad I have the opportunity to do it now.

It's a good experience.

You feel like you're part of something, instead of sitting at a desk on land.

I know this sounds kind of corny, but when you look back on this, this will be some of the best times of your life, years down the road.

I've all ready done it. Like when I was on the (other) boat as a buoy-tender, as a deckie, busting chains, scraping buoys, and I just hated that. I'm just like, 'I want to get off this thing!' Now, I look back and I'm like, 'That was the best time!'

There's a certain amount of camaraderie.

You develop relationships with your crewmates that you would never develop in a factory.

You gain a lot of friends and the experience is pretty neat, so it's something to carry with you.

You get to go places.

One thing, I went to all these little countries everywhere, and I bought gifts strictly for the wife. Then I ended up giving them out to everybody. That was the biggest thing I liked. It was like Christmas. It was fun.

A couple of husbands spoke of the positive changes that deployments helped to make within themselves. One husband felt that deployments gave him a lot of time for 'introspection', so that he could think about and change the things he was doing that were negatively affecting his relationships with loved ones back home. Another husband felt that deployments helped to build strength of character and greater ability to deal with life crises. He used an example that was a bit morbid, but essentially got his point across:

It gives you time to think and re-evaluate your faults. So you can look back and say, 'Wow! I *am* doing this. When I get home, I'm going to try not to do this anymore.' So, it gives you a chance to think about your actions and try to better yourself as a person, so that the next time you see your spouse or your family, you can try and be a better person. It gives you a lot of time for introspection.

I think overall you build strength within you. Having to do without each other, especially if you're really dependent on each other. When you come to a unit like this, I think it builds strength. I think it builds a certain character. Like, if you applied it to another situation, like a spouse is sick and unable to take care of the children, it sort of instills that kind of attitude. Some people don't get that experience, and when a spouse does fall gravely ill, it's like a total shock. Besides the shock of the spouse being sick, now you've got everything else. You've got the homework. You've got the battle of the kids. You've got school problems. You've got house problems, car problems. Deployment might give you the coping skills to deal with things further down in your life, and it might be 20 years later.

This husband may have felt that deployments helped to prepare for family crises, but most husbands found that frequent deployments gave them a greater appreciation of their spouses and families in general. Husbands feel that they are less apt to take family life for granted. Because their time with families is short, husbands make a point of spending more quality time with loved ones. As husbands get reacquainted with their wives and families, they become more aware and appreciative of the small, everyday nuances of family life:

One of the benefits, I think, of having the schedule that we have is you make it a point to do more things. You make the time to do things with your family. For 11 years before I was in the Coast Guard I had a job and for 3 years, I was married before I was in the Coast Guard. Well, if you know you'll be home tomorrow, then you tend to put things off until tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day. Knowing that you're going to be here for only a short period of time, it makes you make the time. You're tired. You don't really feel like going for a walk, but you do, because you know that you're leaving in a week, 2 weeks or a month. It makes you use your time more wisely.

You appreciate all the little intricacies that you miss if you're there every day.

Our time together is really short and it's nice.

It's really appreciated.

That was one of the reasons why we got back underway {went back to working on a ship}, because my wife was like, I miss it when you come home and everything was new, and we'd go out and get to know each other.

You both grow to trust each other. If you're together every day, you take each other for granted. It also prevents a dependency. I know that, if I'm not around for a couple of days, she can take care of herself.

This last husband touched on the benefits that their wives gained from living through multiple deployments. Husbands found that, even if wives didn't enjoy deployments, they did grow stronger and more independent by experiencing the deployment lifestyle. Husbands seemed to take some comfort from the knowledge that their wives could 'handle' things in their absence. Wives were viewed as being well prepared to face crises on their own, even in the worst of circumstances:

It just makes her a stronger person.

I think for my wife, whether she realizes it or not, she's grown a lot.

They grow individually. That's the thing.

A lot of it is, she probably needed to {grow} and the other part of it is, she didn't have a choice. If she looked back 8 years, she'd probably be amazed at how much she accomplished on her own.

That's the same thing for my wife. My wife was always used to family. For the first year and a half that I was in the Coast Guard, and we were married, I came home every day. All of a sudden, it's like, now you run with it. Sorry, I know you don't like it, but here you go. It's a positive and a negative, but she's been able to see that she can accomplish things very easily.

I think we all appreciate that. We don't like to think about it, but I think if something were to happen to each one of us, I think our wives could work this out. Just knowing that she could handle this, she could probably handle [anything].

They're tough.

Much of the wives' discussion of the positives connected with the deployment lifestyle centered around the same points as that of the husbands. Several wives felt they had developed strength and independence as a result of their

husbands' frequent absences. Some were both proud and surprised at their growth as independent women and mothers. Even one wife, who found the whole deployment lifestyle to be 'horrible', was 'amazed' at what she could accomplish on her own:

You get more independence. [Otherwise,] after a while you tend to form into the wife mode and that's all you are.

It builds your self-esteem to know what you can handle. It makes you stronger. I think any wife with a husband who leaves a lot is much stronger than a wife who has a husband that works 9 to 5 Monday through Friday.

It makes you a stronger person. You're definitely more independent. You rely on yourself a lot more.

It's amazing what you can do for yourself, because I am the most co-dependent person in the whole entire world. I have never been away from family. (I think it's horrible. I can't take it anymore.) I think the only positive that I could come up with would be the same thing. It's amazing what I've figured out I can do by myself, without having any other support system.

Wives also echoed the husbands' view that deployments created a greater appreciation for each other in the marital relationship. They expressed that deployments helped couples to develop 'closer', 'stronger' relationships in which partners learned to communicate better with each other. Like the husbands, wives felt that, because time together was limited, couples made a point to 'enjoy' that time:

I think it makes your relationship stronger, because you don't take each other for granted.

You also learn how to communicate more.

It's made us closer. I think our relationship has gotten a lot closer.

I think that, with them going on deployments, you don't take each other for granted. You really enjoy each other's company when they're around, because you know that it's only going to be a short time and they're going to leave.

Most of the wives interviewed were very accepting of their husbands' job and the responsibilities it entailed. One group of wives had a discussion about the need to accept their husbands' frequent deployments. They believed that wives should be understanding of their husbands' profession and just 'go with the flow'. They went on to speak about wives they knew who pressured their husbands to leave the Coast Guard before the 20 year retirement date. If personnel leave before 20 years, they are not entitled to retirement benefits, including a monthly check, medical and lifetime privileges on military bases. One wife felt that joining the Coast Guard was one of the best things that could have happened to her family, due in large part to the fact that they could not otherwise have afforded medical care and decent housing. Although the last wife quoted below was a member in another group, her statements say a lot about the strength and positive attitudes that most husbands and wives have toward the United States Coast Guard:

You don't become dependent.

You just do what you do when you want to do it and you don't plan anything.

You don't sweat it.

Yeah. And you've just got to go with the flow. You can't get upset about it.

That's his career. That was his job choice. See, because I worked. I was a fast food manager, so he went through the same stuff with me. If I got called, I had to go. Because it

was my restaurant, if there was a problem, I'm gone. See ya. You know, because that was my responsibility. And as long as you understand [that] it's his responsibility, you take it better.

When she heard a lot of CG wives whine about, 'Why does he have to go on a boat', my neighbor always said, '*Coast Guard. Coast Guard.* He joined the Coast Guard.' I'm like, I might whine and complain, but I just vent.

They're orders. They're not invitations.

They're not asking him to a luncheon.

We've met so many wives that don't want to have anything to do with it, and they're so upset about the whole situation.

Or some of them, their husbands have 15 years in and they say, 'You're not going there. You're getting out.' And they get out.

15 years in!

Wasted.

I tell everybody, it's the best possible thing we could have ever, ever done. We have 4 kids. We can't afford medical insurance anywhere else. You can't afford...

Marriage in the military is more of a challenge, really, than it is anything else. And it's a new adventure that's amazing. I mean, you wouldn't change it for the world, because you learn.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Families experiencing deployment as a regular part of their lives certainly experienced stress associated with frequent deployments. However, the husbands and wives in this study also developed coping strategies that served them well during deployments and beyond. Both informal and formal supports helped families to cope, with varying success. The stressors, coping strategies and supports utilized by the families studied will be reviewed, with implications and suggestions for future research and programs.

Deployment Stages - Couples in this study experienced the 'roller coaster' of emotions that Reuben Hill spoke of in his study of families separated during World War II. The emotions and stressors that couples in this study experienced in association with the different stages of deployment were similar to those described by Logan (1987) and O'Beirne (1983). During the pre-deployment stage, both husbands and wives spoke of the tension and arguments that occurred just prior to deployment. Even though couples experienced these negative feelings, many reported that they were able to put these feelings aside in order to spend some quality time with each other before deployment began. Expecting that there would be some tension and anger before deployments, these couples seem to make a conscious effort to get through these feelings and work on spending positive time together.

Several husbands and wives spoke of the initial sense of relief that they felt in those first few days of deployment, when the tensions just prior to deployment dissipated. Several wives spoke of feeling a greater sense of freedom to pursue their own interests. Logan (1987) describes this sense of relief, as do Carlson and Carlson (1984), who found that Navy wives experienced a sense of 'liberation' at the beginning of deployment.

Several authors (Carlson & Carlson, 1984; Decker, 1978; Hill, 1949; Logan, 1987; O'Beirne, 1983) reported that the sense of freedom spouses felt was shortly replaced by feelings of depression and loneliness. In the current study, those spouses who experienced feelings of sadness and loss following the ship's departure, did not seem to experience that sense of freedom that other spouses spoke of. Eventually, these spouses were able to pull themselves out of depression by pursuing required schedules and routines, whether at sea or at home.

Many of the wives in this study found the middle weeks of deployment to be the most stressful for them. This was found to be due to what McCubbin and Patterson (1982) refer to as the 'pile-up of demands' on these temporarily single wives and mothers. In their study of Navy couples experiencing deployment, Carlson and Carlson found that daily life gradually built up stress and anxiety for wives. The wives in the current study missed their husbands more at this point in the deployment. They spoke of handling situations such as illness, school issues or preparations for events and moves without the assistance of their life partners. Husbands also felt helpless and frustrated when they heard about their wives' difficulties at home, and were unable to provide assistance.

However, when one looks logically at two-month deployments, everyday demands have less time to build up and the accompanying stress is of shorter duration, than in the six to eight month deployments studied by the above authors. In a preliminary study of Navy wives experiencing 6-month deployments (Finley), wives had to cope with demands that included the buying and selling of a car or home, moves, and other issues that couldn't be put off until their partner's arrival home.

Wives experiencing 6-month deployments also spoke more of the loneliness they felt when experiencing multiple weekends, holidays and entire winters without their husbands. Wives whose husbands deploy for two months at a time can reasonably expect that their husbands, although missing one or two major events or holidays, may be home shortly to spend the next series of important days with their families.

The final days of deployment are referred to by Logan as the 'anticipation stage' of deployment. Husbands and wives felt excitement as well as anxiety about the ship's impending return. Husbands may buy gifts for their families, while wives prepare special surprises for their husbands return. Husbands also worried about how many chores they would have to do upon their return, while wives frantically cleaned to ease their husbands' transition home. One of the most difficult issues to deal with for both husbands and wives was the problem of unanticipated delays in the ship's return. In the preliminary study, Navy wives often experienced 'channel fever', during which time they could see their husbands' ship anchored in the harbor, but their husbands were not allowed to leave the ship for several days

(Finley, 1994). Coast Guard wives weren't tortured by the sight of their husbands' ship in the harbor, but unanticipated delays were difficult nonetheless.

At the homecoming stage, husbands and wives were happy and excited to see each other after two months apart. However, the 'homecoming fantasies' (Figley, 1993) of husbands and wives differed, requiring adjustment of goals and plans from both parties. Husbands reported that they were tired, and just wanted to relax at home for the first few days. Wives were ready to pursue family outings and activities with their husbands, since they had engaged in family activities for two months without his company. Husbands and wives in this study seemed to be aware of each other's needs and preferences, and seemed to make an effort at compromising on their goals.

Homecoming also created a disruption to routines that had been established over the course of the two-month deployment. Husbands found that they initially had some difficulty fitting into a routine that their wives and families had established in their absence. Wives felt husbands disrupted or 'messed up' routines they had established over the course of the deployment. Both partners had to take time to readjust to each other and re-establish routines that were comfortable for both. Reuben Hill found that families who were well-adjusted before deployments, adjusted quickly and easily to routines after the homecoming. Logan's suggestion that families experiencing short-term deployment cycle may not reach this 'stabilization' period, did not appear to be true for families in this study. Although the 'stabilization' period was shorter for these families, husbands and wives found that they got back into their family routines fairly quickly following deployment.

Routines - In this study, the use of 'routines' emerged as an important tool that husbands and wives each utilized to cope with the deployment cycle. Husbands found that the ship's work routine kept them from dwelling on thoughts of missing home and family. Wives also found that maintaining routines at home kept them from becoming depressed during their husbands' absence. Working wives found that the busy routine at their jobs kept their minds off their husbands' departure as well.

Carlson and Carlson noted that families in their study developed routines and social rituals to help them cope with deployments. Wives in the current study established social rituals that included days spent with friends, recreation nights or visits to family and friends. These social rituals provided social support, as well as a way to keep their minds off of their husbands' absence. Keeping busy with social rituals and routines were effective in dissipating some of the nervous anxiety that families felt toward the end of deployments, while they waited for their husbands' return.

Boss, McCubbin and Lavee (1979) found that wives who established 'routines' that were not dependent their husbands 'being around' coped better with their husbands' absence. These routines were carried out to maintain a household and family during the wives' two-month experience as a single head-of-household. The establishment of these routines sometimes made for a difficult adjustment to the 'couple' as head-of-household, upon their husbands' return. Both husbands and wives in this study seemed to expect some disruption to routines, and were able to

adjust quickly to the changes. Therefore, the expectation that some disruption will occur upon the husband's return, essentially becomes a routine part of the deployment cycle. Families expect that they will have to adjust to having their spouse and father back home, so they can plan the best methods to cope with his re-entry. Also, 'expecting that unexpected' circumstances may delay homecoming can also help families cope better with this frustrating, not infrequent, occurrence at the end of the deployment.

Children - Respondents in this study noted that their children's responses to deployment differed across developmental stages. The literature provides support to these parents' comments about their children's reactions (Halloran; Long; McCubbin & Lavee; O'Beirne). For example, the father whose baby didn't know him when he returned from deployment, found that his child experienced the 'stranger anxiety' that's common to that age group. Pre-school aged children became clingy and had trouble understanding where Daddy went and when Daddy would be home again.

Fathers saw older children as more affected by the frequent moves made in the Coast Guard, than by the temporary absence of their father. Alex Rodriguez (1984) mentions that the effects of moves, "...on children at certain developmental stages where continuity of peer group relationships and growing autonomous functioning away from the family are important." (pg. 60) Patricia Long (1986) reports that Orthner's study of 2,000 Air Force children, found that, "...the longer the adolescents remained in the same community, the better adjusted they were." (p.

36). However, so little research has been done on the experiences of military children, that it is not possible to determine what effects moves or routine deployments have on children.

Both husbands and wives found that older children and adolescents developed maturity and responsibility as a result of their father's absence. Wives expressed that, although this could be a positive outcome of deployment, they did not want children growing up too soon by taking on too much responsibility in their father's absence. Mothers in this study seemed very aware of the problems with placing too much responsibility on their children during deployments, and would make an extra effort to allow their children to engage in fun, age-appropriate activities.

The general impression from this study was that families adjusted fairly well to the father's temporary absence. The children's positive adjustment seemed dependent on five factors:

- 1) The techniques parents used to prepare children and maintain their well-being throughout the deployment process were executed in accordance with their differing ages and developmental stages. This included giving information to children about Daddy's deployment that was appropriate to their level of understanding, as well as engaging them in activities that helped them to remember Dad or prepare for his homecoming.
- 2) Children maintained some contact with their father through pictures, e-mails or by telephone. Communication helped them to remember Dad,

- as well as easing the reunion phase for children (Halloran; Long; O'Beirne).
- 3) The mothers in this study maintained a positive attitude and were able to make a good adjustment to the deployment cycle. The mother's attitude and adjustment to deployment can directly affect her children's attitude and adjustment (Applewhite & Mays; Hill; Patterson & McCubbin; Rodriguez; Wersch). Part of this adjustment entailed taking on the roles and responsibilities of both mother and father during deployments. Patterson and McCubbin (1984) found that maintaining an 'androgynous gender-role orientation' positively affected the family's ability to cope with separation. These wives seemed to handle their responsibilities well as temporarily single parents. Husbands expressed both admiration and concern for their wives' ability to juggle all these responsibilities.
 - 4) Wives maintained a close network of friends and neighbors that provided social and practical support during deployments. A network of social support for families minimized the negative effects that a father's absence can create (Hiew; Patterson & McCubbin). The mothers in the current study relied on each other for advice, child care, and companionship for themselves and their children.
 - 5) The maintenance of routines for children provided structure and kept them busy during deployments. These routines included scheduling homework, meal, play and bedtimes. A couple of parents included nightly e-mails to Dad in their routines. These routines also helped

mothers to cope, as they maintained a sense of order and discipline in the home during their time as single parents.

Although the maintenance of routines was important during deployments, the disruption of discipline and routines that occurred once Dad returned home could be problematic for these families. Husbands and wives experienced problems around the reassignment of roles and boundaries once Dad was back home (Drummet, Coleman & Cable; Hill; Riggs). Wives felt frustrated and a little jealous when Dad came back in to the house, setting new rules and boundaries for the children that disrupted the carefully established routine wives had established for children. Husbands also could feel out of place and unwanted when they re-enter the home. "In turn, returning spouses may feel superfluous or excluded from the family if they are impeded in resuming their previous functions." (Drummet, Coleman & Cable; 2003) Some husbands would 'tighten up' on discipline, while others would 'loosen up' the rules of the house in order to spend more time with the children, and not appear to be the 'bad guy'. Wives then felt that they were being viewed as the 'bad guy'.

Hill found that families quickly re-established old routines and settled back into comfortable roles. The parents in this study tended to settle back into routines after a few days. But those first few days following the homecoming could be unsettling for parents. Both husbands and wives expected that the phenomena of 'disrupted routines' would occur during the homecoming phase. This awareness can lead to steps that can be taken by both partners to lessen the frustration

involved. For example, prior to the homecoming, couples can discuss which 'disruptions' are acceptable, as opposed to those 'disruptions' that may cause too much confusion and anxiety for children. Further exploration of the 'positive' and 'negative' disruptions that affect families at homecoming could lead to a 'do's and don't's' list that could be helpful to families experiencing regular deployments.

Children with special needs, particularly those with emotional needs, can be greatly affected by their father's frequent departures and returns (Rodriguez, Wertsch). As one father states about his bi-polar stepson, "Every time I'm getting ready to leave, or getting ready to come back, it really throws him off kilter." Children who have such difficulty handling deployments need consistent, ongoing mental health services, as well as consistent routines at home.

Parents with children who have special needs, not unexpectedly, experience more stress during deployments. The parent left at home needs to step up the taking on of androgynous gender tasks to meet these special needs. As the mother of the child with serious disabilities stated before:

When he goes out to sea it really is a lot different than the normal stress of a husband going out to sea, only because you've got the medical care, you've got the educational care, you've got it all on your plate.

It becomes crucial that these families have appropriate medical, educational and/or mental health services in place. The Special Needs program out of the Work/Life office does make an attempt to meet the needs of these families, but were not

sufficient to meet the needs of the three families that had registered for their services.

The two mothers of special needs children cited the lack of available information and resources that was greatly needed prior to transfer. It seems that the Special Needs program should have personnel available that would research resources at the location a 'Special Needs' family will be transferring to, so that information is readily available once transfer occurs. It would also be helpful to maintain a list of transfer areas that do not have sufficient resources available. This list could then be made available to Commands that handle transfers.

One problem cited by the father of the child with bipolar disorder, was the lack of communication between Special Needs program personnel and The 'Command' that handles transfers. This problem could seemingly be resolved if the two parties were placed in contact with each other, either through their own means, or with the registered service member's prompting. However, even if both departments do communicate with each other, the 'Command' must first meet the needs of the Coast Guard. "This requires that all personal and familial goals be subservient to the military goal." (Freeman, 1994, p. 85) This can mean that service members with special needs families may have some difficult decisions to make when it comes time for re-enlistment in the Coast Guard.

This study was not designed to address the long-ranging debate in the literature as to whether more children in military families suffer from emotional problems than those in the civilian population. But, of the husbands and wives

interviewed, there was nothing said that would lead one to believe that their children experienced more emotional or behavior problems as a result of being the children of a deployed father. It cannot be denied that these children encountered stressors unique to the military family, including frequent moves and deployments. However, it would be unfair to compare the welfare of children whose father's absence is due to routine deployments to the literature on single-parent families, that usually include negative variables, such as death of a partner or divorce. Instead, more studies of the emotional health of children who experience work-related absences of a parent should be conducted, if feasible.

Household Issues - On the post-discussion questionnaire, both husbands and wives rated home management issues as significantly problematic for wives during deployments. The pile-up of demands over the course of deployment (Carlson & Carlson; McCubbin & Patterson) may have contributed to this feeling that household issues, such as finances and car care, became problematic. Wives were much less concerned with the problems of cooking and cleaning during deployments, than the husbands felt them to be. This incongruence on the post-discussion questionnaires can possibly be explained by the assumption that wives primarily did these tasks anyway, whether husbands were home or not. Large yard, household and car maintenance tasks were seen as the husband's domain, which is why several of the wives commented that some chores needed 'a man' to do them. Several of the husbands and wives interviewed seemed to appreciate living in base housing, where a crew was available to perform home maintenance and repairs.

Husbands, especially, seemed to feel more comfortable on deployments, knowing that any large home maintenance issues would be taken care of by base housing maintenance crews.

In the preliminary study of Navy wives (Finley, 1994), many more household management tasks had to be dealt with by the wives alone, due to the 6-month length of deployment. Power of attorney rights became essential to these wives. They often had to buy cars, houses and make major moves during a deployment. Navy wives also spoke of installing washers and dryers by themselves, making their own car repairs, etc. These wives obviously developed a great deal of independence in tackling these tasks, but the pile-up of demands could become overwhelming over time, despite assistance from neighbors and maintenance staff.

Safety Issues – In addition to reducing worries about home maintenance, base housing also provided a safe environment for families to live in while the service member is on deployment. In most cases, base housing is gated, with security officers in place. Wives commented that they felt more secure in base housing than residing out in the community, as some of them had experienced previously. These comments reflected those made by Navy wives in the preliminary study (Finley). Some of the wives interviewed in the previous study lived off base in low-income area, because there were long waiting lists for base housing at the time.. They reported feeling less secure, and hoped to move into base housing as soon as possible.

Gossip – Both husbands and wives rated gossip as the least problematic issue during deployments, but the focus group discussions told a different story about the negative effects of gossip. Gossip reportedly infected some wives' clubs to the point that some wives turned away from this source of support. Gossip also infected the Spouses Net (the web site designed by and for Coast Guard wives) to the point that the site was shut down. In the small town atmosphere of base housing, damaging rumors can start and run rampant. Rumors can also start on the ship, but the ship's Command can usually step in before rumors go too far.

Gossip travels rapidly via word-of-mouth, e-mail or telephone. Gossip that is typical on the ship includes rumors about when and where the ship will dock. These rumors can create a security risk for the Coast Guard, as well as raise false hopes or anxieties of service members and their families about the return home from deployment. Other gossip on the ship may center around infidelities, which can be hurtful to marriages, possibly resulting in divorce. Rumors can range from serious to absurd, but all have the potential to be damaging to couples and families.

Surprisingly, nothing was found in the literature on military families that touched on the problem of gossip. Gossip was added as an element in this study, because it was discovered to be problematic for some of the Navy wives in the preliminary study. Therefore, the following suggestions are offered, (without benefit of empirical support) as methods to curb the potentially damaging effects of gossip:

- 1) Provide training to ombudspersons that include rules for gossip. This training can be applied to wives clubs and other informal gatherings sponsored by the ombudsperson. These rules can derive from basic group work tenets that include confidentiality and respect for other group members.
- 2) Maintain Coast Guard sponsored web sites for wives that include monitoring and a means to report troublemakers on the website. Also, rules for gossip can be posted on the web sites' chat rooms.
- 3) Provide ways for families who live in base housing, to engage in activities that keep them busy, while contributing to the community. Respondents in this study (as well as in the preliminary study) who were busy with work or family activities, didn't listen or respond to rumors on base. Individuals who were 'bored' or seeking recognition, were reported to be the most likely to spread rumors. Increasing voluntarism or providing other meaningful activities for these individuals may help turn their energies in another direction.
- 4) The spread of rumors via e-mail and telephone during deployments can be decreased if information on their damaging effects is included in pre-deployment seminars and other informational literature that is distributed to Coast Guard personnel and their families.

These suggestions may help to quell the damaging effects of rumors, but it is unrealistic to expect that people will entirely cease the activity of gossip on any base, since gossip flourishes in every community in every corner of the world.

Communication – The literature on families experiencing deployment emphasizes the need for families to communicate with the deployed spouse to ease the adjustment to separation, as well as to maintain the marital relationship (Black, Carlson & Carlson, Figley, Hill, Long, O’Beirne). These authors referred to communication in the form of letters, videotapes and phone calls. The advent of e-mail has enabled families to leap from sporadic communication via letters and infrequent phone calls to daily communication.

Husbands and wives in this study found that daily connectivity eased the loneliness of deployments. Wives were also able to get answers to questions about household maintenance, financial or other practical issues that came up on the home front. Families enjoy having daily connectivity, and cannot imagine being without it. However, these expectations could lead to disappointment if wives aren’t hearing often enough from their mates. Nancy Jackson, a reporter for the New York Times, interviewed Christopher Michel, a longtime Navy navigator, on the subject:

‘In Saudi Arabia during the Persian Gulf War a decade ago...It was all about mail, physical mail...but today expectations have changed. People expect to hear every day.’
(N.Y. Times; 9/27/01; p. G6)

Jackson adds, “The Internet is largely responsible for changing these expectations.”
(Ibid; p.G6)

The daily communication of today’s technology, provides tremendous support to families separated by time and distance, but it can have its drawbacks.

The problem of gossip was discussed in the above section. Along with gossip, there is the danger of leaking information about a ship's whereabouts, creating a breach in the ship's security. Negative communications that include complaints about daily difficulties back home can also be frustrating to husbands, as they are helpless to intervene from so far away.

Many of these problems could be averted if recommendations were provided to families during pre-deployment seminars or in deployment handbooks, such as:

- 1) Encourage husbands and wives to maintain brief daily contacts via e-mail in order to diminish loneliness and worries about each other.
- 2) Establish guidelines about safety and security over the internet and telephone. One web site for Navy wives, "...urges its visitors never to use sailors' full names or specifics about... [their] whereabouts."
(Jackson; p. G6)
- 3) Coach spouses about using positive communications during e-mails and phone calls. This could also include a dos and don'ts list for conversations.

The introduction of e-mail onto ships seems to be only the beginning of an age when daily communication has become the norm. Hopefully, instant messaging service will become secure enough to offer it on all ships that deploy. As satellite communications improve, families may be able to see and hear their deployed family member on a daily basis. New ways to communicate are developing rapidly,

making the need to effectively manage new forms of communication ever more urgent.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

As discussed above, the establishment of routines, keeping busy and daily communication, served as internal support system. External support systems included informal social supports and the more formalized support offered through the Coast Guard or other outside resources. The respondents in this study found informal support systems, including relatives and (especially) friends, to be the most helpful during deployments.

Shipboard Supports – The husbands interviewed seemed to maintain a positive support system with peers on board the ship. They also found creative ways to find ‘space’ for themselves and enjoy some ‘alone time’. From the Command’s perspective, the morale of a crewmember is important to the effective operation of the ship, as well as the Coast Guard in general. From a social services perspective, morale of the crewmember can also affect the ‘morale’ of family members back home. The crewmembers interviewed had a healthy attitude toward their work and crewmates that served them well over the two-month deployments.

Social Supports – Social supports for wives include the informal support networks of relatives, friendships and wives clubs (or deployment support groups). Several

researchers have noted a positive connection between the family's ability to adapt to deployments and the use of informal support systems (Bowen; Carlson & Carlson; Hiew; McCubbin). These informal support systems are analyzed separately in this study, with results that varied considerably between the three.

Relatives were found to be the primary social support for enlisted families by earlier researchers (Bowen; Carlson & Carlson; Hill; Rosen & Moghadam). Husbands in the current study also perceived relatives to be the most supportive during deployments. However, the reality for many of the wives living in base housing, was that relatives were not a readily accessible means of support. In fact, relatives often cannot be relied on as an accessible means of support, due to the frequent moves encountered by Coast Guard personnel and their families.

Friendships with other wives on base were discovered to be an extremely valuable source of support to the wives in this study. These wives relied on each other for emotional, social and practical support. They shared a commonality of experiences, even though their husbands may not be on the same ship at the same time. In a recent study of Air Force families, Bowen et al. (2003) found that informal community supports contributed to family adaptation. They found that informal supports had an even more substantial effect on 'sense of community', which, in turn, affected 'family adaptation'. This implies that, families who reside in base housing develop the informal supports of friendships that make them feel comfortable and safe in the base housing community.

All of the wives in the current study reside in base housing. Base housing provides a tremendous opportunity for wives to develop friendships into their greatest source of support.

Those who reside in off-base housing can be isolated from the support that these wives experienced (Bowen; Carlson & Carlson; Knox & Price). The Coast Guard should consider this important support system as a benefit of base housing, and pass this information along to personnel who are going to a base that has deploying ships. Obtaining base housing in high-demand areas has been a problem for some families, especially young families of lower-ranking enlisted personnel, who may have low priority for obtaining housing. Also, several base closures in recent years have resulted in base housing closures.

Friends were considered by the wives in this study to provide the most support during deployments. All of the wives interviewed lived on base housing, and drew their friendship networks from the housing complex. Therefore, following suggestions are made, based on the importance of developing and continuing this support system:

- 1) Keep housing open to Coast Guard families of all enlisted ranks should be a priority for the Coast Guard. After all, if families feel that sense of community with their neighbors, they may be more likely to tolerate the Coast Guard lifestyle.
- 2) Provide opportunities through community functions that could be useful in getting families started on developing friendships.

- 3) Continuing and enhancing the practice of assigning a 'sponsor' from the base that the new family is being transferred to. This will also help wives to develop connections and friendships as soon as they arrive on base.

'Work' as a support, was also included as part of the post-discussion surveys. Carlson & Carlson, as well as Reuben Hill, reported that women found social support and personal enjoyment from work. Respondents in the current study found work to be personally rewarding and provided a way to keep busy, so as not to dwell on deployments. However, most respondents did not present the workplace as a substantial support system for wives during deployments. Instead, focus groups (especially the wives) emphasized the importance of friendships on base as their main source of support. Not enough data emerged about the workplace to support previous findings in the literature.

Wives' clubs (deployment support groups) were not perceived by respondents in this study as a major support system, but not for the reasons that were examined in the literature review. Carlson & Carlson (1984), Rosen & Moghadam (1989) and Orthner (in Drummet, Coleman & Cable, 2003) found that enlisted wives rarely made use of wives' clubs for support. Of all the respondents, only two husbands were of officer rank, so a comparison could not be made between officer and enlisted families on their use of support. The reasons set forth in the literature regarding the limited use of wives' clubs by enlisted personnel, included the finding that more enlisted wives worked, and so drew support from

colleagues at work Carlson & Carlson; Knox & Price). Of the respondents in the current study, few of the wives worked outside the home, and little was said of colleagues as a support system for wives. Several authors also found that enlisted families living off base did not have access to support groups (Bowen, Carlson & Carlson; Knox & Price). All of the wives and most of the husbands resided in base housing, so access to groups was not the issue.

Husbands from the USCGC Garfield were the most vocal about the negative aspects of wives clubs. They felt the wives' clubs served as rumor mills, which reportedly turned a lot of their wives off to this form of support. The development of cliques within the support groups was also of concern to respondents. Officer wives' clubs and enlisted wives' clubs were collapsed into one general wives' club more than ten years ago in most of the military services. This change may have been politically correct, but this move has most likely made wives' clubs more susceptible to developing cliques around rank and social status. Rosen & Moghadam found that enlisted wives may also be afraid to speak freely about their husbands in front of officers' wives, due to the possible negative effects on their husbands' careers:

...there is evidence that participation in formal wives' group activities,...is regarded with some suspicion by enlisted wives, who feel that meetings may serve as a way of pipelining information about family problems to those in command.

(Rosen & Moghadam; p. 193)

It would never be suggested that wives' clubs return to the old format of splitting them according to officer and enlisted status. That would be horribly incorrect

politically, and a step backward in the perception of equality among wives. However, it seems that families may reap more benefits from wives clubs that are run by a professional social worker trained in the use of group work techniques, including the maintenance of group cohesion and group confidentiality.

Coast Guard Supports – The focus group discussions and post-discussion questionnaires reflected the findings in the literature, that military families view military sponsored support systems negatively (Carlson & Carlson; Freeman; Henning). Husbands debated the Coast Guard's responsibility in providing programs that would assist families during deployments. Some felt that adequate programs were available, but families were not accessing them. Others felt the Coast Guard did not offer adequate programs to themselves or their families. Wives expressed frustration with the lack of follow through with services and information from the Coast Guard.

The limited confidentiality of Coast Guard support programs makes service members and their families hesitant to seek services for sensitive issues. Mental health professionals employed by the military have an obligation to share information with commanding officers, if it is deemed necessary (Knox & Price). Families are becoming more comfortable with the use of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP's) to address mental health and other sensitive issues, since EAP's are not under the same obligations as Coast Guard affiliated professionals. Unfortunately, many Coast Guard personnel and their families are not aware of EAP programs and services. Knowledge of and access to these services is crucial to

personnel and their families who have significant emotional, mental health or substance abuse problems.

Many complaints from respondents were about the poor dissemination of needed materials and information by the Work/Life office. The 'Welcome Aboard' packages were rarely received by families when transferring to a new station. The Special Needs office often lacked the necessary resources for information and referral to appropriate services. Wives, especially, found that they didn't know where or who to go to when they needed general information or assistance with problems. Questions about medical, housing, moves, etc., were often left unanswered.

Pre-deployment seminars or workshops did not seem to be offered to families on a consistent basis. Several wives reported that they had not heard of pre-deployment seminars. William Black (1993) notes that pre-deployment seminars are usually poorly attended when they are offered. Drummet, Coleman & Cable (2003) feel that pre-deployment seminars can be helpful in providing information on what to expect during deployments, as well as providing information about child care, finances and the like. They believe that, "...families would benefit from mandated programs that promote advance preparation on separation management." (p. 284). Mandating programs for families most likely lies outside of the Coast Guard's control, and would probably not receive a warm reception if they were. However, pre-deployment seminars could be presented more regularly, with the addition of new issues for discussion. Advertising, as well

as presentation of these seminars in an inviting manner, may encourage greater attendance as well.

Several wives commented positively on the support that they felt from the ship's Command, especially in times of crisis. In a recent study of unit support (unit leadership and its provision of supports to families) and family adaptation in Air Force communities by Bowen et al. (2003), it was found that, "Unit support has a substantial influence on sense of community, which in turn significantly affects family adaptation." (p. 42) If families are made to feel supported and 'listened to' by the Command of their spouse's ship, they are more likely to feel more a part of the ship's or home base's community, and thus maintain a positive attitude about their husbands' work.

Another resource that wives had found helpful to them was the Spouses' Net, a website by and for Coast Guard wives. This site provided information and resources to wives that could be invaluable to families that are moving or experiencing deployment. The reinstatement of a website that is sponsored by the Coast Guard would provide easy access to information, resources and services. Of course, appropriate precautions would have to be taken to ensure security for Coast Guard personnel, as well as some sense of privacy for their families.

The results of this study point to a need for improved coordination and dissemination of information and services to Coast Guard families. Information and services can range from general information about base locations and facilities to referrals to the appropriate resources for families with special and/or multiple needs. Informal supports, such as friendship, can be fostered through community

involvement. Wives' clubs need to be revised to be more welcoming and supportive to wives experiencing deployment. Communication between Commands, Work/Life and the families themselves needs to improve, as well.

For several years, the ombudsperson for a ship has been given the responsibility of acting as liaison between the ship, it's Command, and the families attached to the ship. She has also acted in the capacity of host for wives' club (or deployment support group) functions. Wives may call upon her with problems and concerns. Ombudspersons receive little training for their positions. They are also expected to perform several functions as a volunteer, in addition to the responsibilities entailed in being the wife of a spouse who frequently deploys. Ship's Commands often have difficulty recruiting volunteers for ombudsperson, because of the time and responsibility involved. Ombudspersons can also be placed in awkward, and potentially damaging situations, if they are handling family issues that are beyond their training and expertise.

Social workers have the training and expertise to carry out all of the above tasks, including coordination of services, maintenance of resources, as well as carrying out many of the tasks that can be overwhelming and burdensome to an ombudsperson. The Coast Guard's recent 'move' from the Department of Transportation into the newly formed Department of Homeland Security, has increased the availability of financial resources. The Department of Homeland Security, as well as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, may have opened a window of opportunity to provide more services to families of Coast Guard personnel. The Coast Guard is growing as a result of these world changes, making retention of

personnel a priority again. Military wives have been known to greatly influence their husbands' decisions to remain in the service (Bowen, Thoreson & Goldsmith). Perhaps this is the time to propose that a social worker be attached to every base that has deploying ships. The social worker's duties would include the following:

- 1) Meet and greet new families when they become stationed on the ship. Provide general information to these families about facilities in the area. Determine if any special needs exist.
- 2) Plan and present pre-deployment seminars in conjunction with the ship's Command. Include information about communication, emergencies, as well as what families should expect from deployments.
- 3) Develop and maintain information and referrals for the local area, including medical resources, child care information, EAP linkages and mental health services.
- 4) Act as liaison between the families and the ship's Command.
- 5) Assist wives with developing deployment support groups that are mutually supportive and utilize group work principals.
- 6) Develop community activities that encourage wives and families to interact and develop friendships that could be key to a family's adjustment.

Recommendations for further improvement of support for Coast Guard families are as follows:

- 1) Continue to expand on use of EAPs to address more extensive mental health needs of families.
- 2) Develop and monitor an internet website that provides information, resources and support to Coast Guard wives.
- 3) Refine instant messaging, in order to establish a secure means for families to 'converse' over the internet.
- 4) Improve coordination and communication between Work/Life and Commands. This could be accomplished more easily with a social worker in place, as suggested above.

Positives of Deployment Lifestyle – On the whole, respondents in this study maintained a positive attitude toward a lifestyle that included deployments. Husbands found their work to be rewarding. They enjoyed a certain camaraderie with workmates, and were able to develop meaningful friendships. Some felt they developed 'strength of character' as a result of the Coast Guard lifestyle. They also became more appreciative of their wives and families as a result of being away from them.

Respondents found that wives developed strength and independence as a result of deployments. This development of self-reliance helped wives to make a better adjustment to deployments (Boss, McCubbin & Lester: Hill; Patterson &

McCubbin). This feeling of independence develops pride and enhances self-esteem that can carry over long after the deployment lifestyle is over.

Wives, for the most part, expressed positive attitudes toward the deployment lifestyle. Researchers have found that this positive attitude can greatly increase the family's ability to cope with deployments (Hill; Kohen; McCubbin & Patterson; Rodriguez; Wertsch). Wives were generally accepting of their husbands' deployments, and felt that they should just 'go with the flow.'

Long-Term vs. Short-Term Deployments – This study was not designed to directly compare the experiences of long-term (6 months or longer) deployments to short-term (3 months or less) deployments, but ideas and opinions have developed out of the focus group discussions. Previous research on short-term deployments is virtually non-existent. All of the deployment research analyzed was related to long-term deployments.

In Logan's (1987) article on deployment cycles, she expressed the idea that families experiencing short-term deployments may not have time to reach the 'stabilization stage' following deployment. Families would be getting ready for departure too soon for them to enjoy the stabilization stage at home. Short-term deployments are seen as too disruptive in this sense.

Respondents did find that routines were disrupted by their husbands' return, but they also talked of returning to the old routines within a few days to a week after his return home. It is true that, just by nature of the short-term deployment, disruptions will be more frequent, but the stabilization stage will also occur more

frequently. Each stage of deployment is experienced for a shorter time, but more frequently. If families expect disruptions to routines and incorporate these expectations into their routines, then the disruptive element of frequent deployments is softened.

Briefer deployments also mean that partners spend less time apart, and may experience less loneliness and anxiety about the missing partner. Navy wives interviewed in the preliminary study experienced many long months, including holidays, without their partners. The loneliness these wives experienced was felt to be more profound than that experienced by the Coast Guard wives.

There is also less of a pile-up of demands for the spouse to handle alone during short-term deployments. Many major decisions or household tasks could wait for a husband's arrival home, such as moving furniture or purchasing a home or car. Wives experiencing long-term deployments couldn't put off major home and family issues as easily.

Even if short-term deployments are more disruptive, it seems that the benefits far outweigh the negative element of disruption. Families get to be together more frequently, with more opportunities to enjoy the benefits of family togetherness.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study has opened up several issues that would benefit from further research. The more obvious areas of exploration involve the support

systems utilized during deployments. In the current study, 'friendships' seemed to be the most valued informal support system for wives. Are friendships among wives in other military communities (including those stationed overseas) as important a source of support as the current findings indicate? How can the development of friendships be fostered in the community? Also, how are wives' clubs viewed in other military communities as an informal support system? Are they looked upon more favorably and utilized more often in other military communities? If so, what makes them a more effective support system?

The more formalized support systems in the Coast Guard also require further investigation, with a view toward improvement of these resources. Problems associated with Coast Guard sponsored programs and coordination of services through the Work/Life office need further exploration. What interventions would be useful in improving delivery of services? How effective are Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)? Who makes the most use of EAPs? Who underutilizes EAPs, and why?

Communication between the family and the deployed spouse is important for the maintenance of the marital and parental relationship. E-mail is a new system of communication that provides the means for daily contact. What are the strengths and limits of e-mail as a system of communication? Does daily communication increase family adjustment to deployment-induced separation? How can internet communication be made more secure?

The benefits and drawbacks relative to residing in base housing should also be explored. Does residing in base housing positively affect the family's

adjustment to deployment? Studies need to address the issues of household maintenance, safety, gossip and support systems (including friendships) on bases. Studies could also compare the benefits and drawbacks of living on base, to the benefits and drawbacks of residing in off-base housing.

Gossip was discovered to be an element that can negatively impact on support systems, as well as on spousal relationships and communication. Researchers need to examine the effects of gossip on service members and their families, including exploration of methods that have mitigated the negative effects of gossip.

Further studies need to be conducted around the effects of military life, including frequent moves and deployments, on the emotional well-being of children. Also, a long-term, qualitative study of military children, that follows them from childhood through adulthood, would be useful in settling some of the issues that are a subject of frequent debate among researchers.

The current study began the development of a hypothesis that, although somewhat more disruptive to family routines, short-term deployments are much less stressful to family relationships. Future research should compare short-term deployments to long-term deployments, covering the problems of pile-up of demands, loneliness and depression, disruption to routines, and general effects on marital and family relationships.

Overall, both husbands and wives maintained positive attitudes toward the United States Coast Guard and the deployment lifestyle. Husbands enjoyed their profession, and felt they were making a worthwhile contribution to their country.

Wives felt they developed independence and greater pride in their accomplishments. Both husbands and wives developed routines that helped them to cope with deployments. Researchers need to further explore 'routines' as an internal support system, in order to verify their effectiveness during deployments.

These findings suggest that the deployment lifestyle and positive family functioning don't have to be mutually exclusive. Further exploration and planning for military families to help them maintain a positive attitude can be beneficial to military families, as well as to the country that they serve so well.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A-1**RECRUITMENT SCRIPT
WIVES**

My name is Maureen Finley, and I am a doctoral student at the Hunter College School of Social Work. I am conducting a dissertation project on the stressful effects of deployment on Coast Guard personnel and their spouses, as well as on coping strategies used by personnel and their spouses over the course of the deployment. This is an area of interest to me, because I also experienced deployments as a Coast Guard wife (My husband recently retired). I am hoping that you will be able to participate in a focus group interview with a small group of 4-to-8 wives who are experiencing deployment. Participation in focus group interviews is purely voluntary.

Interview questions touch on issues including spousal relationships, children, safety, gossip/rumors and support systems. The study is designed to discover stresses or coping strategies that you may feel are of concern during deployments. The questions are fairly general in nature, but you could feel discomfort with answering certain questions that may be sensitive issues for you. You may withdraw from the group or from any part of the discussion if it becomes too uncomfortable. Your participation is fully voluntary in any and all parts of the interview process.

Permission to conduct this study has been granted in writing by the command at the work/life office in Washington, D.C. If you have any questions, you may contact Ms. Elaine Sweetland at (---)------. Both the command and your husband's XO are aware that confidentiality of your answers will be maintained, meaning that your identities and comments will not be shared with anyone outside of the group. While I am asking all participants to maintain confidentiality, you should be aware that someone could share information outside of the group.

If you feel that you want to participate, I will be contacting you about setting up a meeting time and place. We may be meeting in the recreation center's private room or in one of the group member's homes. Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any further questions or concerns, either by home phone at (516) -----, cell phone at (---) ----- or e-mail at -----AOL.com. Thank you so much. I will call or e-mail you soon.

APPENDIX A-2

**RECRUITMENT SCRIPT/POSTING
HUSBANDS**

My name is Maureen Finley, and I am a doctoral student at the Hunter College School of Social Work. I am conducting a dissertation project on the stressful effects of deployment on Coast Guard personnel and their spouses, as well as on coping strategies used by personnel and their spouses over the course of the deployment. This is an area of interest to me, because I also experienced deployments as a Coast Guard wife (My husband recently retired). I am hoping that you will be able to participate in a focus group interview with a small group of your shipmates who are experiencing deployment. Your participation would be purely voluntary, and is totally unrelated to your rate or rank on the ship.

Interview questions are on issues including spousal relationships, children, safety, gossip/rumors and support systems. The study is designed to discover stresses or coping strategies that you may feel are of concern during deployments. The questions are fairly general in nature, but you could feel discomfort with answering certain questions that may be sensitive issues for you. You may withdraw from the group or from any part of the discussion if it becomes too uncomfortable. Your participation is fully voluntary in any and all parts of the interview process.

Permission to conduct this study has been granted in writing by the command at the work/life office in Washington, D.C. If you have any questions, you may contact Ms. Elaine Sweetland at (---) ----- . Both the command and your XO are aware that confidentiality of your answers will be maintained, meaning that your identities and comments will not be shared with anyone outside of the group. While I am asking all participants to maintain confidentiality, you should be aware that someone could share information outside of the group.

I will be on the ship at ' ___ Time ___ ' on ' ___ Date ___ ' in order to conduct a focus group. I have been given permission to use the wardroom, in order to ensure quiet and privacy. An announcement will be piped when the group is ready to start. Please understand that, because the announcement is piped, others on the ship may be aware of your participation in these interviews, and could comment on this to yourself or others. Feel free to contact me at any time if you have any further questions or concerns, either by phone at (---) ----- or e-mail at -----
-----.

I hope to see you there!

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET

Age _____ Male _____ Female _____

Officer Status _____ Enlisted Status _____

Number of years in service _____

Number of Children _____ Ages _____

Number of years married _____

Number of deployments before current one _____

Code Name or number _____

APPENDIX C**WIVES OF DEPLOYED HUSBANDS
INTERVIEW GUIDE**

CORE QUESTION: What do Coast Guard wives identify as the stresses and coping patterns associated with their spouse's deployment?

INTRODUCTION

I am conducting these interviews as part of my dissertation project in the DSW program at Hunter College School of Social Work. Your answers will only be used for the dissertation. You can be assured that any information you give me will not be used for any other purposes. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. They will be coded numerically in order to preserve anonymity. This information will not be shared with anyone outside of this group other than with those assessing my performance at the Hunter College School of Social Work.

QUESTIONS

- I. During the few weeks or days prior to you husband's deployment, what were you doing as preparation?
 - A. What household or practical things were you doing to get ready for the deployment? How did you feel about doing these things? What did you do to cope with getting these things done?
 - B. What did you do and/or discuss with your family to get ready for deployment? What problems seem to come up with the children at this time? What did you do to cope with these problems?
 - C. What did you and your husband discuss prior to the deployment? What were your feelings toward the relationship during this time? What were the problems and how were you coping with them? What was occurring in your relationship that was positive at this time? What was your social life like at this time?

II. What were you experiencing during those first few days/weeks of deployment?

- A. What feelings did you experience regarding your relationship with your husband? (Happy, relieved, angry, sad, etc.).
 - 1. What feelings did you experience around coping with children?
Household tasks? Work? Safety?
- B. What difficulties did you encounter in dealing with all of these things?
- C. What did you do to cope with these problems? What or who helped you to cope?
- D. What do you remember as being positive during that time?

III. How did you experience the middle weeks of deployment? What, if anything, made them different than the beginning and end of the deployment?

- A. What were the difficulties you encountered with household tasks, children, work or social life?
- B. How did you cope with these difficulties? What or who helped you to cope?
- C. What were your feelings toward your relationship with your husband at that time? Feelings toward children?
- D. How did the gossip among wives or husbands affect you? Who usually gossips? What did you do to cope with the gossip?
- E. What do you see as positive about this period of deployment?

IV. How did you experience the final days or weeks prior to your husband's return from deployment?

- A. What, if anything, were you doing to prepare for your husband's return?
- B. What were your feelings regarding your husband's return?
- C. What difficulties did you encounter regarding children, household tasks and socialization? How did you cope with these difficulties?

- D. What is most stressful about this period of deployment? What were you doing to cope with the stress? What or who helped you to cope with the stress?
 - E. What is the most positive aspect of this period of deployment?
- V. How are you experiencing these first few weeks following your husband's return home?
- A. What are the difficulties you are experiencing during the reunion with your husband? In the relationship? With the children? With household tasks? With socialization?
 - B. How did you cope with these difficulties? What or who helps you to cope?
 - C. What are your feelings toward your relationship with your spouse at this time? What difficulties are you experiencing in the marital relationship following the deployment? What are you doing to cope with these difficulties?
 - D. What is your social life like at this time? How is gossip affecting you at this time?
 - E. What is the most stressful about this period following deployment? What are you doing to cope with the stress? What or who has been the most helpful?
 - F. What is the most positive aspect of this time?
- VI. Overall, when was the most difficult time during the whole deployment process?
- A. What do you think contributed to making it the most difficult?
 - B. How did you feel toward your husband at that time? What did you do to cope with this difficult time?
- VII. Overall, what or who provided the most assistance to you during the deployment?
- A. What or who would have helped you to cope better with some of the difficulties you encountered, but was not available to you?
- VIII. How has the deployment changed you?

- A. How has it changed the relationship with your husband, both positively and negatively?
 - B. How has it changed your relationship with your children?
 - C. How has it changed your social relationships?
- IX. Overall, what was the most positive aspect of the deployment?

APPENDIX D

DEPLOYED HUSBANDS INTERVIEW GUIDE

CORE QUESTION: As husbands and fathers, what do Coast Guard personnel identify as the stresses and coping patterns associated with their deployment?

INTRODUCTION

I am conducting these interviews as part of my dissertation project in the DSW program at Hunter College School of Social Work. Your answers will only be used for the dissertation. You can be assured that any information you give me will not be used for any other purposes. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. They will be coded numerically in order to preserve anonymity. This information will not be shared with anyone outside of this group other than with those assessing my performance at the Hunter College School of Social Work.

QUESTIONS

- I. During the few weeks or days prior to the deployment what were you doing as preparation?
 - A. What household or practical things were you doing to get ready for the deployment? How did you feel about doing these things? What did you do to cope with getting these things done? What household or practical things did your wife do to prepare for the deployment? What did she do to cope with these tasks?
 - B. What did you do and/or discuss with your family to get ready for deployment? What problems seem to come up with the children at this time? What did you do to cope with these problems?
 - C. What were you and your wife doing or discussing prior to the deployment? What were your feelings toward the relationship during this time? What were the problems and how were you coping with them? What was occurring in

your relationship that was positive at this time? What was your social life like at this time?

II. What were you experiencing during those first few days/weeks of deployment?

- A. What feelings were you experiencing around being away from your children? What were your concerns regarding the children's welfare? What were you doing to cope with being away from your children? What do you see as your wife's role in helping the children to cope?
- B. What feelings had you been experiencing during the early part of the deployment regarding your relationship with your wife? (Relieved, sad, happy, angry, etc.) What were you doing to cope with being away from your wife?
- C. What did you do as social activities during the first part of the deployment?
- D. What is most stressful about this period of deployment? What did you do to cope with the stress? What or who helped you to cope?
- E. What can you think of that's positive about this period of deployment?

III. How did you experience the middle weeks of deployment? What, if anything, made them different than the beginning of the deployment?

- A. What feelings were you experiencing regarding being away from your children? What were your concerns regarding the children's welfare? What did you do to cope with being away from the children? What did your wife do at this time to help the children cope with your absence?
- B. What were your feelings toward your relationship with your wife at this time? What were you doing to cope with being away from her? What was she doing to cope with your absence?
- C. How did the gossip among your shipmates or among the wives affect you? Who usually gossips? What did you do to cope with the gossip?
- D. What do you do as social activities while on the ship?
- E. What was most stressful about this period of deployment? How were you coping with this stress? What or who helped you to cope with this stress?

- F. What do you see as positive about this period of deployment?
- IV. How did you experience the final days or weeks prior to the end of deployment?
- A. What, if anything, were you doing to prepare for your return?
- B. What were your feelings regarding your children during these last few weeks of deployment? What were your concerns regarding your children's feelings and welfare at this time? What were you doing to cope with these concerns? How do you think your wife helped your children with their concerns?
- C. What were your feelings toward your relationship with your wife at this time? What were you doing as preparation for your return home to the relationship? What do you think your wife was experiencing during this stage of the deployment?
- D. What is your social life like at this time? What is your relationship to your shipmates at this time? How is gossip affecting you at this time?
- E. What is most stressful about this period of deployment? What were you doing to cope with the stress? What or who helped you to cope with the stress?
- F. What is the most positive aspect of this period of deployment?
- V. How are you experiencing these first few weeks following your return home?
- A. What feelings have you been experiencing regarding your return to your children? What difficulties are you encountering during your reunion with them? What are you doing to cope with these difficulties? What or who helps you to cope?
- B. What are your feelings toward your relationship with your spouse at this time? What difficulties are you experiencing in the marital relationship following the deployment? What are you doing to cope with these difficulties?
- C. What is your social life like at this time? How are you experiencing your relationship with your former shipmates? How is gossip affecting you at this time?

- D. What is the most stressful about this period following deployment? What are you doing to cope with the stress? What or who has been the most helpful?
- E. What is the most positive aspect of this time?
- VI. Overall, when was the most difficult time during the whole deployment process? What do you think contributed to making it the most difficult? How did you feel toward your wife and children at that time? What did you do to cope with this difficult time?
- VII. Overall, what or who provided the most assistance to you during the deployment? What or who provided the most assistance to your wife? What or who would have helped you to cope better with some of the difficulties you encountered, but was not available to you? What would have helped your wife to cope better?
- VIII. How has the deployment changed you? How has it changed the relationship with your wife, both positively and negatively? How has it changed your relationship with your children? How has it changed your social relationships?
- IX. Overall, what was the most positive aspect of the deployment?

APPENDIX E**POST-DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – WIVES**

1. Please number the following from [5] the most problematic during your husband's deployment to [1] the least problematic during your husband's deployment.

Gossip/Rumors

Cooking/Cleaning

Safety – such as feeling safe at home

Home Management – such as paying bills, car repairs, etc.

Children's everyday needs

2. Please number the following support systems from [5] provided the most support during your husband's deployment to [1] provided the least support.

- Deployment Support Groups or Wives Clubs
- Workplace
- Relatives
- Coast Guard Family Service Centers or other Coast Guard sponsored programs
- Other-Please Specify _____

3. Please check any of the following ways in which you communicated with your husband while he was on deployment:

- Videotapes
- E-mail
- Instant messaging
- Phone calls
- Letters
- Other-Please Specify _____

Which one(s) was/were most effective?

APPENDIX F

POST-DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – HUSBANDS

1. Please number the following from [5] what was the most problematic for your wife while you were on deployment to [1] the least problematic for your wife while you were on deployment.

- Gossip/Rumors
- Cooking/Cleaning
- Safety
- Home Management – such as paying bills, car repairs, etc.
- Children's everyday needs

2. Please number the following support systems from [5] provided the most support to your wife while you were on deployment to [1] provided the least support to your wife while you were on deployment.

- Deployment Support Groups or Wives Clubs
- Workplace
- Relatives
- Coast Guard Family Service Centers or other Coast Guard sponsored programs
- Other - Please Specify _____

3. Please check any of the following ways in which you communicated with your family while you were on deployment:

- Videotapes**
- E-Mail**
- Instant Messaging**
- Phone Calls**
- Letters**
- Other-Please Specify**

APPENDIX G**CONSENT FOR STUDY PARTICIPATION**
Dissertation Project: Maureen C. Finley, CSW

I understand that Maureen Finley is a doctoral student at the Hunter College School of Social Work. She is conducting focus groups with Coast Guard personnel and their spouses as part of her dissertation project in the DSW program at the Hunter College School of Social Work. The dissertation project focuses on the stressful effects of deployment on Coast Guard personnel and their spouses, as well as on coping strategies used by personnel and their spouses over the course of the deployment. Interview questions touch on issues including spousal relationships, children, safety, gossip and support systems. An open-ended questionnaire will be used as a guide to the discussion, but the study is also designed to discover any new stresses or coping strategies that may develop during deployments.

Permission to conduct this study has been granted in writing by the command at the work/life office in Washington, D.C. If I have any questions, I am informed that I may contact Ms. Elaine Sweetland at (----)------. Both the command and the ship's XO are aware that confidentiality of my answers will be maintained, meaning that my identity and comments will not be shared with my superiors.

These interviews will take place in small groups of wives or husbands who are experiencing deployment. Each focus group session lasts for approximately 1-1/2 to two hours. Approximately six to eight focus groups of four to eight members each are expected to make up the interview population. The group interviews will be tape recorded on audio cassettes. Also, the researcher will be taking extensive notes throughout the interview. Before beginning the interview session, I will be asked to fill in the demographic data sheets. A code will then be placed at the bottom of the sheet, so as to maintain confidentiality of my responses. Names and any other personally identifiable data will never be used in this study. All audio cassettes, transcriptions, and notes will be kept in a secure area of the researcher's home, with access only available to her. Cassettes, transcriptions and notes will be disposed of after a period of five years.

I understand that there are some minimal risks involved in my participation in this study. Because the interviews include questions regarding spousal relationships, children, safety issues and concerns about gossip, some discomfort with discussion of these topics in a group situation may result. The questions are fairly general in nature, but if I feel any discomfort with answering certain questions, I understand that I may decline participation in any part of the discussion that makes me feel uncomfortable. I also understand that I may withdraw from the

focus group at any point. Participation is fully voluntary in any and all parts of the interview process.

In the event that the interviews touch on issues that are discussed greatly bother or upset me, I understand that I may consult with a professional at the Family Services Center (Telephone #: (---) -----) or with an outside agency. I understand, in the unlikely event that the interview reveals the danger of harming myself or others, the limits of confidentiality apply, since the researcher is mandated to report any imminent harm to oneself or others.

This research study may help to create a better understanding of the stresses and coping strategies utilized during deployments. Through the group discussion, I may be able to pick up some new coping strategies or gain support from friends and colleagues regarding some of the stresses experienced during deployment. However, the greatest benefit of my participation may be my contribution toward helping families cope with and benefit from the deployments that are typical in the lives of Coast Guard families.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to call Maureen Finley at (---)-----, You may also contact my dissertation chairperson, Prof. Michael Smith at (---) -----, You should contact the Office of Research Administration at (---)-----, if you have questions regarding your rights as a subject or if you feel you have experienced a research-related injury.

A separate form will be handed to you that offers a copy of the dissertation summary, with a space for your name and address. Please be assured that these forms are kept in a separate file and will not affect your anonymity during these interviews.

I have read the above description and fully understand my rights as a study participant.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and relate concerns about the study to the researcher. I understand that my answers will be recorded along with those of other focus group members.

Participant's Signature

Date of Consent

APPENDIX H

AUDIO TAPE RECORDING RELEASE CONSENT FORM

HUNTER COLLEGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK GRADUATE CENTER

Researcher: Maureen C. Finley, CSW

Research Title: Effects of Deployment on Military Families

As part of this project, an audio recording will be made of you during your participation in the focus group discussion. Please indicate below the uses of these audiotapes to which you are willing to consent. This is completely voluntary and up to you. In any use of the audio tapes, your name will not be identified.

1. The audio tapes can be studied by the researcher for use in the research project. _____ Initials
2. The audio tapes can be transcribed by the researcher for only the researcher's use. _____ Initials
3. Excerpts from the tapes or transcripts may be written in the dissertation. _____ Initials

You have read the above description and give your consent for the use of audio tapes as indicated above.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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