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CAREERS OF THEIR OWN:
ROLE-IDENTITY NEGOTIATION AMONG AIR FORCE OFFICERS' WIVES

A Dissertation

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By

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A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
GRADUATE COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore how a military officer's wife, one foot on each meandering path, might navigate simultaneously her careerist and traditional wife roles. Specifically, this study asks the following: In their own words, how do Air Force officer wives define "career"? How does the military lifestyle impact the careers of these women? What obstacles and opportunities do they perceive? By what adaptive processes might career-oriented Air Force officer wives achieve both career satisfaction and commitment to their traditional military role? Finally, what does it mean to be a careerist-traditional wife, and how do such career trajectories proceed over time and multiple relocations?

Drawing on a symbolic interactionist perspective and on respondents' personal definitions of "career," this research details the strategies, innovations, and explorations some career-seeking wives have employed over the course of their affiliations with the military. Data include 93 preliminary survey responses and 15 in-depth, oral life history interviews gathered from Air Force officer wives. Each interview respondent claims a careerist identity, participates in traditional military activities, and has experience living overseas. Each semi-structured, retrospective interview, then, explores the career trajectory of the respondent, the contextual obstacles and opportunities she perceives, the behavioral strategies and cognitive adjustments she employs, and the individualized identity meanings she attaches to her self-defined role.

Analysis explores the military lifestyle as it is perceived by these careerist-traditional wives, the behavioral and cognitive adaptations they undertake, and the implications of their recollections. Substantive findings outline strategies for career-seeking spouses and suggest some future directions for advisement, policy, and research. Theoretical implications support and expand the principles of sociological identity control theory. Specifically, the experiences of these women indicate that individuals act to verify identity meanings not only through behavioral adjustments but through cognitive and definitional adjustments as well. As such, this research extends identity control theory. It clarifies both how role-identity definitions change over time at the individual level and, in the interactionist perspective, how those meanings are behaviorally negotiated at the social level, cumulatively affecting normative change.

CAREERS OF THEIR OWN:
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CHAPTER I: Introduction

The Problem

Today's military organization and its officers' wives square off in uneasy
negotiation.

Some perspectives seem extreme: Wedged between the expectations of
modern women and time-honored obligations to an institution not their own, officers'
wives crave freedom from their traditional "military wife" role. The military,
however, counters with long-established normative demands – role expectations
buoying the military mission and coerced with perceived threats to the officer's
career.

Long deadlocked in this take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum, career-oriented wives
increasingly are choosing to "leave it," eschewing the military spouse role in all but
name and pursuing instead an independent life course. They seek personal rather than
vicarious achievement, and they growingly expect access to the same career
opportunities enjoyed by their civilian sisters.

The military, however, must maintain a highly flexible workforce. Budget
concerns, force reductions, and scattered, world-wide operations progressively
require commanders to "do more with less." The strain on military members and
their families is unmistakable. Even so, and with mission effectiveness at stake, the
military requires its members to work longer hours and endure extended and more

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dangerous deployments – and its families to volunteer more, participate more, and tolerate more.

Despite this tension, the military and its wives have mutual interests, too. Both benefit from the community programs and services traditionally provided by spouse volunteers. Both, as well, benefit from the mutual support generated within the military community by committed, participating spouses. Finally, substantial evidence indicates that the exodus of military spouses takes along with it their military mates: The military relies on the commitment of spouses to retain its all-volunteer force. As such, the military and its spouses are mutually reliant on one another for their own success. How then, to negotiate a mutually acceptable role?

This study explores that question with an examination of the lives and innovations of "careerist-traditional wives" – that small segment of the military spouse population that succeeds in melding careerist and traditional wife identities, concurrently achieving both personal career satisfaction and commitment to the officer-wife role. Through their perseverance, their innovations, and their explorations into an increasingly flexible labor market, these pioneers are mapping an elevated middle ground – not a compromise, in which both parties lose, but a transformational redefinition of roles that leaves both the military and its wives better off.

The Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how a military officer's wife, one foot on each meandering path, might navigate simultaneously her careerist and traditional wife roles. Taken into account are the strategies, innovations, and explorations some Air Force officers' wives have employed over the course of their affiliations with the military. Specifically, this study asks the following: In their own words, how do Air Force officer wives define "career"? How does the military lifestyle impact the careers of these women? What obstacles and opportunities do they perceive? By what adaptive processes might career-oriented Air Force officer wives achieve both career satisfaction and commitment to their traditional military role? Finally, what does it mean to be a careerist-traditional wife, and how do such career trajectories proceed over time and multiple relocations?

Drawing on respondents' own interpretations and definitions of "career," this study explores such questions through oral life history interviews. A personal life event grid and a life course chart serve in tandem as a framework for each semi-structured discussion, enriching understanding of the highs, lows, turning points, and divergences in each respondent's careerist and traditional-wife paths. Each retrospective interview, then, explores the career trajectory of the military spouse, the contextual obstacles and opportunities she perceives, the behavioral strategies and cognitive adjustments she employs, and the individualized identity meanings she attaches to her self-defined careerist role.

This research has ramifications in four arenas: in the personal career pursuits of military wives, in military family policy, in the research and literature on military spouses, and in the study of sociological identity theory. First, this research offers to career-hopeful military spouses and their advisors models suggestive of tactics by which spouses might both meet personal career goals and maintain satisfaction in their role as military spouse. Second, it suggests to military policy-makers some of the ways in which employment programs could better assist these wives and, then, some strategies by which the commitment of career-oriented military spouses might be retained. Third, this study expands the scholarly literature on career-oriented military spouses. It fleshes out the profusion of quantitative data with richer life-history descriptions, it suggests some of the opportunities inherent in the role rather than focusing exclusively on its obstacles, and it refocuses the perspective from policy-making to individual agency Finally, this study enriches identity theory by examining the behavioral and cognitive processes by which individuals might verify multiple and often conflicting role-identities.

Rationale

The rationale for this study is driven by its socio-historical context, its timely exploration of evolving roles, and its multi-level social significance.

The Socio-Historical Context: A Window of Opportunity

Scholars of social change note the growing geographic mobility of the American workforce, the growing role of short-term relationships and temporary employment, and the ever-increasing demand for organizational flexibility (Rubin,

1996). Such structural trends herald the end of the traditional employee-employer

relationship – that long-term, implicit contract by which employees were once

assured a lifetime of well compensated work and by which employers achieved

steady growth in predictable environments. Today, the workplace grows more fast-

paced and flexible, jobs more contingent and temporary, once-standard benefits more

rare, and employer-employee relationships more fleeting.

Trends towards flexible work show new models of employment: In 2004, the

U.S. Census Bureau reported that in 2000, 19% Americans did some or all of their

work at home – a 23% increase over the prior decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 20

October, 2004). Similarly, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that as of

May, 2001, almost 29% of American workers had flexible work arrangements and,

furthermore, that such work arrangements were most common managerial,

administrative, and professional specialty occupations (U.S. Bureau of Labor

Statistics, April 18, 2002). More recently, a study by the International Telework

Association and Council (ITAC) found that the number of Americans performing

work from home – i.e., participating in *telework* – increased 7.5% in 2003 alone. In

addition, the ITAC noted that 16.5 million Americans are now self-employed, a 4.4%

increase during 2003 (ITAC, 2004). The trend towards alternative work

arrangements is clear.

Propelling this change are structural developments such as emerging computer

and telecommunication technologies. For instance, one study quantified the impact

of broadband technology on telework outcomes, finding an average productivity

increase of 33.3% among workers trading their dial-up internet for high-speed

broadband (ITAC, 2003). A year later, a replication of the same study showed an

84% increase in broadband use over just twelve months (ITAC, 2004). So, the ever-

increasing speed with which such technologies emerge drives an ever-increasing need

for the adaptation of work models, and even the most traditional and institutional

employers are taking note. For example, the U. S. Federal Government now

mandates that executive agencies establish telecommuting opportunities "to the

maximum extent possible" (Department of Transportation and Related Agencies

Appropriations Act, 2001), and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has

initiated the Telework Issues Working Group to promote and monitor change. In a

report to congress in January of 2004, the OPM reported a 93% increase in

telecommuting among federal employees between April 2001 and October 2003

(OPM, 2004).

So, emergent work arrangements like flex-time, telework, job sharing, and

outsourcing present new opportunities for both workers and employers. Such

employment models can enable workers to better manage non-work responsibilities,

increase job satisfaction, and reduce stress. Likewise, employers are better able to

attract, motivate, and retain highly qualified workers, minimize absenteeism and real

estate costs, and increase employee commitment among those valuing flexibility.

However, there are costs for both parties, too: Employers see greater complexity in

workload management and diminished workforce loyalty as the traditional employer-

employee contract grows more contingent. Employees see reductions in traditional

benefits, cope with greater uncertainty, and face new forms of work-family conflict as the distinction between work and family blurs in collocation.

Although these trends present a grim outlook for civilian workers overly reliant on the traditional employment model, career-seeking military spouses should be much more optimistic: At no time since the dawn of the women's labor movement have the characteristics of military-spouse workers and the needs of civilian employers been more complementary. As the standards of employment shift toward flexibility – contingent workforces, global outlooks, temporary gigs, telecommuting, and meaningful but short-term relationships – they grow ever closer in definition to the life of the military spouse. For career-oriented military spouses, a window of opportunity swings open.

Choices and Innovation: Three Role-Identities for Military Officers' Wives

This study conceptualizes three roles for military officers' wives, that of traditional wife, careerist, and careerist-traditional wife. The three roles are representations of a traditionalist/modernist dichotomy in career orientations and are separated here for their heuristic value rather than as an accurate or enduring description of any one individual. As such, it is not expected that any one individual will ideally fit any one prototypical role – but that an individual, during a given segment of her life, might resemble to a greater degree one of these three roles.

First, the *traditional wife role* is that which is historically associated with the officer's-wife lifestyle. As used here, the prototypical traditional wife takes up the role of the subordinate player in a *two-person career* – a situation in which the wife's

participation in her husband's long-term paid employment is elicited through normative organizational demands. (Employers operating under such assumptions can be said to subscribe to a *two-for-one employment model*.) The role arose in accordance with the predominant environment influences of a traditional military institution and a traditional, male-dominated labor market (see Figure 1a.).

The *careerist role* is that which is commonly associated with modern, "liberated" career women. Prototypical careerists eschew the expectations of the traditional wife role, forging their own careers in the civilian sector. This role rose up in opposition to the traditional wife role in accordance with the women's labor movement and the opportunities it opened in the traditional employment market (see Figure 1b.). As such, the careerist and traditional wife roles took on antithetical expectations. In recent decades, then, officers' wives who wished to work have been compelled to choose between the careerist and traditional-wife roles.

Today, however, a growing number of career-oriented women are exploring new ways to walk an ever-thickening line between – the role of *careerist-traditional wife*. Exploiting new technologies and an increasingly flexible labor market, this small segment of the spouse population maximizes career progression while simultaneously retaining a traditional military identity and reaping the benefits thereof (see Figures 1c and 1d). Thus, the careerist-traditional wife role appears to be an emerging transformational composite, an innovative blend of the careerist and traditional wife roles, and as such is the focus of this study.

The Social Significance: Meaning in Motion

As C. Wright Mills suggested in 1959 and as reiterated by Rubin (1996), the

"sociological imagination"

> . . . allows us to see our own experience in a historical and social context. It is easy to see our own day-to-day experiences and to explain them in individual terms; it is much harder to view our lives in terms of the movement of societies and economies. Yet failure to do so means that we are caught in our own limited visions and cannot avail ourselves of the opportunities that social change provides. (p. 24)

The social significance of this study rests on the connections and movement

between self and society. A sociological perspective developed by Mead (1934) and

Blumer (1969), *symbolic interactionism* suggests that individuals derive meaning

through social interaction, that they behave in accordance with those meanings, and

that meanings are multiple and flexibly interpreted. Furthermore, social structures

and their meanings are always negotiable and in flux, and – most important to the

present discussion – individuals can through agentic behavior initiate gradual, multi-

level change in their social systems. Through their micro-level interactions and

innovations, then, humans can redefine the roles, norms, and social structures that

make up their macro-level societies.

Although this research emphasizes the individual-level behaviors, strategies,

and adjustments that characterize the careerist-traditional wife, its larger significance

lies in its potential to expose multi-level social reverberations. Following symbolic

interactionist reasoning, it is possible to envision the systemic, multi-level impact of

the meanings and behaviors associated with the three military spouse roles introduced

a.

Traditional Employment Market

Traditional Wife Role-Id

Traditional Military

b.

Traditional Employment Market

Careerist Role-Id

Traditional Wife Role-Id

Traditional Military

c.

Traditional Employment Market

Careerist Role-Id

Flexible Employment Market

Careerist-Traditional Wife Role-Id

Traditional Wife Role-Id

Traditional Military

d.

Traditional Employment Market

Careerist Role-Id

Flexible Employment Market

Careerist-Traditional Wife Role-Id

Traditional Wife Role-Id

Traditional Military

Figure 1. Choices and innovations: Prominence of officer's-wife role-identities over time

above. The following discussion illustrates the connections between individual meaning and social-structural change – the reciprocal influence of each role at the societal, organizational, interpersonal, and individual levels.

At the societal level, officer spouses adopting the prototypical traditional wife role operate largely within the military social structure, while careerists circulate largely in the civilian sector. Those adopting the careerist-traditional wife role, however, maintain boundary-spanning relationships in both systems. At the organizational level, the traditional wife role perpetuates the military's institutional status by cooperating with normative expectations. The military is enriched through her labor and "readiness" to cope with deployments, long hours, and frequent relocations. The careerist role, however, undermines traditional normative expectations through non-participation, denies the military her "free labor," and negatively influences retention rates. Those fulfilling the careerist-traditional wife role blend the best of both. Although the military must relinquish some normative control, the spouse enjoys increased opportunity for self-development, the family enjoys increased financial well-being, and the military reaps both her positive influence on retention and her boundary-spanning influence in the civilian world.

At the interpersonal level, the prototypical traditional wife maintains predominately military-based relationships, while careerists maintain predominately civilian relationships. As a result, the traditional wife is socially sequestered within the military sector, while the careerist stays outside the reach of the military's social support and information network. Neither has the potential to instigate adaptive

social change – the traditional wife because she perpetuates the norm, the careerist because she renounces norms, and thereby relinquishes her influence among other military spouses. In contrast, the careerist-traditional wife enjoys social support and information networking in both military and civilian sectors. She possesses influence among peers in both groups and can thereby instigate change, weaken normative assumptions, dilute cultural extremes, and model the value of diversity.

Finally, at the individual level, the prototypical traditional wife accepts and reinforces military norms. She participates in unit functions, community organizations, and military-sponsored volunteerism, while the careerist rejects these activities, thereby undermining traditional norms. The prototypical traditional wife is characterized by dependence and vicarious achievement, the prototypical careerist, by independence and personal achievement. What then, characterizes the careerist-traditional wife? While the role's potential seems great for positive multi-level influence, and while we can guess at what those impacts might be, little is known about how individuals go about merging the traditional military spouse and modern careerist roles. This study sets out to explore just that.

Research Questions

This study explores the following questions: In their own words, how do Air Force officer wives define "career"? How does the military lifestyle impact the careers of these women? What obstacles and opportunities do they perceive? By what adaptive processes might career-oriented Air Force officer wives achieve both career satisfaction and commitment to their traditional military role? Finally, what

does it mean to be a careerist-traditional wife, and how do such career trajectories proceed over time and multiple relocations?

Definition of Terms

- *Military spouse* – in general, refers to any spouse of a military member. Due to the setting and sampling delimitations of this study, the term as used here refers only to the female spouses of Air Force officers.[1]

- *Role* – a set of behavioral expectations associated with a social status.

- *Identity* – the subjective self-meanings individuals attach to their roles.

- *Role-identity* – a term sometimes employed when referring to both a role and its associated identity meanings. Use of the term emphasizes the interdependence of the two constructs.

- *Norms* – socially sanctioned rules that define appropriate behavior and therefore elicit conformity.

- *Agency* – the ability to act, make choices, and employ behavioral strategies.

- *Role innovation* – a transformational role-making process which gradually sculpts a new or redefined role – ideally, one founded on more effective, efficient, and fulfilling behavioral expectations.

- *Careerist role-identity* – that set of behaviors and/or meanings which is commonly associated with modern, "liberated" career women. Prototypical careerists eschew the expectations of the traditional wife role, forging their own careers in the civilian sector.[2]

- *Traditional wife role-identity* – that set of behaviors and/or meanings which is commonly associated with the single breadwinner family model. A prototypical traditional wife takes up the role of the subordinate player in a *two-person career.*

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[1] For further discussion of sample boundaries, see the *Sampling Frame* and *Delimitations and Limitations* sections in Chapter Three.
[2] These role-identity definitions facilitate the project's literature review. Operationally, respondents will be asked to self-define "career." For further discussion, see *Research Design* in Chapter Three.

- *Careerist-traditional wife role-identity* – that set of behaviors and/or meanings which characterizes a complementary blend of the careerist and traditional wife roles.

- *Two-person career / two-for-one employment model* – a situation in which the one spouse's participation the other's long-term paid employment is elicited through normative organizational demands.

Overview

Given this problem, purpose, and rationale, this study continues with a review of relevant literature in Chapter Two and, in Chapter Three, an explanation of methodological perspective and procedure. Subsequent analyses draw on research data to describe the military context as it is perceived by participants, to detail the behavioral and cognitive adaptations undertaken by these women in the course of their career pursuits, and to summarize the implications of those findings.

CHAPTER II: Review of the Literature

Building on the problem, purpose, and rationale introduced in Chapter One, the following discussion reviews the theoretical and substantive literature most relevant to this research.

Theoretical Perspective

This study draws on a theoretical perspective grounded in Herbert Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism and framed in identity theory as developed by Sheldon Stryker (1980). The questions addressed here are based on the premise that variations among individuals in life course trajectories are largely determined by the socially negotiated roles one adopts and adapts and by the identity meanings one attaches to those roles. The following discussion traces the tenets of symbolic interactionism, role theory, and identity theory, highlighting concepts of multiple identities, agency, and innovation.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological perspective that suggests that individuals negotiate meaning through social interaction. Based on ideas generally credited to George Herbert Mead (1934), the tenets of symbolic interactionism assert that the self is constituted through mind, cognition, and the exchange of language and symbols. Through the mutual negotiation of meaning and the exchange of language and symbols, individuals through their relationships reciprocally shape one another, their social structures, and in the end, society itself. As such, the self, social structure,

and society are always in flux, constantly engaged in mutual influence and redefinition.

Hubert Blumer (1969) expanded Mead's ideas, coining the term "symbolic interactionism" and introducing its philosophy into sociology. Sociology until then had focused on institutions and social structures but had yet to consider how individuals and their interpersonal interactions shape those social structures. Blumer's sociological interpretation of social interactionism founds its assertions on three premises: (1) that individuals behave according to the meanings that things have for them, (2) that the meanings of things arise from the ways in which others act, and (3) that meanings are multiple and are flexibly interpreted through interaction (Blumer, 1969, p. 2-5). Also critical to Blumer's conceptualization is the agency of human beings. Because people act on meanings, and because people reciprocally influence those meanings, people can influence one another to action. So, through their micro-level interactions and innovations, humans create, redefine, and alter the roles, norms, and social structures that make up macro-level society itself. The focus of symbolic interactionism, then, is socially negotiated subjective meaning.

Role Theory

While social interactionism highlights the bottom-up interpersonal negotiation of meaning and its dynamic effects on the social system, role theory emphasizes the top-down impact of the social system on individual behavior, suggesting that socially determined role expectations determine behavior. A *role* is a set of behavioral expectations attached to a particular social position or status. As conceptualized in

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role theory, roles are relatively static and are proliferated through socialization

processes (Turner, 1956). Role theory founds its assertions on the premise that

people live their lives in groups and occupy positions within these groups. Socialized

within these positions are role expectations that eventually congeal into *norms*,

socially sanctioned rules that define appropriate behavior and therefore elicit

conformity. Given these social rules and the deterministic power of social structures,

role theory contends that all human behavior must be considered in light of the multi-

layered social context in which it occurs. The focus of role theory, then, is the impact

of social structure.

Identity Theory

Identity theory integrates ideas from role theory and symbolic interactionism,

focusing on the interplay between social structures and subjective meaning. As such,

identity theory concerns itself both with *role*, a set of behavioral expectations

attached to a particular social position or status, and *identity*, the subjective self-

meanings individuals attach to those roles. Although often studied separately, the two

constructs are inextricably intertwined. Identity theorists, then, walk between the

fields of sociology and social psychology on a fine line well described by Thoits

(1995):

> Sociologists generally devote their efforts to identifying *which* social
> phenomena have effects on individuals while psychologists generally
> specialize in identifying *the mechanisms or processes through which* social
> phenomena have their effects on individuals. Consequently, sociologists often
> use, explicitly or implicitly, the work of psychologists to fill in the missing
> links that tie society to the individual. (p. 1231, emphases original)

As formulated by Stryker (1980, 1981), identity theory maintains that roles, identities, and their related behaviors arise *both* from the dynamic negotiations described in social interactionism and from the deterministic influences of social structural elements – those addressed in role theory. In a complementary extension (Stryker & Burke, 2000), Burke and his colleagues delve deeper into the internal processes by which role-identities are formed, redefined, and maintained (e.g. Burke, 1991; Burke & Stets, 1999; Cast & Burke, 2002). Other angles pertinent to the present study include the effects of multiple role-identities as well as agency, role-making, and innovation.

  Multiple identities. In 1890, William James penned the oft-quoted notion that everyone has as many "selves" as they have social relationships. While few today would argue with the notion that humans fill multiple roles and therefore harbor multiple identities, theorists offer differing conceptualizations of multiple role-identities, their integration, and their effects on well-being. Early role theorists maintained the *role scarcity hypothesis*, which maintains that due to the limitations and scarcity of human energy, multiple roles lead inevitably to conflict and strain (Coser, 1974; Merton, 1957). Discouraged by the inconclusiveness of related findings, role and identity theorists addressed the *role accumulation hypothesis,* which maintains that holding multiple roles brings status, diversified sources of self-esteem, and increased well-being, despite the possible negative effects of role strain. Using variables such as commitment, salience hierarchies, and centrality, studies on multiple identities generally support this positive correlation between multiple

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identities and well-being (Thoits, 2003). That said, some notable moderators have been identified, such as role quality, role combinations, and – most pertinent to this study – obligatory versus voluntary roles and the function of individual agency (Thoits, 2003).

Agency and innovation. Three basic premises filter through symbolic interactionist theories of role and identity: (1) that roles are to varying degrees voluntary and involuntary, (2) that individuals are to varying degrees committed to each role, and (3) that individuals possess *agency*, the ability to act, make choices, and employ behavioral strategies in regards to those roles (Bandura, 2001; Stets & Burke, 2003; Thoits, 2003). As suggested by role theory, a role can be to varying degrees accepted or rejected by the individual on whom it is imposed. When roles are accepted as presented without question or change, individuals engage in *role-taking* behavior. When roles are rejected, individuals exit the role or withdraw in *role-distancing* behavior. As easily imagined, role-distancing behavior occurs most often in roles that are imposed and oppressive – those involuntary roles from which an individual cannot escape.

A third option emphasizes human agency: When role expectations create conflict, clash with identity meanings, or no longer meet individual or societal needs, proactive individuals engage in *role-making*, the negotiation of modifications to a role or multiple roles. As used here, *role innovation* occurs as a transformational role-making process in which the individual gradually sculpts a new or redefined role – ideally, one founded on more effective, efficient, and fulfilling behavioral

expectations. Through these behavioral and cognitive adaptations, then, individuals might gradually integrate multiple conflicting role-identities into a more complementary composite whole (Burke, 2003; Smith-Lovin, 2003; Thoits, 2003).

Through such processes, agents both respond to ineffective norms and initiate social change, gradually altering the expectations associated with the roles they occupy. This link between individual role innovation and the social structure is well articulated by Stets and Burke (2003):

> Patterns of behavior within and between individuals have different levels of analysis, and this difference is key to understanding the link between self and society. At on level, we can look at the patterns of behavior of one individual over time and come to know that individual. By pooling several such patterns across similar individuals, we can come to know individuals of a certain type. At still another level, we can look at the patterns of behavior across individuals to see how these patterns fit with the patterns of others to create larger patterns of behavior. It is these larger, interindividual patterns that constitute social structure. (p. 129)

Theory and the Officer's Wife

This study examines the adaptive behavior patterns of career-seeking officers' wives. By qualitatively exploring the behavior patterns of similar individuals over time, and by subsequently pooling those patterns, this study comes to know individuals of a certain type – careerist-traditional wives who maintain both career satisfaction and commitment to their traditional wife role. The study traces the behavioral strategies and cognitive adjustments employed by these individuals in their role-making activities. Through these micro-level adjustments, careerist-traditional wives initiate innovation – role transformations that reverberate through multiple levels in their relationships, their communities, their organizations, and their society.

Substantive Perspective

Framed by these theoretical foundations, this study explores the lived experiences of career-oriented, Air Force officers' wives. Concepts central to this exploration include greedy institutions, military spousehood, career orientations, and military spouse employment.

Greedy Institutions

Lewis Coser (1974) first introduced the concept of greedy institutions, suggesting that certain social institutions make disproportional demands on members' time and energy. In a frequently quoted analysis, Mady Wechsler Segal (1988) applied the concept to the military context. Claiming that both the military and the family assert extremely greedy demands, Segal argues for an increased awareness of the conflicts inherent in military-family relations.

While the all-encompassing presence of family has always made for greedy relationships, social trends – such as the growing number of both single parents and dual-working couples – appear to be making the family even greedier. At the same time, an already greedy military institution continues to demand more from its members and their families. As always, the military places great pressure on families, demanding geographic mobility, risk of injury or death, often-lengthy separations, foreign residencies, and adherence to normative constraints (Segal, 1988). Even so, as the military reduces its size yet takes on more missions across disparate locations, the military grows greedier, too (Segal & Segal, 2003). Finally, the growing number of dual-working military families necessitates consideration of a possible third

"greedy" organization, that of the military spouse's own employer. Segal's framework thus underscores the inherent difficulties of balancing the demands of multiple, interdependent greedy institutions and, as such, provides a foundational understanding of the challenges faced by the military spouse.

Military Spousehood

Military spouses have come a long way from the "camp followers" of the Revolutionary War, and the term "military spouse" now refers to a great variety of individuals rather than to the officer-only wives of the early twentieth century. Today, 52.3% of the U. S. military's 1,419,061 active duty members are married. Approximately 93% of these spouses are female, 70% are under the age of 36, and 47% have children (Military Family Research Center [MFRC], 2003).

Popular literature. The characteristics of the military lifestyle have proven of interest in both popular and scholarly literature, and both genres show recurring themes such as mobility, social support, and normative demand issues.[3] Within the popular literature, a long tradition of continually updated, how-to handbooks instruct current spouses and socialize newcomers regarding what they might expect from the military lifestyle (Cline, 1998; Crossley & Keller, 1992; Shea, 1951). While such tomes typically include helpful but mundane hints such as how to appropriately host luncheons, address letters, and polish silver, they are as a group interesting for the

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[3] While lifestyles (and acronyms) differ slightly among the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, this review considers in general the characteristics of military spousehood as they apply to all services and ranks.

historical progression they represent. For instance, Nancy Shea's classic, The Air

Force Wife (1951), advises military spouses on the topic of employment:

> Homemaking is a full-time job, and a wife should not work unless there is a
> real need for the money she earns. Of course, there are extenuating
> circumstances, where an aged or ill parent must be supported, but simply to
> improve one's standard of living or to buy a piano, silver, or a car is not a very
> worth-while reason, if such work in any way jeopardizes your home
> responsibilities. If you do work, always remember that your husband and
> your home should come first, and it is not cricket to expect your husband to
> accept a slapdash sort of housekeeping. (p. 128)

Five decades later, the premier issue of Military Spouse Magazine advises readers on

topics including the tenets of Islam, mutual fund investments, and job-search skills.

And, with sage advice for employment interviews, such as "profanity is never

appropriate" (Stone, 2004, p. 12), the content of these more recent publications

demonstrate that military spouses, their expectations, and their needs have changed.

Scholarly literature. Considerable empirical research examines the

characteristics of the military spouse population. That said, this foundational

literature consists largely of (a) correlative studies addressing retention and readiness

concerns, such as that conducted between 1986 and 1991 under the auspices of the

Army Family Research Program (e.g. Bowen, Orthner, Zimmerman, & Meehan,

1992), (b) correlative studies addressing psychological issues, such as the line of

research conducted by Lenora Rosen and colleagues (Rosen & Durand, 2000; Rosen

& Moghadam, 1988, 1991; Rosen, Westhuis, & Teitelbaum, 1993) on social support

and well-being among military spouses, and (c) sweeping, quantitative quality-of-life

and demographic reports. Of the latter, most arise from DoD- or service- sponsored

surveys motivated by such instrumental military concerns such as the tracking of

"family readiness" and retention (e.g. MFRC, 2003). Using this data, researchers have come to general agreement regarding the summary demands of military spousehood – factors that to a great extent echo Segal's (1988) theoretical depiction of the military as a "greedy institution." These include structural factors, such as frequent relocation, deployments, risk, and foreign residencies, social support factors, such as the role of friendships, child care, and community organizations, and normative factors, such as socialization processes and rank-based spouse duties (Martin & McClure, 2000; Rosen & Durand, 2000).

Today, however, the field sees the emergence of a new interest in qualitative projects designed to enrich these statistics with human context. In contrast to quantitative research, such studies are better able to illuminate the complex normative issues at play inside the military culture, bringing a richer description and a deeper understanding of individually lived experience. Of special note is the work of Margaret C. Harrell, who has in the past several years developed a line of largely qualitative research regarding the lives of military spouses – studies including explorations of the lives of junior enlisted wives (Harrell, 2000), senior officer wives (Harrell, 2001), and the gender and rank-based demands perceived by each (Harrell, 2003). While much of this work draws broad-based qualitative descriptions of living conditions and cultural norms, her most recent project, *Working Around the Military* (Harrell, Lim, Castaneda, & Golinelli, 2004), contributes the field's most comprehensive examination of military spouse employment issues.[4]

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[4] See summary in *Military Spouse Employment*, below

Given the population represented in the present study, also particularly

relevant is Harrell's (2001) portrayal of the normative demands perceived by today's

officer wives.[5] Drawing on 18 months of fieldwork and loosely structured life history

interviews with 105 military spouses, this study reveals that traditional norms, while

slowly eroding, in many regards still apply – not as formal statements, but as

implicitly communicated expectations. Harrell identifies several categories of

"voluntary" spouse activity, including unit and readiness support, institutional

activities, morale, public relations, and ceremonial duties, mentoring, development,

and role preservation, and entertaining and socializing.

While explicit institutional demands on officers' wives have to some degree

waned, Harrell (2001) suggests that it remains "important to note that the volunteer

duties of an officer's wife can be a time-consuming as full-time employment" (p.

56).[6] Such duties differ by service, rank, and position of the military member. For

instance, senior officers' wives perceive normative demands dictating volunteerism,

in-home entertaining, and public appearances, expectations grow, too, from norms

generated in regard to unit-level support groups.

A time-honored military tradition, unit-level support groups are comprised of

all unit spouses. Membership is automatic – regardless of the spouse's desire to join,

and groups meet regularly to address squadron business, plan events, and elicit

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[5] Additional research (Bourg, 1995; Harrell, 2001; Harrell, 2003) confirms that such normative demands are perceived most strongly by female spouses of senior ranking officers. Male spouses and the spouses of lower ranking military members perceived fewer and less intense normative demands.
[6] While scholars generally agree that such demands are still perceived among modern military spouses, some debate exists regarding to what degree modern spouses behaviorally fulfill such demands (e.g. Durand, 2000).

volunteerism. While foci and participation rates vary among units, all adhere to similar missions: to provide mutual support, to disseminate unit information, and to serve the unit, base, and community. As such, the unit-level duties of an officer's wife often include staging and attending monthly spouse coffees, hails and farewell dinners, unit balls, and other social activities. In addition, the duties of a wife that chooses to participate in other, community-level organizations (such as a base-wide officer spouses' club) can number many more. Spouse participation is not mandated by formal regulations, and support groups are purportedly run by willing volunteers. However, as commanders are formally mandated to ensure that a support group is actively in place, the burden of leadership within these groups is often by association foisted upon the commander's wife – regardless of her desire or ability to lead. In practice, then, leadership of such unit-level support groups parallels the rank hierarchy of the unit itself.[7]

The sanction compelling the fulfillment of such duties lies in one coercive catch: the evaluation of the military officer. Indeed, even after explicit spouse evaluation was removed from official officer evaluations in 1988 (DoD, 1988), an officer's wife continues to be perceived as an "extension of the officer" (Harrell, 2001, p. 60). While regulations now preclude the formal evaluation of an officer's spouse, subtle appraisals still occur. For example, while written officer evaluations may no longer include negative critiques of a spouse's participation, some do make

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[7] Harrell (2001) finds that this parallel rank is visible, too, in the communication patterns of military spouses. Commanders' wives refer to their unit's spouses as "my girls"; spouses are customarily categorized as "lower ranking" and "senior ranking"; and references to "the chain of command of spouses" are common.

positive reference to spouses by using catch-phrases such as "a good command team" (Harrell, 2001, p. 70). As such, the norm-based expectations placed on officers' wives continue to affect officer evaluations, both through the use of positive comments (or the absence thereof) and through more subtle, reputation-based assessments.

Career Orientations

Although many general studies on military spousehood conclude that military spouse employment is a pervasive problem, few address the issue in much detail, moving instead quickly on to a laundry list of other concerns. From these shallow storylines, however, one can glimpse three career roles for the female officer's spouse – traditional wife, careerist, and careerist-traditional wife.

The traditional wife. While commonly associated with long-term, paid employment, the term "career" has throughout the literature been applied more broadly, referring to long-term roles in many areas of life. For example, Goffman (1968) considered the career of the mentally ill, Lopata (1971) examined the career of the housewife, and Jans (1989) studied the career of the military wife. As used here, traditional wife is a role ascribed to the subordinate player in a two-person career – a situation in which the wife's participation in her husband's long-term paid employment is elicited through normative organizational demands. Although

participation is "officially" voluntary, her cooperation is to some degree coerced through perceived threats to her husband's career.[8]

Several labels have been attached to the individuals and institutions enacting traditional wife expectations – for example, "career of wife of" (Jans, 1989), "wives' incorporation" (Finch, 1983), "husband-oriented women" (Lopata, 1965), the "two-person career" (Papanek, 1973), and the "career-dominated marriage" (Ortiz, 1997). Each, however, implies "a combination of formal and informal institutional demands which is placed on both members of a married couple of whom only the man is employed by the institution" (Papanek, 1973, p. 852).

Although the traditional wife role has since maturation of the women's labor movement been commonly regarded as a passé social structure, modern studies show that the role is alive and well in a variety of contexts, including within populations such as the clergy (Frame & Shehan, 1994), medical professions and academia (Fowlkes, 1980), professional sports organizations (Ortiz, 1997) and, perhaps most visibly, the military (Jans, 1989). The most blatant examples of the traditional wife role and the accompanying two-for-one employment pattern arise in organizations that resemble the greedy institutions discussed above (Coser, 1974).

Such greedy institutions often exhibit strong organizational cultures and operate in institutional enclaves such as college towns, company towns, and on

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[8] The traditional wife role could, of course, be ascribed to a male military spouse (i.e., a career husband). However, as the associated role behaviors are highly gendered, male spouses seem unlikely to be saddled with such expectations. This was found to be the case in Harrell's (2001; 2003) studies of Army life. Interestingly, even in families in which both partners were active-duty military members, only the female partner perceived strong normative demands to participate in her spouse's unit activities.

military installations (and particularly those overseas). The traditional wife role arises, too, within dangerous or glorified occupations, among highly successful professionals, and in situations in which families' lives are largely defined by the employing institution. Perhaps more surprisingly, social scientists suggest that the traditional wife role-identity is most likely to arise in these contexts when wives are at once highly educated, achievement-oriented, and – not so surprising – heavily dependent on their husband's employing organization (Papanek, 1973).

As pointed out by Papanek (1973), Jans (1989), and Finch (1983), in such situations perceived normative demands relegate the traditional wife to a combination of subordinate roles, including office cheerleader, entertainer, volunteer, social manager, party-planner, public-appearance sidekick, office decorator and housekeeper, and sporadic single parent. So, although all marriage partners to some degree negotiate each other's contributions to work roles, the two-person career brings the expectations of a third influential party – the husband's employer – into the negotiation process. Thus, through her work in these background roles, the traditional wife reinforces the importance of the employing institution, contributes to its goals, and frees her husband of responsibilities that might otherwise interfere with his work.

Thus, at the individual level, the prototypical traditional wife role is experienced as conflicting normative expectations, vicarious achievement, and marital tension. Adopting a stance of "structured ambivalence" (Papanek, 1973, p. 857), organizations normatively coerce the wife's cooperation through perceived

threats to her husband's career, yet rarely do they acknowledge or compensate the wife for her work. Instead of direct recognition or remuneration, the wife is expected to be satisfied in knowing that her contributions have furthered her husband's career. She is allowed only vicarious pride in his achievements, as her own activities technically lie outside of the respected world of work. As such, her contributions are simultaneously expected and devalued (Finch, 1983; Jans, 1989; Papanek, 1973).

A composite picture: The officer's spouse as traditional wife. Among officers' spouses, the prototypical traditional wife can be characterized as largely absent from the civilian employment sector and largely participative within the military community. As such, her cooperation with the two-for-one employment model – in which the military elicits free labor from a member's spouse – supports social agendas by furthering military missions. At the organizational level, traditional wives operate largely within the military's "company town," relying on the military's benefits and fully accepting the institution as the predominant determinant of family income, location, and social status. In so doing, she maintains the classic "organizational family" (Bowen & Orthner, 1989). The traditional wife fulfills role expectations by contributing to the military and its communities through volunteerism, social event planning, and leadership among fellow spouses. Through normative socialization processes, such participation is assumed and formal recognition or remuneration of her labor is unnecessary. Her "spouse readiness" allows the military member's time to be fully at his employer's discretion, and the traditional wife stands ready for deployments, overtime demands, and frequent

relocations. In the end, her cooperation, her social sequester, and her influence among other spouses perpetuates this institutional culture.

At the interpersonal level, the military's traditional wives receive social support largely from military-based relationships, and they are fully integrated into the military's mutual support and information network. She may disdain the careerist as a "self-involved career woman" and separate herself from those seen as self-seeking, aggressive, and overly independent. Prototypically, her behavior and relationships reinforce the military's closed culture and, as such, she does little to initiate normative change. At the individual level, traditional wives devote their time to participating in military community activities such as unit functions, volunteerism, and community organizations. Cognitively, the prototypical traditional wife accepts dependency and thus reinforces military norms and socialization processes. She focuses on the military member's needs, development, and achievement, sharing vicariously and quietly in his accomplishments. The traditional wife understands that, although her support contributes to her husband's success, her contributions will not be formally recognized. While her husband's continued success can bring her some privileges, she has no legitimate claim to social status and will be sanctioned if she presumes to "wears her husband's rank".

The careerist. When enacting the two-person career model described above, institutions operate on the assumption that "alternate uses of the wife's time are neither important nor productive, in the economic sense of the term, and that her 'opportunity costs' are therefore low" (Papanek, 1973, p. 856).   Prototypical

traditional wives are, effectively, in a state of "gainful unemployment," contributing to their husband's success and financial gain and thereby vicariously improving their own situations. However, as pointed out by Papanek (1973), "it is only if the wife's opportunity costs are in fact as low as the husband's employer considers them to be that the couple benefits financially from her participation in the two-person career" (p. 864). However, as social trends move towards norms of two-income households, a growing number of military wives are seeking to reduce the opportunity costs associated with being a service spouse. They seek careers, opportunities, and achievement of their own.

Whether in the civilian or military context, however, the mixing of traditional wife and careerist roles often results in work-family conflict. Among those women who attempt to "have it all," many find that juggling multiple roles nets more strain than satisfaction. The challenges of military spousehood show many similarities to this work-family conflict, a much-studied concept among women in the civilian world. However, in the case of careerist women who are "married to the military," both their families and their personal careers are unavoidably subject to the greediness of a third, overarching institution. As such, the military institution – rather than personal career or the family unit – often proves the greater force in determining the family's situation. In response, then, career-pursuing officers' spouses are likely to renounce their traditional wife role, minimizing their participation and separating themselves from the military community. As we will see, however, even in these cases the greedy demands of the military prove costly.

A composite picture: The officers' spouse as careerist. Among officers'

wives, the prototypical careerist operates largely in the civilian employment sector.

Traditionally, she attempts to maintain long-term, full-time positions, job progression,

and steady occupation-related relationships. At the organizational level, wives who

adopt the careerist role remain largely absent from the military sector. The military

loses the free labor assumed in the two-for-one employment model, and families are

less able to compensate for the military member's long and unpredictable hours and

deployments. In addition, when spouses blatantly choose non-participation in unit

and community activities, they to some degree undermine cohesion, weakening the

institution's normative power. Finally, careerists may negatively influence the

retention decisions of their military mates.

At the interpersonal level, prototypical careerists trade social support largely

within non-military relationships. They remain outside of the military's mutual

support and information network. The careerist may disdains the traditional wife as

"trivial" and "just a military spouse," separating herself from those spouses who may

in her eyes be characterized by dependency, weakness, invisibility, and martyrdom.

As she circulates outside of military social networks, she does not influence – nor is

she influenced by – other military spouses. So, aside from protesting through non-

participation, she has little power to instigate normative change.

At the individual level, careerists devote their time to occupational goals,

educational pursuits, and career-oriented progression. The prototypical careerist

rejects the two-for-one employment model and rarely participates in military

activities or military-sponsored volunteerism. Although the careerist focuses on

personal career achievements, she encounters often extreme work-family conflict and

frequently perceives her career efforts as thwarted by military-related factors such as

employer discrimination, tied migration, and the income and progression

discrepancies that result. Cognitively, careerists may reject and resent military norms

and socialization processes as affronts to their independence. They focus on personal

needs, self-esteem, and self-development, and they are achievement-motivated.

Finally, the prototypical careerist understands that her military husband's

achievements are his alone. While each partner might assist in furthering the other's

career goals, husband and wife each earn and claim their own accomplishments.

The careerist-traditional wife. But, what might happens to the careerist and

traditional-wife dichotomy when shifts in social environments – such as those we see

today – present alternative employment opportunities and thereby increase the

perceived costs of the traditional wife role? What happens when traditional wives

successfully become careerists, too? As pointed out by Papanek (1973),

> Elements of the "two-person career" pattern clearly present major problems
> for the family in which both husband and wife follow independent careers. In
> fact, women often find the demands of their husbands' jobs to be a major
> factor in their own reluctance or inability to develop independent careers at
> levels for which their education has prepared them, and move instead into
> patterns which may be highly productive and innovative and in which the
> demands of the husband's job are incorporated into the wife's own work in a
> career. (p. 853)

So, it seems, career-oriented wives have three options. They can relinquish their

work-related aspirations and commit to the traditional wife role-identity, they can

choose the careerist role-identity, or in some circumstances, they can flexibly forge a merger between the two.

It is this latter, innovative juxtaposition of the careerist and traditional wife role-identities that is the focus of the present research. As such, the careerist-traditional wife emerges, exploiting the growing flexibility of the civilian employment sector to maximize career opportunity while at the same time remaining committed to her military lifestyle and relationships. Hers is, in essence, an elevated, transformational blend of two roles into one. As modern trends in the civilian employment market continue, and in hopeful consideration of the evolution of past military spouse roles, one can envision an optimistic trend towards resolution of the traditional-wife/careerist debate. Just how might such a resolution play out?

An incomplete picture: The officer's spouse as careerist-traditional wife. Imagine that trends shift towards the predominance of a merged careerist-traditional wife role: Reverberations through the social structure lead employers to increasingly see military spouses as an employable population, and the economic benefits of increased labor are realized by both parties. At the organizational level, the military retains affectively committed spouses but now shares with the civilian sector influence over family income, time, and socialization. However, boundary-spanning relationships now bridge mutual influence between the military and civilian communities. These wives value participation and social support in the military sector but, due to time constraints, they must be selective in their participation. The military therefore shifts from assuming to recruiting spouse participation and

volunteerism. Finally, although the military has relinquished considerable normative control, the increased opportunity for personal development and family financial well-being positively influences retention decisions. At the interpersonal level, social support among military spouses is more flexible and diverse, as it is given and received in both military and civilian circles. Careerist-traditional wives are visible within the military community and thereby model opportunities and effective strategies for other military-committed, career-oriented spouses. Finally, mutual influence circulates between military-spouse and civilian populations: Normative assumptions are weakened, cultural extremes dilute, and diversity becomes valued.

At this point, the picture becomes less clear. While we can easily imagine an idealistic state in which the military and its careerist-traditional wives prove mutually elevating, few have envisioned the ways in which this can occur. However, one thing seems clear: Only through innovative, agentic adaptations at the individual level will officers' wives and their interdependent social structures realize such a change. This study sets out to explore those adaptive employment strategies.

Military Spouse Employment

Paralleling trends in the private sector, military wives have growingly sought employment. Indeed, with 55% of officer spouses and 68% of enlisted spouses either in the workforce or seeking work, career-seeking military spouses are the norm within the modern U. S. military (MFRC, 2003). As such, military spouse employment has gained attention as a critical issue among military family researchers and within the Department of Defense.

Spouse employment. As described above, military spouses and their careers are unavoidably subject to the greediness military lifestyle and, as such, the military institution proves a great force in determining career outcomes. Even in cases where the careerist spouse withdrawals from participation in the military community, the costs of her military affiliation can be great. Today's research on military spouse employment focuses largely on the quantifiable benefits of spouse employment and the costs associated with military affiliation.

In general, the individual-level benefits of military spouse employment parallel those of women in the civilian sector. For example, among samples of military spouses, research has shown that satisfaction with overall career development prospects has a significant impact on well-being (Rosen, Ickovics, & Moghadam, 1990). Military spouses, like civilians, work for varied reasons, including financial stability and self-fulfillment. In fact, among senior officer's wives and those spouses with graduate degrees, self-fulfillment is the single most important motivation for employment (Harrell et al., 2004).

However, such benefits are offset by the penalties associated with being an employed military spouse. Substantial correlative research demonstrates costs both psychological and financial. For example, while mutual social support among military spouses has been shown to buffer the stress of military demands (Rosen & Moghadam, 1988, 1991; Rosen & Durand, 2000), research conducted during the first Gulf War suggests that employed military wives did not cultivate and have in place these stress-buffering support networks (Rosen, Westhuis, & Teitelbaum, 1993).

Financially, employed military spouse are penalized in a variety of ways, but most visible are the wage discrepancies between military and civilian wives. In 1992, Payne, Warner, and Little found an 18.4% annual wage discrepancy between military and civilian wives, attributing these differences to long periods of unemployment during relocation and to lost seniority and human capital. They further estimate that the military's three-year rotation policy, as compared to a hypothesized six-year rotation policy, reduces wives' career income by 40%. Wardynski (2000) identified a 20.1% discrepancy between military and civilian wives – a discrepancy that grew larger with years of education. Similarly, Hosek (2002) calculated an annual penalty of 28.8% for college-educated military spouses and, in addition, found that military spouses earn less than civilian spouses at every age.

So, while these studies have considered a range of structural and normative barriers to labor force participation and compensation, much of the research on military spouse employment focuses on mobility as the primary contributing factor to the labor participation and income discrepancies between military and civilian wives. Based on Mincer's (1978) concept of tied migration, these studies suggest that under normal circumstances, couples operate as a single economic unit, making self-maximizing decisions to move (or stay) when prospective benefits to one partner compensate for and outweigh the losses sustained by the "tied mover" (or "tied stayer"). These losses include such factors as frequent and long periods of unemployment during relocation and devalued human capital due to relinquished seniority and erratic training, relationships, and job progression. In the case of the

military, however, once a couple makes the initial decision to move into the organization, its subsequent move/stay decisions are irrevocably "tied" to the whims of the military. So, whereas civilian couples can make economically sound decisions for each move/stay opportunity, the military spouse becomes, in effect, a *perpetual* "tied mover." As such, the tied-mover losses she incurs multiply with each involuntary change of station.

In any case, most studies in which military spouse employment is the focus of research address these issues as quantifiable problems – problems that can be objectively defined, measured, and manipulated. Utilizing statistical accounts of observed variables such as income, hours worked, and mobility, interested parties can neatly track progress and expose conveniently quantifiable problem areas. Although such data is inarguably useful, current methodologies ignore critical aspects of military spouse employment such as career progression, career satisfaction, competing cultural demands, normative sanctions and, ultimately, the individualized meaning of work. In fact, subtle and complex characteristics such as these cannot be captured with the correlative research that dominates the field today. Only through understanding subjective perceptions can researchers come to know the experiences of the career-seeking military spouse.

Policy. In response to modern research findings, the Department of Defense (DoD) has instigated several numerous policy initiatives. Perhaps the most critical of these came about in late 1980s, when the DoD issued a directive (DoD, 1988) explicitly declaring officer spouses' freedom to work – until then, their participation

in military activities had been noted on officer evaluations. The following year, the DoD issued a second instruction (DoD, 1989), establishing worldwide employment preference for military spouses seeking federal employment. Although this initiative has been criticized for its ineffectiveness, it nonetheless set a new course regarding spouse employment.

Two decades after officer spouses were granted official freedom to work, momentum builds once again behind the issues of military spouse employment. The DoD has instigated an annual DoD Spouse Summit Conference, established a Spouse Employment Working Group and, most recently, forged an agreement with the U. S. Department of Labor that expands the implications of previous hiring preference policies. However, much remains to be done, and even the latest anaylses, such as the *Working Around the Miltary* (Harrell et al., 2004) study described below, indicate substantial structural lag between the needs of career-oriented military spouses and the realities of their military lifestyle. Researchers, sociologists, and military leaders continue to both make suggestions and fiddle with policy and programs. That said, it is only through the examination of the subjective experiences of career-oriented military spouses that we will learn which and to what degree such policy initiatives might be subjectively appropriate, appreciated, and effective. Until then, military spouse employment initiatives remain largely a policy-maker's guessing game.

So, although the quantitative studies discussed above have contributed a number of valuable demographic descriptions, correlative findings, and policy recommendations, such quantitative analyses offer little insight into the complexities

of military spouse employment and the lived experiences of the career-seeking military spouse. However, a recent RAND study, *Working Around the Military: Challenges to Military Spouse Employment and Education* (Harrell, Lim, Castaneda, & Golinelli, 2004), makes strides towards addressing such complexities through a more comprehensive – and productive – mixed-methods approach.

Working Around the Military. Using secondary analyses of multiple existing data sets, original quantitative survey data, and interviews conducted with 1,100 military spouses at U. S. bases, Harrell et al. (2004) address in unprecedented detail the challenges associated with military spouse employment. The mixed-method design of this study allowed (1) comparisons between matched groups of military and civilian spouses, (2) comparisons among military spouses by branch of service, rank, and other demographics such as age, education, mobility, and base location, and (3) an examination of unmeasured factors, such as "taste" for work, perceived employer bias, and military lifestyle demands. Such flexibility netted a number of interesting finds concerning the degree to which employment is problematic for various demographic groups and, in addition, allowed researchers to identify several policy recommendations.

First, the study compares military and civilian spouses on several factors, finding that military spouses (all branches and all ranks) are on average younger than civilian spouses and, furthermore, are more likely to be minorities, to have some college education, to have young children at home, and to undertake long-distance relocations. In regards to employment, military spouses are less likely to be

employed – and that those who do have jobs earn less. Among samples of civilian

and military spouses matched on such factors as demographic characteristics, work

experience, and education, military spouses are employed at much lower rates and,

when employed, earn one to two dollars less per hour than do their civilian neighbors

(Harrell et al., 2004). So, while observed factors indicated that military spouses

should be more employable and earn higher wages than their average civilian sister,

their military affiliation instead actuality costs them on average $1-$2 an hour. As

demonstrated above, this hourly discrepancy is compounded by others, such as lost

weeks of labor participation (Hosek, 2002). The remainder of the study sets out to

identify the qualitative factors responsible for such discrepancies, addressing such

concepts as "taste for work" and military lifestyle demands – in short, how and why

military spouses work.

In regards to how military spouses work, Harrell et al. (2004) found that

occupational choices among military spouses mirror those of civilian spouses.

However, some discrepancies exist – for example, that military spouses are more

likely to occupy lower-paid administrative positions and that senior officer wives and

those with graduate degrees are more likely to be teachers. In regards to why military

spouses work, Harrell et al. found that motivations varied by rank and education. So,

while junior enlisted spouses often worked for financial reasons, officer spouses and

those with higher educations sought employment for personal fulfillment.[9] In regards

to why unemployed military spouses do not work, Harrell et al. found that "single-

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[9] This finding is echoed by Scarville (1990), who found that enlisted spouses as a group tend to work
for extrinsic reasons, while officer spouses as a group tend to work for intrinsic reasons.

parenting" responsibilities, multiple relocations, and general military lifestyle demands played major roles. The demands of such "extra duties" appeared to be exacerbated by the military member's frequent absence, unpredictable hours, and job inflexibility, as well as the absence of traditional support structures such as collocated extended families. Overall, two-thirds of those interviewed believed that their military affiliation had negatively affected their opportunities for employment. One-half believed it had negatively affected their opportunities for education. Finally, Harrell et al. found that the more educated the military spouse, the more likely she was to perceive a negative impact from her affiliation with the military. For example, three quarters of spouses with graduate degrees cited the negative impact of frequent, involuntary moves.

Given these findings, and drawing both on suggestions solicited from interviewees and on their own conclusions, Harrell et al. (2004) make several recommendations for military research and policy. Echoing the recommendations of other researchers (e.g. Hosek, 2002; Wardynski, 2000), the researchers suggest that the DoD should pursue opportunities for military spouses with both local employers and military contractors, strengthen spouse priority for civil service jobs, and tailor spouse employment programs and policies to appropriate audiences – for example, incorporating recognition that spouses work for more than financial reasons. Finally, related suggestions include addressing child care costs and availability, examining policy, licensing, and certification hurdles, and improving educational opportunities

through in-state tuition incentives, distance learning initiatives, and the expansion of continuing education programs.

Critique of the literature. As shown above, Harrell et al. (2004) contribute substantial knowledge to the study of military spouse employment. However, both in this study and in the literature as a whole, three noteworthy ruts remain: an overly wide scope, an overly narrow cross-sectional perspective, and an over-emphasis on problems and policy.

In *Working Around the Military* (Harrell et al., 2004), the sample scope includes a wide range of military spouses, and its mixed-methods approach allows a valuable, big-picture summary of military spouse employment. The large sample size allows, as well, between-group comparisons on such observed variables as service branch, rank, and education. However, the large size and broad scope of the sample here limit the return on the study's semi-structured interview process, necessitating a largely code-and-count analysis and an oversimplification of narrative data that in a smaller, more focused study might produce a deeper and more detailed description of lived experience. Finally, this study excludes military spouses who are stationed overseas from its interview process – a significant omission given that military families are much more likely to live overseas than are civilian families and, furthermore, that moves across international borders are the most detrimental type of relocation to employment rates and income (Hosek, 2002).

Research concerning military spouse employment is also consistently cross-sectional in perspective. While such snap-shot studies can draw a convenient, cost-

effective picture of such easily quantifiable variables such as present employment status and financial comparisons, they do little to illuminate the more complex processes at play. The issue is, in short, much more complicated than the "currently employed" / "currently unemployed" dichotomy frequently used. In the name of convenience, then, studies have focused on *work*, rather than long-term *careers* – often ignoring critical issues such as skill-based underemployment, reasons for working or not working, career fields, and personal employment goals and strategies. In addition, such cross-sectional designs are largely biased by self-selection: For example, among older and more educated spouses (i.e., those who work for self-fulfillment rather than financial reasons), only those with military-compatible careers will continue to work. Professional spouses pursuing other, less-compatible career choices often, in frustration, simply resign their ambitions and opt out of the workforce (or, indeed, out of their marriages and the military itself). So, while the study by Harrell et al. (2004) delves more deeply than most into these difficult issues, it remains limited in that it examines neither career progression nor personal adaptation over time.

Finally, research regarding military spouse employment overly emphasizes questions of problems and policy – an understandable trend given that most studies in this area are funded by policy-making bodies such as the Department of Defense. Indeed, while problem-identification and policy-response are critical tactics here, such emphases tend to ignore the agency of military spouses themselves. Certainly, career-oriented military spouses face problems specific to their lifestyle, and

certainly, such problems can be mitigated through policy response. However, researchers have thus far failed to examine what is perhaps the most direct route to issue resolution: the strategies and career-path progressions of successful careerist spouses. We have yet to ask, "What can military spouses do for themselves?"

Careers of Their Own

Building on the work of Harrell et al. (2004) and others, this research charts a new perspective within the literature on military spouse employment. As we have seen, most previous studies have employed all-encompassing samples, snapshot-like cross-sectional designs, and questions of problems and policy. This study, however, takes a tightly focused look at long-term career processes as experienced at the individual level. Instead of using a wide, representative sample, this study takes as its subject a small segment of the spouse population – Air Force officers' wives who have achieved both career satisfaction and commitment to their traditional role. Instead of taking a cross-sectional slice of the present, this study seeks out retrospective accounts of long-term career progression. In addressing long-term processes rather than current demographics, *career* issues (rather than work or job issues) come to light.

Finally, instead of asking only what challenges are associated with military spouse employment or how policy-makers might remove those challenges, this study adopts an agentic perspective – and endeavors instead to explore the strategies by which some career-oriented spouses have successfully overcome those challenges. However, while the problems-and-policy and agentic perspectives are here presented

in contrast, they are of course in practice both interrelated and complementary. So, researchers in the past have explored how the military can help its spouses, and this study will explore how military spouses might help themselves. Together, then, the two perspectives illuminate tactics of both policy and self-sufficiency: We here explore how the military can help its spouses help themselves.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to seek out the self-sufficient processes through which some career-oriented, officers' wives merge the traditional wife and careerist roles into one, transformational whole. By supplementing the military's policy-making perspective with an agentic perspective borne of the experiences and strategies of successful spouse pioneers, this study charts new paths towards an emerging role: traditional wives with careers of their own.

Overview

Pursuing the problem, purpose, and rationale introduced in Chapter One, this chapter reviewed relevant literature and built the theoretical and substantive perspectives of this study. Chapter Three, in turn, outlines methodological perspective, research design, and procedure. Subsequent chapters, then, detail the military context, the behavioral and cognitive adaptations undertaken by respondents in the course of their career pursuits, and summarize the implications of those findings.

CHAPTER III: Methodology

This chapter builds from the problem, purpose, and rationale introduced in Chapter One and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two to construct a unified methodological perspective and to describe both research design and the procedures undertaken during the course of this study.

Methodological Perspective

This study employs as its main strategy an oral life history approach as suggested by questions of process and human agency within the life course paradigm (Giele & Elder, 1998). In accordance with the symbolic interactionist perspective (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934) and qualitative approaches in general, this study founds its inquiry on (1) the relativist ontological belief that realities are not objective but numerous and individually constructed, (2) the transactional epistemological claim that the knower and the subject are inseparably intertwined, and (3) the methodological premise that all social entities exist in an ongoing flux of mutual influence. The following discussion reviews the life course paradigm, introduces an oral life history approach, and evaluates the validity of oral evidence.

The Life Course Paradigm

The four-part life course paradigm offered by Janet Giele and Glen Elder (1998) represents a convergence of symbolic interactionism and several variations on life course research. The paradigm incorporates simultaneously the dynamics of the individual and the social system, bringing to light their mutual influence, and suggests an array of research methodologies including historical demography, life histories and

biography, and longitudinal designs. As suggested by Giele and Elder, the life course

patterns revealed with such designs can be conceptualized as influenced by four

intersecting factors: human agency, location in time and place, linked lives, and

timing (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The life course paradigm (adapted from Giele & Elder, 1998, p. 11)
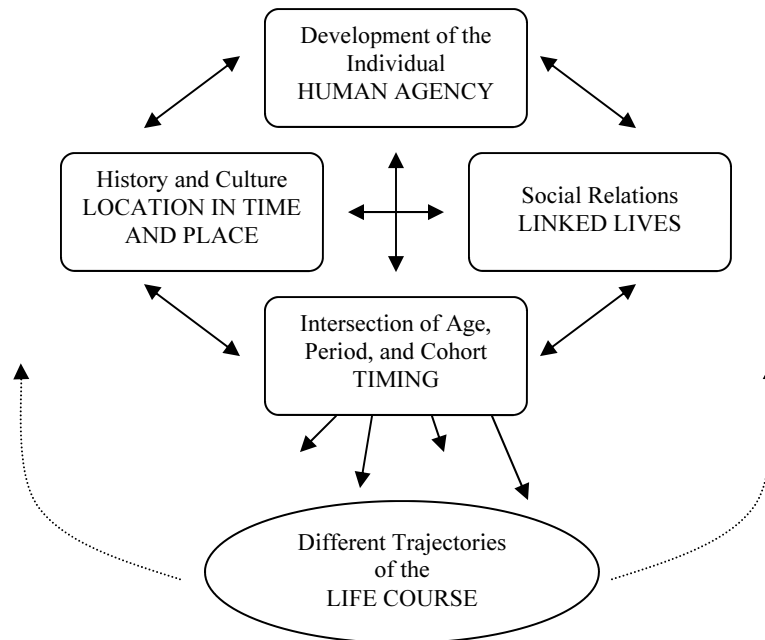
Human agency accounts for an individual's personal goal orientation.

Individuals adjust behavior and cognitions in order to meet their needs, directing their

efforts and perseverance towards the achievement of goals such as financial security,

life and domain satisfaction, and social support. Although influential in all life course

patterns, human agency is most clearly illuminated in biographical and life history

designs. The primary concern of this study is human agency. As such, its life history

design charts the strategic choices and adjustments made by military spouses in

pursuit of their personal career goals as they respond to their ever-changing

situations.

Location in time and place accounts for the lived historical moment and

cultural background of the individual. While each individual carries unique

experiences, each also is influenced to some degree by demographic experiences

patterned by culture, historical events, and location. Location in time and place is the

predominant concern of oral history and demography designs, but the effects are

influential in all life course patterns and should therefore be a concern in all life

course research. Although the primary emphasis of this study is agentic individual

behavior, analysis will also include consideration of the structural and historical

elements that these individuals have experienced in common – in short, their location

in time and place.

Linked lives accounts for the social interaction and mutual influence

experienced due to the individual's integration in society. Levels of integration vary,

but all individuals are to some degree linked to others through relationships and

institutions and through such factors as socialization, mutual support, shared

experiences, and mutually perceived normative demands. As the linked lives

influence is present in all life course patterns, its consideration deepens understanding

in all life course research designs. In this study, linked-lives elements such as social

relationships and perceived normative demands are critical and inseparable contextual

factors in determining the career trajectories of career-oriented military wives and, as such, their influence will no doubt be visible throughout the course of qualitative analyses.

Timing accounts for individuals' strategic adaptation to current situations. In order to meet the goals of human agency, individuals respond to external pressures by mobilizing the resources at their disposal in light of current life events. Such life events range from expected to unexpected, passively to actively enacted, and gradual to sudden. Although most clearly illuminated in longitudinal designs, timing is a critical aspect of all life course patterns. As such, timing can be viewed as the funnel through which are filtered the other three factors of the life course – human agency, location in time and place, and linked lives. This study seeks to integrate the elements of Giele and Elder's (1998) life course paradigm in an examination of human agency, as it is filtered through timing factors and traced along the twists and turns of the life course.

According to Giele and Elder (1998), the four factors of the life course paradigm – human agency, location in time and place, linked lives, and timing – comprise the elements of any given *life course trajectory*, a traceable sequence of events, perceptions, and evaluations as experienced by an individual. When considered in combination with multiple life trajectories of similar course, each individual trajectory can be seen as a thread in a larger, more powerful social force. Indeed, such social force is the crux of social influence and change – the concurrent,

reflexive process through which individuals influence social institutions and social institutions, once again, influence individuals.

Merging Methodologies: An Oral Life History Approach

This study explores the life course trajectories of careerist-traditional wives – both the individual trajectory of each participant and, secondarily, the cumulative patterns those individual trajectories construct. With these objectives in mind, the study employs retrospective interviews in which each participant gives an oral, sequential recounting of her past experience as a career-oriented military spouse. As such, the research design interweaves two methodological approaches: *life history*, which emphasizes the rich subjectivity of individual experiences, perceptions, and agency, and *oral history*, which seeks the oral, in-depth remembrances of multiple informants in order to achieve a fuller understanding of a historical period, an event, or a location in time and place. However, inconsistencies in terminology muddle the literature on biographical, retrospective methods, and "life history" and "oral history" are used varyingly and, sometimes, even synonymously. The following discussion draws on Clausen (1998), Miller (2000), Lummis (1987), and Ritchie (2003) to differentiate between the two approaches and to clarify their underlying philosophies. Ultimately, however, this study blends the two approaches, interweaving methods and motives from each.

The life history approach. The life history approach seeks to explore aspects of a subject's life experience through such methods as in-depth retrospective interviewing, the graphing of life matrices and trajectory charts, and the examination

of such life features as turning points, i.e., times or events "when one took a different direction from that in which one had been traveling" (Clausen, 1998, p. 202). Often, personal assessments of perceived influences and life satisfaction, representing either (or both) general or domain-specific satisfaction, provide useful conceptualizations as well (Clausen, 1998; Giele, & Elder, 1998; Miller, 2000). While life histories are inescapably intertwined with historical events and location, the primary focus of life history studies remains the analysis of the experiences and perceptions of the individual.

The oral history approach. Like some life history (or "life story") methods, oral history methods seek sequential, narrative data through retrospective interviewing. Oral history, however, is associated predominantly with the discipline of history:

> The difference between the way social scientists use life story methodology and oral history is one of central focus: life story emphasis is on the subjective world of the informant (although that is understood within the structures of history and sociology), whereas oral history is primarily concerned with gathering information about historical and social structures (although the person's subjectivity will be apparent and of interest at the same time). (Lummis, 1987, p. 25)

Oral history projects often are undertaken to bolster archives, to fill in gaps in recorded history, and to add diverse perspectives to the "official" histories produced by societies' elite and politically powerful (Ritchie, 2003). Given these primary motives, oral history projects are often wide-spread, institutionally sponsored endeavors. They typically give primacy to the compilation, preservation, and open availability of oral recordings and transcripts, and they often include a comprehensive

cross-checking of data for historical accuracy, drawing on multiple forms of evidence to discern what "really" occurred.

An oral life history approach. In keeping with its sociological underpinnings, this study combines the life history method and oral history method into a unified methodological approach. From the life history approach this research makes its primary focus on the subjective experiences and perceptions of individual careerist-traditional wives. It utilizes life matrices and charts to provide some structure and facilitate historical accuracy. From the oral history approach, this study takes both its oral interview method and its secondary theoretical consideration – the interplay between individuals' lived experiences and the historical, structural context in which it occurs:

> There is a dialectical relationship with individuals forming society and society forming individuals, and alternative approaches to historical and social knowledge from interviews are validly based on the perception of people as creators and bearers of economic and social relationships. Each individual oral history, therefore, is an exemplar and reveals the history of the period through the relationships of the individual with others, lived within the constraints of the economic and social. In theory, therefore, even one interview can reveal the relationships experienced by those sharing similar time, spatial, and social locations. The pattern of one life will, apart from personal contingencies, follow the same essential trajectory of others in that economic and social position. (Lummis, 1987, p. 105)

Although limited resources and a demand for absolute confidentiality preclude adherence to some standards of purist oral history, this study shares oral historians' ultimate goal: By interweaving the parallel threads of participants' lived experiences – the obstacles they faced, the opportunities they encountered, and innovations they made – this study will glimpse the movement of a unified communal history.

The Validity of Oral Evidence

Although the primary goal of this oral life history approach is not objective historical accuracy, its methods do raise questions regarding the validity of oral evidence (Lummis, 1987; Ritchie, 2003). In effect, such interview processes ask participants to *profess* through *recollection* their *perspectives* on an event, period, or process. As such, the validity of oral evidence can be evaluated on three dimensions: its perspective, its recollection, and the profession itself.

- *Perspective* – Questions of perspective recognize that any piece of oral evidence represents only one of multiple realities. Often considered a frustrating weakness, this aspect of oral evidence is nonetheless the primary source of rich description and detail. Any oral historical record seeking objectivity, then, should incorporate testimony from as many perspectives – angles, levels, and distances – as possible.

- *Recollection* – Questions regarding recollection simply acknowledge the fallibility of human memory. With the passage of time, mechanisms such as selective remembrance and story rehearsal both suppress recollection and create unintentional distortions.

- *Profession* – Questions regarding profession recognize that individuals are often motivated to *intentionally* distort claims regarding remembered perceptions. This proves a particularly perplexing issue when interviewing elites and current public figures – those who are threatened by potential consequences of candor and who may therefore have greater motivation to conceal, self-theme, and "spin" the truth. Further complicating matters, the very presence of the researcher and the interviewee's perceptions of that researcher to some degree determine interview outcomes. In any case, and although transparency can be encouraged through rapport, interviewing techniques, and confidentiality measures, such oral evidence should be viewed as a joint construction located within a very specific time and place.

While some researchers may go to great lengths to verify the factual accuracy of recollections, to flush out multiple perspectives, and to question how "the facts" might be spun and professed, not all of these dimensions are equally predominant

across disciplines or studies. For instance, a historian might painstakingly verify oral evidence in order to reconcile multiple perspectives on a single objective event, a folklorist might value oral evidence as cultural artifact, regardless of whether the stories told have any factual accuracy at all, and a psychologist might use oral evidence to study the fallibility of memory or to explore the evaluation and presentation of self. The importance of each varies according to the research questions at hand.

This study undertakes retrospective interviews from a sociological perspective, seeking out the participants construct the careerist-traditional wife role. As such, the project first and foremost strives to embrace multiple perspectives, bringing to light diversity among individually perceived experiences. At the same time, this study does not dismiss the validity issues associated with recollection. Recognizing that the historical accuracy of each oral account is a valuable objective, the design encourages accurate recollection through the use of life event matrices and charts as structural frameworks for each interview. Finally, this study acknowledges the political nature of the military environment and the pitfalls associated with interviewing those who have public personas to protect. As such, this study seeks to cultivate candor through the careful preservation of confidentiality.

Research Design

Overview

Overview

This study explores how some Air Force wives successfully negotiate the careerist-traditional wife role. It asks the following questions: In their own words, how do Air Force officer wives define "career"? How does the military lifestyle impact the careers of these women? What obstacles and opportunities do they perceive? By what adaptive processes might career-oriented Air Force officer wives achieve both career satisfaction and commitment to their traditional military role? Finally, what does it mean to be a careerist-traditional wife, and how do such career trajectories proceed over time and multiple relocations?

This study frames those questions within symbolic interactionism, identity theory, and the life course paradigm. Using a mixed-method, oral life history approach, the research expands role-related event histories into rich qualitative data through the charting of life paths and through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Coding, analysis, and interpretation are designed to capture subjective, retrospective perceptions of the meanings, sanctions, and strategies involved in navigating the careerist-traditional wife role.

Sampling Strategy

As pointed out by Giele and Elder (1998), life course studies "differ by whether they focus on differences in events and trajectories *within* individuals, *among* individuals sharing a common personal characteristic, or *across groups* of individuals who have experienced a common historical or economic environment" (emphasis

original, p. 183).   As such, this study seeks maximum diversification *among* individuals in their overall life courses and *within* individuals in their segmental life experiences.

Additionally, qualitative research seeks to sample individuals who are "expert participants," highly experienced with the topic of interest. As researchers, then,

> we deliberately and purposefully select a setting or context where we will best see what we want to study. We do not usually choose a place or a sample randomly, for we would then have to relay on luck to see what we are interested in; we do not choose the "average" experience, as then the characteristics of the phenomena are diluted. (Morse & Richards, 2002)

This study employs a two-stage purposive strategy designed to identify and enlist careerist-traditional wives with intense, relevant experiences and who are therefore be able to contribute relevant expertise. Most broadly, the respondents sought here are those career-oriented officer wives who have, relative to others in the sampling frame, achieved high career identity and high participation in the traditional military wife role.   The first stage of sampling entails the distribution of a preliminary survey to the entire sampling frame, the second, the selection of a small pool of ideal-typed interviewees from those responding to the preliminary survey.

Sampling frame. The selection of the Ramstein Officer's Spouses Club (ROSC) as the setting for this study is based on reasons both of convenience and purpose. First, my membership in this organization during the planning phases of the project and the relationships I formed there allow access to population largely sequestered from outside sources. Furthermore, as suggested by Morse and Richards (2002), "the setting for the research must be one in which the phenomena of interest

are likely to be seen – frequently, and in an intense form" (p. 34). Locating the study in the ROSC offers a pool of potential respondents likely to meet one sampling criterion – that of commitment to the traditional wife role. Finally, economic and ecological theories of homogamy and assortative mating (Becker, 1973; Blau, 1977) suggest that individuals mate within "marriage markets," networking on factors such as education, social class, and location. The military family literature bears out such hypotheses: While there are certainly many career-motivated military spouses within other spouse groups, sampling within an officer-level population such as the ROSC is more likely to net those with college educations, intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivations for work, and expectations for professional careers as opposed to money-making jobs (Harrell, 2004; Scarville, 1993). Finally, sampling from an overseas military base ensures that all respondents will have some experience with foreign relocations, one of the most challenging obstacles for the career-seeking military spouse (Hosek, 2002). [10]

Due to differences in the cultural and career dynamics of the wives of officers and the wives enlisted personnel, the wives of enlisted personnel are excluded from this study's sample. Although consideration of a wider population would undoubtedly foster richer understanding, resources such as time, money, and access constrain this project's scope. As such, only the experiences of wives of Air Force

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[10] While fully employed spouses are perhaps less likely to participate in spouse club activities, many do. However, prevailing norms compel "committed" officer spouses to participate in these voluntary organizations (Harrell, 2001, 2003), and as such, non-participants may be less likely than participants to have highly salient military-spouse identities – one of the two criterion for selection. Even so, this study's narrow sampling frame imposes definitional delimitations in that "commitment to the military spouse role" here implies spouse club membership.

officers are here explored. For further discussion regarding the sample boundaries

and generalizability of this study, see *Delimitations and Limitations*, below.

The ROSC is a private, charitable organization located at Ramstein Air Base

in Kaiserslautern, Germany. With approximately 60,000 Americans living in and

around the city, Kaiserslautern represents the largest enclave of American citizens

outside the United States. Correspondingly, the ROSC is the U. S. Air Force's largest

spouse organization. Membership in the ROSC is voluntary, and all spouses of

military officers stationed in the Kaiserslautern area (regardless of service branch,

gender, or nationality) are invited to participate. The spouses of civilian government

employees holding officer-equivalent ranks are also eligible for membership.[11] As

Ramstein Air Base is a headquarters base for both U. S. Armed Forces Europe and

NATO its officer population is, by comparison to other bases, disproportionately

rank-heavy. The 270 dues-paying members of the ROSC reflect this rank

distribution.   ROSC members indicating their sponsor's pay grade are here divided

into four rank-based categories: early career (lieutenant and captain), mid career

(major), late career (lieutenant colonel), and senior career (colonel and general ranks).

See Figure 3, below.

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[11] Although civilian spouses make up twelve percent of the ROSC, they are for theoretical reasons
excluded from this study. (See *Delimitations and Limitations*.)

Figure 3. ROSC members distributed by military member's rank

ROSC Members by Rank Groups

Civ, 28, 12%

Early Career, 58, 24%

Senior Career, 43, 18%

Mid Career, 46, 19%

Late Career, 65, 27%
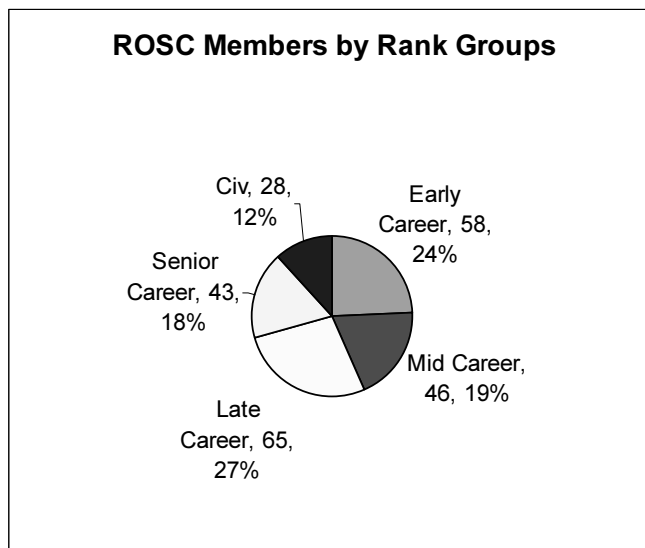
Survey process. I sought out prototypes among ROSC members of career-oriented officer wives who, relative to others in the sampling frame, showed both (1) high careerist identity and (2) high commitment to the traditional military wife role. Holding these characteristics constant, but allowing career satisfaction to vary, I sought further variation in the following factors: career identity meanings, age and rank, parental status, career field, and assignment locations. [12]

All ROSC members attending an organization function were asked to complete a preliminary screening survey. The survey data ultimately served two primary purposes: to provide descriptive information regarding the sampling frame as a whole and to provide relevant information for the identification of potential

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[12] For further discussion of sampling delimitations, the theoretical boundaries of included and excluded groups, and issues of study scope and generalizability, see *Delimitations and Limitations*, below.

interview candidates. As such, survey responses served to guide rather than determine the selection of prototypes for this purposive sample.

In keeping with relativist ontology, the survey first asked respondents for their personal definition of "career." In light of this personal definition, respondents indicated the extent to which they believe themselves to have a career. As such, the careerist identity could at the individual level be attached to any number of "career" types – for example, "professional volunteer," "home business owner," or even "career housewife/parent." Furthermore, and also based on their personal definitions, respondents completed a 12-item, 5-point Likert scale assessing careerist identity, career satisfaction, and affective commitment to the military lifestyle (see below). Three additional items addressed longitudinal career identity. The survey continued with 15 items regarding age, education, career interests (past, present, and future), parental status, past duty stations, and husband's profession and rank – those factors useful in formulating a diversified group of interviewees. Finally, the survey asked respondents to indicate their availability and willingness to participate in subsequent in-depth interviews. The survey took approximately ten minutes to complete. (See preliminary survey in Appendix A.) An in-depth review of each survey component follows.

Notably, this preliminary survey was based on respondents' personal interpretations and definitions of "career." Recognizing the importance of individualized meaning, the questionnaire explored the extent to which each respondent has achieved a career identity, career satisfaction, and affective

commitment for the military. For example, individuals might attach career identity meanings to employment categories such as "professional volunteer" or "career housewife/parent" – categories not usually encompassed under positivist conceptualizations of "career." Given this free variation in definition, the resulting sample of careerist-traditional wives included a wide array of career identities. Such variation added a richer understanding of internal, cognitive identity processes to this exploration of socio-behavioral role negotiation.

Based on these self-defined conceptualizations of career, the preliminary survey included twelve items from pre-validated scales measuring careerist identity, affective commitment to the military, and career satisfaction. Careerist identity was measured using three items from an eight-item scale adapted from the woman-centrality and scientist-centrality scales developed by Settles (2004):[13]

1. In general, having a career is an important part of my self-image
2. I have a strong connection with other career-oriented women
3. Having a career is an important reflection of who I am

Commitment to the military lifestyle was measured using a portion of the military commitment scale developed by Gade, Tiggle, and Schumm (2003). Adapted from Meyer and Allen's (1997) three-component conceptualization and its Affective, Normative, and Continuance Commitment Scale, the eight-item scale utilized by Gade et al. was developed for the explicit purpose of measuring affective (emotion-based) and continuance (cost-based) commitment among military spouses.

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[13] On the eight-item scale, Settles reported an alpha of .79 for the woman-identity scale and an alpha of .78 for the scientist-identity scale.

Because this study seeks to identify spouses showing attitudinal rather than economic

commitment, only the four-item affective portion of the scale is here employed[14]:

1. I feel like "part of the family" in the military
2. The military has a great deal of personal meaning for me
3. I feel a strong sense of belonging to the military
4. I feel emotionally attached to the military

Finally, career satisfaction was measured using a five-item scale developed by

Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990). The scale measured satisfaction with

self-perceived career success and progress towards income, advancement, and

development goals: [15]

1. I am generally satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career
2. I am generally satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals
3. I am generally satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income
4. I am generally satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement
5. I am generally satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills

Three additional items addressed longitudinal career identity, and a total of 15

items assessed demographic information regarding age, education, career interests

(past, present, and future), parental status, past duty stations, and husband's

profession and rank. Finally, the survey asked respondents to indicate their

availability and willingness to participate in subsequent in-depth interviews.

Survey response. As planned, all ROSC members attending an organizational

function were asked to complete a preliminary screening survey. Because time

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[14] Gade et al. report a coefficient alpha of .87 for this four-item affective commitment scale.
[15] In previous studies, coefficient alphas for this scale ranged from .83 to .89 (Fields, 2002)

constraints mandated survey distribution at a mid-day function, respondents were largely those ROSC members without full-time jobs. In addition, several of the organization's most active members were away at a volunteer leadership conference. To combat these apparent biases, the survey was subsequently distributed by e-mail to those ROSC members not attending the function (as well as to a few members who requested electronic copies).[16] In the end, several responses were received from individuals who had obtained forwarded surveys from ROSC members. These adaptive procedures undoubtedly introduced additional biases – for example, the construction of a response base comprised of two distinct groups, those who were simply present at the function and those who were passionate enough about the topic to take the time to submit an e-mailed reply. Even so, I believe the adaptation produced a decidedly more balanced pool than would the exclusive use of those responses obtained at one, selectively attended function.

Overall, the survey was very well received, and its distribution generated much interest, discussion, and debate. In fact, the identity issue under exploration here appears to be quite a "hot topic" among military wives: I received a total 93 completed surveys – and 60% of those respondents agreed to participate in the 2-3 hour interview process. The relevance of the topic was underscored as well when, on multiple occasions, I was contacted by individuals either requesting an interview or expressing overt disappointment at not being selected for an interview.

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[16] Although e-mail distribution was not explicit in the original research proposal, the eventuality of e-mail communication and the confidentiality issues it involves were addressed in the Internal Review Board proposal.

Survey Data Analysis

As noted above, survey data served both to provide a descriptive picture of the sampling frame and to provide relevant information for the selection of potential, ideal-type interviewees.

First, quantitative demographic information was compiled using an Excel datasheet imported into SAS data-analysis software. Using SAS, I compiled simple descriptive statistics and, from that data, construed a picture of the sampling frame. Although the data are not statistically representative of the ROSC organization, they do provide an illustrative depiction of survey respondents.[17]

A total of 93 individuals completed the survey, and all were female. Number of children ranged from zero to four with a mean of 1.9, and 45% of respondents reported two children. Age and rank distributions paralleled the "senior" age and rank make-up of the ROSC. Age of respondents ranged from 22-65 years, with mean age of 39 years. Sponsor's rank was distributed as follows: 27% early-career (lieutenant and captain), 26% mid-career (major), 25% late-career (lieutenant colonel), 15% senior-career (colonel and above), and 15% military-affiliated civilian. On average, respondents had been "married to the military" for 13 years and had spent 31% of that time overseas. Furthermore, respondents reported a mean of 5.6 PCS relocations and a mean of 2.79 years spent at each location.

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[17] Because some of the surveys were received via e-mail, a few of the responses represented here are from prior or non-ROSC members. All included responses, however, meet the basic selection criteria of (1) being a military wife and (2) having some overseas experience.

Regarding education and occupation: 98% of respondents reported some college-level education. 73% had attained a Bachelor's degree or greater, and 24% had obtained a Master's degree or greater. A wide range of career fields was reported. Career-field categories were reduced to eight general occupational categories, listed here by descending frequency: business/finance, medicine, education, communications/PR, human services, military, IT/engineering, and law. Additionally, several individuals listed home-making as the primary source of their career identity.

In regards to current employment: 47% of respondents reported some level of ongoing or occasional paid employment. Of all respondents, only 9% indicated traditional, full-time paid employment while overseas, while 11% detailed some form of alternative employment arrangement – for example, telecommuting or home business ownership. 15% of respondents had at some point been military members, and just over 3% were active duty or reserve military members at the time of survey completion. Finally, 67% of survey respondents indicated that they volunteer in the community on a regular basis. Volunteers who indicated approximate number of hours per week contribute a range of 2-50 hours a week – a mean of 12.6 work hours per individual. However, contributions are not distributed normally, but as a positive skew with a few individuals contributing much more than average (see Figure 4):

Figure 4. Distribution of volunteer hours
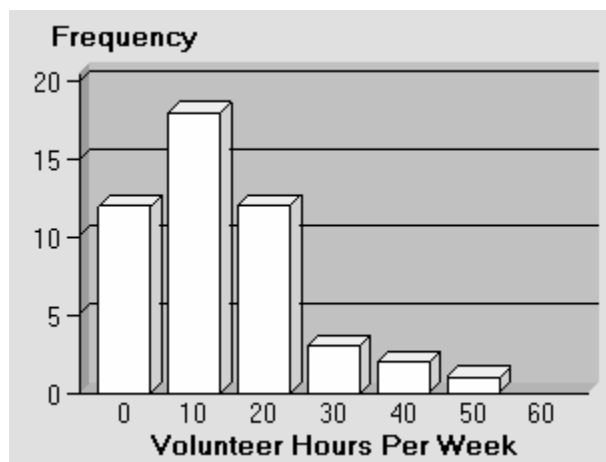
Interview Sample Selection

In addition to providing these descriptive statistics, survey data supplied

relevant information for the identification of potential interview candidates. That

said, the survey data were used to guide rather than dictate sample selection. Again,

the objective of the sampling strategy here employed is not to achieve a group

representative of the general population, of military spouses, or even of the sampling

frame. Instead, from among those respondents identified as careerist-traditional

wives I sought a wide range of intense identity meanings and career-related

experiences, including variation in career definitions and identity meanings, career

fields, current occupational activities, age and sponsor's rank, parental status, and

PCS locations.

 Sampling was undertaken in three steps: First, I identified those respondents

who qualitatively represented the careerist-traditional wife. Second, I orchestrated

among those a mix of both alternative and standard career definitions and a mix of

both high and low affective commitment (see notes, below). Third, and finally, I

insured among those a diverse mix of career fields, current occupational activities,

age and sponsor's rank, parental status, and PCS locations.

Identifying Careerist-Traditional Wives

The first step was to identify those respondents who qualitatively represent the

careerist-traditional wife. This judgment was based on (1) the respondent's claim of a

career identity (however "career" was defined) and (2) the respondent' s

demonstrated commitment to the traditional military spouse role. Again, I sought

individuals claiming a careerist identity, as the questions pursued here ask how Air

Force officers' wives can and do sustain personal career identities. In addition, I

sought individuals who demonstrated commitment to a traditional military spouse

role. This criterion was included, first, in acknowledgement of the social

contributions traditionally made by – and often expected of – military officers'

wives.[18] Secondarily, I included this criterion in recognition that those spouses who

do not participate in the military community relinquish their influence within that

community, i.e., they surrender their opportunity to instigate interactionist social

change.[19]

First, identity claim was determined using an intersection of four indicators:

an explicit career claim (Item #2), a high-quartile score on the career identity scale

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[18] For further discussion regarding these norms, see *Greedy Institutions* and *Military Spousehood* in
Chapter Two and *Officers' Wives* in Chapter Four.
[19] For further discussion regarding the reciprocal nature of self and society, see *Social Significance:
Meaning in Motion* in Chapter One and *Socio-Behavioral Negotiation* in Chapter Six.

(see Survey Key), and/or an explicit claim of career importance (Item #16) – all in light of the career narrative (Item #33). Next, commitment to the traditional military spouse role was determined using an intersection of two indicators: community participation as indicated by volunteerism (Items #32), and community participation as indicated by occupational activities and career-path narrative (Items #2 & #33).[20]

Using the variety of indicators described above, I dichotomized each survey respondent as "high" or "low" on two continua: *career identity* and *community participation*. Those landing in the high-high quartile were deemed "careerist-traditional wives" and were thus candidates for the interview sample (see Figure 5)[21]:

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[20] Some incidental notes on affective commitment: My original research proposal indicated that a high-quartile score on the affective commitment scale (see Survey Key) would be the primary indicator of commitment to the traditional spouse role. Prior studies have indicated that affective commitment is predictive of such factors as retention intent (Gade et al, 2003) and, in formulating a research plan, I made the ill-fated leap that the same would hold true for such activities as volunteerism and community participation – those interactive behaviors critical to the interactionist perspective here espoused. However, preliminary survey analysis showed that many of those respondents known to be most participative in the military community showed low levels of affective commitment. As this study specifically seeks those wives who contribute to and interact within the military community, a behavioral indicator – volunteerism – was added to the mix, and the criterion variable changed from "affective commitment" to "community participation." ("Affective commitment" however was retained as a secondary descriptive category – and it did, indeed, prove interesting in later analysis. For further discussion, see *Methodological Implications* in Chapter Seven.)

[21] This study's introduction conceptualizes three career-related role-identities: careerist, traditional wife, and careerist-traditional wife. However, as shown in Figure 4, the low-low quartile on the career identity / community participation grid may indicate identification with roles outside the consideration of this study.

Figure 5. Identifying careerist-traditional wives
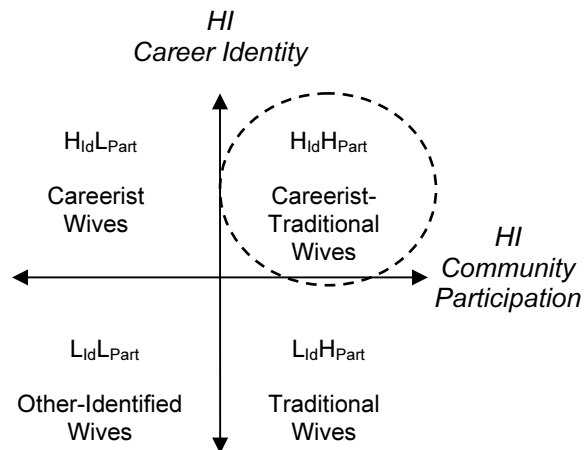
After identifying the careerist-traditional wives from among the survey respondents, I moved to the second step: orchestrating from among those a mix of both high and low affective commitment (see footnote[20] above) and a mix of both alternative and standard career definitions. The following two sections outline that process.

Noting Affective Commitment

First, from among careerist-traditional wives, affective commitment scores were dichotomized into two groups: high and low. This secondary category was retained for later exploratory analysis (see footnoted discussion[20], above). After noting affective commitment, I moved on to explore the definition of career and to construct a optimally diversified sample pool of careerist-traditional wives. (See also Figure 8 under *Standard and Alternative Definitional Types*, below.)

Exploring the Definition of Career

Definitions serve to delineate conceptual boundaries. They imply specific decisions regarding inclusions, exclusions, and the scope of a concept's applicability. This section preliminarily addresses the first of the study's primary research questions, "How do some Air Force officers' wives define career?"

Primary in this sample selection process – and the seed of what was to become the central theme of this study – is the diversification of respondents' career definitions. The goal of this analysis is to progressively build an emergent conceptual scheme that might assist in interviewee sample selection. As such, I here undertake an qualitative inquiry into the meaning of the term, *career* – in other words, an inquiry into the complex boundaries respondents construct in regards to what does and does not constitute a career. I outline the process by which I moved from respondents' definitional specifications to this study's standard/alternative definitional classifications.

Definitional specification. Embedded in each respondent's definition of career are a number of specifications – subjective, boundary-setting stipulations regarding what does and does not qualify as a career. I began my analysis of these stipulations by open-coding a transcript of all respondents' personal definitions of career. [22] Using NVivo software, I repetitively and reflexively moved through the transcript, picking out mentioned specifications and applying to them *in vivo* nodes –

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[22] As demonstrated by the wide variety of definitions received, survey respondents took to heart my introductory statement encouraging freedom of definition. For the wording of this statement, see survey materials in *Appendix A*.

in other words, creating qualitative categories using respondents' own language as labels[23]. I gradually moved to axial coding, progressively splitting, merging, and re-labeling categories and organizing nodes towards greater conceptual clarity. This initial specification analysis, then, was not an attempt to reduce definitions to a single, exclusive classification node, but to illuminate the multifaceted nature of those definitions. In the end, I settled on a total of 23 primary nodes, each linked to the larger tree through a series of organizational "place-holder nodes." The resulting taxonomy has three main branches: career locus, time investment, and motive and outcome.[24] (See Figure 7, below.)

After creating the node tree, I was interested in the relative prevalence of each node branch. Using NVivo, I profiled node information and sorted by number of sections coded. This simple tally offers an overview of the quantitative frequency of coded nodes – in other words, the number of definitions coded at each. In Figure 7,

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[23] Narrative data obtained with both the preliminary surveys and the life history interviews was transcribed in full and stored in separate, password-protected documents. Those documents were imported into QSR's NVivo program, software used to organize data and facilitate the researcher's exploration of complex qualitative data. Like other computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, the program itself does not manage or analyze data but instead offers the researcher a flexible system by which facilitate the storing, management, coding, sorting of data, nodes, and themes. NVivo, then, is simply a tool to help qualitative researchers meet the method's paradoxical requirement for "the simultaneous pursuit of complexity and the production of clarity" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 9). [this description of NVivo needs to be earlier in the Methods section where you first mention it. . .]

[24] When devising my original research plan, I expected to find that individuals would incorporate occupational specifications within their personal definitions of career. This, however, was not the case. With the exception of three "career moms," no respondent specified her occupation within her definition of career. Instead, most indicated their occupations separately in open-ended narrative response. In their definitions, then, respondents in general resorted to much broader terminology, locating the essence of career either externally, in a profession, job, location, or activity, or internally, as an outcome of a cumulative past, as a lived moment, or even as latent potential or a planned future state.

the width of each square depicts the frequency of a specification node.[25] Squares at

node junctures indicate the cumulative frequency of mentions in child nodes. For

instance, among mentions of career locus, twice as many references were made to

external loci than to internal loci. Among those locating career externally, half

equated career with a job, position, or employment, while approximately one-third

referenced some unspecified activity. One quarter equated career with a profession or

occupation, and a few respondents specified that careers take place outside the home.

Although an imprecise representation, this visual model makes apparent the relative

prevalence of each coded category.

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[25] A caution: One of the hazards of frequency models such as this is potential for misinterpretation of
the two-dimensional squares. The frequency count of each node is represented here by the *width* of
each square. But, because the shapes may be seen as areas (rather than as simple widths) they may be
inaccurately interpreted. For the purposes of this model, however, I retained the use of two-
dimensional symbols, as their exaggerated visual variation made frequency differentials more
apparent.
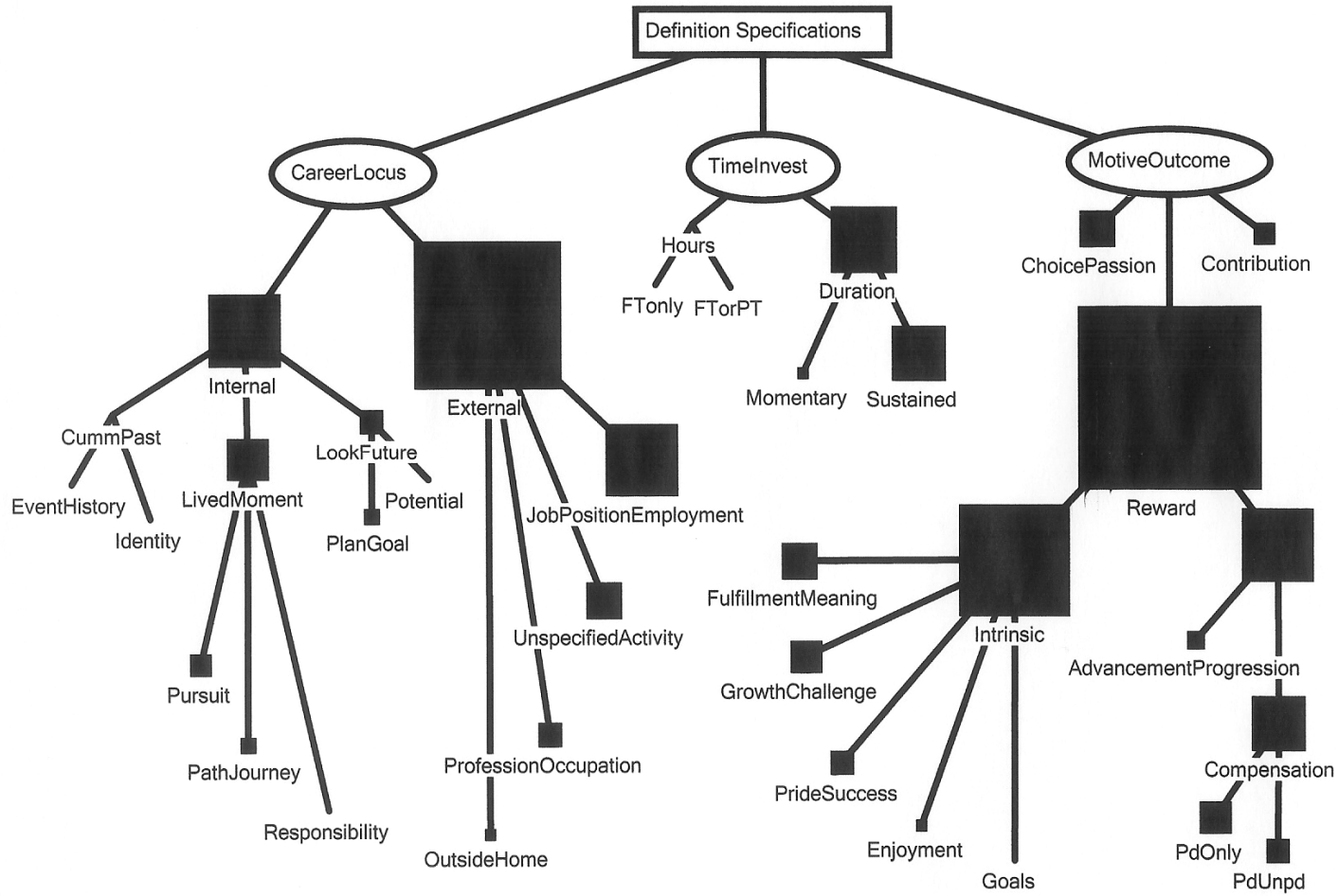
Figure 6. Node tree: Relative frequency of definitional specification nodes

For the purposes of this study, it is enough to observe the broader node distributions that are visible in Figure 6. Most notably, the great majority of mentions split relatively evenly between the career locus and the motive and outcome branches, while the time investment branch carries a much lighter load. The weight of the career locus branch is distributed unevenly, with mentions tending more towards external than internal loci, while the weight of the motive and outcome branch falls largely on reward. Here, both intrinsic and extrinsic mentions are common, but it appears that intrinsic motivations and outcomes are more central to the meaning of career. The more weighted branches of this node tree merited closer scrutiny.

Using NVivo's proximity search feature, I completed several co-occurrence searches, which returned in matrix form the Boolean intersections of all searched nodes. In addition to the single-node tally above, I also could estimate the prevalence of each dyadic node combination. Most notable are the clusters of pairs that formed around two commonly mentioned career loci: job/position/employment and unspecified activity. First, both were frequently coded, and both showed up in multiple concurrent pairs. More intriguingly, the two often paired on nodes within the same branch, but once in that branch split in noticeably opposite directions. While such combinations are thought-provoking, these common pairings are in the end merely suggestive of the patterns underlying larger specification clusters. That said, the insight gleaned in this analysis was ultimately instrumental in conceptualizing two the definitional types – standard and alternative – and, therefore, in diversifying interview sample selection.

Standard and alternative definitional types. As described above, the general

purpose of the definitional analysis undertaken here was to build a conceptual scheme

of respondents' personal definitions.[26] Given the multidimensional specifications and

patterns noted above, how to categorize respondents' career meanings?

First, it is worth first noting that my eventual use of the *standard definition*

label to some degree implies the assumption that there exists a socially "standard"

career norm – an understanding of the concept that is shared among those in a social

system. As shown in the diversity of the specifications above, it is clear that such an

assumption is not altogether accurate. Although symbolic-interaction purists might

object, I for the sake of expedience temporarily compromised my premise of absolute

relativity and, in quest of a definitional baseline, turned first to Merriam & Webster

(Mish, 1997).[27] This dictionary defines career in three ways: as "an occupation or

profession followed as a life's work," as "a course or passage," and as verb, "to go at

top speed, especially in a direct or headlong manner."

Comparing and contrasting this assumed social norm (a.k.a. "dictionary

definition") to the data specifications outlined above, it is clear that survey

respondents as a group depart from this norm in several significant ways. For

instance, although many personal definitions did associate career with an occupation

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[26] In contrast to the direct, in-vivo coding used above, this segment of analysis required the
conceptualization of second-level categories to describe the definitions themselves – in other words,
labels that lump together related definitional characteristics. These labels, then, each represent a multi-
dimensional cluster comprised of several continua and/or categories. So, this labeling process is, in
essence, an exercise in definition, and as such these labels, like every definition, impose boundaries of
inclusion and exclusion.

[27] That said, I'd persist in arguing that even this "dictionary definition" is not an agreed-upon social
consensus, but rather something more akin to a qualitative mean.

or profession, and while many alluded to a path or journey, only 5 of the 93 respondents specified life-long continuity. It is apparent, as well, from their definitions and narrative responses that very few of these wives would describe their career as being in any way "direct" or at "top speed."

Abandoning the dictionary definition, I questioned whether perhaps military wives might comprise a subset of the general social system – a subset interactive enough to have negotiated its *own* "standard" definition. In consideration of the great variety of definitional specifications employed by survey respondents, and returning to the coding analysis above, I landed once again on those combinatory node patterns that were teased from the larger scheme. It was ultimately from these combinations that I drew two type descriptors, *standard* and *alternative*.

As used here, *standard* definitions of career are those that adhere most closely to the profession/employment cluster – definitions placing the locus of career in a job, position, profession, or occupation. To review, such definitions tended to emphasize growth and challenge, advancement, and paid compensation. *Alternative* definitions of career instead adhered more closely to the unspecified activity cluster – definitions allowing both momentary activity and uncompensated work.[28] Figure 7 displays the specification nodes primarily indicative of the standard and alternative definition

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[28] These ideals in place, a caveat arose: Although both full-time work and paid work paired among mentions more closely with the professional employment cluster than with the unspecified activity cluster, relatively few respondents explicitly stated these qualifiers. If descriptors were classified strictly according to these mentions, then, only a handful of standard definitions would result. (Numbers aside, this method would impose bias, too, as many part-time and unpaid workers did claim a career identity based on the profession/employment locus.) So, in order to respect what were apparently contextual norms, and in order to foster reasonable balance in the number of standard/alternative designations, the standard descriptor was broadened to include definitions allowing part-time and unpaid work.

types. The figure is best read from the center column outward, starting with the specification node, noting the number of node mentions coded and the percentage of mentions also coded as *alternative*. A directional arrow indicates each node's predominant relationship with the standard/alternative dichotomy. Finally, prototypical respondent definitions illustrate each specification node.

Figure 7. Specification nodes as indicators of definition type

Specification nodes indicative of STANDARD DEFINITION		Specification nodes indicative of ALTERNATIVE DEFINITION
e.g. "on-going employment"	Position/ Employment N = 35, 12% Alt*	
	Unspecified Activity N = 19, 84% Alt	e.g. "A channel of activity for your talents"
e.g. "Professional growth and development"	Growth/ Challenge N = 16, 31% Alt	
e.g. "A salaried position"	Paid Work Only N = 15, 7% Alt	
e.g. "Staying within your chosen field"	Profession/Occupation N = 13, 8% Alt	
	Paid or Unpaid N = 12, 58% Alt	e.g. "Any job you do with or without getting paid"
e.g. "Employment that increases in knowledge and pay with experience"	Advancement/Progress N = 9, 11% Alt	
	Momentary Duration N = 6, 100% Alt	e.g. "What you are doing at that time that you do well"
e.g. "Work outside the realm of mother or wife for which you receive pay"	Work Outside Home N = 6, 0% Alt	

* N = total number of coded mentions. Percentage is the proportion of those mentions also coded as *alternative*.

This dichotomization resulted in a relatively balanced standard/alternative

split, with 48 definitions coded standard and 36 definitions coded alternative.[29]

Within these trend-based, type-descriptor categories thrived some definitional

diversity. Note, both the similarity and the intra-category range apparent in this set of

four standard definitions:

> *Career*: Staying within your chosen field and then advancing up
> the career ladder taking on progressively increasing responsibility
> and job breadth

> *Career*: A salaried position held for a number of years

> *Career*: An individual's profession or vocation regardless of
> whether it is a paid or volunteer position

> *Career*: The profession I return to when employed

And, finally, in this set of four alternative definitions:

> *Career*: Using your gifts and talents in your job or service to
> others

> *Career*: Something that you are excited to do at the beginning of
> the day, and at the end of the day puts a smile on your face for the
> things you were able to accomplish

> *Career*: Raising my kids

> *Career*: The direction an individual chooses to orient the primary
> source of his or her energy, the current life focus which fuels an
> individual's self-esteem

In order to achieve a variety of identity meanings, I carried out a qualitative

analysis and dichotomization of respondents' personal definitions of "career." As

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[29] Such multi-dimensional categories are, of course, imperfectly exclusive. However, most definitions
fit clearly into one of the two categories – and those that were ambiguous at first glance were in most
cases clarified when read in context of the career extent and career path narratives. Those few that
remained ambiguous were left unclassified.

described above, the definitions were for sample-selection purposes divided into two

groups: *standard* and *alternative*. Although these definitions differed on many

dimensions, and although each type was attached to a variety of career fields, this

basic standard/alternative dichotomy served the diversification purposes of initial

sample selection.

With distinctions drawn, then, between high and low affective commitment

and standard and alternative definitional types, I identify and diversify in sample

selection four sub-categories of careerist-traditional wives:

Figure 8. Identifying four categories of careerist-traditional wives
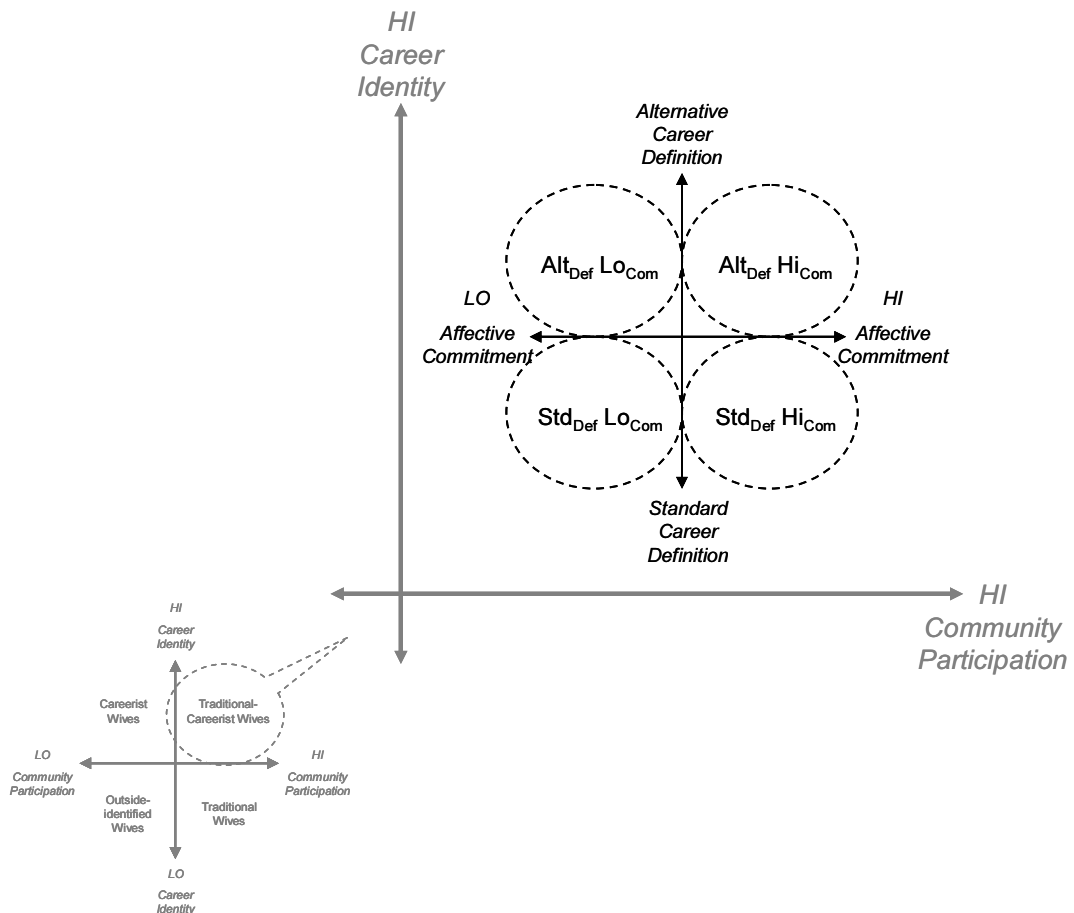
Diversifying Demographic Factors

The final step in sample selection was to further diversify using relevant demographic variables. Using the information obtained on the preliminary survey, I pursued purposive selection on relatively straightforward factors I insured among those a diverse mix of career fields, current occupational activities, age and sponsor's rank, parental status, and PCS locations. I first reviewed survey responses (Items #2, 31, 33) regarding personal career field, reducing the fields to seven occupational categories: business/finance, medicine, education, communications/PR, human services, military, and IT/engineering. In addition, I added an eighth category to accommodate those who in narrative claimed homemaking as their primary career field. Then, to achieve a mix of current occupational activities, I designated three realms of activity – volunteerism, parenting, and paid work – and labeled respondents by seven possible combinations (see Figure 9)[30]:

Figure 9. Identifying realms of occupational activity

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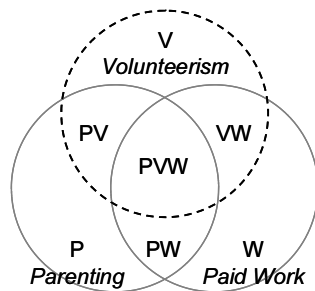
[30] Note that, due to the prior criterion of community participation, only individuals operating to some degree in the realm of volunteerism are here selected.

Using demographic information obtained from the preliminary survey, I ensured further diversification on age and sponsor's rank (Items #18, 29, 23), parental status (Item #22), and PCS experiences (Items #23, 25, 26, 33). Finally, among these careerist-traditional wives I allowed current career satisfaction to vary. Although the study's research questions specifically seek out successful career adaptations, retaining "negative case" individuals, i.e., those showing currently low satisfaction, lent to the analysis a clearer picture of the obstacles and frustrations encountered by those aspiring to the careerist-traditional wife role.

This sample-selection process netted a pool of potential interviewees who, while having "expert experience" and while falling within the boundaries of the criteria above, prove deliberately diverse in individual experiences, interpretations, and life course trajectories. From this pool of candidates, I contacted potential interviewees by phone or e-mail, according to the preference indicated on the preliminary survey. Overall, their responses were very generous, although several candidates were unreachable due to summer travels and PSC relocations.[31] I began interviewing across the categories, purposively sampling to fill gaps and answer emerging questions as interviewing progressed. When contacting potential interviewees, I reminded them of the requirements for study participation and then

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[31] The months of May, June, and July – the exact timeframe of this study's data-collection processes – comprise the military's busiest relocation and travel period. Each year, approximately 1/3 of Ramstein's military population rotates (most of them during the spring), and this statistic does not include the peak-season travel of families with school-age children. So, ideally, this study would have been executed at a less hectic time of year. However, time constraints – both my own and the organization's – dictated the timing of this research.

formally invited each to participate in the interview process. Ultimately, I

interviewed a total of 15 careerist-traditional wives.

<p style="text-align:center">Interview Respondents</p>

Those interviewed in-depth comprised a reasonably diverse group of 15

careerist-traditional wives, each embodying the detail-rich expertise here sought.

These women represented an array of career identities, broadening the concept of

"career" to include varied levels and types of paid employment, sub-employment, and

unpaid endeavors. Within the bounds of these criteria, the sampling strategy served

to illuminate a wide array of individual experiences, interpretations, and life course

trajectories. Table 1 summarizes by selection criteria the resulting sample of

interviewees.

Table 1. Summary of interviews

#	Sampling Constants				Dichotomous-Category Variables				Multiple-Category Variables														
	Career Identity Claim		Community Participation		Career Definition		Affective Commit		Current Career Field								Current Activities (Volunteerism + Work and/or Parenting)						
	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo	Std	Alt	Hi	Lo	Busi Man	PR Com	Educ	Hum Serv	IT Eng	Med	Mil	Hom	V	W	P	V W	V P	W P	V W P
29	*	-	*	-	*		*					*					*	-	-			-	
46	*	-	*	-	*		*			*							*	-	-			-	
61	*	-	*	-	*		*								*			-	-		*	-	
79	*	-	*	-	*		*							*				-	-		*	-	
27	*	-	*	-	*			*						*				-	-		*	-	
38	*	-	*	-	*			*	*									-	-		*	-	
78	*	-	*	-	*			*	*									-	-			-	*
88	*	-	*	-	*			*			*							-	-		*	-	
03	*	-	*	-		*	*		*									-	-			-	*
15	*	-	*	-		*	*				*							-	-			-	*
33	*	-	*	-		*	*								*			-	-		*	-	
57	*	-	*	-		*	*								*			-	-		*	-	
82	*	-	*	-		*	*						*					-	-		*	-	
54	*	-	*	-		*		*				*						-	-		*	-	
68	*	-	*	-		*	*			*							*	-	-			-	

In order to preserve confidentiality, the demographic composition of the interviewed sample is presented below only in summary form. Like that obtained from the preliminary surveys, this descriptive data was compiled using an Excel datasheet imported into SAS data-analysis software. This analysis is intended for descriptive purposes only. They are not intended to be a statistically representative subset of any larger organization or demographic group.

All 15 careerist-traditional wives were affiliated through marriage to the U. S. Air Force. Within this group, the number of children ranged from zero to three with a mode of two. Age of interviewees ranged from 27-50 years, with mean age of 37 years. The military-related experiences of interviewed wives were diverse. Interviewees had been "married to the military" a mean of 11 years, ranging from 4-22 years. Nine respondents had no familiarity with the military at the time of marriage, while four reported high pre-marriage familiarity. Among participants' military mates, career fields of participants' sponsors were split evenly by function, with seven working in support fields and eight working in operational fields. Sponsors' military experience was distributed as follows (Figure 10) :[32]

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[32] Because three of the sponsors represented here transitioned to officer status mid-career, years in military – rather than rank – is a more accurate indicator of experience.

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Figure 10. Sponsor's military experience by years in service
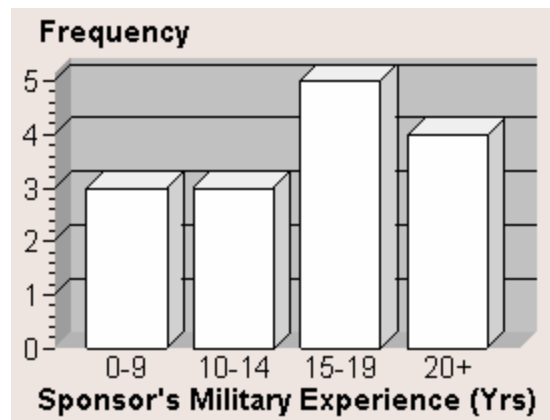
Interviewees had spent approximately 35% of their married time overseas, and they individually averaged a range of one to five years per location. Although the setting of this study dictated that much the overseas experience represented occurred at Ramstein, most interviewees had spent time at other overseas or remote locations as well. As such, considered here are the cumulative experiences of wives stationed in Alaska, Germany, Guam, Hawaii, Japan, South Korea, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.[33]

Their careers: As indicated previously in Table 1, all interviewees claimed some type of careerist identity. Eight professed standard definitions of "career," while seven professed alternative. As also shown in Table 1, career fields and current activities were purposively sampled to include a wide range of occupations. All selected participants volunteer or participate regularly in community and/or unit

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[33] Alaska, Guam, and Hawaii are "remote" stations considered for military purposes to be overseas.

activities, and those 10 who indicated number of regular volunteer hours reported a mean of 15 hours per week.

Although each participant had some paid work experience, just five interviewees held paid positions at the time of this research. (One of those five had returned to the U. S. and was newly employed there.) Four interviewees indicated that their primary occupational activity entailed some form of alternative work arrangement, for example, a home-based business, contracting or self-employment, or telecommuting. Three interviewees were prior military members, one held current active-duty status, and one held current reserve status. All 15 interviewees reported some level of college education. Of those, 13 held Bachelor's degrees, of those, 7 held Master's. One interviewee was in the dissertation phase of her doctoral studies.

<div align="center">Interviews</div>

The Interview Process

The following discussion reviews interview format, outline, and summary.

Interview format. Upon arrival at the interview site, each respondent first read and signed an informed consent statement. Next, given a life event grid (see example in Figure 11), each respondent estimated the timing of pertinent life events. (At time of invitation, participants were encouraged to bring with them to the interview any records – e.g., resumes, address books – that might assist in this process. Personal records were not retained by the researcher.) These event histories served only as skeleton structures from which to better "hook" memories of past experiences and, as such, detailed accuracy was unnecessary. After life events had been estimated on the

grid, the respondents were asked to estimate quantitative ratings of satisfaction in the

career, traditional wife, and general life domains. These ratings were not the focus of

the study but simply an estimate by which to more efficiently structure the subsequent

life history interview (Denzin, 1989; Giele, 1998). Finally, these ratings were

automatically transposed using MSExcel onto domain satisfaction chart (Clausen,

1998) showing the simultaneous paths of the three domain trajectories. (See example

in Figure 12 and Interview Materials, Appendix B).

Figure 11. Sample of a completed life event grid

RESPONDENT: Krista

TODAY'S DATE: 9-Nov-04

BIRTH YEAR: 1969

YEAR MARRIED MILITARY: 1991

YEAR	AGE	MOVES/ PCS TO. . .	PAID WORK (Job/FT/PT)	VOLUNTEER WORK (ORG)	CAREER PURSUIT EVENTS (own graduations, promotions, training, etc.)	FAMILY & OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS (births, illness, deaths, separations, long deployments, etc.)	HUSBAND'S JOB CHANGE / RANK CHANGE	SATISFACTION WITH CAREER PURSUIT (1-10, 10 HIGH)	SATISFACTION WITH MILITARY LIFE (1-10, 10 HIGH)	GENERAL LIFE SATISFACTION (1-10, 10 HIGH)
1989	20	at Cal Poly	PT	coach				7		8
1990	21		PT	coach		Dad diagnosed		4		4
1991	22	To Cal State / To Florida / Marry			Graduate BA		LT -- pilot	5	5	6
1992	23	PCS to Ramstein, Germany	PT	ROSC, coach		Squadron turmoil, deployments, 6mos. Separation	CPT - pilot	1	0	1
1993	24	Back to California	FT	teaching-related	graduate coursework teaching	9-mo. voluntary separation for my school		1	5	5
1994	25	PCS to Aviano, Italy	PT	OSC/sqd	turned down GS job for first travel-writing gig			4	6	6
1995	26		PT	OSC/sqd		Bosnian war. . .		5	6	7
1996	27		PT	OSC/sqd				5	7	7
1997	28	PCS to Osan, Korea	PT	OSC/sqd				6	7	7
1998	29	Las Vegas (6mos.)	PT	OSC/sqd				6	6	7
1999	30	PCS to Hill, Utah	PT	Sqd	Ski-Europe gig		MAJ --pilot	8	8	8
2000	31		PT	Sqd				8	8	8

Figure 12. Sample of a completed domain satisfaction chart

Preliminary instruments complete, each session then moved on to a voice-recorded semi-structured interview. The format of each life history interview was determined largely by the form of the individual's life event grid and resulting life course chart. Beginning with a lead-in summarizing the background of the participant, each interview moved through a sequential accounting of the participant's life course and career path. The interview moved through life segments as delineated by permanent change of station (PCS) moves. Each then briefly focused on the details of notable turning points as mapped on the life course chart, for example, the highs, lows, turning points, and domain divergences. Finally, each interview concluded with several summary questions.

Interview outline. The original interview outline was as follows:

I. Lead-in
   A. Review of childhood and life prior to this marriage.
   B. Summary of life today, including family, activities, and current career status

II. Segments in Sequence – referencing individual's life event matrix
   A. Career-related expectations at time of marriage
   B. Segments in sequence [series repeated for each PCS segment]
      1. Overview of life at location
      2. Career goals on arrival
      3. Obstacles
      4. Opportunities
      5. Summary of activities
   C. Current plans and career-related expectations

III. Turning Points – referencing individual's life course chart
   A. Summary of life course chart
   B. Notable features
      1. Turning points
      2. Low points
      3. High points
      4. Domain divergences

IV. Wrap-up
    A. Summary of experience as a career-oriented military spouse, including obstacles and opportunities
    B. Advice to a new military spouse
    C. Questions and/or comments

However, as expected, other pertinent topics emerged as the study proceeded. As such, the list above evolved through the course of interviews. Not all interviewees answered every question, and some respondents interviewed early in the process were later asked to respond to additional follow-up questioning via e-mail. Some of the emergent, follow-up questions that arose during the course of research:

- Sometimes a military member's job comes with expectations or "duties" for that member's spouse. To what degree have you felt like you "should" participate in military, unit, or community activities? How are such pressures related to the military member's position?
- To what extent can the behavior of a wife help and/or hurt her husband's military career?
- Why do you volunteer in the community? Do you consider your volunteer work part of your career, or is it "something extra"?
- What strategies have you used in your job searches? Which strategies seem most effective in your career field?
- How has your definition of the term "career" changed over time? What thoughts and/or emotions did you experience as this change took place?

During the interview sessions, participants to varying degrees moved between topics on their own, addressing the topics above out of sequence. For this reason, I used topical check list rather than a list of questions for note-taking during interviews. (See interview questions and original topical checklist in Appendix B.) At the close of each interview, each respondent was offered the following: a copy of the signed consent form, a copy of her life course grid and life course chart, a form for

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requesting an electronic copy of the final research report, and printed information

regarding career-related community resources and confidential counseling services.

Interview summary. Interview sessions ranged from 1.5 to 3.25 hours, with a

mean of approximately 2.25 hours. Most of the interviews took place in the local

library's private meeting room. Two were held behind closed doors in the ROSC

office, and one took place in the respondent's private office. All were one-on-one

interviews with no others present. The question and answer session from each

interview was digitally recorded and transcribed in full. (For the sake of clarity,

many fillers and false starts – ums, ahs, etc. – were omitted.) As per plans stated in

the internal review board proposal, the digital recordings were stored as password-

protected files and erased after transcription. Transcripts and their accompanying

interview materials were issued pseudonyms, and respondents were thereafter

referenced by pseudonym and/or survey-respondent number. Interviewee contact

information and keys, interview transcripts, and other interview materials were stored

as password-protected computer files. Although with each interview invitation I

explicitly offered to reimburse childcare costs, I was able to set appointments for

times convenient to the interviewees, and none requested reimbursement. [34]

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[34] Three exceptions to this procedure occurred: First, one interviewee requested that her interview go unrecorded. I took detailed notes, and thereafter constructed from those notes a paraphrased transcript. Second, and due to geographical challenges (e.g., PCS moves) that placed interviewee and interviewer on opposite sides of the plant, two additional interviews were completed via e-mail. (Although not explicitly outlined in my original proposal, the approved IRB plan did allow for electronic communication.   In these cases, a supplementary consent clause (1) clarified that the confidentiality of electronic communications could not be ensured and (2) stated that the participant's e-mailed response would constitute agreement to participate in the study.) Presumably due to the additional effort and time involved in typing e-mailed responses, the data collected from these interviews shows considerably less depth than that collected in face-to-face interviews. So, although not ideal, such adaptations made possible interviews otherwise precluded by circumstance.

Interview Data Analysis

The data analysis phase of this project primarily entailed the coding and interpretation of qualitative narrative and oral life history transcripts.

Data coding. Like the previous analyses of preliminary survey data, the analysis of interview transcript data relies heavily on coding processes. First, transcript documents were prepared in MSWord, inserting headers and color-flagging outlined interview sections and saving the prepped documents in rich text format. After importing the documents into NVivo, I attached to each respondent's transcript survey-obtained demographic and categorical information – a process NVivo refers to as "assigning attributes." This preliminary detail-work, while time-consuming, allowed me to organize and access abundant data in one concise system and to later perform complex searches incorporating respondent attributes.

The transcript analysis process can be roughly outlined in three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. During *open coding*, I read reflectively through each transcript and identified initial categories, or *nodes*. Initial nodes in this study denoted responses related to driving research questions, the interview outline, and those interesting features in respondents' life course charts – the highs, lows, and turning points that reoccur across the data. So, in this study, open coding involved assigning nodes to "mentions," those spontaneous topics that arose in response to interview questions. Next, *axial coding* sought to identify relationships among previously coded nodes, thereby considering dimensions, interconnections, and processes. Node categories were combined, split, and organized into node trees.

Finally, *selective coding* identified the core categories or concepts by which the other categories could be connected. Selective coding, then, brought more focused, conceptual understanding (Gibbs, 2002; Morse & Richards, 2002).

However, while this discussion outlines transcript coding processes in a linear manner, the process in practice was highly repetitive, reflexive, and non-sequential. Adding to the complexity was the need to undertake coding analyses with multiple data sources – for instance, respondents' personal definitions of "career," the brief narratives obtained with the preliminary survey, and the in-depth narratives acquired during interviews. While not a straightforward, linear method, the coding processes used did support a nuanced exploration of the study's rich narrative data.

Data interpretation. The strategies above enhanced the organization, understanding, and interpretation of the study's complex data. Utilizing these methods, I was able to illuminate some ways in which some Air Force officer wives simultaneously negotiate careerist and traditional military wife roles.

The narrative data here created can be interpreted in several lights. First, analysis expands the literature on career-oriented military spouses by fleshing out its profusion of quantitative data with richer qualitative interpretation, by suggesting some of the opportunities inherent in the role rather than focusing exclusively on its obstacles, and by developing hypotheses for further research. Second, it enriches identity theory by examining the ways in which individuals can simultaneously manage and merge multiple role-identities. Third, it identifies for military policy-makers some strategies by which the commitment of career-oriented military spouses

might be retained. Finally, this research offers to career-hopeful military spouses and their advisors models suggestive of tactics by which individuals might both meet personal career goals and maintain commitment to their traditional social roles.

<div align="center">Evaluation</div>

Delimitations and Limitations

In accordance with qualitative methods in general and in-depth, life history interviewing in particular, this study gleans rich detail from a very narrow pool of "expert" participants. Seeking a substantively rather than statistically representative sample, then, the study employs a purposive sampling strategy designed to identify and enlist the participation of careerist-traditional wives who have intense, relevant experiences and who will therefore be able to contribute relevant expertise. In so doing, this study purposively trades generalizability for rich detail. Such goals necessitate a number of delimitations and impose several limitations.

Sample boundaries. The small sample demanded by this study's qualitative methodology, the use of the ROSC as a sampling frame, and the sampling criteria employed necessarily delimit the population represented here.[35] Most notably, this study excludes the following groups: wives of enlisted military members, male spouses of female military members, military service groups other than the Air Force, and spouses of civilian government employees.

Why exclude the wives of enlisted military members? Like those of the other groups excluded here, the experiences of enlisted spouses deviate from those of

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[35] For further discussion regarding the sampling frame and study setting, see *Sample Selection*, above.

officer spouses in several significant ways, giving rise to a tangle of differing

dynamics, interpretations, and analytical emphases. Several factors contribute cause

for exclusion. First, military family research, policy, and programs regarding spouse

employment have largely focused on the needs of *job*-seeking (rather than career-

seeking) spouses. While the largely financial concerns motivating job-seeking

spouses are certainly pressing issues, a specific goal of this study is to add to the

literature information regarding the intrinsic, identity-related concerns of *career*-

seeking spouses – concerns that are most prevalent among the spouses of officer

ranks (Scarville, 1993). Second, research comparing the experiences of enlisted and

officer spouses indicates that enlisted spouses as a group both are less networked in

the military community than officer spouses and perceive fewer and less intense

normative demands than do officer spouses (Harrell, 2001; Harrell, 2003). Such

factors delineate distinct obstacles and opportunities for each group.

Furthermore, access is an issue among most military populations. While the

ROSC is an accessible population under present circumstances, a comparable enlisted

frame is not equally accessible to me. Finally, even if an enlisted sampling frame was

readily available, this study's narrow focus, detailed data, limited resources, and

small sample size preclude further group-defined differentiation and comparison. So,

while similar research within the enlisted population would prove interesting, this

study excludes the spouses of enlisted military members.

Why exclude comparison groups of wives from other military branches?
While great similarities exist among the lifestyles of military families throughout the

armed services, dynamics do of course to some degree differ. Due to the availability

of the ROSC as a sampling frame, and like much research in the military family

literature, this study focuses on a narrow population from one service branch – the

wives of Air Force officers. However, because military members occasionally serve

exchange tours in other services, among the members of the Air Force-affiliated

ROSC may be a few spouses representative of differing military branches. They will

not be excluded from the sample because of their spouse's military affiliation but

neither will they be compared as service-delineated groups.

Why exclude the husbands of female military members? Research suggests

that normative demands are perceived most strongly by female spouses of senior

ranking officers. Male spouses and the spouses of lower ranking military members

perceived fewer and less intense normative demands (Harrell, 2001; Harrell, 2003).

In fact, even in families in which both partners were active-duty military members,

only the female partner perceived strong normative demands to participate in her

spouse's unit activities. So, while the traditional wife role could be ascribed to a male

military spouse (i.e., a career husband), and likewise, the role of careerist or careerist-

traditional husband, the associated expectations are highly gendered. For these

differing dynamics, the male spouses of female military members are excluded from

this study's sample.

Why exclude the wives of civilian government employees? Although the

spouses of civilian government employees participate in ROSC activities, their

lifestyles differ in that they move much less frequently and, when they do move, it's

much more often a result of the family unit's choice. As is the case with the spouses of enlisted personnel and the male spouses of female military members, the lifestyle and experiences of civilian spouses are too incompatible to be included in the sample, and the study is too narrow to allow additional between-group comparisons.

Scope and generalizability. The primary delimiting factor in this research is its very narrow scope. This study, like much life history research, trades generalizability for detail, pursuing in-depth illumination of micro-level processes – the very subjective interpretations of past experiences as viewed through the lens of today. As such, reasonable people might argue that the study's data can be generalized no further in space than to the respondents themselves (and, given the assumption of multiple realities always in flux, no further in time beyond the moment in which they were constructed). That said, the themes, meanings, and experiences that emerge from the retrospective accounts of these individuals may show patterns suggestive of trends characterizing a wider military spouse population.

As this qualitative research did not declare the relevant issues *a priori*, it was difficult to determine in advance just how generalizable those emergent issues would be. And indeed, given the relativist philosophy underlying this project, it remains for the reader to judge its finding's situational applicability.

For example, this study explored the obstacles, opportunities, and strategies employed by aspiring and achieving careerist-traditional wives – and, the literature suggests that some of the obstacles likely to arise during the course of this study are normative behavioral demands, long and unpredictable deployments, and frequent

relocations. The experiences perceived and the strategies employed by this study's very narrow sample will to varying degrees be applicable among wider populations: For example, the literature shows that officers' wives perceive stronger normative demands than do the husband's of female officers. As such, the obstacles, opportunities, sanctions, and strategies encountered in regards to normative demands might prove generalizable only among female officers' spouses. However, factors associated with long and unpredictable deployments might best generalize to Army and Navy populations, while factors associated with frequent relocations are concerns shared by the great majority of career-seeking military spouses.

Validity and reliability. Questions of validity and reliability are largely irrelevant to in-depth qualitative research such as the study discussed here, but several issues do merit discussion. First, the symbolic interactionist tradition maintains that there is no one truth on which to deductively validate individual experiences – no single truth exists. However, as per the previous discussion regarding the validity of oral evidence (see *Methodological Perspective* section), this retrospective study does attempt to maximize objective accuracy by first building a historical framework of life events for each respondent. From that framework of events, then, respondents can better recollect the more fleeting experiences linked in between (Giele & Elder, 1998; Scott & Alwin, 1998). The life event matrix, then, serves as a net of concrete events by which to fish slippery but relevant perceptions from a sea of irrelevant memories. That said, cross-sectional retrospective data such as that created here must be interpreted only as respondents' current perceptions of their pasts.

The researcher's role. While empirical research generally strives to obtain unbiased data, the philosophical foundations of symbolic interactionism suggest that the "realities" explored in the course of this research are relativist social constructions derived through the situational negotiation of meaning. Because the interviewer and interviewee mutually create the constructions represented here, the researcher's influence is to a great degree unavoidable.

The researcher's influence also permeates the analysis and interpretation of data. Of particular note here is my personal experience with the subject of this research. My interest in the topic of careerist-traditional wives arose from my own struggle in negotiating the careerist-traditional wife dichotomy as well as from my observations of others as they have forged similar paths. Marrying into the military as a new college graduate, I began married life as a highly dissatisfied careerist. After many false starts and much frustration, however, I stumbled upon two very fulfilling career paths. First, despite frequent relocations I was able to pursue mind-stimulating graduate coursework through an innovative university program. Second, a fluke freelance writing gig parlayed into a fruitful travel-writing career – an opportunity facilitated as much by my military lifestyle as by emerging technologies, perseverance, and a growingly flexible employment market. The disruptions, however, have been many: During my thirteen years as an Air Force officer's spouse, I've relocated twelve times. Seven of those relocations were inter-continental moves. My husband and I have resided in four foreign countries for a total of ten years, and we estimate that we have spent approximately 4 ½ years apart due to military

deployments, remote tours, and other separations.[36] Through all this, my

commitment to the traditional officer's wife role has periodically ebbed and surged.

The paths of my careerist and career-wife identities have, as well, diverged and

converged, ushering into awareness the questions addressed here.

As such, I acknowledge both my own biases toward the subject matter and the

socially constructed nature of the interview data. The research design here employed

sought to minimize interviewer bias through the use of semi-structured interviews –

the structure for which is derived from the interviewee's life event history rather than

from strictly a priori questions. Based on those individual histories, the semi-

structured interviews explored the self-identified highs, lows, turning points, and

divergences along the respondent's life course.

Finally, although the data collected and the interpretation offered by this study

can arguably be construed as simply "my personal construction of others'

constructions," such reasoning ignores the comparative similarities among those

individuals' stories. While representations of individual experiences – and

particularly long-term recollections of those experiences – can be faulted on positivist

grounds, this study accepts those ambiguities, seeking to glean from the flux the

themes by which those individual constructions might be unified.

Ethical Considerations

Five ethical concerns are of note: the potential psychological effects of life

history interviews, the maintenance of confidentiality, perceptions of possible

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[36] More fun facts: To reach this point in my education, and thanks to OU, I've completed graduate coursework across five countries, three continents, and one typhoon-ravaged Pacific island.

repercussions, the researcher's relationship to respondents, and the obtaining of permissions and disclosure of intent.

Potential psychological effects. Researchers note that for most respondents life history interviews are cathartic, positive experiences encouraging reflection on adaptations over the life course (Miller, 2000). That said, the alternative is also possible, and some respondents may find such "forced introspection" psychologically disturbing. In any case, life history interviews are invasive. It was my intent to tread lightly, using a loose, semi-structured format and recognizing the priority of the respondent's well-being over the demands of the research process. In addition, during the interview debrief participants were offered printed information regarding career-related resources and confidential counseling services in the local community.

Confidentiality. A primary ethical consideration in this study is the maintenance of confidentiality. This study employed standard data management practices such as password-protected data files and the use of pseudonyms. Because data collection required the gathering of detailed career and duty-station histories, it is possible that a reader with knowledge of a participant's history might be able to piece together enough information to indirectly identify the respondent. For these reasons, analyses are here presented in summary form, purposefully omitting capsule summaries for each individual.

Possible repercussions. While this study addresses relatively benign subject matter, and while the dangers of confidentially breeches (and, presumably, the related repercussions) are mitigated with the precautions discussed above, the perception and

possibility of potential repercussions remains an issue. In order to reduce the

perceived power of localized command hierarchies, the research design would ideally

incorporate respondents at bases scattered worldwide. However, as limitations of

time and financial resources preclude interviews at multiple bases, Ramstein Air Base

– a location as diversified as military bases come – was selected as the site of this

study. Ramstein is home to several organizational headquarters, it hosts multi-

national NATO forces, and it is a transit hub for deploying troops. As noted already,

with over 60,000 Americans stationed in the area, the community is the world's

largest enclave of American citizens residing outside of the U. S. As such, the

community's multiple command structures, diversified missions, and large population

afford a measure of anonymity not found at smaller, more specialized locations.

      Prior relationships. Although at the time of data collection I was no longer

be a member of the hosting organization, my recent membership increased likelihood

that interviewer and interviewee would be previously acquainted.[37] While voluntary

participation and a semi-structured interview format somewhat mitigate bias, the

greater perceived concern may be my relationship to and influence on my husband, a

military officer. However, at the time of research my husband had relocated from

Ramstein Air Base and was therefore no longer part of the local power structure. In

any case, his prior position was with a multi-national NATO unit, a command

structure well removed from the overwhelmingly American context of the sampled

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[37] In the end, I recognized or had been briefly acquainted with 10 of the 15 interviewees prior to their
interviews. I explicitly excluded "friends" from interview candidacy – i.e., those with whom I'd had
purely social interaction.

organization. Ideally, this research would take place on a base where I had no prior

relationships. However, in this case it was my prior organizational membership that

opened access to a hard-to-reach, highly sequestered population.

Permissions and disclosure of intent. Permission for organizational access

was obtained in writing early in the planning process from the president and senior

advisors of the Ramstein Officer's Spouses Club. The ROSC is a private

organization, and its senior advisors confirmed that no additional permissions were

required from military or government channels. Of course, this study complies with

all IRB requirements for participant informed consent. (For permissions letter and

informed consent forms, please see Appendices A and B.)

<div align="center">Overview</div>

This chapter built from the problem, purpose, and rationale introduced in

Chapter One and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two to construct a unified

methodological perspective and to describe the research design and procedures

undertaken during the course of this study. Chapter Four, *In Dependence*, delves into

collected data with a portrayal of military life as it is perceived by interview

participants and, in particular, as it relates to their personal career pursuits.

Subsequent chapters detail the behavioral and cognitive adaptations undertaken by

these Air Force officer wives in the course of their career pursuits and summarize the

implications of those findings.

CHAPTER IV: In Dependence – The Careerist-Traditional Wife in Context

The military lifestyle imposes a paradox on its spouses: On one hand, the military unilaterally dictates many of the most critical determinants of family life – location of residence, duration of stay, retention decision windows, social status, and family collocation. So dominant are these structural impositions that military wives have for decades been labeled in official military parlance with the moniker, "Dependent Spouse".[38] Paradoxically, the military also demands that its spouses be independent enough to function within highly uncertain and highly unstable circumstances. For instance, given the demands of mission readiness, spouses must be able to single-handedly carry out all aspects of household management, they must be able to undertake sporadic single-parenthood, and they must be able to do all this on a moment's notice. The military, then, compels both great dependence and demands great independence from its spouses.

That families function adequately within these parameters is intriguing in itself. That some military spouses are able to achieve some sense of personal career identity within these parameters is more intriguing still. This chapter illustrates the life of the careerist-traditional wife – the context of her military lifestyle, both structural and normative, and the expectations she brings to and carries through her personal career pursuit. Taking up two of this study's primary research questions, I

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[38] While moves have been made to instate a label less derogatory, the "dependent spouse" moniker is widely used in practice. The connotative labeling does not end there: See *Identity in Play*, below.

ask the following: How does the military lifestyle impact the careers of these women? What obstacles and opportunities do they perceive? The discussion below, then, addresses the perceived contextual conditions under which some Air Force wives pursue their personal career path.

As described previously in Chapter Three, the sample selection process undertaken here ensured that each of the fifteen interviewees was a *careerist-traditional wife* – one of those wives who, relative to others in the sampling frame, indicated both a high sense of career identity and high levels of community involvement. I here expand that description with a more detailed examination of how such wives pursue their own career satisfaction while concurrently maintaining their participation in traditional role-based activities. My analysis is based predominately on the narrative data gathered in fifteen in-depth, oral life history interviews. After transcription was complete, I repeatedly and reflexively coded the transcripts, building progressively more conceptual categorical nodes. This process of "coding up," then, allowed me to organize and understand complex data without losing those critical links to each respondent's verbatim narrative. My analysis was reflexive, too, in that I often bounced observations between data sets. In addition, after transcript coding and analysis was solidified, I sought corrective, confirmatory, and comparative evidence in a re-examination of the narrative data from the preliminary survey. So, although the richest evidence employed here arose from the in-depth interviews, other data sets proved useful for both idea-generation and fine-tuning.

(For a detailed description of data collection instruments and process, see Chapter

Three, *Methodology*.)

So, drawing on the life stories gathered during the in-depth interview process,

this chapter draws on respondents' own words to voice four aspects of their careerist-

traditional wife experience: (1) the military context in which it occurs, (2) the

personal expectations driving the process, (4) some considerations for military moms,

and (3) and the identity issues that arise when these factors interact.

<p align="center">The Military: His Career, Her Life</p>

Many writers and researchers have addressed the nature of military family

life. While this literature is growingly nuanced, many stereotypes persist, and

observers tend to approach the military family experience with an over-generalized

perspective. However, the data gathered here illustrate great diversity within the

experiences of military wives. Much of military life is determined by locations and

relocations and the nature of the military member's work. Examined here are the

following stereotypical aspects of that life: frequent relocations, remote domiciles,

frequent separations, dangerous occupations, and low pay. While there is certainly

evidence to support such descriptions, this research illustrates much diversity among

individually lived experience. Each aspect, as emphasized below, is to a great degree

determined by the military member's profession and position.

Locations and Relocations

Frequency of relocation. The frequency of relocation certainly impacts a

military wife's ability to maintain a continuous, progressive career. Data gathered

with this research indicated that frequency of relocation, or average years between

Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves, i.e., one in which the military family

packs up all their belongings and move to another military base, spanned a wide

range among respondents. Survey respondents, for instance, reported a range of one

to sixteen years between relocations, with a mean of approximately three.

Respondents indicated that some of the factors influencing this duration of stay

included the location itself, the military member's career field, and, to some degree,

choice. For instance, locations such as Washington D. C. and Virginia, where

military operations are concentrated, offer for the military member diverse job

opportunities across many military professions. These locations, then, up the odds of

stability, in that the military member may be able to pursue career progression in

multiple positions without having to uproot the entire family. One spouse, an active-

duty military member herself, related,

> We went to Washington [D. C.]. . . and we were actually very
> stable. For six years, my children, that's all they knew. . . I had three
> jobs during that period. My husband had two, but the kids only
> knew that one place.

On the opposite end of the specialization continuum, a military member with a

highly specific job might be limited to just one or two possible base locations, greatly

diminishing relocation potential. One pilot, traditionally a highly mobile military

profession, remained stationary for eight years:

> We were in Shreveport for eight years, almost nine. That's not so
> rare in his career field, because right now the Air Force only has two
> B-52 bases, so there aren't that many bases [to go to] when you're
> operational. It makes for a completely different ballgame so far as
> PCS-ing goes.

Also notable here are those families that choose long separations in order to maintain a stable home base. Among interviewees, these situations arose when military members opted either to attend extended training or to accept a remote assignment with a "guaranteed follow-on" – a subsequent assignment at a pre-determined location of choice.

> He was at the Pentagon for three years and then went to Korea for a year. He was three more years at the Pentagon, and then a year at [school]. But for us, for the family, we didn't have to move during that entire time. That was a decision for him to go to Korea! It was time for a move, but the kids were settled in school and I had good jobs going. . . I was making more than he was at that point. . . I wasn't ready to move, and I wasn't leaving. So, he left [to Korea], and then came back, and we had our follow-on there. . . That was a long run.

Location. In addition to tour duration, the location of station also plays a role in the obstacles and opportunities perceived by a career-oriented wife. During the course of interviewing, respondents would often attribute difficulty in finding appropriate work to factors related to base location. Among these, the most frequently noted culprits were relatively remote stateside locations and overseas locations. Such conditions often limit the jobs available to spouses within the local economy and increase competition for jobs on base – and these limitations apply to both the *number* and *types* of options on hand. So, even in cases where a wife is able to secure a job, it is likely to entail some form of underemployment. (Many of the spouses interviewed here had in such cases chosen non-employment, working instead in more fulfilling and or applicable volunteer positions.) Interestingly, problematic employment conditions were perceived not only in remote U.S. and overseas

locations, but also in those stateside locations where the job-seeker saw herself as a social "outsider":

> I was trying to find a job. . . trying to find a job. . . Mississippians don't take very well to Northerners. It was really crazy. I mean, I went to several career days, and was told that I would find it very hard to find a job because I was a "Yankee" -- in those words, honest to God! Even from the guy from Mississippi education and employment office. I said, "You know that's discrimination." He said, "Yes I know, but you're sure probably not going to find a job."

Nature of Work

Family separation. The extent of family separation is influenced by several factors, including military member's career field and choice. While almost all military members undertake some off-site training that temporarily separates them from family, those in certain support and operational fields see, in addition, long and often unpredictable assignments that take them away from home for months at a time. Given the tempo of current operations and manpower requirements, several interviewees expressed frustration at ever-longer and ever more frequent deployment schedules:

> My military [satisfaction] ratings will continue to be low due to the demanding deployment rates this base has. They are hit up every fifteen months – that means [my husband] could deploy three or more times while we are here. . . I think that to continue deployments that frequently is asking too much from families.

Dangerous occupations. Adding to these wives' frustration is that many of these deployments are to some of the world's most volatile places. As deployments become more frequent and longer in duration, then, military families are feeling the

crunch. One spouse illustrated the stress of uncertainty inherent in such dangerous

deployments:

> [His deployment] was absolutely terrifying, and if I knew then some
> of the things I know now. . . I might have cracked. I mean really,
> really cracked. He was in Iraq and finally called us, saying he was
> on his way to the airport in Baghdad to fly to Kuwait. . . And he
> said, "Yah, the bus is broken down, so they are helicopter-ing people
> out.". . . [I didn't know then], but I know now that the bus had
> gotten hit by a bomb: It wasn't broken, they'd *bombed* the bus!

> *Low pay*. One stereotypical characteristic of military life, low pay, did not

seem to be a critical issue among these careerist-traditional wives. Presumably, this

has much to do with the delimitations of the sample, in that all were officer wives.

The financial perspectives of a sample of enlisted-level wives, for example, might

differ considerably. Among this particular group, however, many commented on the

luxury of not having to view a second income as imperative:

> [The military] gives you an opportunity in that it gives you
> flexibility. You have a financial "in" that gives you the flexibility to
> take time to think about what you really want to do. You're not
> forced into a job that… well, I don't have to take a job at the BX
> (Base Exchange, i.e., shopping center) to make money.

Another respondent echoed,

> While I would not be opposed to some kind of part-time employment
> that allowed me the same service and social benefits I have enjoyed
> in the past, I do not see that I will be confined or defined by a
> monetary-producing title. I am blessed in that the military has made
> it financially possible for me to not have to work.

So, I conclude this section with a note on why these women work. Many

respondents seem to work not for money, but for fulfillment. Several, in fact,

explicitly confirmed that they sought work and/or career for predominately intrinsic reasons. One social worker commented,

> I was not going to work for AAFES (base services) and I was not going to flip burgers. I didn't need to do that. We didn't need the money, per se. I just needed to have something meaningful to do.

Another respondent, a manager by trade, told of job-hunting as a newlywed:

> So, we got married. . . went on our honeymoon. . . and moved. I got to [his base], unpacked, and said, "Time to find a job." It was one of the most frustrating experiences of my life – really, could not find a job to save my life. I applied for anything and everything within reason. . . And I went to interviews only to hear again and again, "You're overqualified, and you're overpaid. We can't meet the salary you were making [before]." And I tried to explain, "I'm not looking for that salary. I'm looking for something with some kind of substance."

Officers' Wives

The officer's wife role carries both stigma and forceful social expectations. Stereotypes over-generalize the similarities of a group of individuals. In some cases – such as "career woman" – such stereotypical connotations are largely positive, while in others – such as "officer's wife"— they are largely negative. The discussion below draws interview responses to expose a self-characterization of the "typical officer's wife." Of course, like those structural constraints outline above, the stigmas and normative expectations perceived by interviewees varied greatly, often in concert with their husband's career field and position. The following section addresses the stigma, normative expectations, and socialization processes perceived by this study's interviewees.

The Stigma

Many respondents addressed negative stereotypes associated with officers' wives. These negative perceptions are spelled out below in several excerpts, the first from a very highly accomplished careerist, a once-critical officer wife. She tells of an impromptu addition to a speech she had recently delivered at her *alma mater*:

> It just came upon me. . . I told them about being a military spouse
> and how wrong I was [at first]. I explained to them, "I thought that
> military spouses had tea, ate bonbons, and gardened or whatever. I
> was wrong." I said, "I was president of an officer spouses' club, and
> my club's governing board had nurses. . . I had two attorneys. I had
> an aerospace engineer, and I had a CPA. I had teachers, and I had
> moms." I said, "These women rocked my world. I want you to
> know that I was wrong. I want you to know that – these women who
> back their husbands – they're amazing."

Another account paints a less glowing impression of officers' wives:

> I thought the spouses were nice women, but they were so very
> different from my old friends. They seemed, for the most part, to be
> happy moving around the world, unsettling themselves and their
> children, and then receiving a handful of flowers at the end of three
> years. It frustrated the hell out of me, because at hail-and-farewell
> ceremonies the guys in the squadron would laud each other for hours
> on end about how great they all were. I would think about all of the
> philanthropic activities I had seen the wives participate in – and then
> watch as they were called forward for a five-dollar bunch of flowers
> from Safeway. I was like, this just isn't right! Don't [these women]
> want or need any more out of their lives? At first it made me truly
> sick and saddened. It sounds elitist, I know, but I pitied them.

Finally, one respondent shared an anecdote to reflect the stigmatic perceptions she understands others to hold. Here, she tells of an interaction with several young soldiers who were tasked with helping out at an officer spouses' club fundraiser:

> You have to be honest, when you have a young airman with one or
> two stripes, he's not going to willingly say, "Oh, let me go over there
> and volunteer for those Ramstein officers' spouses!" He's going to

say, "Oh, God, I have to go over there with them." . . . There were about ten airmen sitting inside one morning – they had come in to get their coffee and all – and I kind of point-blanked things: I said, "So what are all the little stories that you've heard about officers' wives?" All the blood left their faces, and I said, "So, I'm assuming you've heard that we are all just a bag of bitches. Has that been your experience?" And they said, "No, ma'am. It's not." So, I told them, "The next time you come upon that conversation, please promote us in a little different way. You know, we're like anybody else. We've got good eggs mixed in with the bad eggs. Just take away the good eggs, and don't worry about the bad ones."

Normative Expectations

In addition to a stigmatized social role, military spouse-hood brings with it a blurry set of normative expectations. Much over-generalization tends to plague discussion assessing just what these expectations are, whence they arise, and what role they play in officer evaluation. A list of the expectations commonly invoked by this study's respondents includes parallel leadership responsibilities, active participation in social events (or "mandatory fun"), acceptable behavior, and participation in the mutual support of "sister spouses."

That said, it is important to note upfront that the lived experience of an officer's wife seems to rest heavily not simply on her husband's military membership, but on her husband's career field and his position within that career field. The factors that bring these expectations into relief seem to be associated with both military occupation and rank. For instance, those wives associated with small, tight-knit operational units (e.g., flying squadrons) seemed to participate more readily in unit activities than were those associated with support-related units (e.g., finance squadrons), and officer wives associated with units of greater rank homogeneity (e.g.,

all-officer units) seemed to perceive stronger social inclusion than did either those whose units had a wide range of ranks or those who were isolated as one of only a few officers. The spouses of commanders, too, were generally understood to shoulder greater pressure to participate in the two-person career format.

Is it myth? The excerpts below highlight opinions expressed by interviewees when questioned about spouse participation in general, the social expectations on officer wives, and the extent to which a wife's behavior might influence her husband's career. These responses portrayed several themes: ongoing changes in perceived norms, the social benefits of mentoring and mutual support, recognition and effect on military member's career, and rank- and position-based expectations. Illustrative interview responses follow. (These comments should be read, of course, remembering that this sample is comprised entirely of participating wives. Those women who have chosen absolute non-participation are not represented here.)

So, is it simply myth, or are officer wives really still expected to play a traditional role? One senior officer wife commented on changing norms,

> I can look back over the time that he has been in the military and I can see a change. I think that the division between officer and enlisted is closer than it was when we were first in. I think that the expectation on the wives has decreased. It used to be that the expectation for the wives were very high, and depending on your husband's rank, you were expected to hold certain positions in certain organizations and do certain things – and people just did them whether they were suited for them or not and whether they wanted to or not. That's still present, but I think there is a lot more latitude now, in being able to say no. . . Wives' whole lives aren't devoted to their husband's career, and wives don't have those expectations [of others] because it's a changing world. I've seen that change.

However, one young wife noted that those norms are still felt:

> I think a wife's non-support of base activities doesn't go unnoticed – especially at small bases. At a recent promotion ceremony, the base commander here praised all the hard work the [promoted member's] wife had done and talked about how her efforts benefited so many. If you have a non-supportive wife, it makes things much harder, and squadron morale won't be as high as it otherwise might.

The commander's wife. At the top of the "spouse's chain of command" are commanders' wives. These women were unquestionably saddled with the bulk of the normative expectations mentioned here, and it seems that commanders' wives are often asked to lead, regardless of their desire or ability to do so. While much of their participation was purportedly voluntary, the normative expectations and the sanctions they carry seem subtle but persistent:

> As a military member's rank ascends, his wife's role is expected to increase. I know that the few wives of colonels, etc., who didn't participate or show up for coffees were spoken about with suspicion and even resentment. So, I really do think that [wives' participation] can make a difference in the careers of military husbands. I think it is a networking thing, and I think a wife's participation can definitely benefit the officer.

Ironically, the officer's wife stereotype in its more extreme form portrays commanders' wives as meddlesome snobs – queen bees, per se, in the "bag of bitches." But, despite the considerable informal power they are presumed to wield, these women do not go unstung. Often, among other military wives, they feel the full brunt of social outcast. As indicated below, such perceptions might be partially attributable to both the rank distribution within a unit and the military's fraternization

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statues, which prohibit socializing between ranks.[39] As such, this outcast effect may

be less of a factor in small, more rank-homogenous units.

> I struggled at first. With him being a squadron commander, the people I could associate with were limited. You know, he had a captain working for him. . . and two ace lieutenants, [and the rest were enlisted]. He just didn't have a lot of people working for him that I could hang out with. It was very hard for me at first. I found other moms, but then we'd be at the park and somebody would say, "Well, what does your husband do?" And I didn't think it was important. . . but eventually it'd come out [that he's a commander]; and people would stop talking to me because they'd say, "She's a major's wife" and "He's a commander? Sorry, we can't talk to you."

Another commander's wife echoed those concerns with an anecdote:

> He was a squadron commander there. . . He had a very large squadron, and it was mostly enlisted and a handful of officers. As far as officers' wives there were, truly, maybe just four. And [my husband] said to me, "I don't expect you to do anything as a commander's wife. You don't have to, or you can. Just understand that the enlisted wives will be very intimidated, so don't be your bold self." Alright. So I said, "OK, I'm going to have a wine and cheese party and I'm going to invite them all." I went out and found special letterhead, and I did up the invitation myself. I did a menu, and I got all excited.   I had mailed out invitations to 87 people. . . and I didn't hear from anybody.   The day before it was supposed to happen, I got a phone call from two of the gals who were senior enlisted spouses, and they asked if it was still OK if they could come. "Was there still enough room?" Ha. So, I had those two come to the house, and I made a spread. But, they wouldn't eat in front of me and they wouldn't drink in front of me. . . When I went to the restroom, they got up and got some water or something, but I had made punch and opened wine and all that. It was a very difficult experience for me.

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[39] While these statues don't, of course, apply explicitly to spouses as individuals, they do regulate social interaction between *couples* – i.e., the "standard unit" of social activity among married adults.

Socialization Processes

Interviewees' comments introduced some interesting views on how norms are socialized – both the nature of their origin and their meaning. The following section briefly outlines the origin of norms, the role of mentoring, and the ambiguity at play.

Origin of norms. First, while normative expectations are often presumed to be perpetrated "from the top-down," several interesting features here indicate that normative expectation may be perpetuated as much by rumor as by sanction. For instance, one pilot's wife observed,

> My perception is that the spouses perpetuate [a myth] more so than
> the actual reality of it. I feel like other spouses maybe feel like they
> have to do this – like they are the key behind their husband's career,
> and that they take on this role because they "can make or break his
> career." And, there's this level of competition [among wives].
> There's this air of, "Well, that spouse made twenty things of chili, so
> I've got to do something better." Just some silly stuff like that.
> Ultimately, I think the men in charge enjoy chili and stuff. But, I
> don't think the majority of those in leadership roles and command
> positions are chalking up brownie points for whose wife is cutest and
> whose makes the best chili. So, I really feel like the pressure is
> perpetuated by the spouses. I've never felt pressure from any
> commander or any commander's wife. I've never experienced that.
> I've only experienced it from within my peer group.

Likewise, one captain's wife described the misinformation rampant within her early peer group:

> [Early in his career, the guys were] jockeying for the best jobs,
> which created a kind of strange competition. And, it created strange
> environment for the spouses, too. There wasn't really any single
> source of leadership. There were two captains and the colonel, and
> that was pretty much it. (And, even the two captains' wives were a
> lot like lieutenant wives, as they were pretty new.) So, nobody really
> knew what you were supposed to do as a military spouse. There
> were a lot of rumors and a lot of misinformation about what you
> were supposed to do to be a "good" military spouse. One time one

of the wives even tried to say that we had to sit by date of rank when we rode in the car. I thought that was the most ridiculous thing I had ever heard – and we were all just second lieutenant wives! It was very stupid, and I tried to avoid them. So, it kind of, in a way, ostracized a lot of people – not having any older spouses to play role model.

Mentoring. That said, the role these "older spouses" might play in the socialization process remains unclear. Less experienced wives, as above, do at times perceive a void of guidance, and experienced wives do laud the positive aspects of mentoring. However, given the rapid rate of social change here, a meeting of these two minds often results in the less experienced wife declaring (often quite reasonably) that the elder's advice is obsolete. One experienced wife commented,

> I think our participation and support of the base and its military families can only help. It helps set the tone that younger spouses can follow. It helps them to know there is someone there if they are having trouble. We are all in this together and it's nice to know someone out there understands our trials and tribulations.

And, a less experienced wife recalled,

> I have an aunt that was married to a Marine lieutenant colonel. When I got married, for my wedding gift, she gave me that service etiquette book called, *Today's Military Wife*. It is actually a very excellent book, and it explained to me a lot of things which I didn't understand, like the acronyms and the money that we would be getting. . . But, then she sat me down and talked to me about what I should be doing as a military wife – which was a little bit scary. She told me that if I had a job, I would ruin my husband's career. She said, "It's your job to be out promoting him and doing things that make him look good, not working on your own career." Of course, I took that to be a bunch of nonsense. She's kind of in the old school of military wives, which is a little bit different. So, we didn't see eye to eye on that.

Ambiguous expectations. So, in general, these officer wives painted a picture of ambiguous expectations. While few admitted to submitting to pressure to participate, many lauded the benefits of participation, and all commented that they to some extent felt the full of normative role expectations. Several expressed the sentiment that, although it is not the way things *should* be, and although things are changing, the social expectations on officers' wives are to some degree still in place. One response summed up the ambiguity well:

> Can a wife's participation help her husband's career? Oh, I think it really can! People say it can't, but I think it's about the overall picture you give the military. I know they want the spouse to be involved – although I personally don't feel pressure. But, I think it's good if the wife can be involved. And why not be involved? It's good for your husband – it shouldn't be, but it is. It's an unwritten "thing," if you will. . .   So, if you can be involved, why not? I mean, it's good for your family.

So then, how to answer: Is it simply myth, or are officer wives really still expected to play a traditional role? Very clearly, these military spouses have perceived a wide but ambiguous range of both normative demands and socialization processes. Everyone across the board noted change, but no one put a finger on the exact nature of that change. So, given the equivocation, ambiguity, and flux illustrated above, I declare no "true" set of role demands. Officers' wives – on an individual basis – observe others' behavior, and gauge from that their own interpretations. From those interpretations, then, they act to reject, embrace, or negotiate the social norms they have individually perceived.

Personal Career Expectations

The remainder of this manuscript will focus on how such factors interact with the personal career paths of careerist-traditional wives – the expectations they bring to and carry through the process as well as the behavioral and cognitive adjustments they make.

In prelude, I observed that expectation- and adaptation-related factors were very often addressed in consideration of relative temporal factors. In other words, relevant aspects might be addressed with either a short-term perspective based on the immediate situation (e.g., current base or location) or a long-term perspective based on career-spanning processes (e.g., path expectations). As such, the discussion below references two temporal perspectives: segmental, or by-location, and long-term, or career-spanning. In my analysis of interview transcripts, I discerned three dimensions of career expectation: *timing*, *career stage*, *career approach*. These factors are described below and then employed in analysis.

Timing

The timing of an individual's stated expectation describes the point in one's military affiliation that the expectation occurred. Timing, then, describes where in a life history the expectation occurred. Most broadly, this research addressed expectations as either *initial*, i.e., the expectations one holds at the point of marriage, or at *relocation*, i.e., the expectations one holds at the point of permanent change of station. Expectations at any point in time can, of course, describe aspirations both segmental and long-term. Naturally, in reply to my retrospective questioning,

respondents almost exclusively offered long-term assessments when asked about their initial expectations and segmental assessments when asked about their expectations at relocation.

Stage

Individuals' career expectations can also be described as taking place at some point along a career-stage continuum. I noted several points of personal career development along this path: *youth, training/re-training, early-career, and continuing career*. While these stages can, of course, occur at any point in the lifespan, interviewees generally moved through these stages sequentially. That said, certain critical events, such as marriage, can occur at any of these stages (see also Chapter Six, *Making It Work*). So for example, while one interview respondent might describe her initial expectations from a training-stage perspective, another might describe her initial expectations from a continuing-stage perspective. Consider respondents' perspectives in the following statements of expectation:

> When I first got married, I had not finished high school – and it was very, very important to me that I finish high school. I did not want a GED. I wanted to finish high school. I knew that that was important, and I knew that I wanted to pursue a job. Nursing was always in the back of my mind since I was a kid. So I think that was always there, but most important when I got married was that I finish high school.

Another career-seeking spouse recalled,

> After we got married, I thought, "Maybe I want to go into the medical professions." I said, "We're married now, I know we'll be moving, and that's a job that can move with me." So, I went back to school to study medical assisting and training.

An early-career teacher echoed similar hopes:

> I thought, "OK, here I am, newly certified as a teacher, and now we're moving to a foreign country." After looking into DoDDS (a school system for military kids), I realized that I'm not going to be able to continue with that accomplishment. I guess I kind of blame military life for that.

And, finally, an experienced careerist commented,

> I was so happy and comfortable in what I was doing as an early childhood specialist, that when I got married and moved, I was not at all content in [my career]. So, even though it's worked out nice for our family life, it's not my ideal career to be doing in home child care. That's not what I was educated for, and I have energy for a lot more. After you've run programs and been a director and all that, you kind of get used to running a lot of things. So now I have this build-up of career energy that needs to get out. . . and nowhere to put it.

Approach

From among respondents reported expectations, I also discerned three distinct differences in career approach: ambivalence, determination, or accommodation. Ambivalent approaches described those that lacked clear direction, determined approaches marked those with highly defined goals and motivation, and accommodating approaches marked those that, while having general direction and motivation, distinctly incorporated adaptations in light of perceived contextual constraints.

Ambivalence: [40] Several respondents noted their early career ambivalence – a pattern notable among career-identified moms:

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[40] Only two interviewees displayed this initial ambivalence. Incidentally, they were both at the time of study career-identified homemakers.

My expectations at marriage? Gosh. I don't really think I had any
expectations, to be honest with you. Although I wanted some type
of *great job*, I just never pursued that. I don't know why. . . I just
didn't have any expectations.

A community anchor reiterated those early-career motivations, reminiscing,

I think my goals, my aspirations at that moment, were simply based
on, "Well, I have to work." There really was nothing. . . I mean, it
wasn't a financial decision. There was really nothing else behind the
mindset other than, "Well, that's just what I do. That's what I have
to do. I just graduated from college, so I need to continue this."

Determination: On the other hand, many careerist-traditional wives expressed great

determination. One businesswoman recalled,

I planned to work in international business, which was my
undergraduate degree. I wanted to work with a big multinational
corporation in Europe, because I spoke German and French.

An experienced nurse remembered,

I knew I wanted to go to college. I knew that I wasn't done. I really
just didn't feel fulfilled. . . So, I was always finding things to keep
me busy. . . But that wasn't working. I was running out of things to
do. . . So, [I pursued] nursing, because I knew that being a nurse
would travel wherever he went.

A doctoral candidate mused at her early determination,

When we first married, I was determined to finish my PhD and then
become a professor at [my university].

And finally, another experienced spouse recalled her determined but still unrealized

plans:

When we found out that we were going to Germany, we were so
excited. Boy did I have plans! "I'm going to work for IBM, or
Mercedes, Chrysler, Porsche, or Hewitt Packard, or Philip Morris,
or Johnson Controls." . . all these big American companies.

Accommodation: Most experienced spouses, however, eventually acquire some

allowance for accommodation. One engineer recalled,

> Starting off, I had grand illusions that I would work hard and rise to
> the top of my field. But, with [a military husband's] career to
> consider, I refocused my career goals to be more flexible with his
> biennial PCS schedule. Presently, I'm satisfied working part-time,
> which also allows time to give back to the community through
> volunteer activities. For the future, I hope to improve my education
> through a Master's degree and get my Professional Engineer license
> while continuing to work at least part time.

This spouse, too, expressed accommodation for her husband's career:

> And if [my husband] continues on this fast track of his, I don't know
> if I'll ever be able to work, as we might be moving every year. So,
> I'll do my best to get involved, volunteer, and start something up.
> I'll make some noise somewhere.

The Progression of Career Expectations

Using these three dimensions, then, I discerned some broad patterns. First, the

careerist-traditional wives interviewed for this research in most cases brought strong

career expectations with them into their military marriages. While prior familiarity

with the military lifestyle appeared to fine-tune those expectations, most respondents

– even, notably, wives with prior military service – described some degree of

disillusionment. Eventually, determined careerists' initial, long-term career

expectations proved unrealistic within the military context. Pithily expressing the

sentiment conveyed by many of these women, one interviewee declared, "I had the

wrong expectations."

Analysis of initial expectations reveals that many of these women came into

their military marriages anticipating a traditional, long-term career path – knowing

that they would need to adapt to military life, but not grasping the full extent of the

changes they would have to make. As such, most entered with what I have termed a

"standard" definition of career. A lethal combination was this standard initial

definition and an unaccommodating, determined approach. Although a few

respondents had some degree of familiarity with the military lifestyle prior to

marrying, most had very little understanding of the constraints their new lifestyle

posed. So, many respondents experienced upheaval as their determination-driven

expectations withered. Others, however, seemed to better understand upfront the

consequences of their military involvement. That said, even those expecting their

careers to wane "grieved" as it occurred:

> Before I was married, my career was my entire world. I always
> looked forward to every day as a television reporter and found great
> fulfillment in my career choice. It was a highly competitive field,
> and I excelled in it. Regardless, I knew that at some point, I might
> wake up to find myself old and alone if I chose to put my career
> ahead of other life experiences like marriage and motherhood. When
> I met my husband, I knew that we would marry. I also understood
> and accepted that supporting his military career would probably
> mean my broadcasting career would be over. The first several years
> after we married, I continued to work in the broadcasting world, but
> I was forced to accept less impressive jobs in smaller markets in
> order to work where my husband was stationed. . . It was very
> frustrating, but it allowed me time to grieve for my lost career. It
> was a long and painful transition.

Interestingly, interviewees who were less than sympathetic about their peers'

frustration were those who had entered their military lives relatively late and with

established careers in place. A case in point: "If they married into this, they know

what they are getting into. At least. . . Well, I guess I got all starry-eyed, too, when I

had that diamond on my hand." That said, such comments were rare – most

respondents agreed that they (and even their husbands) had little foresight regarding the details of what lie ahead.

After bearing the initial brunt of disillusionment, however, most eventually adopted some form of accommodation. Respondents described both how their career expectations altered during each PSC segment and how their short-term, segmental expectations adjusted to fit their initial understanding of each location. Accommodation hence was manifest in a number of strategies, both segmental and long-term. For example, after marrying into the military, some went back to school to retrain for a career path they believed more suitable to the military context, several abandoned their original careers and adopted volunteerism as a substitute career path, and others accommodated military constraints by adapting their work arrangements and/or accepting some form of underemployment.

A brief aside is worthwhile at this point: Although adoption of the accommodation approach is highly apparent within this study's sample, it is important to note that this sample includes only those who qualified as careerist-traditional wives – in other words, those claiming a current career identity and participating in the traditional military-spouse role. However, it seems likely that many one-time careerists, unwilling or unable to adopt some form of behavioral and/or cognitive accommodation, abandoned their career identity – and as such go unrepresented here. Alternatively, career-frustrated individuals might abandon the identity-assaulting situation, either through ending a relationship or separating as a

couple from the military. One respondent illustrated how such self-selection might

play out, relating the story of how she temporarily called off her engagement:

> I started to realize that having a fiancé – and, more specifically,
> having a fiancé in the Air Force – was cramping my style: I was not
> ready to be an Air Force wife. I knew that whatever job aspirations I
> had. . . Well, I had just graduated, just gotten this great job, and I
> thought it was my niche. I loved it. And, I knew all that would just
> fall to pieces, because at the Air Force base he was going to there
> was no career opportunity for me. So, I gave back the ring and
> cancelled the wedding.

Returning to careerist-traditional wives represented here, I reiterate the

importance of accommodation. Over the course of multiple relocations, most

interviewees gradually fine-tuned their long-term expectations, accommodating the

military lifestyle and becoming more and more "realistic" in their career aspirations –

and, as a group, developing more and more alternative definitions of career.[41] This is

not to say, however, that their career pursuits necessarily evolved smoothly. Indeed,

change itself characterizes the military lifestyle, and each change can pack a punch of

turmoil.

Military Moms as Bench Strength

As described above, the military lifestyle and personal career aspirations

proves for many officers' wives a contradictory mix. However, the clash seems

particularly potent among women who are also parents. Parenthood is challenging in

any circumstance, and dual-career arrangements and single parenthood make it even

more so. That said, the uncertainty and unpredictability inherent in the military

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[41] This phenomenon is detailed more thoroughly in Chapter Six, *Revisiting the Definition of Career.*

lifestyle impose particularly cumbersome expectations and constraints on career-oriented military moms.

Long-premised on the two-person career assumption, the military perpetuates its "greedy" ways by assuming the absolute availability of military members' extended support networks (Papanek, 1973; Segal, 1988). In the case of military families with children, this presumption nears coercion: If military-member parents must be available for long hours and deployments away from home, then *someone* must stand ready behind them to, at a moment's notice, pick up parental slack. As such, career-oriented military moms often abandon their personal career pursuit to perpetually "sit the bench," understanding that the military will occasionally and unpredictably commandeer their services.

Such conditions curtail the career aspirations of many military wives, as the constraints imposed here are considerable. In addition to the frequent relocations, inauspicious locations, and frequent separations that frustrate the efforts of most career-oriented military wives, the careers of military moms are compounded with additional limitations. In effect, the military's impositions often render them unemployable in the most basic of ways: They are, while sitting the bench, unable to commit fully to any regularly scheduled activity.

Often, this limitation alone precludes a traditional career pursuit. That said, some military moms adapt by either pursuing part-time, contingent, or otherwise alternative work arrangements or enlisting the services of hired help or, in the rare case that it is nearby, of extended family. However, the frequent relocations that

often characterize military life mean such services must once again be secured with each relocation. Even with these allowances, career pursuit proves a rocky road. Consider the struggles of these two military moms – and note that nowhere in either anecdote do they expect the assistance of their military mates:

> Child care as a nurse is extraordinarily difficult. It's difficult for anyone, but as a nurse. . . The shifts [at one hospital] started at 6:45am, and it was a thirty-minute drive. So, I had to find a daycare center that opened between 6:00am and 6:15 that would take [my son]. And then, I didn't get home until 8:30 at night. My shift ended at 7:15 but, as a nurse, I was never out of there time. . . I was usually getting home between eight and nine at night. It was horrible. I remember just crying so many times because there were no facilities. . . So I used multiple people. At one point, we had this one lady that joked that she potty-trained my child. Although, I don't really think it was a joke. . . And then, I turned to using one person to drop my son off [at daycare] in the morning, then they would take him to school, and then they would take him back to daycare. Then, someone from the daycare center would pick him up and take him [to her] home, and then later I would pick him up from her house. It was really rough.

A second mom tells a similar tale:

> Being a military wife and mother dictates certain compromises in my career, such as hours worked. So, I've always worked contingency, which enables me to set my own schedule and earn high pay, but it also requires self-starting and cuts benefits. One of the biggest challenges I've found as a "career woman" married to a career military man is childcare. I've had to base my jobs and days and hours worked on what care I could find. It is very difficult, not to mention illegal in some states, to put a child in daycare for more than 12 hours, and with a husband who frequently deploys, this is always tough.

Several respondents drew parallels between the contextual constraints inherent in the military parenting of children and those inherent in the military parenting of pets. Furry and four-legged family-members, it seems, pose many similar challenges.

Again, because of the military's assumption of a spouse's ready service, the pet-

parenting scenario poses issues of availability and care. Pet-parenting military wives

face frequent and unpredictable "single-parent" responsibilities: They must

reconsider care options at each location, and they see greatly diminished freedom to

travel – not an inconsiderable liability given the far-flung, global nature of the

military lifestyle. So, while there are, of course, vast qualitative differences between

the parenting responsibilities associated with children and pets, many respondents

noted parallel constraints.

Identity in Play

> I worked as a maid at the Holiday Inn. . . during a very economically
> depressed time in Montana. Nobody had jobs. The one comment that
> I will always remember: The housekeeping supervisor said to me,
> "You have caught on so quickly to your maid duties. We only had to
> tell you one time, how many soaps and shampoos." So, they were
> very excited, and they moved me into the laundry room very quickly.
> And as I was leaving, she said, "You have done such a good job. I
> knew from the moment I met you that you were 'maid material'." She
> meant that as a compliment. But in my mind, I thought, "No. I think I
> can do better." That was kind of motivating.

Given the meaning-charged nature of career, I was not surprised to find a

great number of identity issues in play among these careerist-traditional wives.

Although not addressed explicitly in the semi-structured interview format, identity

issues surfaced again and again in discussions of personal career pursuit, the military

lifestyle, and the interaction of the two. Foremost among themes here was the

identity-defining nature of career: Whatever one's professed definition of the

concept, *career* seems an effective answer to the self-reflective question, "Who am I,

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and what am I worth?" Note the equation of work and identity in these three

respondents, the first from a nurse, the second from a social worker, and the third

from a manager:

> I always really, truly identified myself by my job. I'm a nurse.
> That's what I do.

> I am the best mom I can be. For now, that is my career. But, I will
> always be a social worker at heart.

> It is more than a job, it is one of your defining characteristics. A
> career is your contribution to society as well as your small stake in
> the battle for women's rights. It affords you the financial and
> emotional freedom that our mothers didn't have. It makes you an
> equal partner in a relationship and a balanced individual.

> Recognizing the interdependence of career meanings and identity, I address

the following: (1) military career predominance, (2) identity disruption, (3) identity

adaptation, and (4) inadequacy.

His Career Comes First

Whatever personal career meanings an officer's wife might hold, her

husband's career almost inevitably comes first. As discussed above, the

"greediness" of the military institution dictates it so (Segal, 1988). So, when

the military demands his service, he goes. For example, one respondent

said,

> My husband got a message. . . and it was his boss saying, "Hey,
> we've got this great job in Germany, and we want to put you in for
> it." After a series of phone calls right there in the car, he was in for
> this job, flying C-21s at Ramstein – a *total cherry job* on top of his
> 17-year Air Force flying career. . . My career, of course, came to a
> screeching halt.

Another careerist-traditional wife told of rather extraordinary measures to maintain

her professional credential while stationed overseas. One plan entailed flying to

Greece from Germany in order to attend a professional conference that would earn

the requisite continuing education units:

> It hit on a Friday afternoon. . . [He came to the house] and said,
> "I've got to go back to work. . . it's about a deployment." He was in
> the [deployment] window, but I wasn't freaking out just yet. That
> was Friday – and we were due to leave for Greece on Tuesday. He
> came home and said, "They want me in Iraq on the 10th." "Are you
> trying to tell me that we're not going to Greece?" I didn't sleep for
> two days. I was livid. [The conference trip] was six months in the
> planning. I didn't want to lose my license. . .

So, it's an interesting and effective mechanism: The military makes demands, the

member responds, and the supporting spouse is left with no justifiable target for

complaint because her husband has no choice in the matter.

> He swears he's going to be around more – because that has, very
> honestly and very candidly, created some huge problems. . . But, it's
> no fault of his own. When somebody says, "You're deploying,"
> what do you say? "No?" Without a really good reason – no, you
> don't. But, I didn't marry him not to see him, you know. I didn't
> marry him to raise two kids by myself.

A second respondent explains,

> The military just seems to be more dominant – just a more dominant
> force overall – versus, for instance, a corporation. There, if they tell
> him to move, he can say no and go find another job.

> Once "signed on" as a military wife, the woman and her family are, in effect,

under contract to tolerate much -- her husband's work hours are unlimited, as are the

number and duration of his deployments away from home. The preeminence of his

career, then, is assumed. Any career she constructs is highly subject to his

institution's whims, and she is likely to weather multiple relocations, disrupted career

plans, and considerable sub-employment. In short, in most cases it is quickly

clarified for all three parties – the military, the military member, and the spouse – that

his career comes first.

Identity Disruption

Although any significant change in life circumstances can interfere with

identity meanings, marrying into the military seems to trigger some potent

disruptions. Mentioned frequently among this study's careerist-traditional wives was

a seemingly inevitable interruption of career expectations – in particular, the waning

of financial and emotional strongholds that once buoyed respondents' identities:

> My life satisfaction took a sharp dive after [my] having to get out [of
> the military]. I was not prepared for what it's like not to work. It
> was like having the carpet yanked from underneath me. I guess I
> identify myself through professional challenges. . . Not having that
> left me lost.

A newly married entrepreneur echoed,

> Before I married a military man, I had a six-figure income and the
> lifestyle that is associated with that level of income. Marrying,
> moving, and having my personal income drop to zero, then to
> minimum wage, was indeed humbling.

Identity disruption repeatedly marked interviewees' stories. In many cases,

but not all, the identity disruption described by interviewees can be characterized as a

demoralizing sink into *non-person status* – a state in which one is denied social or

legal significance. The most constraining encounters were those perceived as

assaulting self-efficacy, and the most ubiquitous were those having to do with the

military's use of social security numbers, both discussed below.

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Self-efficacy. The bureaucratic "red tape" that binds the military may go

largely unnoticed by a military wife when stationed in the urban U.S., particularly

when she lives, works, and does business within the local rather than the military

community. However, when she relocates to an overseas location, her husband's

base of station unilaterally dictates much of her day-to-day life, including most

services, housing contracts, driver's licensing, and visa and travel documentation.

For many highly productive, independent women, this shift can be stifling. She is, in

effect, forced into greater dependency. Many interviewees, for example, expressed

surprise at how little they were able to accomplish within the military community

without their husbands' presence or explicit consent. Particularly frustrating were

these constraints in the context of living overseas when the military member

deployed:

> When I moved here to Ramstein, I really had no idea of what to
> expect. What I found was that it was very different, living on a
> military community. At first, it was very frustrating because I could
> never get anything done without my spouse. I couldn't sign up for
> the utility program, I couldn't get legal forms and, after being out of
> town, I couldn't even to get my hold-mail because I'm not the box
> holder. It is very interesting to be a dependent. It's very strange that
> spouses can't … that they really can't have any responsibility.

Even medical care is administered in the military member's name, and one

spouse describes her frustration:

> I had a really bad experience with the medical system, where I
> couldn't even get an appointment [without him]. I didn't do
> something right, I don't know. It was frustrating, I felt like my
> identity was fading. It had nothing to do with [my husband] – it was
> *my identity*.

Respondents conveyed a number of mechanisms by which the military wife's

secondary status is conveyed. A similar story – this one involving an identification

card – describes how that message was for her made clear:

> I had a run-in with "the law" once. . . [We had been at a party on
> base], and I was walking to my house to get a diaper or something
> for the baby, and I got pulled over for being out past curfew. I was
> so young! But, I didn't have my ID card on me. So, when I
> explained to them that I was married, they didn't believe me. . . I
> was on the sidewalk in front of my house, [but they wouldn't let me
> go in] to get it – at least until they brought a police escort. Finally, I
> showed them my ID card, but they wouldn't give it back to me until
> my husband and his supervisor appeared. And after all that, they
> handed my ID card *to my husband*. So that was my introduction to
> base. We had only been there a few months when that happened, so
> to me [the lesson] was that I had no rights – that I wasn't important,
> and that only my husband counts. . . I have to say that I've never
> forgotten that.

Social security numbers. It seems odd, at this point, to call out something so

concrete. But, among respondents the most frequently mentioned instigator of

identity disruption was the military's record-keeping system. All records within the

military community – everything from medical histories to video rental accounts and

library cards – are filed only by the military *member's* social security number. His

social security number, in effect, becomes hers – an unambiguous symbol of her non-

person status. Several spouses, in fact, professed to have forgotten their own

numbers. (In addition, in personnel records, an ordinal attached to the member's

social security number denotes number of prior marriages. For instance, my records

identify me as Mrs. XXX-XX-XXX Wife #1.) As depicted in the following accounts,

many military wives find demeaning the standard practice of identifying dependents

by their sponsors' "last four" – i.e., the final four digits of his social security number.

One wife recalled,

> We moved, and that was my first introduction to military life – and I did not like it. I hated it. I was a number. I was a dependent. They would ask for a social security number and I'd give them mine. I didn't know they wanted his all the time.

And, similarly, another commented,

> I need to be just "Karen." I don't need to be running around on his social security number. I need to be just me.

Interestingly, one career-experienced but newly married interviewee made explicit

that the ego under attack here was borne not of her personal identity, but of her

professional identity:

> . . . And then, [all of a sudden], I had no identity. When they asked me for my last four, I said, "Of what?" "The social security number." So, I gave them my number. But, of course, I was not in [the system]. "No, the social security number of your husband." And I said, "What's wrong with mine?" It was frustrating. I felt like my identity was fading. My identity was fading, and my ego was becoming bruised. Let me clarify that – my *professional* ego was becoming bruised.

Vicarious Identity

Some form of identity disruption marked most interviewees' stories. That

said, these disruptions were not uniformly unwelcome. Identity adaptation can be

said to occur as disrupted identities are adapted to be more congruent – for instance,

when they are redefined, abandoned, replaced, or even postponed in response to the

context at hand. While a variety of adaptations – both behavioral and cognitive – will

be addressed in subsequent chapters, notable at this juncture is a specific type of identity adaptation, the *vicarious identity*.

Interestingly, many respondents made clear an explicit acceptance or rejection of the vicarious identity. Some wives quickly espoused their husband's identity, embracing the opportunity to call his career their own. This vicarious identity, then, represents the traditional officer's-wife expectation – the assumption that the wife will play a ready-and-willing supportive role in the two-person career format, wholeheartedly backing the needs of her husband and his employer. Put most simply, his career is her own:

> My husband's career is, in a sense, mine. I can not be a good mom without my husband, and he cannot be a good military officer without me. Yes, he could do the job well, but what about those last-minute get-togethers when he has to bring a side dish? Or the promotions where they need, or rather would really like, to have a cake? Guess who's up making that dish or cake?

Another respondent, however, believed that, in the past, her vicarious identity made her overly dependent and psychologically unhealthy:

> I think in the beginning, my identity overall was, "I do what he does. I mean, I don't fly, but whatever he needs, I'm there to serve and take care of him." That's fine to a certain degree, but I know that it was unhealthy, because I'd become completely dependent on him. . . I wouldn't say that I'm the type that uses his rank or a title to convey myself, but everything I thought and everything I did really rotated around him and what was best for him.

The reservations expressed by this second respondent echo the hesitations of many. Several respondents went much further, however, and entered sometimes fierce rejections of the vicarious identity:

I feel like what I do for a living is as important as what my husband does. If he asks me to attend a work function, I would do so happily – as I would hope he would do if I invited him to a work function.

A teacher illustrates,

And those necklaces! Let me tell you how I feel about that: When we arrived on base, all the squadron wives were wearing these [fighter-jet] charms. He asked me if I wanted one, but I said no. I'm not unsupportive of him. It's just that. . . I don't see why I should have to wear a jet necklace around my neck. There's certainly no way he'd wear a book symbol around his.

Although often a highly efficient, effective adaptation strategy within the military context, the vicarious identity is not immune to disruption. One spouse told how she became severed from a once-vicarious identity:

I think I probably began to try to separate [myself] a year and half ago when all his medical stuff started [and he was taken off flying status.] All of a sudden, I was just train-wrecked. And I realized, out of that, how much I was dependent. . . Maybe it was the title of it: I could say, "My husband is a pilot." Everything was wrapped up in that. I felt like, "If he's not flying, then who am I?" So, I went through a low point of pulling myself away from his identity – or rather, of having that identity shattered.

Finally, one of the oft-bemoaned symptoms of a vicarious identity in this context is the "wearing of rank," whereby an officer's spouse acts as though her husband's rank is her own. This seems to be much more common, for obvious reasons, among rank-differentiated groups. Too, some wives – for instance, commanders' spouses – are treated with the deference merited by their husbands' rank whether or not they encourage it (and despite their sometimes fervent protests):

I hate being "Mrs. Colonel." I hate it. . . "Mrs. Colonel," or "Katie's Mom," or "Ma'am." I have a name and I have skills and I have accomplishments outside of that.

And, one senior officer wife appreciated the absence of rank among wives:

> We're so top-heavy here – general officers are a dime a dozen. If
> you are like Colonel, you're like cleaning the sidewalks. So, it can
> be very intimidating here because of all the brass. But the women
> here, I'll have to say, 99.9% of them, do not wear their husband's
> rank. They just don't. People know [your husband's rank] by where
> you live and where you are, but they just don't wear rank.

Battling Inadequacy

From a stranger's perspective, the identity disruption and adaptation described
above may appear to be taken in stride. But many interviewees told a different tale,
one of great frustration, depersonalization, and anomie. They describe a stifling,
solitary process that nonetheless surfaces frequently in the course of social
interaction. As a military spouse, I have both been there myself and witnessed it in
others – those awkward moments when a young careerist wife tears up and stumbles a
faltering reply to the seemingly innocuous question, "So, what do you do?"

Up to this point, discussion has focused on the self-reflective nature of
identity – how, for instance, the concept of career can define the self. However,
identity has social implications as well, and questions of career succinctly answer
inquiries of who others are and back subtle evaluations of what they are worth.
Society, it seems, demands explanation:

> "What should I do? Who should I be?" And, then, the social
> expectations: "Are you going to get a job? Are you going to have
> kids?" Society was telling me that I needed some definition for
> myself – that I needed to tack on some title.

One captain's wife illustrated similar social pressure:

Probably the last spouses' function that I went to there – the one that really distanced me from it all – was a Christmas coffee. I was quizzed over the same questions: "What's your name? Who's your husband? Where did you come from? Do you have kids?" All that stuff. And then, I got to one woman, and we had gone through all those basic things. Then, we got to the kid question: She asked, "Do you work?" And I said, "I'm probably going to start working part-time for the USO, but nothing really crazy." And she said, "Well, do you have kids?" I said, "No." And she said, "Well, how old are you, and how long have you been married?" And, I'm just, "OK. You know, why should I be defined by that? What does it matter? I'm a human being, just talk to me!"

Valuations of others rarely are made explicit. As such, individuals to some degree evaluate their own social worth based on their perceptions of what others think – a reflected, or "looking-glass" self (Cooley, 1902/1964). Interestingly, few respondents seemed to find in that mirror a positive verification of their claimed identity. Most respondents, in fact, seemed to battle some level of self-discerned social inadequacy. Moms felt inadequate for being "just a mom," and wives felt judged for being "just an Air Force wife." Full-time careerists felt judged for continuing to pursue selfish ambitions, and full-time volunteers felt inadequate for not securing paying positions. Note the social pressure perceived and illustrated in the following comments, the first from an unemployed but career-claiming social worker, the second from a career-identified community anchor:

And some people might say, "Oh, you're holding on too long to what you've done in the past." But, it's part of me. It is part of who I am, and it will always be part of who I am.

I am content never having the [paid] career that American pop culture says I "should" have. I do not have a desire to have children either. I really enjoy just taking care of my husband, our home, and giving myself emotionally as a friend and counselor to people and organizations.

Overview

This chapter introduced substantive analysis of collected data, portraying the

contextual obstacles and opportunities, role expectations, and identity issues

associated with military life as they are perceived by interview participants. Chapter

Five, *Making it Work*, next details the behavioral adaptations undertaken by these

military wives in the course of their career pursuits. I explore the behavioral details

of how these women successfully achieve careers. I ask, "How do they make it

work?"

CHAPTER V: Making It Work – Behavioral Adaptation

Previous discussions addressed the ways in which some Air Force officer wives' define career and the structural and normative contexts in which these individuals undertake career pursuit. This chapter explores the specific strategies and adaptations by which those career pursuits move forward. I here focus on the acts by which these wives make clear – for themselves and others – their careerist identities. Addressed are the following questions: By what adaptive processes might career-oriented Air Force officer wives achieve both career satisfaction and commitment to their traditional military role? What does it mean to be a careerist-traditional wife, and how do such career trajectories proceed over time and multiple relocations?

First, I examine the career-related decisions these women make and the reasoning behind those decisions. Included here are considerations regarding occupational fields, paid work, volunteerism, and the unexpected opportunities that arise. Then, building from those isolated career decisions to a longitudinal path, I examine patterns in behavioral adaptation, both the turning points these wives perceive and the adaptive, long-term career trajectories that emerge. As such, this chapter is perhaps this study's most pragmatically concrete – it focuses on the behavioral strategies and adaptations that facilitate career pursuit and chronicles for career-seeking spouses the lived experiences of the careerist-traditional wives who've gone before.

Constructing a Career: Strategies for Work

> It's just like anything in life: You run into obstacles. You can
> choose to let them stop you, or you can climb over them. You can
> let them break you down, or you can get through them. Realize that
> any obstacle is only there for a short amount of time – well, it can be
> there forever if you choose to let it. But you do have a choice. Life
> is always about moving and bending and changing. . . You choose
> how you handle any obstacle in your life: You can turn it into
> something that teaches you something you didn't know – or you can
> choose to let it beat you down.

Indeed, career-oriented officers' wives face many challenges in the course of

their career pursuits. Those who continue that pursuit actively choose to overcome,

to move and bend and change, and very often, to learn something new. This section

addresses the challenges met and strategies undertaken as careerist-traditional wives

construct their personal career paths. Considered here are their options, choices, and

strategies regarding (1) occupational field, (2) work, (3) volunteerism, and (4)

unexpected opportunity.

Considering a Field

While many military spouses marry with their occupational paths in place,

some young spouses enter their military affiliations still in search of a career-field

choice. Furthermore, among those military spouses who enter with considerable

career experience, many find the military context inhospitable to their original career-

field choice and eventually make moves to retrain and enter a more fitting occupation.

From the wide array of specific occupations claimed among study's career-identified

respondents, I here call out seven occupational categories: business, public relations,

or communication, engineering or technology, education, human services, medicine, military, and homemaking. The following discussion highlights some of the obstacles, opportunities, and contextual interactions inherent to each.

Business. Those careerist-traditional wives claiming business or public relations and communications careers represent a wide range of experiences and expectations, and I lump them together here in interest of simplicity rather than for any great similarity. Military wives who entered their military marriages with strong business backgrounds in place usually had to undergo considerable adaptation to make their expectations fit. Few with corporate backgrounds found their tied moves accommodated by their original corporate employer. Many expressed frustration at having to "downsize" their dreams, and many described the discouragement of having to prove oneself with each new move:

> I had done some corporate work, and I was able to move up to personnel coordinator. I was managing about thirty people in different areas [around the state]. So that was a challenge. Then, moving to Langley, I sent my resume out. I interviewed and was told, "Oh, you can file." I was going "No, I've already managed thirty people, and I don't want to move down the ladder. I don't want to be a file clerk." So extremely frustrating. . . I was deflated.

One respondent, currently working part-time contracts, commented,

> My part-time employment here will last until we move, and then it depends on where we go. My company has contacts all over, but still, I'll probably have to start again from scratch with yet another firm.

And, another summed up,

> I enjoy moving, but there's anxiety that comes along with starting all over again professionally.

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Likewise, those businesswomen with established entrepreneurial backgrounds often

find their markets swept away with each relocation. Entrepreneurs hence echoed

many of the concerns of their corporate sisters:

> When you move, you have to re-establish yourself. Sometimes you
> re-establish and the money's better, and sometimes you have to take
> a cut. You know, about the time you get yourself in place in one
> area. . . it's time to go, and then you have to re-establish again.

Another illustrated the "downsizing" experience she underwent with marriage and a

move overseas:

> When we came here, it was a little shock because they were very
> proud of their bazaars here. They had the attitude that, "You're just
> a little lady with crafts." They said, "You don't understand our
> bazaars and the kind of money we make. . . 2.2 million dollars," and
> of course, my snide remark was, "Oh, well, you might be too little
> for me. Because the ones I sell at gross out at 15-20 million dollars,
> so, you might be just a little small for me." I was used to doing
> business with Saks and Macy's and Dillard's on a professional level.

Those obstacles aside, it is interesting to note that many respondents from all

walks of occupational life eventually settled into a business-related pursuit. The

military lifestyle, while not terribly conducive to any type of career continuity, seems

to lend opportunity relatively readily in the business-related fields – whether part- or

full-time, and whether stateside or overseas. Notably, those wives who eventually

adopted business-related career paths tended to be both highly creative and highly

flexible. Several career-changers described themselves as "accidental entrepreneurs":

> Finally, we were stationed in Turkey and I accepted that I would not
> be able to pursue a job in my field (in my native tongue!). This gave
> me an opportunity to take a greater role in the volunteer world, and I
> became the president of the spouses' club. At the same time, I
> became pregnant with our daughter. At last, I could embrace my
> new career. Somewhere in between motherhood and volunteering, I

became the "accidental entrepreneur" with a party dip recipe I
concocted one Christmas. It never ceases to amaze me how the
party-dip business seemed to find me! Over the last three years, we
have sold thousands of packets of dips through a series of European
military bazaars. . . So, it seems I have found my fame as the party-
dip lady. I continue to volunteer ridiculous amounts of time as the
president of a spouses' club – where I constantly meet other ladies
who, like me, once had an entirely different kind of career.

Hence, though businesswomen are likely to undergo major changes in their

expectations, those with prior business experience may be somewhat ahead of the

game. Consider the entrepreneurial spirit of one ex-corporate businesswoman:

I have a home-based business that will eventually allow me to regain
my corporate income. . . I have, like so many military spouses,
joined the home-business arena. Our first duty station was remote,
and not wanting to be in "survival mode" for employment, I began a
home-based business. My income level has not yet equaled what I
left behind in my civilian days, and I do miss the income, the socio-
economic level, and the options at that level of income. But, my
goal is to make this home based business work as a career, both for
my personal satisfaction and for the good of our combined income.

While some respondents pursue highly committed business agendas, other

military spouses find their ideal levels of employment as part-time businesswomen,

consulting with in-home sales companies such as Pampered Chef, Tupperware, or

Creative Memories, freelancing or telecommuting with companies in the U. S., or

manufacturing and selling their own handicrafts. Such part-time business endeavors

allow many military wives to both pursue a career identity and, at the same time,

remain committed to other demanding roles, such as "mom" and military wife:

The tax work I did was done from home at my convenience, so I
could fit in the kids activities with what work I needed to get done.
Telecommuting is a great thing if you can find the right employer. . .
Being a parent is a big part of my career. That is why my career
focus has had to change over time. I know my kids are mine forever,

but a job changes many times with each PCS. I'm no longer willing to put my all into a job that I will leave in 2 years.

Finally, business-related resumes seem, among the career fields, to be the most readily enhanced by the volunteer work traditionally undertaken by officers' wives. Unlike those in many of the occupations outlined here, several professional businesswomen noted how their volunteer work would directly bolster their employability. (See *Why They Volunteer*, below.)

Engineering and technology. Few of the wives represented here claimed engineering or technology as an occupational field. From those few who did, however, two commonalities can be discerned: the specialized nature of the work and a difficulty in finding field-related employment. First, the careerist wives in this group felt that their career opportunities were very limited, particularly overseas or in remote U.S. locations. If federal employment was not available, these wives turned to the less steady work offered by contractors. If contract work was unavailable, they ended up working outside of their field, if at all. One engineer's work history is illustrative:

> After making all that progress in my own career, I was suddenly
> jobless in a small town. It was very rural, and there was no support –
> I mean, it was 250 miles to the nearest military support base. I
> finally found a little work in my field there but had to commute an
> hour each way. That only lasted six months. I thought, "I have
> better things to do with my time." But, then I couldn't find anything,
> so I took a job outside my field at a medical practice doing
> transcription. It was boring, but it paid the bills for a year and a half.
> . . In general, I was bored. But, I tried to keep busy, and, you know,
> WalMart is happenin' on a Saturday night. . . . When we got here, I
> looked for jobs through the Civilian Personnel Office, the federal
> employment system, with contractors, and through word of mouth. . .
> To get the part-time job I have now, I ended up interviewing for

about ten positions with contractors. My first job offer was to Iraq!
So, I feel lucky to have this part-time job.

Education. Among those occupations traditionally considered conducive to the military lifestyle, those in education present a reasonable range of opportunity for the careerist-traditional wives represented here. First, there is one of teaching's more commonly regarded benefits: schedule. Teachers in general work schedules that correspond well to "mom's hours," an important issue among military wives whose husbands see frequent deployment. Likewise teaching often offers an option to take summer leave – again, a schedule that corresponds well with the military's common June-July relocation window. Job availability stateside is generally good, and the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DoDDS) system offers some chance of employment while overseas.

That said, officer wife-educators expecting to work for DoDDS were more often disappointed than pleased. First, several alluded to the system's difficult credentialing standards – experiential criteria that young teachers were unlikely to meet upfront and, given the constraints of the military lifestyle, were unlikely to obtain elsewhere. Second, several respondents noted a general unavailability of jobs. DoDDS apparently hires mostly civilians, promoting from within according to seniority. As such, overseas teaching posts often are filled and occupied for long periods by older, more experienced civilian staff. Those who did find full-time teaching jobs in DoDDS schools often attributed their success to "luck" or "timing." Of those success stories, it appears that most full-time teachers "fell" into positions at

the last moment as schools realized they were over-enrolled. Still, even those

positions were temporary, contracted only for one school year.

> When we got orders to come to Germany I thought that I wouldn't
> work at all. I had heard rumors that DODDS was very hard to get
> into. I came over with the attitude that I would find other things to
> do.   In the summer of 2004, after finding no job prospects, I came to
> the sad realization that I may not work or teach for the next year.   It
> was difficult to accept. Then, two weeks before school started, I
> received a call and I was hired as a kindergarten teacher. It was the
> most excited I had ever been to get a job. Unfortunately, my position
> has been cut for next year so I will be going through all this again.

Hence, many young and mobile teachers were likely to engage in some type

of sub-employment, either working part-time in childcare or substituting in teachers'

absence. Sometimes, too, this decision was by choice:

> [While overseas], I just wanted something to do to fill my time. . .
> And that actually worked out pretty well for me. I substitute taught
> at the middle school. I actually hedged my bet – I asked, "OK,
> which school needs substitute teachers?" . . . So, I ended up working
> about three days a week.

A home childcare provider, a teacher prior to marriage, noted similar opportunity:

> I was [out of work and] at home just three months – it didn't take me
> long to realize that I needed to do *something*. But, I didn't want to
> work outside the home again, because it wouldn't make sense for me
> to have somebody else be with [my daughter] while I went off to be
> with other kids. So I thought, this is the way it will work, "[My
> students] are going to come to me, and I'm still going to be with my
> daughter – and be able to keep up my resume." It was really
> important for me not to have a gap in my resume. And, at least I was
> still doing something with children. So I did my lesson-planning
> each week, and I did all the things to get registered with the state and
> the military. I just did it with a little bit of a twist because I didn't do
> it full time. . . drop-in only. So I thought maybe that would work,
> and it did. I had kids everyday, and it was perfect because they
> wouldn't be there all day. . . So it was the perfect balance.

Frustrations aside, teaching does offer career-oriented military wives an opportunity for some degree of occupational continuity. While the work may not be full-time, some form of related sub-employment and or volunteerism seems to be readily available. For those desiring or willing to accept a flexible, part-time career path, education proves a player.

Human services. For the purposes of this study, human service providers include vocations related to fields such as social work, public health, law, and counseling. Social services encompass a wide range of occupational levels, from entry-level care assistants to seasoned, highly educated lawyers, judges, psychologists, and counselors. Each of these professions was represented among this study's survey respondents. However, the perception of general job availability seemed to decrease with job experience and specialization – in other words, although much entry-level work is available in these fields, highly skilled professionals with correspondingly high expectations found little of interest.

Because social services are offered on military bases around the world by government agencies, these officers' wives often sought work in the federal employment system. Some found related jobs, while others found all applicable positions filled indefinitely by civilian contractors or active duty military members. Thwarting expectations here was the inconsistency of hiring practices:

> Once [in Germany], I started by applying at the various agencies that
> hire health educators or patient advocates or anything related to
> public health or patient education. . . And what I found was that all
> the jobs were active duty. Not only that, but they are mostly active-
> duty Army. They do have one civilian guy. . . but he's been there
> forever and he indicated that he is not going to leave. While I

seriously considered backing over him with my car "by accident", that didn't seem like a good way to get the job. . .

Furthermore, like teachers, many human service providers must meet credentialing requirements and deal with issues of state-by-state credential reciprocity. While those lucky enough to gain entry to the federal employment system enjoy sweeping reciprocity, those who do not must navigate often complex credentialing and continuing education issues. While many find it difficult to break into paid work at the higher levels of social service, the federal system does, with some luck, offer opportunity. Those willing to accept what might be less than ideal positions, pay, and work arrangements will likely find a number of career-broadening (rather than niche-focused) options for paid work:

> I have been fortunate enough to have been involved in a career that has a great need for workers in every place we have lived thus far. I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and I have been able to find social work jobs in each location where we have lived (sometimes in the civilian world…but currently as a government service employee on base). Sometimes I am unable to work as a "licensed" therapist because there is no reciprocity between [my home state] and the state where I become a new resident. In this case, I can still find similar jobs, but usually at a lower pay grade and with less responsibility.

Another professional described similar concerns, concluding,

> The problem is that GS jobs are hard to come by [at stateside bases]…and often overseas as well. I will resign from my Government Service job in Germany at the end of the month, due to another PCS move. But, [I plan to] continue to work in my career field wherever we move.

Finally, volunteer opportunities in the social services abound within military communities. Many of these, in fact, are offered by community services

organizations such as the Family Support Center and the Red Cross – organizations that tend to on occasion hire paid staff from among their faithful volunteers.

Medicine.   Among the study's respondents, the medical professions were represented by nurses and administrators at several levels – no physicians were caught in the sample. Like teaching, nursing is traditionally considered to be among the occupations best-suited to the military wife's lifestyle: It is a highly portable profession, it is in demand in the private sector in stateside locations, and rank is as a rule determined by demonstrated skill and education level rather than by localized seniority. As such, the nurses in the sample showed high continuity in their career paths – relative, at least, to those of the other career fields represented here.

When stationed stateside, nurses enjoyed great opportunity for paid employment, and few showed involuntary lapses in their career paths. However, some obstacles were perceived in obtaining work while overseas. For instance, most paid hospital positions are filled by active-duty and contract personnel, and those positions that these spouses did find open had relatively low wages – so low, in fact, that many chose not to work while overseas:

> Presently, I am not working as a nurse for the first time since becoming a nurse. Since we are stationed overseas, I am only able to work at American hospitals.   The salary for RN's is so low that it is not worth my while to work. My time is better spent with my family and volunteering. So, I am currently doing quite a bit in the volunteer realm. This keeps me occupied and gives me a sense of self worth.

A second nurse explains,

> I have been volunteering my time since we've been here. I'm a nurse. But, they don't pay nurses near enough, here, so I decided not

to work. It just wasn't worth my time to work for seven or eight
dollars an hour. So, I've spent my time volunteering and traveling.

Childcare issues, too, proved problematic:

> With no childcare for my son, and with my husband going on
> frequent, short little trips, it's not possible for me to work. So, I
> volunteer at the hospital and try and keep my nursing skills that way.
> Although, I just realized a couple weeks ago when I was
> volunteering how much I've forgotten in the year I haven't worked.
> I realized that by the time we get back to the States – three- and a
> half years – I'm going to need some significant retraining as a nurse.

One nurse found only volunteer positions available at one overseas base:

> I love working as an RN, and I did work for five years out of school.
> When we went to Japan I didn't work: They didn't hire from the
> folks stationed there – but, you could volunteer. Great.

That said, and even when paid positions are rare or unavailable, nurses were without

exception able to find applicable work as a volunteer. So, nursing appears to offer

relatively great opportunity for career continuity. Too much of a good thing? Several

respondents, it should be noted, chose not to work or volunteer while overseas, opting

instead for a temporary break after exhausting themselves in stateside nursing jobs:

> [When we arrived], I gave myself about three months where I didn't
> even think about [finding work]. I didn't even look into it. My last
> job was exhausting, and it took about a month to have my eye tick to
> go away. I'm not kidding. I had a tick for the last year and a half
> before we left. . . And then, when I looked into it [here], RN pay
> was so awful. So awful. It just wasn't worth it. . . I would not put
> myself out that hard. I just needed a break. My husband and I talked
> and we decided, no, I just wasn't going to work.

Military. Dual-military families, in other words, those where both spouses are

military members, experience a set of obstacles and opportunities unique to their

employment situation.   First, among this study's careerist-traditional wives, active-

duty military members ranked among the most highly career-identified respondents.

Their on-going military careers were, as a group, more continuous than any other

employment group represented here, and they enjoyed very clear career progression,

much like their military mates. This enviable career commitment, however, does not

come without cost:

> I have a successful military career which in many ways parallels my
> spouse's. I joined the military before my husband did, and I never
> expected to marry until I left service. But then again, I never
> expected to stay in service beyond my initial term. While I feel a
> strong connection to my current career path, I see both my husband
> and myself leaving the Air Force due to the stresses of long overtime
> hours, the difficulty scheduling time off together, the probability of
> deployment, and the difficulty of scheduling mutually rewarding
> career moves.

Respondents in dual-military families without exception mentioned the hardships

associated with repeated and prolonged separation – a particularly substantial obstacle

when juggling the parenting responsibilities:

> Q: And you've both had long deployments while you were here?
> A: Yes. And it actually worked very well. I actually volunteered
> for mine, because I could do it during the summer. So I sent my kids
> home for the summer to the States. Then, they were here [in
> Germany] with [my husband] for about a month and the rest of the
> time they were in the States. . . I came back [from Iraq] in
> September, and he left for Afghanistan in October.

Equally problematic – and quite often fatal – is the difficulty of orchestrating of

collocated assignments:

> We were both in the Air Force and both in the same career field, and
> I thought I'd stay in as long as it worked. But, that didn't last long.
> I bailed pretty quick.

A senior military officer commented,

It has been challenging to keep two military careers going. It became impossible with this next job: I am being sent to a base that does not have a position for my husband. My selection was made without my input and with full knowledge that my husband would have to retire or we'd be separated. Up to this point the Air Force worked with us, but I'm told the more senior you are, the less control [you have].

A separated officer explains similar frustrations:

In the first 2 ½ years we were [married], we spent a full year apart – six months on either end. Then, when it came time to PCS, the Air Force wasn't able to get me within 200 miles of him. So, I reluctantly got out.

In any case, it seems as though the partners inevitably face a decision: Whose career comes first? Two answers seem popular. First, partners can "take turns," alternating assignments, giving each equal opportunity for career pursuit, or they can come to an agreement that one career will prevail when their optimal career courses diverge. Contrast, for instance, the comments of these two active-duty officer wives:

Well, actually, the Air Force has been very good at stationing us together. But then, we've kind of taken turns selecting where we want to go and who would get the job that they want – and the other person would have to find something else.

In contrast,

At my first duty station I met my second husband. Nearing the end of my commitment in the Air Force, he was sent to flight school and was given the opportunity for a flying assignment. I was not a flight nurse and would not have been given an assignment at the same base. . . Because he outranked me, we opted for his career to continue in the military and for me to get out.

Finally, one active-duty wife, a senior officer, explained how, due to decisions made in interest of their families, women are disproportionately affected by the obstacles inherent in the Air Force context:

I think I might. . . try to be a little more vocal about the situation of women in my career field. When I started, women were fifty-five percent in my class. And, now, at this point, there are just two percent. So it's really women that we're losing. . . They take two tours and then decide that they can't do this anymore. You just come to a point where you or your spouse has to get out. . . [Even if you stay in], when you get to about mid-field grade, and you're looking at a span of career, you start competing for jobs – and perhaps a woman may fall below because they've made choices because of family, not to go here or there, or do this job or that job. . . Because I look around at the [women] who are left, and they have worked hard. Really hard.

Homemaking. While I was not surprised at the large number of survey respondents who claimed homemaking as their primary occupational activity, I was surprised at the large proportion that claimed careerist identities based on their homemaking activities. While many homemakers maintained a standard definition career and, correspondingly, disqualified claim of a careerist identity, many wives – quite easily, it seems – espoused broadened definitions of career, specifying alternative definitional qualifications that allowed claim of a careerist identity. Contrast, for instance, the following responses. First from a mom claiming no career identity:

[A "career" is] a goal I have personally made for myself as far as my own employment is concerned. Currently, I don't consider myself to have a career. . . With a third child on the way, I have no career "dreams." Aren't dreams for people who sleep?

In contrast, this mom claims a career identity based on an alternative definition:

[A "career" is] a long-term involvement or job that one learns about, practices, refines, enjoys, and pursues in order to achieve some sense of accomplishment in life -- whether it be in a monetary way or not. My present non-paying career is being a supportive military wife and mother-all.

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Several explanations, incidentally, displayed some ambivalence: For instance one mom wrote, "Right now for the first time ever, I am a stay at home mom. It is a love/hate relationship, but I love it." In any case, from the statements above it's apparent that behavior does not an identity make. These two women, while enacting very similar behavioral patterns, disagree as to whether those behaviors constitute a career.

So, career-identified homemakers in general subscribe to the breadwinner model, whereby one spouse works outside the home while the other undertakes a wide range of duties, including perhaps caring for children and maintaining a household. This, of course, well fits the two-person career model so long maintained within the military institution: Although only one is paid, both spouses contribute labor to the employing organization – the first directly, the second indirectly through support of the first. Traditional role expectations dictate that the officer's wife play that secondary role. Although those expectations are, by most reports, no longer so ubiquitous, many of the wives participating in this study nonetheless chose to adopt traditional role behaviors:

> In the nontraditional sense, yes, I do have a career. Although I'm not currently paid, I am engaged in the life-long profession of parenting. . . And, now that my two children are in school, I have many opportunities to volunteer to fill the gap left by [the absence of] a paying job.

Among these homemakers, I identified two groups: career moms and community anchors. While both profess identification with the homemaking role, these two types of homemakers take different foci. *Career moms* identify largely

with their parenting role, equating career with the raising of their children and, in the

case of these careerist-traditional wives, the volunteerism associated with their

children's activities:

> [A "career" is] something you do that you feel is meaningful and
> rewarding and contributes to your life. I feel my "career" is my
> family and all the things that go along with that.

Community anchors, in contrast, may or may not have children, but broaden their

homemaking activities beyond their own home to other families' children and to the

military community at large. These women, then, mother their communities – and in

so doing portray the quintessential traditional officer's wife:

> I have not had a focused employment pursuit but have instead
> reacted to the needs of my family, our school, and community at the
> time – for example, home-schooling, leading spouse groups, OSC
> activities, Boy Scouts, and PTA. . . I worked for two years in
> nursing before having children, but our frequent moves – my oldest
> son is in 10th grade and in his 10th school – have led me to stay
> home and be the family anchor. . . I never expected to have such a
> passion for parenting them and other kids who have less structured
> homes. . . I love the people of the military and God has put their
> needs on my heart. They are "my community," and my spouse's
> command jobs have allowed me great access and opportunity to
> make a difference.

As reported by both career moms and community anchors, the obstacles and

opportunities of a homemaking career simply parallel those of military life in general.

Career and identity needs of the wife aside, contextual obstacles – such as

separations, dangerous work, and multiple relocations – are most easily overcome

within the family unit by adopting the two-person career model so long-established

within the military context. As such, if the career and identity needs of the wife can

be met through her identification with the homemaking role, she really can "have it

all." That said, among the dangers here is the over-adoption of a vicarious identity. For further discussion of the vicarious identity, see Chapter Four.

Jills-of-all-trades. Finally, from among this study's participants I identified a group of career-identified wives that defy pigeon-holing into a single occupational field. Like homemakers, these wives espouse broadened, alternative definitions of "career." But unlike those more single-minded career moms and community anchors, these Jills-of-all-trades incorporated multiple occupational pursuits into their career identities. Interestingly, these women as a group appear to be highly career satisfied, achieving, perhaps, a sort of requisite variety that carries their career identity through multiple relocations and career contexts. Consider the following personal career description:

> I have a very broad-based career in that I have been trained and feel confident in performing a variety of tasks that are worthy of payment. Although not currently employed, I have always had and will always have a career path. My career path is affected by my military status and my family situation. My priority right now is taking care of my husband, our two children, and our home, but I have a career path in mind that will allow me the flexibility of being at home when needed or relocating when necessary. I maintain this career path through continuing education, volunteer work, and part-time employment when it is available. My career path has evolved from purely professional to active duty military to homemaker – with advanced education, certification, and home-based businesses mixed in.

Considering Work

The discussion above considered a variety of long-term occupational fields. The following discussion factors in short-term work opportunities – choices made within a segmental, or by-location, perspective. For instance, having chosen teaching

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as a long-term occupational field, a teacher faces at each new location a set of short-term decisions regarding work. Addressed in this brief overview are (1) the criteria by which one might weigh the pros and cons of a given job, (2) some options regarding work format and ways of working, and (3) the job-search strategies employed by work-seeking spouses.

Work criteria. Among those criteria that these wives took into account when considering specific jobs were fulfillment, progression and continuity, compensation, and time on station. First among concerns was *fulfillment*, defined in differing ways, but most often taking into consideration the use of one's skills and the engagement of one's passions. First, many respondents differentiated between career-related pursuits and "a job" or "work":

> I know the difference between teaching college-aged students, which
> I love, and teaching eighth-graders, which I hate – though, I think
> they are both important jobs. I think we connote a "career" with
> something we love and "job" with something we have to do.

A second likewise differentiates,

> A job is just somewhere you have to go to work everyday. A career
> is something where you are constantly learning and seeking out new
> opportunities and doing new things. [My old job], well, it's like a
> monkey could do it…a smart monkey, but a monkey.

A third explains her take on motherhood, arguing,

> Contrary to popular culture, I don't really consider [motherhood] a
> career – more like "work." It is still difficult for me to think of
> "stay-at-home-mom" as an equal partner in that respect regardless of
> how exhausted I feel at the end of the day or how politically correct
> it is to say, "It is the hardest job out there." As a child of the TV
> generation, I would still like to be Claire Huxtable not Carol Brady
> (who, incidentally, was a stay at home mom with a housekeeper).

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In addition, and as described previously, several respondents emphasized that they work for intrinsic fulfillment rather than extrinsic compensation. Given the relative financial stability of these wives' families, many described how they chose unemployment over unfulfilling work:

> So I went back to civilian personnel and I had them look at my transcripts and my records and tell me what I was qualified for. They wanted to put me in a nice little GS-4 position doing clerical work. But, I didn't want to do clerical work. I used to have *my own* clerk. So, I just didn't want to do it. It is not that I can't do it, and it's not that there is anything wrong with it. It's just that it's not in my career field, and I didn't want to do it. So I told my husband that it looks like I can work at Taco Bell, the BX, or the commissary, or do clerical work. . . And he said, "I would rather have you not work and be happy."

Second, this study's careerist-traditional wives considered factors related to *progression and continuity*. However, few had encouraging takes on these topics. As one spouse commented when asked about career progression, "It's not going to happen." Another respondent advised,

> Decide what career progression means to you. You know, if it's to be the vice-president of a company at the age of thirty, then I'm not quite sure that marrying someone in the military would work well. Having said that, I think being a military spouse provides you with a lot of unique experiences that you can't gain in life otherwise. You know, anywhere from moving around to different places to. . . You can do personnel work, or you can do volunteer work, or you can help out in many different areas. . . You realize that you can actually do more than you think that you can do.

Hence, career progression can, like "career" itself, be broadly defined. In addition, one spouse optimistically pointed out that job continuance and career continuity are perhaps less critical than in the past:

The [main] obstacle is that you move every couple of years, which causes little breaks in your resume. But, I think that in the US, that is becoming less of a problem. People [in general] tend to switch jobs a lot more, and in some career fields, it's even a plus because it shows that you are flexible and that you have had a lot of experiences. . . So, [although] I think the big obstacle is moving and always having to readjust your job at each different base, one of the benefits is that you get to have a lot of different experiences.

Third, career-seeking wives take into account *compensation*, both the earned pay associated with a position and the opportunity costs associated with committing to a time-consuming job:

The pay was bad – more than ten dollars an hour less than what they were paying me when I left the States. The nurse recruiter [here], he even said that he was embarrassed to tell me how much they pay. It's like nine dollars and change. And that's in this day and age, in the nursing field, in a critical care unit, for a certified nurse with ten years of experience! It's horrifying. So between [the pay] and the night shift, I didn't do it.

Another respondent weighed opportunity costs,

Really, I could work in any of the clinics here if I really wanted to work. . . But the longer I live here and don't work, I think, "Who am I kidding? I don't want to work. I'm in Germany. I want to be able to go!" Where did I go? Well, Italy, Greece, Holland, and Spain in a month – *in the span of a month!*

Finally, of peripheral note here is the role *time on station* plays in the rationalization of either persisting in or leaving an unsatisfying job. From the respondents' comments it seems that military spouses are likely to tolerate less satisfying situations simply because those situations are not indefinite:

The one opportunity [inherent in military life] is that, if you are sick of your job, you know you're leaving. So, there's always a good out if you hate your job. . . [In my last job], I was so burnt out, but I knew there was a move coming up so I was able to hang on and hold on until we moved.

One manager echoed,

> I just wasn't happy with the job, but. . . I just kind of stayed there. I
> don't know. I just always felt like we were going to move – we
> would be moving on at some point. So, why bother switching jobs?

And, a government service employee responded,

> Q: If you had been in the civilian world or perhaps not overseas,
> would you have left that job earlier on and sought. . .
> A: Yes! Yes! Oh, most definitely! But because of where we were,
> my options were very limited. . . And, because we were time-
> limited, I did my best to stick it out.

> *Work options*. In addition to specific job requirements, many careerist-

traditional wives adapted to their situations by altering their expectations regarding

potential ways of working. Adaptations seem to center on time commitment, work

focus, and work format.

First, most wives had adapted their expectations regarding time commitment –

in other words, they chose or felt forced to consider something other than full-time

work. Part-time work and contingency work were popular options here:

> I didn't look too hard into jobs before we moved here. . . I thought I
> would maybe do some part-time work, something like that. I knew I
> would want to travel here and didn't need to work for money
> purposes. So we would make do. It would be OK. I just wanted to
> keep my fingers in it.

Likewise, a nurse explained,

> Being a military wife and mother dictates certain compromises in my
> career, such as hours worked. I've always worked contingency,
> which enables me to set my own schedule and earn higher pay, but it
> also requires self-starting and cuts benefits.

Second, several wives altered the level of focus in their careers. Like those spouses represented in this chapter's discussions on *Jills-of-All-Trades* and *Expecting the Unexpected*, these wives made conscious decisions as to whether they would adopt a specialized or diversified focus in their careers. While some maintained specialized interests, most careerist-traditional wives related how they had gradually broadened their perspective, and several eventually claimed career identities as Jills-of-all-trades. For example,

> I knew my husband's military career would take us all over the world, and I wanted to be prepared for a wide variety of jobs. I then pursued my Certified Public Accountant License (CPA) to avail myself to more professional job choices. I have been flexible in my job choices and have been able to secure jobs at each of our duty stations. I have worked in public accounting, tele-commuted with income tax preparation and payroll tax preparation, and have even substitute taught when no accounting jobs were feasible. I have put my education to work and ventured into real estate, rental property, and land development with my two sisters who also have finance and management backgrounds. You have to be creative when you are a military spouse that moves around.

Similarly, consider this composite career:

> I taught one year at the high school level, fulltime, then married and began following my husband around the world. From that point until about a year or two ago, I taught part-time college English everywhere we lived. I also did in-home sales for a short time. Currently, and for the past two years, I have made and sold my own jewelry, which I love! I also volunteer and am a homemaker.

Finally, many careerist-traditional wives had at some point adapted the format of their work. As described above, many businesswomen became "accidental entrepreneurs," adopting a self-employed work format in order to offer handicrafts or professional services from their homes. Others took on part-time work as home sales

consultants and freelancers. Taking advantage of modern technology and today's global marketplace, several spouses described forward-thinking work formats such as long-distance operations and telecommuting. For example, I was surprised to find that the job satisfaction of one military spouse showed an incline after her move overseas – the opposite response shown my most. She explained:

> Ahhh, I loved Germany. Maybe this job satisfaction was due to a bit of a change in what type work I was doing. . . The tax work I did then was done from home at my convenience, so I could fit in the kids activities with what work I needed to get done. Tele-commuting is a great thing if you can find the right employer!

Related here, too, are those spouses who countered relocation issues by choosing temporary family separation over job severance. In contrast to those who operated jobs in a long-distance format, these spouses operated their *families* in a long-distance format. Among careerists without children, it is not uncommon for wives to opt for temporary family separation in search of continuity, staying behind or choosing a different location altogether in order to continue a productive career pursuit:

> We got orders nine months before I graduated from nursing school. But, I said, "I'm sorry. I love you, but you go on without me. I'm going to stay here and finish."

A graduate student and professor was faced with a similar choice, explaining,

> My husband, who is now finishing [an elite military training course], just found out that he won't be able to come back here. So, great. We're moving again. My career doesn't transfer, so if I want to keep my career progressing we'll have to separate until he can get back.

> *Job search strategies*. The careerist-traditional wives utilized many of the

same job-search strategies that might be utilized by civilian job-seekers. While

stationed at stateside bases, these wives used common strategies such as web searches, combs through newspaper classifieds, word of mouth, and networking within community organizations. Using these strategies, many sought and found appropriate work within local civilian economies. However, when seeking work on military bases – and particularly overseas, where employment is in most cases limited to on-base or military-related positions – these strategies proved less effective. As such, these wives often found themselves adapting to conditions and options "outside their comfort zones." One woman offered the following wisdom:

> You have to broaden your skill spectrum when you can so that you don't pigeon-hole yourself. Look where you wouldn't look – work on your education, volunteer, and network. Don't be afraid to try things you wouldn't otherwise do. . . The military life will force you out of your comfort zone.

In short, these military wives had to get creative. Among those officers' wives living overseas, those deciding to seek paid employment most first sought work with either the federal government or with private contractors working on base. Those working for private contractors were largely employed in administrative, clerical, or technical positions, and often on part-time or contingency bases. One engineer commented, "It's contract, so the work comes and goes. But, the company has locations all over the world, so at least I'm making some good contacts. And, at least I'm not just sitting at home in a foreign country." While many other jobs – both part- and full-time – are offered by on-base operations such as the AAFES exchange and commissary services, few of these officers' wives found any interesting work there. Most, it seemed, sought professional or executive-level positions appropriate

to their education, training, and experience, and few such positions are made available to transient military spouses.

Therefore, many job-seeking wives approached the option of federal employment, which professes a wide range of job opportunities with employers including the military, its service units, and the Department of Defense Schools (DoDDS). Teachers and administrators seeking work with DoDDS pursued employment avenues specific to that organization – avenues discussed above in *Considering a Field*. Likewise, those opting to join their spouses in military service pursued work through recruitment channels. (See also, *Considering a Field*.) What remains unaddressed here are the experiences of those wives who approached federal employment within the government service (GS) system.

Discouragingly, among those wives who sought work with the government service system, few found appropriate work, and few had a pleasant experience while trying. Because of the volume and vehemence with which these spouses in general denounced the federal hiring program, I here devote considerable space to their concerns. In general, these wives related very similar stories regarding federal job search assistance and the application process. The stories, incidentally, told tales of frustration not just at Ramstein, but at other European bases and at stateside bases as well.

First, many criticized the services offered by the Civilian Personnel Office (CPO), the government's one-stop shops for federal employment. Several

respondents related how employment advisors assumed spouses were looking for

low-level clerical work:

> They had all these [job] listings. And when we walked in, the director happened to be the one there. . . and she was very condescending. Ultimately, she apologized because she was directing me toward administrative assistant positions, like "Oh, you can work at AAFES. . ." [My husband] finally said, "She has a master's degree." And that *really* limited what I was going to be able to do, at least in that community.

A public health professional recalled a similar experience, musing,

> I was not a very happy person. They just give you the book of job [listings] and they expect you to go through it and find something that sounds interesting to you. There are not a whole lot of things in there that are very exciting – snow remover or maybe something seasonal – and they're not very good at trying to help. They say that they will [help] once you go to their class. There, they say they'll help you find something that is in your career field or help you get in contact with someone in your field, but they don't. They just look at your information, and they say this is the best you can do…blah…blah…blah.

Another spouse described the facilitation of CPO's job-seeker skills class:

> It seemed that everyone at civilian personnel was incredibly rude. I took their class – they have a little briefing on what jobs are available – and the speaker was awful. She started talking about how the only job she could find when she got here was at Burger King. So, she started working at Burger King, and that was twenty years ago. But now, she's moved up the GS system – and left her husband. I couldn't believe she was the speaker that was coming to motivate us as to what kind of jobs we could get! She was saying that being married to a military person is really hard and horrible – so horrible that when he PCS'd, she stayed here because she had gotten into the GS system. Now, she supports herself as a GS-10 after *twenty years.* I was going, "Those are some lofty goals. . ." I don't know. To me it was really sad.

> Despite the questionable efforts of civilian personnel offices, most of the

respondents that reported applying for GS positions learned about open positions

through rumor and networking. But, alas, the frustration did not end there. Consider

the ill-fated efforts of these wives – I include all three stories to emphasize their

disturbing similarities.

First, after learning about a promising position from an acquaintance in

Germany, one job-seeking spouse called the U. S. to inquire about the application

process:

> [They said], "No, we need your application here [in the U. S.], and
> you need to mail it. We won't take faxes and we won't take e-
> mails." So, I spent hours – really, a couple of days – doing the
> Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs). The package was just
> really thick and I felt really good about it. I mailed it as fast as I
> could from here. It got there on Tuesday. The deadline was
> Monday. Normally, when you apply for a job there's a deadline, but
> they look at the postmark-by date, not the [arrival] date. I didn't
> hear anything. . . didn't hear anything. Then, I got a letter – a form
> letter of rejection that was so unprofessional. The first line said,
> "You are not being considered for this position because you are not
> qualified. . ." *I'm not qualified?* ". . . because your application was
> a day late. Thanks. We will keep it in the file."   It was really
> horrific. . .   So, I called down there. They said, "Well, the
> manager's not here right now, but you were late so you can't get in."
> It was very frustrating, and I just got very bitter about the system.

A second spouse, an experienced public heath professional, tells a similar tale:

> I applied for a library assistant [position] when we first got here
> because I just needed to do something. I followed the instructions, I
> thought, explicitly. (I used to write these grants where you have to
> be sure that the margins are exactly right or they won't read it. So, I
> thought, "No problem, I can read directions.")   But, apparently not,
> because this was only a GS-2 position and I got denied because my
> application was not done correctly. The lady walked me through the
> process. . . I did my little KSAs. . . But, I did not put a copy of my
> high school diploma in the application. I put a copy of my college
> diploma because I thought that that superseded my high school. But
> apparently, I needed both. And, instead of just saying, "Hey, we'd
> like to get an update because you left this out," they say, "You are
> automatically disqualified because you apparently can't follow

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directions." So, that was really upsetting. I got disqualified for a GS2 position! I can't even remember what that makes, like six or seven dollars an hour, you know. It was a temporary position shelving books. . . So that was very special. I went back into civilian personnel, and I said, "Hey, I got this letter that said I wasn't qualified." They looked back into my application and they acted like I was the stupidest person in the world. I was so frustrated when I left there.

A third spouse's story reflects a frustration that, given the apparent ineptitude of the hiring middleman, might be felt as well by the hiring unit:

We were at a party and I met a guy who was managing a construction project on base. We talked, and he pretty much offered me an engineering job. But first, we had to fineggle the GS hiring process. When I went to the employment office, they said, "Just put your application in." It turned out to be a 40-page application! But I did it. *Months* later, I got a letter. It said, "Your application was not forwarded to the hiring office because you do not qualify for the position." But, I knew the manager needed someone *now*, and he had agreed that I'd be perfect. They never did hire anybody, even though the guy really needed help. That was the last straw for me. I ended up just helping my friend do part-time catering.

Among those few respondents who had obtained work in government service positions, luck and persistence were the factors primarily attributed to their job-search success:

In the personnel announcements, it said you had to have a doctorate. It was a GS-11/12 position, and I was thinking, "There's no way. My father is a GS-12. . . There is no way on God's green earth that I'm going to get this position." But I said, "It costs me time to apply, and that's it." So, I applied for the position and probably waited a good four months. They ended up having only two local candidates apply. So they advertised it worldwide but didn't get anybody better-qualified than the local candidates, so I ended up getting that position.

Although it worked out well for this latter GS applicant, some familiar with the GS

application system – including some of those wives whose stories are relayed above –

might suspect that better-qualified candidates may have been disqualified from

consideration on grounds of procedural technicality. In any case, few had positive

experiences with the government employment system.

That said – I'll end on a hopeful note here – those who did fall into GS

positions appeared to expect a level of career continuity on par with those employed

as active-duty military members or employed in highly flexible telecommuting

arrangements:

> Just recently, I joined the federal government system and truly see
> this as a career building move. I feel as a spouse it is sometimes
> difficult to grow within a company when you are moving every three
> years. Now, I am working within a system that understands people
> move, and I can keep my level and continue increasing that level as
> opportunities arise.[42]

Job availability. As in any employment market, job availability plays a large

role in determining career-related opportunities for military wives, regardless of their

current station. Both in the U.S., where spouses can draw on the civilian employment

market, and overseas, where opportunities are considerably more limited, factors such

as preference policies, local hiring policies, and timing come into play. First, in

determining their work expectations, many spouses invoke hope based on the federal

spouse preference policy – a much-touted statute giving some degree of employment

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[42] The degree to which these expectations are commonly realized remains in question. While this study's respondents related overwhelmingly negative experiences with the government employment system, it's possible that those wives who do find federal employment are more likely to become pure careerists who do not participate in "traditional-wife" activities. Because this study explores only the dual paths of those who claim both careerist and traditional-wife identities, the experiences of pure careerists are not represented here.

preference to military spouses. However, among this study's sample, this "preference" seemed to have more bark than bite. As noted above, spouses in general had little luck breaking into the government service employment system. Other groups, too, such as veterans and relocating federal employees claim some degree of federal hiring preference. However, the real benefits of such preference were, among this study's respondents, frequently called into question. One experienced engineer, herself an active-duty veteran, described her expectations for finding work in Germany:

> I had huge expectations of finding a job at Ramstein. I thought, "I should have no problem finding an engineering job, between my veteran's preference, spouse preference, and the constant construction going on there." With my qualifications, it seemed like GS and contract jobs should have been a dime a dozen. I was very disappointed.

Within occupational fields, employment arrangements differ from location to location. For instance, while some military clinics rely on military-spouse labor pools to fill their paid nursing staff, others might use all active duty and civilian labor, drawing on the military-spouse labor pool only for volunteers.

> Living [stateside] afforded me many opportunities to explore and further my personal career. I have had to be rather creative living overseas. Here, all of the paid employment in my career field is currently filled by active duty members. So, I have continued to fill my resume with volunteer experience. . .

A social worker explained,

> I was a GS in London so I had what I thought was a leg up, already being part of the system. But I quickly learned that it was different here: There are so many contracted social work services.

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Finally, some words on timing. Although all career paths are affected by situational timing, the fortune or misfortune wielded by sheer coincidence is magnified for highly mobile military spouses as they move again and again – and again and again find themselves at the whims of chance. For example, while less mobile employment-seekers might lie low in "the wings" awaiting an ideal position, the mobile nature of the military life does not allow work-seeking spouses that luxury. Many respondents – including several of those among this study's most self-efficacious – noted the capricious role that luck plays in both successful and unsuccessful job hunts:

> There are professional jobs available, but the timing has to be right
> for you. You have to get here, and a job has to come open because
> someone has PCS'd. There *are* professional jobs here, your timing
> just has to be right.

Volunteering

A time-honored tradition among officers' wives, volunteerism is today undertaken with a variety of motives in mind. Outlets for volunteerism remain many, and much of the military community's support network, particularly when overseas, is fueled by unpaid labor. As community participation was invoked in this study as a defining characteristic of careerist-traditional wives, the aspects of volunteerism are covered in some detail here. The following discussion questions (1) why these wives volunteer, (2) when these wives volunteer, and (3) where these wives volunteer.

Why they volunteer. In this study, one of the qualifications of a careerist-traditional spouse is that she to some degree participates within and thus contributes to the military community – in other words, she to some degree fulfills the traditional

officer's wife role.[43] However, few careerist-traditional wives choose volunteerism

simply because it is the behavior dictated by their traditional military role. Few seem

to volunteer their efforts based solely on affective commitment to the military, and

few seem to volunteer from entirely altruistic motivations. In addition, some

volunteer while stationed in certain locations but not at others. As one spouse points

out, military wives participate for many different reasons:

> I joke that I got "sucked" into doing the [spouses' club] board, but
> now those people have become some of my closest friends. We've
> all volunteered for different reasons.   You know, some people,
> [volunteerism] is what they do. Other people, like myself, are not
> working while here, so we say, "OK. Let's find something to do."

So, the motivations behind voluntary participation tend to be multi-faceted,

drawing on both altruistic and instrumental rationales and seeking both intrinsic and

extrinsic outcomes. Consider the following statements of intrinsic value:

> And so frankly, I view these [volunteer] board positions as jobs. I'm
> not getting paid, but I'm getting better. . . And we're doing such
> good. The feeling that I get inside is the pay.

Another full-time volunteer echoed,

> It's something about when you make somebody else feel better about
> who they are, or make their life situation feel a little bit better. And,

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[43] A note on the tracking of volunteer hours: Several attempts have been made to estimate the number of volunteer hours contributed by military spouses and, from those numbers, to estimate the fiscal value of their unpaid labor. Similarly, some effort has been made to instigate hour-tracking systems. But, such systems are inevitably flawed both by the over-reporting of hours that's suspected among those wives competing for recognition and honors and by the vast under-reporting of hours among those who don't want to go to the trouble.   The most entrenched of these programs is the Army's volunteer program, and the Air Force appears to be making moves to follow suit. For instance, Ramstein's current system tracks volunteer hours by requiring volunteers to log their hours on a military web site. The catch: This ".mil" web site is accessible only by military members using system-linked computers. As such, military-wife volunteers must report their hours worked to their military-member husband, who then logs his wife's volunteer hours into the institutional system. Many wives object, noting that the program moves disturbingly towards the re-establishment of those formalized officer-spouse evaluations long-banned from officer performance reports.

it usually makes you feel ten times better – you get more out of it
than the people do.

Some women, instead, most emphasized the instrumental value of their volunteer

activities – in particular, the professional development to be gained:

You can gain experience leadership roles in volunteer organizations
on base. . . You can gain first hand management experience,
financial knowledge, and organizational skills, and special events
planning. . . You know there is a huge positive side, and this stuff is
going on my resume when I go back to the States.

One teacher explained,

The child care coordinator position on the ROSC. . . is important
because it goes back to my resume. . . It's going to keep there from
being a gap [on my resume], even though it's a volunteer position.

And, an experienced businesswoman encouraged,

When and if I am looking for a professional job, I am putting these
jobs – not at the bottom as extra activities – but at the top as "This
year, I was president of this club. I was president of that club. . ."
Of course, I will work with someone to make sure that it is worded
properly. . . But, I think it's very important. You don't have to give
up.

Hence, many respondents used volunteerism to bolster their career pursuit. Of

note here, however, is one working careerist who pointed out that time is in fact a

resource – and how, if not undertaken selectively, volunteer involvement can pose a

threat to career accomplishment. She explains why, at this point in time, she doesn't

participate in the squadron wives' group:

I always feel compunction to get involved in activities because I
don't want any one person to carry all of the weight. . . I am the kind
of person who, when I am involved, will volunteer to help out with
everything. So, here. . . I don't go to coffees because I know I'll
sacrifice professional endeavors for cookie-baking. And rightly or
wrongly I'm not willing to do that.

Finally, it should be noted that several respondents do volunteer simply to "fill the time" or because they were influenced by friends' invitations. Even in these cases, however, more explicit meanings eventually seemed to emerge, taking the place of more ambivalent initial motivations. Many respondents recalled a mix of rationales and expected outcomes – and several made a point of explaining how their reasons for volunteering had changed. It is these stories, perhaps, that best describe the richness of volunteerism. Consider the multifaceted accounts below:

> My volunteer positions have given me great training in my area of expertise. Volunteering has also filled the void of adult contact I have missed out on while staying home with my children and telecommuting. I hope my volunteer efforts have been as rewarding for the organizations have they have been for me personally.

A second woman recalled,

> Originally, I volunteered to fill the time. But now, I enjoy helping people and using my skills to benefit those who don't have what I do. I'll put my volunteer work on my resume. . .

Another echoed,

> At one time, in the beginning, I viewed volunteer work as part of my career – a way to meet folks and network, a way to obtain training on boards. . . Now I'm older and view it much differently. I get personal satisfaction now out of doing my share and supporting those who really need it.

When they volunteer. As mentioned above, several wives mentioned volunteering to "fill the time" or as an outcome of social networking. This void of time and the networking that takes place among non-working military wives is apparent here, and many of the wives in this study undertook their volunteer activities

as a temporary hiatus from paid labor or as a result of social networking while

stationed overseas:

> I can honestly say that I volunteer as many hours here that I worked
> [before], and that I volunteer more here than I ever have in my entire
> life. I think it is just the nature of the community. You get here, you
> get involved. Like in the United States, there are so many other
> things to do, but here. . .

A second explained the networked nature of volunteerism:

> So I started volunteering, and once you start volunteering, you start
> meeting people and they start asking, "Why don't you come
> volunteer here, too?" So, you do and then you start volunteering
> everywhere. That's how that happened and honestly, people ask me
> why I volunteer. It is more to keep myself busy than anything else.
> That's really sad. It should be that I want to help the community and
> I'm a really good person, but if I was home all day, I would go crazy
> so. . . I have to be doing something.

Others indicated that their volunteer work was an integral part of their self-concept:

> I guess, more importantly, at heart that's who I am. Some people
> might say, "Volunteering for the ROSC, that's not the same thing
> that makes you a social worker." But ultimately, it is. It's
> something that I believe is at the core of who I am.

While careerist-traditional wives participated in the military community while

overseas, they differed as to whether their voluntary participation was integral to,

supplemental to, or a temporary substitute for their personal career path. For some,

volunteer participation was an on-going career activity, regardless of their current,

segmental situation. Others indicated that they participated in volunteer activities only

when their contextual situation precluded them from working or doing other things.

Where they volunteer. Much of the military's community support system is

founded on volunteer efforts – a dependence more noticeable in overseas and remote

locations, where employment constraints dam deep pools of untapped ambition and

labor among career-seeking military wives. In these locations, military wives seeking

outlets for their volunteer efforts find a number of opportunities from which to

choose. Many wives seek volunteer opportunities specific to their occupational

fields, while others seek general leadership experience or a chance to assist with

school and children's programs. Many volunteers undertake intense involvement

while overseas. The following description sums up – in regards to quantity, rather

than detail – the volunteer participation of many wives overseas:

> I was originally very excited about [the job I was offered], but could
> not possibly accept it due to the lack of childcare. So, I volunteer. A
> lot. I am on the board of two organizations and on a bazaar
> committee for a large welfare bazaar. I started a welcome committee
> in my squadron, and I'm a key spouse for my squadron. I also
> volunteer at the local army hospital in the exact same capacity I'd
> work were employed there. I "work" in the ICU and do everything
> the other nurses do. As a volunteer, however, I get to spend more
> time with the patients and less on paperwork. It is actually the best
> of both worlds – if you can forgo the paycheck.

Whatever the direction of their intent, volunteers find ample opportunity to

contribute. This section outlines several of the most common outlets for volunteerism

among this study's officer wives: unit-level programs, base-level spouse clubs, inter-

community liaison organizations, community service groups. (Of course, as above,

many spouses search out more specialized outlets, too.) Many commented at length

on their volunteer activities. In the interest of brevity, their descriptions are

paraphrased here.

Unit-level opportunities include unit support groups and key spouse programs.

Unit support groups in most circumstances are loose networks of all spouses affiliated

with a given squadron. These groups come together, often for monthly "coffees," in order to plan social activities, elicit voluntary participation, share squadron information, and encourage mutual social support. Differences in degree of activity, however, are notable. For instance, among overseas fighter squadrons, these groups tend to be closely tied social networks, while among larger, more rank-differentiated squadrons, these groups tend to more closely resemble formal communication networks. Perceptions regarding expectations vary widely among military spouses. Traditionally, these groups are overseen by the commander's spouse, with the descending structure of the spouse's group paralleling the hierarchy of the unit itself.

While many of the commander's wives interviewed here perceived some pressure to lead these groups, the Air Force's Key Spouse Program has to some degree mitigated those expectations. The Key Spouse Program offers formal leadership training to military spouses invited to participate by the squadron commander. These spouses are expected to provide support and leadership among unit spouses, particularly when new spouses arrive to the unit and when the unit is deployed. Finally, notable among payoffs here is that volunteerism undertaken at the unit level is, among other volunteer outlets, the most likely to gain the notice and recognition of the unit commander. As such, unit volunteerism can sometimes carry a highly political charge.

Base-level spouse clubs operate most often as officer and/or enlisted spouse clubs. These groups bring together spouses from all units and function both as social support networks and as hubs for philanthropic operations. Activity and membership

levels vary widely by location, with the Ramstein Officer Spouses' Club being one of the largest and most active in the world. Membership in such organizations is purportedly voluntary and, in contrast with many traditional role norms, is now largely perceived to be truly so. That said, there are within these organizations opportunities for high-profile participation and leadership. Leadership within these groups is, most commonly, elected by the membership.

That said, the spouses of base-level commanders are often invited – many seem to feel, "are expected" – to serve as active advisors on the club's governing board. Club boards are most often comprised of three to 35 governing board members, with anywhere from one to six Colonels' and Generals' wives serving as senior advisors. Many career-oriented military wives land on such boards in search of leadership roles and skill development. Because these groups have community-wide influence, and because their philanthropic activities benefit this wider community, achievements realized in these groups tend to both attract the attention of high-ranking military members and enhance professional resumes. For instance, the primary fundraiser endeavor of the Ramstein Officer Spouses' Club is their International Bazaar, a four-day event held each fall. (Many overseas spouses' clubs host similar events, several on comparable scales.) This bazaar is an enormous undertaking that involves 150 vendors from around the globe, orchestrates the efforts of over 400 volunteers, and brings in gross totals of over 2.2 million dollars. The role of bazaar chairperson is a high-powered position bringing both enormous

responsibility and huge returns in the form of recognition, social connections, and professional resume fodder.

Inter-community liaison groups are formalized organizations that seek to create a social network among various factions of the community. Such organizations link individuals and groups to other groups, joining forces, encouraging cross-cultural exchange, and fostering community-wide communication. In stateside communities, these organizations might, for instance, take the form of newcomers' clubs. In military communities (and particularly those overseas) host-nation friendship clubs, inter-service organizations, and inter-club councils prevail. Among this study's careerist-traditional wives, several noted their participation both in the German-American Friendship Club and American Women's Activities Germany, an inter-service organization formed to offer leadership training and networking opportunities for military-affiliated volunteers in Europe. More so than base- and unit-level activities, participation here seems to be unquestionably voluntary, at least among most officers' wives. That said, however, the spouses of high-ranking military members within the European Theater are invited – again, many read "are expected" – to participate as senior advisors. Involvement in such organizations seems to be highly rewarding, particularly for the inter-cultural exchange and the sweeping perspective that such participation cultivates.

Finally, community service groups include a wide array of organizations – traditional service organizations such as the United Service Organization (USO) and Red Cross, military support units such as the Family Support Center, nationally-

affiliated private organizations such as Girl Scouts of America, as well as a variety of church- and school-related programs. They are so numerous, in fact, that they are for simplicity's sake here lumped under one unifying label, "community service groups." Two varietals are apparent. The first are military-affiliated organizations that, although employing some paid workers, use volunteer labor to supplement their paid workforces. The USO, Red Cross, and Family Support Centers are examples of these volunteer-supplemented operations. Many volunteers land in these organizations either because their occupational field is in human services and is closely related to the mission of the unit and/or because they hope to volunteer temporarily and then work their way into a paid position once one becomes available.

The second type of community service group relies solely on community volunteers. Often, these are special-interest groups, sports clubs, religious organizations, or children's activity groups that function in military communities much as they do in any civilian community. Just as in civilian contexts, participants in these types of organizations tend to be motivated by personal interest and a desire to be involved in the activities of their children. While such activities bring little chance of eventual paid employment, and while they are perhaps less persuasive when it comes to professional resume-building, involvement often defines the careers of career-identified moms and community anchors.

Expecting the Unexpected

One of the most recurrent themes in this research is versatility, and it surfaced again and again in the address of issues both segmental and long-term. Careerist-

traditional wives, it seems, eventually learn to expect the unexpected. A related

theme is one having to do with the contextual obstacles and opportunities presented

by the military lifestyle. While much of the discussion above has focused on

obstacles and the strategies some women use to overcome them, it seems an

opportune moment to reflect again upon some of the most prevalent reasons spouses

marry into the military: for instance, worldwide travel, new experiences, social

support, and adventure.

While recognizing that military life imposes very significant constraints on the

careers of officers' wives, they do well, it seems, to instead focus on the immense

opportunity their situation allows:

> When you decide to marry a military person, it truly changes what you
> are going to do with yourself – you know, how you're going to spend
> your time once you have the luxury of *choosing* how you're going to
> spend your time. It's just an amazing opportunity, because people do
> some awesome things.

Even when stationed overseas,

> It really gives you the opportunity to have the time to think about
> which direction you want to go. And with technology. . . you're not
> even locked into a location to pursue your educational goals. You
> know, if I wanted to do some work, maybe I could do freelance
> writing for children's magazines or something. There's a ton of
> things. So you have time to think about that. . . [as well as] an
> opportunity to try it. You can try different things and if something
> works, you can kind of find your niche. It's a luxury to have that
> freedom, and I appreciate that.

Particularly when overseas, constraints on employment options greatly narrow

the attraction of work among financially stable officers' wives. Many of this study's

participants noted the upside of such situations. Most commonly, they noted

opportunities both to "branch out" from one's area of expertise and to take a temporary break, enjoying the attractions of expatriate life. First, among work-seeking wives, many noted the value of (sometimes forced) explorations outside one's area of expertise:

> [Military life] has been challenging at times. You really have to reinvent yourself, and be willing to consider positions that are maybe not in your expertise. The school liaison position, again, I applied for that on a whim. Nowhere in it was international business or human resources management, which were my comfort zones, the areas I had worked in. But I would say it was one of the top things that I have done. . . [I would have missed that opportunity] had I not taken the risk to even apply for it, or to even consider something that was so different and alien to me from everything else that I had done. You have to be willing to roll with the punches and go from there.

Very often, such explorations lead to discovery of a new career path.

> I think that the military has dictated my career in a lot of ways. I certainly wouldn't have stayed in restaurant management forever, but the military sending us to [that remote base where there were no jobs] – but happening to be near one of the best nursing schools in the state – serendipitously made me re-look at my career choices. So that was a huge bonus for me, the military sending us there. . . [It was] a relief. I was thinking, "OK, I don't have to do this anymore." It was almost like starting over – like choosing a new path.

Such exploration can, too, open eyes to new hobbies or passions:

> [After not finding career-related work], I couldn't stand being around the house anymore. I just couldn't stand it. And I hadn't tapped into the volunteer world yet. I didn't know what that was about. It was something that. . . well, I was so busy in my career for twenty years that I never had time. . . So, I started to tamper with cooking. I went to [the local university] and took some night classes and some weekend classes, and fell in love with it. It was a creative side that I didn't know I had. . .

Finally, many study respondents discovered that an overseas assignment –
while in most cases frustrating to career pursuit – provides a great opportunity to
simply take a break. One wife quipped, "I have to admit, I am enjoying the 'forced
unemployment' of living overseas." Several others echoed her confession:

> And looking back, two years now, I think I would have been crazy to
> have wanted to work because I wouldn't have been able to
> experience Europe. And in so many ways – although the job
> satisfaction sucked – it was London! And we were able to do things,
> because we didn't have any kids and because [we had] enough
> money and freedom. . . We could really enjoy life in other ways,
> whether it was a walk in the park or going out to eat or going to the
> theatre or taking a day trip to wherever. There were so many other
> things that we could do that really kept [my satisfaction] at a high.

A concluding thought on priorities: There are some things that can substitute, at least
temporarily, for career pursuit. Careerist-traditional wives, it seems, do well to
expect – and embrace – the unexpected opportunities of military life.

The Art of Adaptation: From Turning Point to Trajectory

The analyses above have addressed how careerist-traditional wives define
career, how they describe the context of the military lifestyle, and, in the first section
of this chapter, how they employ behavioral strategies to minimize obstacles and to
maximize opportunities. Thus far, then, I've focused on concrete career events –
occurrences perceived to be to a greater extent either inflicted (e.g., a tied relocation)
or self-enacted (e.g., a tactical job search) – and how those events might affect the
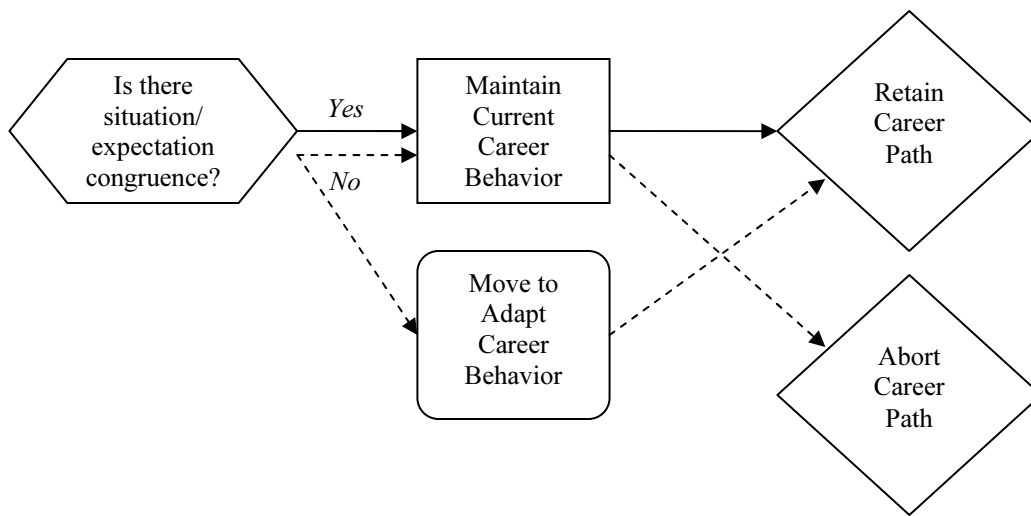behavioral verification of career identity.

In this section, part two of *Making It Work*, I examine the more complex
behavioral processes at play in career adaptation: I bracket the behavioral adaptation

sequence with the pivotal notion of situation/expectation congruence – the sought outcome of an evaluative process in which perceived satisfaction is both an antecedent and a result of adaptive behavior. Moving from processes of situational evaluation to long-term behavioral career path, I include a theory-building discussion regarding (1) situation/expectation congruence, (2) turning points, (3) critical events, (4) inter-domain divergence, and (5) longitudinal career trajectory.

Situation/Expectation Congruence

Perceived satisfaction is an emotional state, a byproduct that emerges from the cognitive evaluation of situation/expectation congruence. In other words, when one's expectations and the perceived situation at hand prove a good match, the individual lives that equilibrium as neutral-to-positive emotion, or satisfaction. A congruent state motivates maintenance of the status quo – individuals will act to maintain that equilibrium. Incongruence between expectation and situation, in contrast, is lived as dissatisfaction, and that dissatisfaction motivates behavioral action aimed at altering or adapting to the situation. (See the flowchart in Figure 13.)

Figure 13. Situation/expectation congruence and agentic behavior

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┌─────────────┐                ┌──────────┐              ◇────────────◇
│ Is there    │     Yes        │ Maintain │             Retain
│ situation/  │ ─────────────► │ Current  │ ──────────► Career
│ expectation │ ----------►    │ Career   │             Path
│ congruence? │     No         │ Behavior │              ◇────────────◇
└─────────────┘ ╲              └──────────┘
                 ╲
                  ╲           ┌──────────┐              ◇────────────◇
                   ╲          │ Move to  │             Abort
                    ╲-------► │ Adapt    │ --------►   Career
                              │ Career   │             Path
                              │ Behavior │              ◇────────────◇
                              └──────────┘
```

Incongruence (and the dissatisfaction that denotes it) is at once both an antecedent of response and a result of action – regardless of whether that spurring action is perceived as imposed or agentic. For instance, in discussion of the military lifestyle, career-related expectation/situation incongruence is often perceived as a result of military-imposed contextual constraints. As used in this discussion of behavioral adaptation, however, incongruence is also a motivator: Individuals act to regain equilibrium when expectations and the situation at hand are perceived as incongruent. Put another way, when standing at the precipice of a steep drop in career satisfaction, individuals will make moves to prevent the fall. Likewise, an individual bottoming out in satisfaction will likely make moves to climb from the pit.

I seek to build from a simplistic event-and-strategy perspective one that acknowledges the more complex, reflexive processes at play. In order to address complex career and career-identity issues, I return to the interview data. As outlined

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in Chapter Three, *Methodology*, this study used domain satisfaction ratings and domain satisfaction charts to reveal and visually display perceived states of congruence. Interviewees first completed a chronological life event grid. Then, they rated their year-by-year satisfaction in three life domains: career, military life, and general life. I transposed these ratings into graphic domain satisfaction charts.

The following discussion undertakes an analysis of quantitatively derived data, drawing on domain satisfaction ratings to better illuminate narrative text. The analysis employs domain satisfaction charts as visuals to tease out segmental turning points in interviewees' event histories. My goals: First, to identify those turning points that respondents seem to hold in common and, second, to build from those segmental turning points a longitudinal picture of behavioral career trajectory.

Turning Points

Using the domain satisfaction charts created from respondents ratings of year-by-year satisfaction, I identified and inquired about evident *turning points*, those segments of time in which interviewees' career satisfaction took a dramatic swing. Each interviewee's satisfaction chart might either display a number of turning points or appear relatively stable. As illustration, dotted circles in Figure 14 mark the turning points apparent in two domain satisfaction charts. In each chart, double gray lines bracket the point of marriage and point of interview (i.e., 2005). Single gray lines mark segmental relocations, and the nature of each location is labeled on each segment. The solid black trajectory line traces career satisfaction ratings across time.

Figure 14. Observed turning points in two domain satisfaction charts

Life Course Chart by Year

Life Course Chart by Year
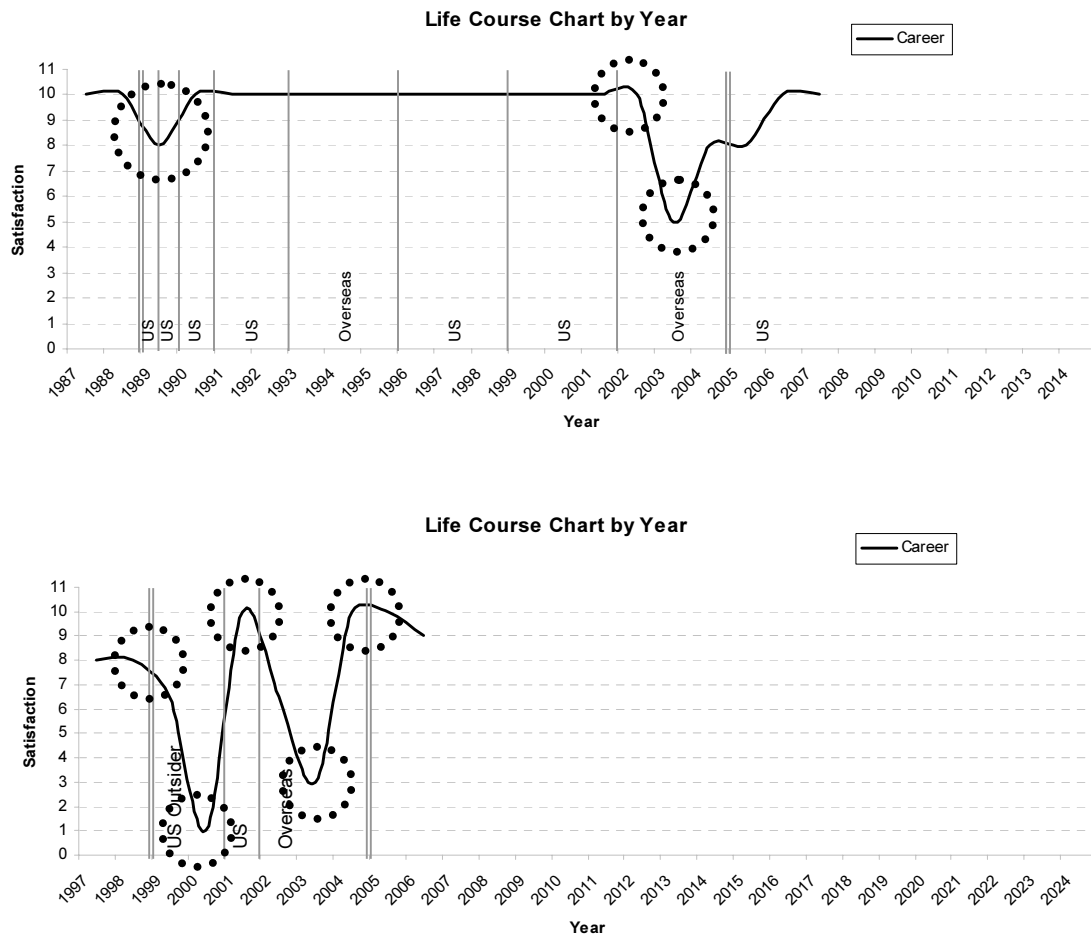
As shown above, these two respondents saw differing degrees of stability in their career satisfaction. The first chart represents the relatively stable career satisfaction of an active-duty military member; the second, the wild ride of a newly married and highly mobile event planner.

Discussion of domain satisfaction and, more specifically, these individual turning points illuminated career adaptation processes. Instead of the

chronologically forward, event-to-event sequences related during discussion of career-event histories, these conversations targeted critical events in reverse – starting first with a satisfaction state and working backwards towards perceived causal events.[44] Here, I asked respondents to account for self-professed state. The following analyses address the nature of career turning points.

Critical Events

In a side-by-side examination of all interviewees' domain satisfaction charts, I first discerned several critical events – in other words, occurrences that seemed to trigger turning points across individual charts. In addition to the highs and lows experienced by all careerists (e.g., those founded on such factors as job satisfaction), the careerist-traditional wives as a group appeared to be highly affected by several critical events. The following critical events seemed related to the highs and lows of their career satisfaction: first immersion into military life, relocation, motherhood, change in career-related status, and time on location.[45]

First immersion in military life. Initiation into the military lifestyle appeared to trigger downturns in the career satisfaction of many careerist-traditional wives. It should be noted here, however, that many of these first immersions occurred simultaneously with an overseas move, a move away from home, and/or an exit of an

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[44] From a comparison of the narrative data based on the event grid and that based on the satisfaction chart, it seems that respondents were more concretely "fact"-oriented when moving through a chronological discussion of events but more emotion-oriented when discussing those same events as accounts for professed states. Potential methodological implications are discussed in Chapter Seven.
[45] Although, of course, these events can occur simultaneously, for discussion they are here called out as separate events.

established career. Nonetheless, the relationship seemed prevalent even in apparently
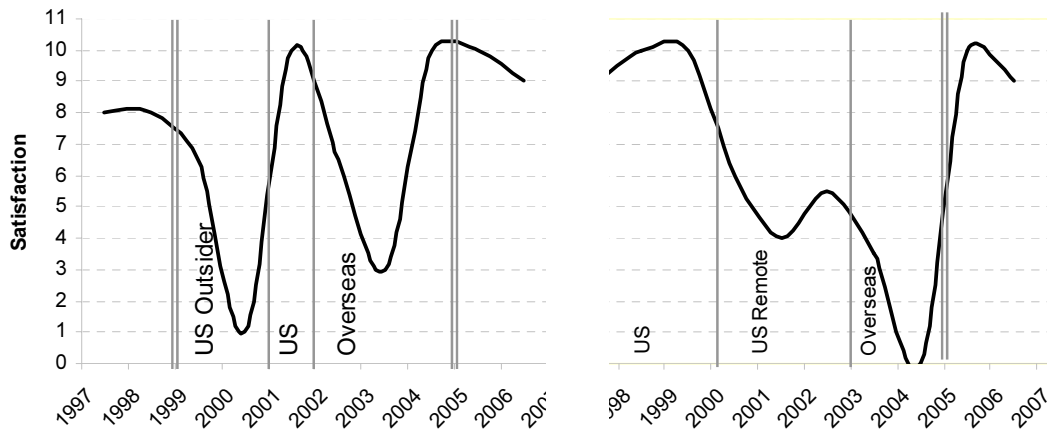
non-confounded instances:
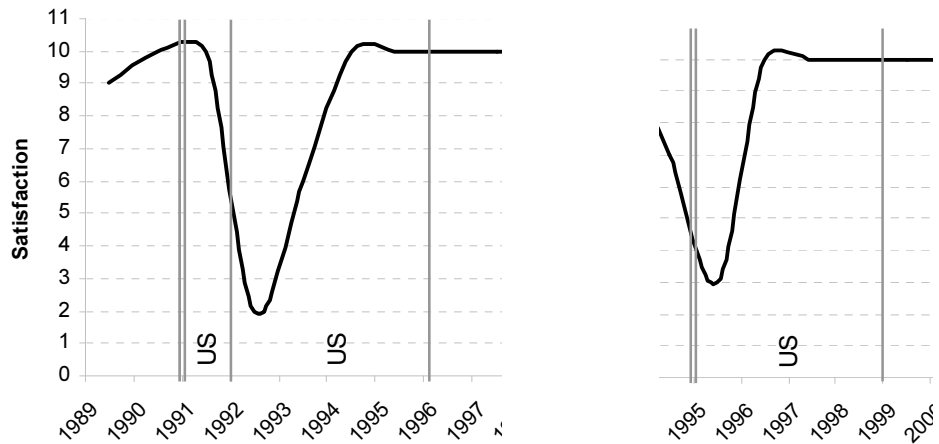
Relocation. Career satisfaction among these wives seems linked to the details

of *relocation*, i.e., moves appear to trigger turning points in satisfaction. First, almost

across the board, overseas moves were accompanied by swings through extremely

low career satisfaction. Compare the experiences of these four respondents:
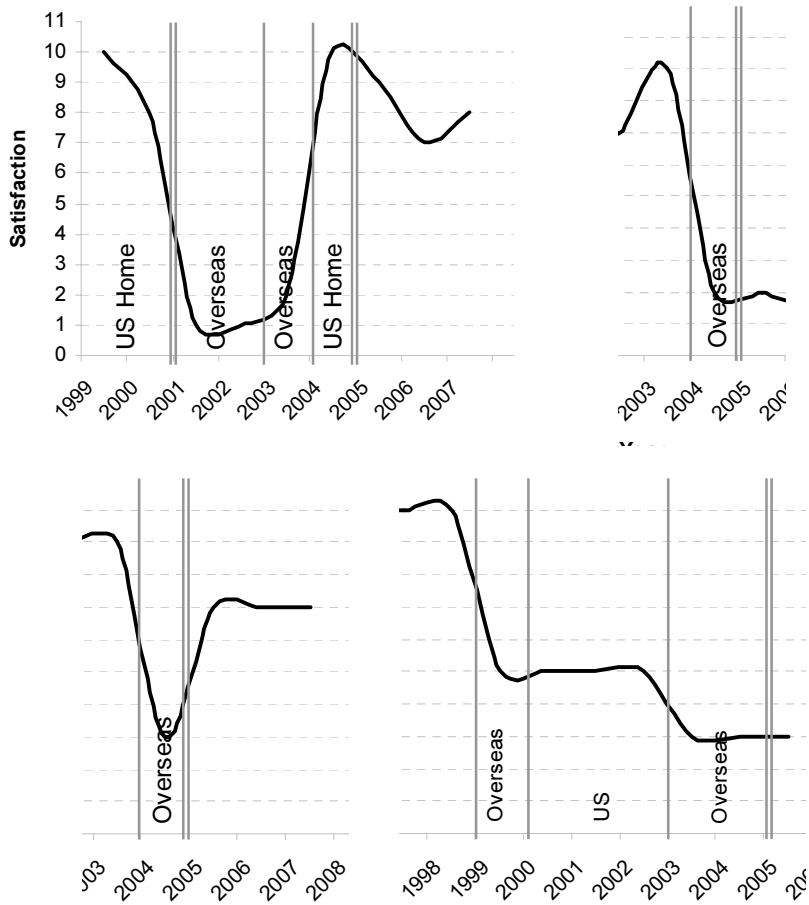
Similarly, relocations to either remote or self-described "foreign" locations – in other words, those locations where respondents perceived discrimination or outsider status – were in general experienced with low satisfaction. Note the double dip these two women experienced as they undertook both types of "foreign" relocations:

Satisfaction

11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 200⁻

US Outsider   US   Overseas

.98 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007

US   US Remote   Overseas

That said, these career lows were in some cases mitigated by job continuity. For instance, those with portable home businesses or those who are military members seemed immune to this effect. Observe the rise in career satisfaction when one telecommuter moved overseas:

US Home   Overseas   US

1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006
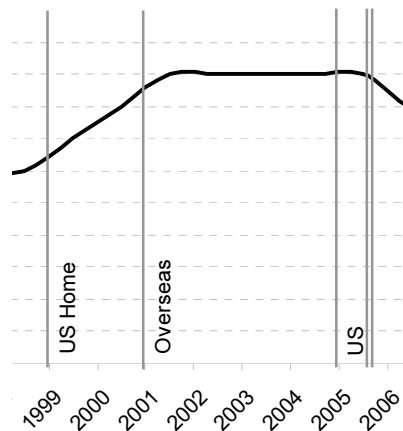
Finally, of note here is the stabilizing relationship of staying or returning to the stateside location one considers home. Respondents remaining near home seemed to experience greater career stability, while those returning home experienced those moves as positive turning points:

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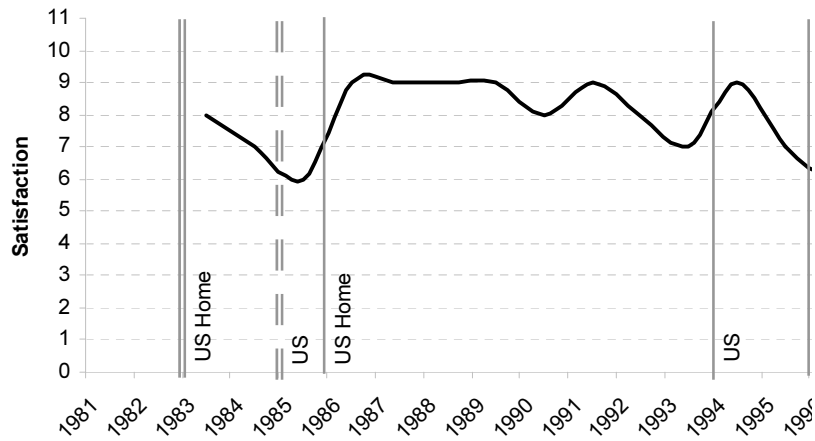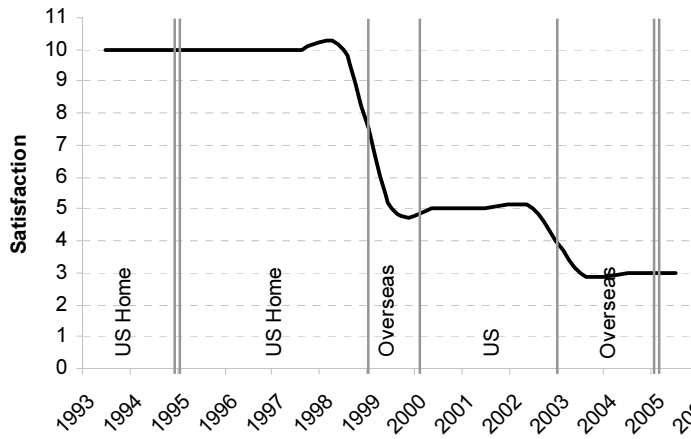
Motherhood. Again, careerist moms from all walks of life make adaptations at the onset of motherhood. The arrival of one's first child did seem to shake things up a bit – not surprisingly, given the contextual demands often perceived by military moms. (See also, *Sitting the Bench* in Chapter Four.) The stars on these two charts represent the birth year of these moms' first children.
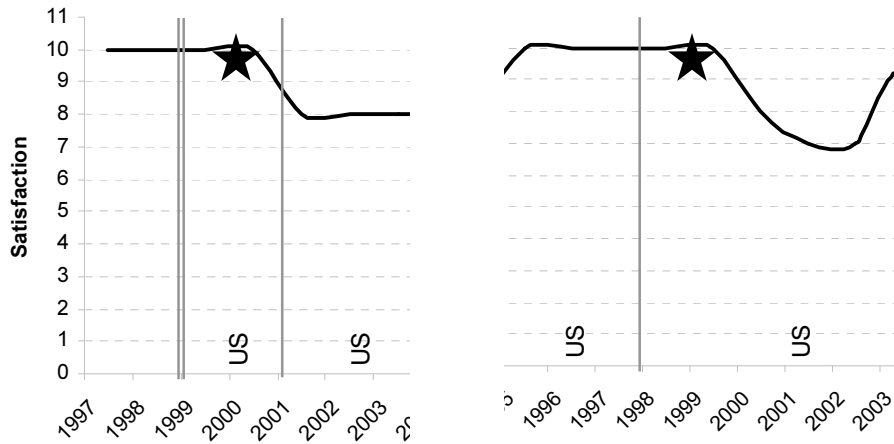
Time on location. This critical factor refers to the duration of one's stay at a single location. Related to relocation in general, time on location appeared to have a positive effect on career satisfaction. Consider the stable highs in these two satisfaction charts:

Change in career-related status. Finally, *change in career-related status* –

such as exit from and entry into a new occupational field – was tightly related to

satisfaction. Most dramatically, satisfaction often plummeted as these women exited

long-established career paths. Interestingly, even when that exit was perceived as

largely voluntary, careerists sometimes were surprised by the low satisfaction that

followed. In contrast, the discovery of a new occupational path – perhaps one more

conducive to military life (as in the second instance below) – can be accompanied by

steep increases in satisfaction. The stars on these two charts denote the exit of an
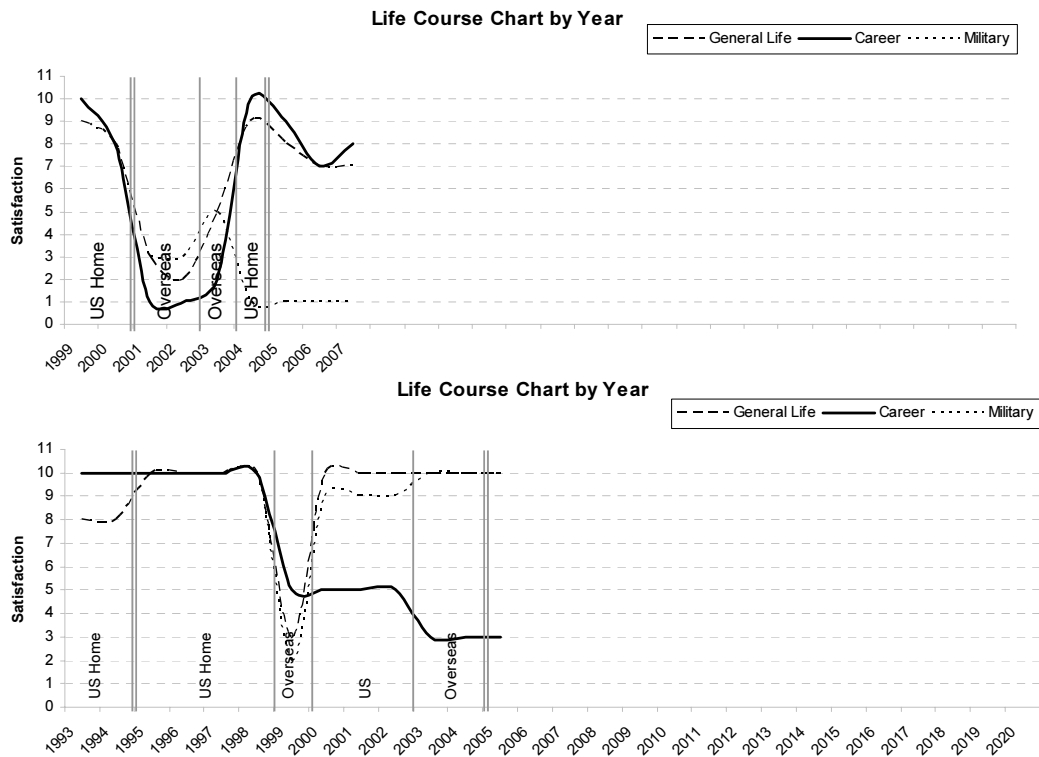
established career path:
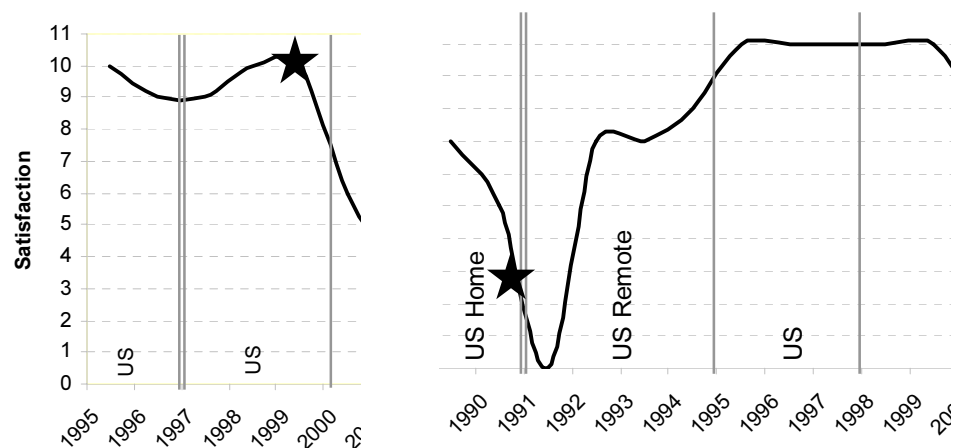
Hence, these critical events mark common turning points among careerist-

traditional wives – flash points, per se, in the longitudinal career path. Notably, these

events largely reinforce the contextual factors explored in Chapter Four, *In*

Dependence. Here, however, these turning points can be seen as critical points in the

career course, situations in which these wives must evaluate expectation/situation congruence – and make behavioral moves to either maintain or regain it.
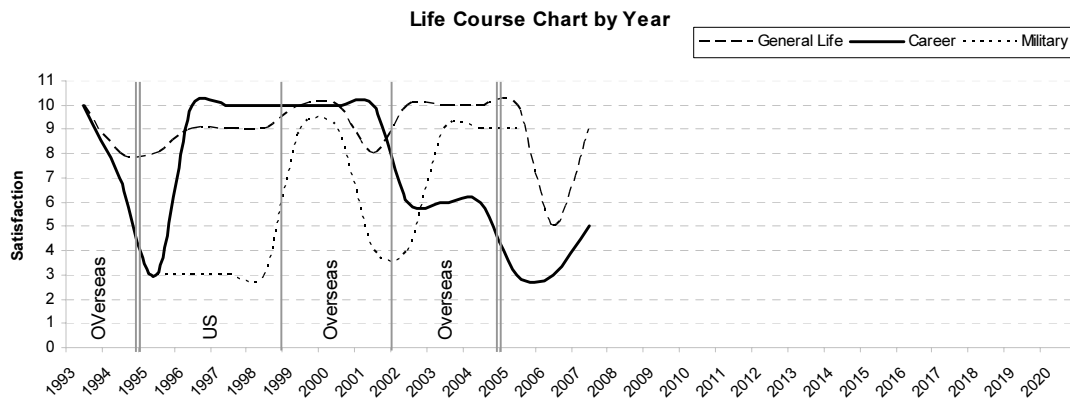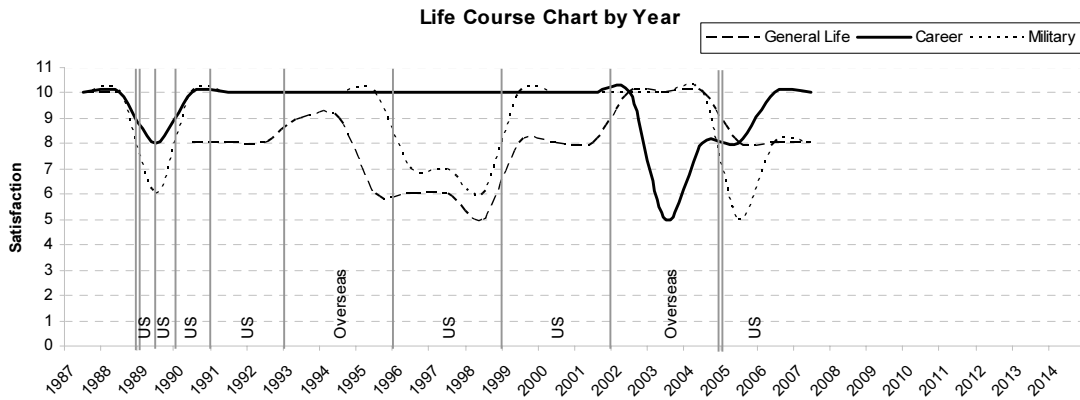
Inter-domain Divergence

As noted in methodology descriptions, respondents indicated retrospective ratings of not only their career satisfaction, but of their satisfaction with military life and their general life satisfaction as well. These secondary domain trajectories were interesting as comparative baselines. Although these trajectories represent retrospective accounts of satisfaction – and although they are ongoing and in flux – notable, too, were the ways in which these domains intertwined with and diverged from career satisfaction ratings. In the domain satisfaction charts represented below, career satisfaction is denoted with a solid line, general satisfaction with a long-dash line, and satisfaction with military life with a short-dash line.

First, when multiple domains are considered, visible are life segments in which respondents chose between two domain-related role-identities. For instance, the respondents represented below each appear to regain satisfaction in two role-identity domains by trading off the third. Note, too, how they made different choices: The first, a college professor, sacrificed military satisfaction while enhancing general and career satisfaction. The second, a mom and businesswoman, instead sacrificed career satisfaction while enhancing her general and military satisfaction.

Life Course Chart by Year

General Life - - - | Career —— | Military · · · · · ·

Life Course Chart by Year

General Life - - - | Career —— | Military · · · · · ·

Furthermore, it was also interesting to note which of the two specific domains – career or military – was more closely entwined with general life satisfaction. In most cases, general satisfaction became more and more tightly interwoven with or parallel to military satisfaction. In some cases this relationship was apparent from the start, in others, it became apparent over time. (In just two cases was career notably more related to general life satisfaction.)

Life Course Chart by Year

General Life — Career — Military

Life Course Chart by Year

General Life — Career — Military

In one case where a mom rated career path only up until the point she stopped working outside the home, military and general satisfaction were nearly perfectly entwined after her paid pursuit was abandoned:

Life Course Chart by Year

General Life — Career — Military
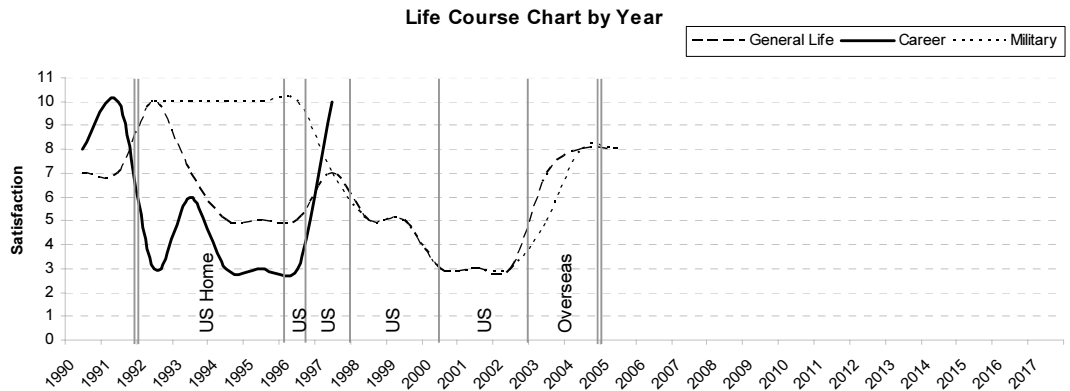
Finally, most encouraging were three cases in which all domain satisfaction trajectories moved in concert. These individuals seem to have negotiated – at least for the short-term – career, military, and general life domain meanings that are complementary or, at least, not mutually exclusive. Further inspection supports this analysis, as the three wives achieving this balance – a newly committed careerist volunteer, a teacher with a home-based daycare business, and a community anchor – each compromised or substituted her original occupation, eventually adopting a career path conducive to the military lifestyle:

Life Course Chart by Year

--- General Life   ━━ Career   ⋯⋯ Military

Chart 1

Y-axis: Satisfaction (0–11)

Vertical labels: US Outsider, US, Overseas

X-axis: 1997–2024

Chart 2

Life Course Chart by Year

--- General Life   ━━ Career   ⋯⋯ Military

Y-axis: Satisfaction (0–11)

Vertical labels: US, US, Overseas

X-axis: 1997–2024

Chart 3

Life Course Chart by Year

--- General Life   ━━ Career   ⋯⋯ Military

Y-axis: Satisfaction (0–11)

Vertical labels: US Home, US Home, Overseas, Overseas

X-axis: 1999–2026

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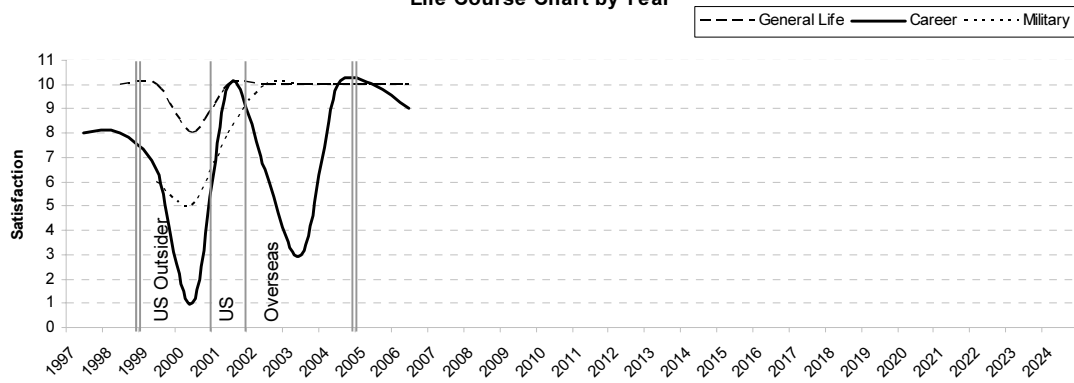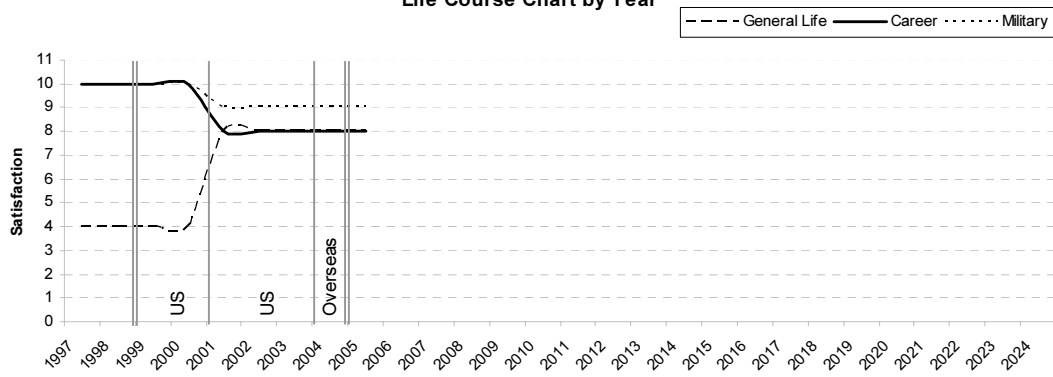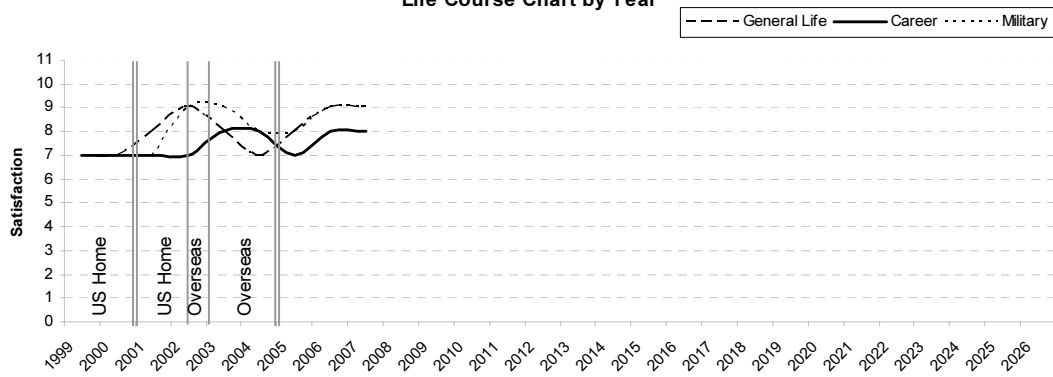
Career Trajectory

> A "career" is something you do for yourself to help you feel
> fulfilled, and it can be a part time or full time opportunity. Right
> now, I am a domestic goddess that runs my own business while at
> the same time juggling the demands of being a military spouse with
> two small children. I am a "jack of all trades." When I met my
> husband I was working on my PhD in Medical Microbiology. Due
> to the PCS demands of military life, I chose to leave my program to
> follow my husband. I then spent the next three years working [for a
> sporting-goods corporation] in marketing. I was in design and sales.
> . . and I am privileged to have my name on two different patents.
> Upon moving to Germany, I chose to start up a jewelry company
> with a friend who is also a military spouse. As I am also a stay-at-
> home mom with a three-year-old and a five-month-old, this provides
> me an outlet away from "mommy-hood." The military has taught
> me how to be adventurous and flexible.

Like that of the woman above, the career trajectories of other careerist-
traditional wives meander highly discontinuous paths. This section examines how
officers' wives responded over time, adapting their behaviors to counter recurrent
bouts of situation/expectation incongruence. The following discussion (1)
summarizes the adaptive, behavioral tactics these women undertake and (2) links
those adaptive behaviors into longitudinal career trajectories.

Behavioral tactics. As shown in the domain satisfaction charts above, turning
points are swings in perceived domain satisfaction – swings in which the individual
is, through cognitive evaluative processes, simultaneously motivated out of current
behavior and into adaptive behavior. In the face of situation/expectation
incongruence, individuals perceive themselves to be to varying degrees agentic. For
example, in moving towards adaptation, they might feel pulled (by voluntary,

opportunistic choice), prodded (through gradual coping processes), and/or pushed (by involuntary life change). What behavioral tactics might they apply to adapt?

Ideally, one's original role behavior encounters congruence, allowing for ongoing fulfillment of original role meanings. In such cases careerist-traditional wives simply *continue* their career pursuit. For example, one of this study's careerist-traditional wives had an active-duty military career that was very similar to what she set out to achieve. However, when careerist-traditional wives faced conflict in less congruent situations, they chose from among several behavioral tactics. They might, for instance, *abort* the counter-situation responsible for the offending incongruence and retain the original careerist behavior (e.g., see *Domain Divergence* above). Alternatively, they might abort the original role behavior, and comply with the demands of the offending situation. Finally, they might *adapt* role behavior so that it better accommodates the offending situation.

This latter tactic itself took several forms. Careerist-traditional wives might undertake the following adaptations: (1) temporarily *interrupt* the original behavior, putting it on hold until the offending situation passes (e.g., as might a stay-at-home mom); (2) *compromise* career-related behavior, retaining behavior but in a diminished form, and thus lessening incompatibility but still acceptably moving forward on the same occupational pursuit (e.g., in-field volunteering); (3) *substitute* for the incompatible work behavior a more compatible set of work behavior, one that equally or acceptably fulfills a parallel occupational pursuit (e.g., from corporate to home business); or (4) retain the original occupational behavior but in a diminished form,

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and then *compound* that behavior with supplemental occupational behavior (e.g., the adoption of multiple part-time career roles).

With explication of these adaptations, we can further detail the situational/expectation congruent flowchart introduced earlier:

*Figure 15.* Adapting towards congruence: Behavioral strategies.
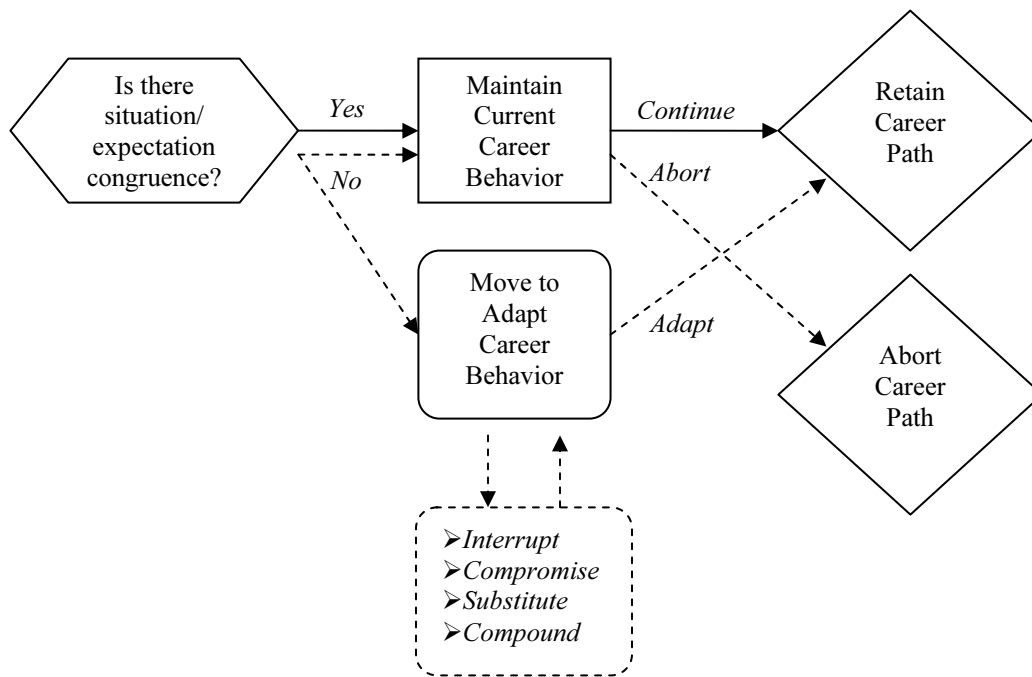
Behavioral career trajectory. The model presented above indicates the tactics by which the some Air Force officers' wives behaviorally countered situation/expectation incongruence. In the previous section, I summarized the adaptive, behavioral tactics these women undertook. Here, I link those adaptive behaviors into longitudinal career trajectories.

First, in the course of this research, I developed a notation system by which to diagram the behavioral career paths of participants. Each adaptive career behavior – a move to continue, abort, interrupt, compromise, substitute, or compound – can be diagrammed as shown below in Figure 16.

Figure 16. Diagramming adaptive career behavior.

a. A Continuous Career   b. Aborted   c. Interrupted

d. Compromised   e. Substituted   f. Compounded
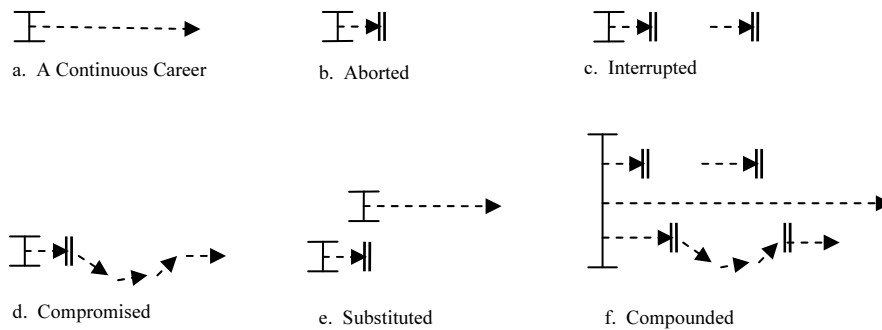
Starting with a timeline, interviewees' life event grids, and their narrative interview responses, I used this notation to diagram interviewees' career paths – not their satisfaction levels, as in the domain satisfaction charts above, but their behavioral career trajectories. These diagrams visually depict interviewees' adaptive "habits" as they are applied to their longitudinal career path. The three diagrams included below are offered as a varied sample of careerist-traditional wives' behavioral career trajectories. Each, as a careerist-traditional wife, claims an ongoing careerist identity.

As shown in the three diagrams in Figure 17, participants developed over their longitudinal career trajectories a variety of adaptive habits when adaptation was called for. Consider the career descriptions and behavioral

career trajectories of these three wives: the first, an active-duty military member with a largely continuous career, the second, a Jill-of-all trades who developed a highly compound career from a multiplicity of compromised paths, and the third, a career mom who, before having children, adopted the adaptive habit of serial substitution.

So, first, consider the story and behavioral career trajectory of an active-duty careerist (Figure 17a):

> A "career" is ongoing employment that increases in knowledge and pay with experience. I have been a military officer and a certified health care executive for twenty years. I've been married to a military officer for the last 16 years. . . It has been challenging to keep two military careers going, but I plan to serve long enough to retire at the next pay grade.

Next is the story and multi-path career trajectory of a Jill-of-all-trades (see Figure 17b):

> A "career" is an area of potential employment. I have a very broad-based career in that I have been trained and feel confident in performing a variety of tasks that are worthy of payment. Although I'm not currently employed, I have always had and will always have a career path. My career path is affected by my military status and my family situation. My priority right now is taking care of my husband, our two children, and our home, but I have a career path in mind that will allow me the flexibility of being at home when needed or relocating when necessary. I maintain this career path through continuing education, volunteer work, and part-time employment when it is available. My career path has evolved from purely professional to active duty military to homemaker – with advanced education, certification, and home-based businesses mixed in.

Finally, consider the story and behavioral trajectory of this career mom. Referencing the quote below and her career trajectory, note as well the prior adaptive habit of serial substitution (Figure 17c):

Figure 17. Diagramming longitudinal career trajectories
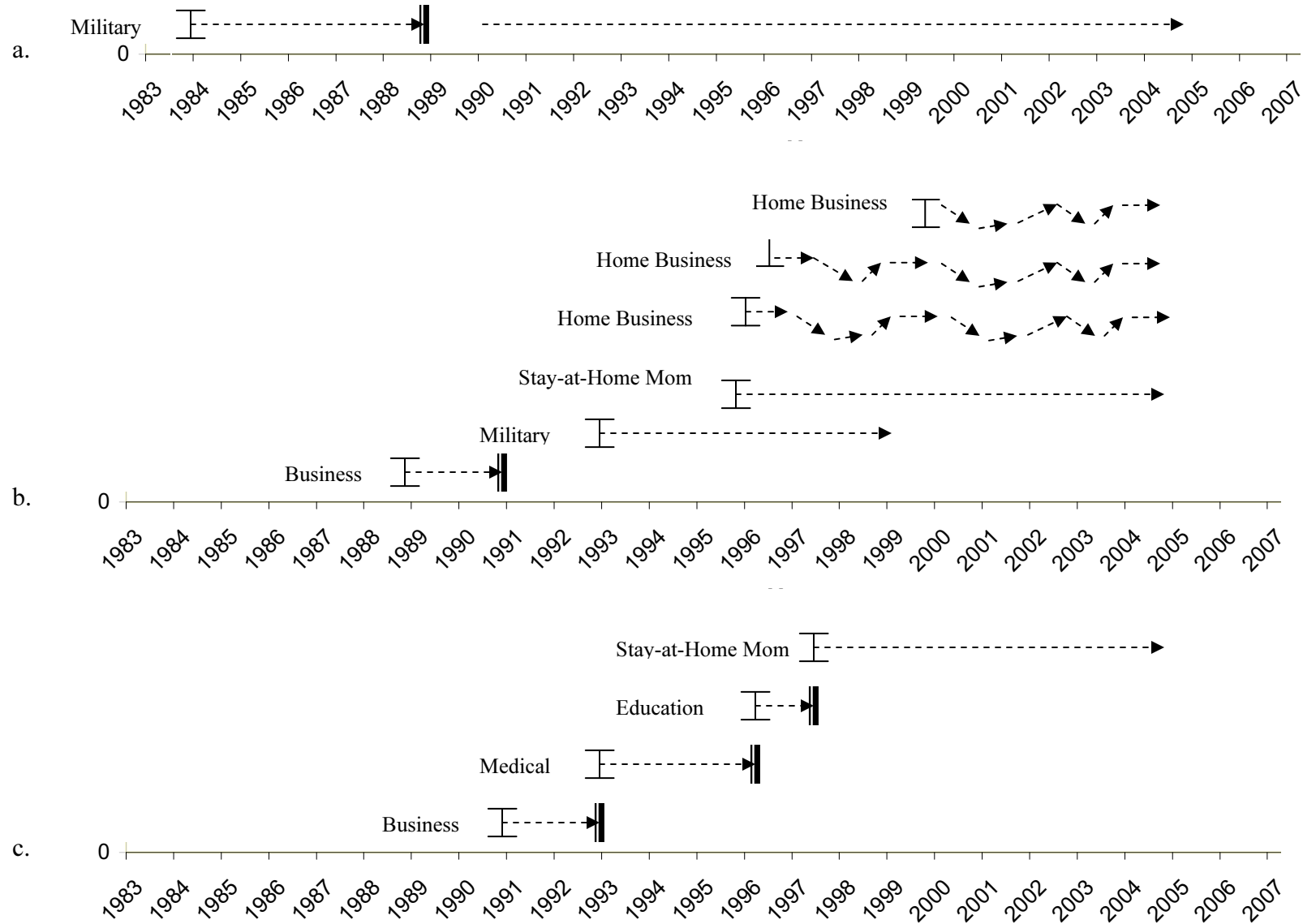
A "career" is something you put your heart into. I have a career in that I am a fulltime mom – and I love it. In the past, I was in sales, I trained as a medial assistant, and I was an educational counselor for [a community college]. Now my career is being a mom. I volunteer on the executive board of the ROSC board, I teach religious school for first graders, and I coach t-ball. I volunteer at my daughter's school, and I supervise a reading group. Basically, I'm a full-time mom. It offers me flexibility and is fun.

A cognitive career trajectory? The discussion above highlighted segmental turning-point experiences as lived by this study's interviewees. These turning points fuse states and events and, when linked in sequence alongside corresponding adaptive behavior, offer a rich understanding of longitudinal, behavioral career trajectory. These trajectories tell the story of how each individual through time adapted her behavior in order to maintain relative congruence and thereby behaviorally clarify and verify her careerist identity.

However, there is a piece of this analysis still ajar: According to the identity claims, career definitions, and behavioral trajectories of this study's participants, continuous career-related behavior does not an identity make. In other words, many respondents claimed a strong, stable careerist identity despite their highly discontinuous, highly compromised behavioral career paths. Given vast differences in behavioral continuity, how might the three career trajectories diagrammed above each be associated with equally strong, equally steadfast, continuous careerist identities?

In the next chapter, I conceptualize a second, parallel career trajectory, this one derived of adaptive identity cognition rather than, as here, adaptive role behavior.

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This time, however, I ask not *with what words* they define career, but *by what processes*.

Overview

In light of the contextual factors described in Chapter Four, this chapter outlined some of the behavioral adaptations undertaken by careerist-identified wives in the course of their career pursuits. Chapter Six, Revisiting the Definition of Career, probes evidence that individuals verify identity meanings not only through behavioral adaptation, but through cognitive adaptation as well. Subsequent discussions then summarize the implications of these findings.

CHAPTER VI: Revisiting the Definition of Career – Cognitive Adaptation

I concluded Chapter Five with the observation that, despite highly disparate levels of behavioral career continuity within the sample, many individual careerist-traditional wives maintain strong, steadfast career identities. A career identity, then, does not necessarily indicate the enactment of objectively "traditional" role-related behaviors. As such, it seems that adaptive role-identity processes occur not only at the behavioral level, but at the cognitive level as well. This study has moved gradually from a relatively static perspective on career definition and contextual norms to a more fluid portrayal of adaptation and strategy, turning points, and longitudinal career trajectory. This chapter pursues further understanding of those dynamic processes with an examination of cognitive adaptation and strategy.

To explore this cognitive trajectory, I draw on respondents' narratives to explore, once again, how careerist-traditional wives define career. This analysis, however, adopts a more dynamic stance than did prior discussions, asking not *with what words* these women define "career," but *by what processes*. I emphasize here, then, the dynamic, long-term, and multi-level social aspects of identity negotiation. Included are discussions regarding (1) identity definition and etymology, (2) redefinition as cognitive adaptation, and (3) the social-behavioral negotiation of identity.

Identity Definition and Etymology

Embedded in Chapter Three, *Methodology*, was a discussion regarding the definition of career. I now echo that discussion and once again emphasize the fundamental nature of definition. Definitions serve to delineate conceptual boundaries and, as such, they imply specific decisions regarding inclusions, exclusions, and the scope of a concept's applicability. However, when applied to identity-charged concepts such as "career," one's definitional boundaries do not merely include and exclude abstract concepts – they include or exclude *the self*.

The following section addresses identity as self-definition and frames identity definition as a fluid, etymological process.

Identity as self-definition. Identity, in effect, is a type of self-definition. As a type of definition, identity meanings serve to delineate membership boundaries, regulating one's inclusion or exclusion in a specific role-identity. Identity *claim* is allowable based on the boundaries drawn in concept definition. As applied here, an individual's personal specification of "career" can be seen to either include or exclude the self from a careerist identity. [46]

Identity and etymology. In previous sections of this manuscript, discussion centered on definition and identity as relatively stable entities. However, if identities can be considered definitions, then identities, like definitions, can be explored in light of their etymological history. By *etymology*, I mean the examination of the origin of

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[46] Of course, the symbolic interactionist perspective suggests that this definition and its associated identity are in essence momentary, socially negotiated meanings always in flux. For a discussion of these more complex social processes, see *Symbolic Action Between,* below.

a concept and the processes by which that concept arrived at its current form and meaning.

Respondents were asked to consider the question, "How has your definition of 'career' changed over time?" – a question I suspected might be rejected as overly difficult or obscure. However, many respondents offered remarkably articulate explanations of how their definitions had continuously evolved over time:

> I used to think that "career" was your paid job and your expectation about how that career would be continuing. And, even though I did marry someone in the military, I always expected that I would have a job and continue to move up the career ladder with each different move, based on my new experiences. But then, coming overseas, it was just a little bit different, and so now my career definition is more in line with not necessarily always being paid employment. And, I guess, pretty soon it is going to change again. I have a new baby on the way, and I am somehow now fulfilled and excited about being a mother. . . So, I'm sure [my definition of "career"] will change again.

In this discussion, I look at how respondents' definitions of "career" changed over time, exploring career-identity definition not as a static benchmark, but as a dynamic adaptive process. Such etymological examinations can take the perspective of either the individual, with meanings personally defined, or the perspective of larger social groups, with meanings cumulatively defined and perceived as cultural norms. Likewise, the oral life histories undertaken in this research offer a detailed look at how identity definitions might be adapted over time at the individual level as well as a glimpse of how those individual identity definitions might be employed to negotiate changes in cumulative social norms. Both processes are discussed below.

Redefinition as Adaptive Cognitive Process

From respondents' narratives, it is apparent that adaptation takes place not only through behavioral strategies, but through cognitive redefinition as well. By what processes might that redefinition occur? This section addresses that question. Here, I build from interviewees' narrative responses a theoretical understanding of how and why the identity definitions of careerist-traditional wives might evolve. Included are discussions of (1) situation/expectation congruence as it relates to cognitive adaptation and (2) definitional specification as a tool for cognitive adaptation.

Situation/Expectation Congruence and Cognitive Adaptation

As in prior explorations regarding why careerist-traditional wives might adjust their career-related behaviors, it appears these women adjust their cognitive career-related meanings to better fit the contextual constraints and opportunities they perceive. As one wife advised, "Be prepared to redefine 'career' to make it fit. . . The military life will force you out of your comfort zone." Careerist-traditional wives, it seems, redefine "career" in order to compensate for contextual constraints outside of their control. They redefine the meaning of "career" in order to mitigate situation/expectation incongruence:

> My definition of "career" has definitely changed. If I wouldn't have gotten out [of engineering and the military], it wouldn't now include job searching, coding medical transcripts, and volunteer work. . . It's a change forged by necessity. I'm compensating for factors outside my control.

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Such a redefinition of identity meanings might be seen as a cognitive

adaptation that operates in parallel alongside the behavioral adaptations addressed in

Chapter Five, *Making It Work*. Careerist-traditional wives might engage not only in

agentic behavior, but also in agentic cognition – two strategies, both aimed at

reducing perceived situation/expectation incongruence. As such, Figure 18

conceptualizes a basic cognitive model that parallels the basic behavioral model

presented in prior discussion:

Figure 18. Situation/expectation congruence and agentic cognition.
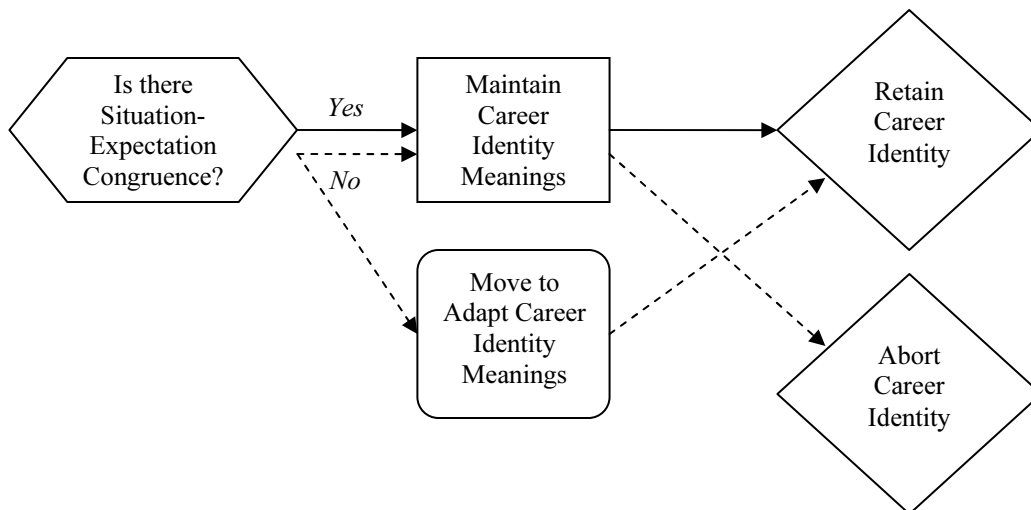
Drawing on the model above, careerist-traditional wives can be seen to

perceive equilibrium when one's identity meanings and the situation at hand produce

a situation/expectation match. However, when there exists situation/expectation

incongruence, she can choose either to maintain career identity meanings and abort

her career identity or to adapt career identity meanings and, if successful, retain her

career identity. Next then, I address the ways in which the adaptation of identity meanings might occur.

Definitional Specification: Tactics for Cognitive Adaptation

Noting the importance of situation/expectation congruence, the following discussion explores definitional specification as a tactic by which individuals might pursue cognitive adaptation. Addressed here are (1) definitional type and identity claim, (2) definitional type and identity continuity, (3) redefinition as cognitive strategy, and (4) potential redefinition options.

Definitional type and identity claim. Early in this research, I observed an apparent relationship between career claim and alternative definition, noting that identity continuity appeared to be fostered by an alternative career definition. As noted in Chapter Three, *Methodology*, respondents were asked both to define "career" and make an identity claim based on that definition. To review, *standard* definitions of career are those that adhere most closely to the profession/employment cluster – definitions placing the locus of career in a job, position, profession, or occupation. Such definitions tended to emphasize growth and challenge, advancement, and paid compensation. *Alternative* definitions of career instead adhered more closely to the unspecified activity cluster – broadened definitions allowing both momentary activity and uncompensated work.

In addition to playing a guiding role in sample selection, I observed among survey responses some simple relationships between definitional type and identity claim. For instance, while standard definitions were more common within the

respondent group, identity claim was much more prevalent among those constructing alternative definitions. As shown in Table 2, those respondents constructing standard definitions were evenly split on identity claim, but all but three of those respondents using alternative definitions claimed a career identity:

Table 2. Prevalence of identity claim and definitional type combinations

		Definitional Type	
		Standard	Alternative
Identity Claim	Yes	N = 22	N = 33
	No	N = 24	N = 3

An alternative definition, it seems, does much to buoy career claim. These relationships resonated in the course of interviewing, as well. It became clear – particularly in respondents' accounts of how their "career" definitions had changed – that their careerist identity definitions were not static constructs, but highly dynamic cognitions. Furthermore, while many specifications offer options for change, it seems that most adaptations were in the direction of broadening definitions towards more alternative, inclusive specifications. It seems that definitional changes are cognitive adaptations to perceived identity incongruence: The broad definition specifications that are associated with alternative definitions allow careerist-traditional wives to maintain a continuous career identity despite their often highly discontinuous careerist role behaviors.

That said, it is the object of this discussion to pursue a highly dynamic

understanding of cognitive adaptation. Important, then, is an understanding that an

individual's ultimate goal is not merely momentary situation/expectation match, but

rather the maintenance of long-term, continuous situation/expectation congruence.

Definition type has not only momentary, static influence on identity claim, but

longitudinal influence as well.

Definition type and role-identity continuity. It is clear from the narrative data

that the career identities of those career-oriented wives clinging to strictly standard

definitions often fall prey to the military's contextual whims. Their cognitive career

trajectories – in other words, their careerist identities – either zigzagged alongside

their often-erratic behavioral career trajectories or were aborted altogether as

contextual constraints took their toll. As such, the identity trajectories of those

advocating standard definitions were marked by the same stops and starts,

compromises, and substitutions as their behavioral trajectories. For instance, consider

the abandoned, interrupted, and/or compromised career identities of the following

three respondents, all advocates of standard career definitions:

> [A "career" is] work outside of the realm of mother or wife for
> which you receive pay. [Do I have one?] Not to any extent at this
> point in my life. I loved the field I was involved in previously. But,
> it is a difficult one to move with every few years. You really need
> connections and it's not an easy field to break into when they know
> your time there is limited. I worked at a university and loved the
> atmosphere. So eventually, I may go back to [the university], if not
> the job I was trained to do.
>
> A "career" is a goal-oriented job with opportunities for growth and
> advancement. I don't believe I've ever had a career! Becoming a

lawyer was my original goal, but so many things have changed. My path in life has been more led, rather than my doing the leading.

A "career" is an activity one does each day that fulfills a part of them personally, a job that is productive for both the employee and the employer, and something that gives one a sense of accomplishment, self-esteem, well-being, and purpose. At this point in my life my career has been placed on hold to further my husband's career.

Advocates of alternative career definitions, however, did not experience the same diminishment of their careerist identities. Instead, they allowed for the contextual constraints of military life, incorporating within their definitions a broader range of definitional specifications and thereby qualifying a wider selection of segmental career activity. In so doing, they expand career options by making their definitions more inclusive – and, in the end, maximizing cognitive continuity. For instance, as noted in Chapter Three, respondents broadened their definitional specifications to accommodate part-time work, motherhood, or work outside their occupational field. Many, as illustrated below, adapted identity meanings by broadening multiple definitional specifications:

> Well, certainly when I got out of college, a "career" was a 9-5 thing. It was kind of tunnel vision: "This is what I was trained to do, so it is for the rest of my life." But then, I've had so many other opportunities present themselves, and I've actually been able to take advantage of those. So now, I could do just about anything. . . But, I don't really see myself in a paid career anymore because being a mom and taking care of the family is more important to me. And yet, I don't want to stay in my home all day every day. I want to be out and have a sense of accomplishment. So I'm not really concerned about promotions, whether it's military or civilian, or how much money I make – "career" now is more oriented towards job satisfaction. I don't think that [feeling] was there when I graduated from college. Then, it was like, "I have to make the most money," or rather "I just want to pay off all my bills." So, that's changed too.

My reason for working is totally different than it was when I
graduated from college.

It is notable here as well that many respondents seem to have experienced a

devaluation of the relative personal significance of career in addition to a general

broadening of definitional specifications.[47] One mom reflected,

I define "career" much differently now that I'm a mom. . . I've
figured out that I'm going to have those [occupation-related]
moments, but they don't have to be all of who I am. I have moments
of glory as a social worker even though I'm not working full time –
because I know things that other people don't. And I can do things
that other people can't, and I can talk about things that other people
can't. . . But, [my career] is part of who I am, and it will always be
part of who I am.

Another mom commented,

Before, I wrapped my satisfaction and my self-worth around the
amount of money I made, the house I lived in, and my
accomplishments. As I got older and was happy in my marriage –
and was happy just to have a life – then my career did not hold the
same importance to me. My value system changed as far as what I
saw as being important in making a life happy. If you're happy in
your life, in who you are, and in who you are married to. . then the
significance of your career. . . Well, it's not that it changes, it's not
that you don't want to be successful – it's just that you see yourself
as a success anyway. So, even if your career dives a little bit, you're
still a success. . . So, I'm still in a career, it's just not the top focus
of my life.

Such narratives, then, indicate a pattern of cognitive, definitional adaptation –

adaptations clearly related to definitional type.

In light of the definitional change noted in interview responses, I reconsidered

the preliminary, longitudinal data provided by survey participants. As discussed in

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[47] While these respondents cognitively diminished their valuation of "career," it should be noted that
many end up aborting their career identities entirely. Because they do not currently qualify as
careerist-traditional wives, their stories are not represented here.

Chapter Three, *Methodology*, participants completed a survey including a career-identity scale and career-path narratives using their own definitions of career. From survey responses, I coded a combination of up to three nodes for each individual: *past identity*, *present identity*, and *future identity*.[48]

Striking for their reconfirmation of narrative interview data are the patterns observable among the three career identity path indicators: While some standard-definition careerists maintain continuous career paths through largely behavioral adaptations, alternative-definition careerists almost exclusively maintain career continuity. Table 3 displays the prevalence of longitudinal identity claim combinations by definition type:

Table 3. Prevalence of longitudinal identity claim combinations by definition type

	Claim of. . .			*Number of Respondents Claiming Combination*		
	Past ID	Pres ID	Fut ID	Total Frequency	Frequency by Def Type: Std	Alt
	X			N = 9	8	1
Longitudinal Identity Claim Combinations*	X	X		N = 1	1	0
	X	X	X	N = 38	16	22
		X		N = 0	0	0
		X	X	N = 0	0	0
			X	N = 3	3	0
	X		X	N = 14	12	2

*An eighth combination, that of no identity claim at all, is
not included here, as we are interested only in those
claiming some measure of career identity

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[48] Incidentally, career identity path nodes were coded a total of 157 times. Most common among these codes was past identity; least common was present identity – a division perhaps explainable by the employment-related difficulties associated with the overseas setting in which this research took place.

As shown above in Table 3,[49] two possible combinations – both requiring

present career identity – are empty sets (present identity, present/future identity), and

another such combination has just one entry (future identity).[50] As displayed here,

perhaps the contextual situation that these respondents presently occupy somehow

disfavors identity claim. Interesting, too, are the ways in which the frequencies split

when compared by definitional type, i.e., standard and alternative. As shown above,

standard definitions cluster on three modes: pure-type past identity, past/ future

identity and, for those who've been able to perhaps achieve behavioral career

congruence, past/present/future identity. In contrast, respondents claiming an

alternative identity fall almost invariably to the past/present/future identity

combination. Once again, it appears that the construction of an alternative definition

may be related to the longitudinal continuity of a career identity.

    Redefinition as strategy. Ideally, one's original identity meanings encounter

compatible contextual situations, allowing fulfillment of expectations and

situation/expectation congruence. As discussed in Chapter Six, *Making It Work*,

some careerist-traditional wives maximize continuous equilibrium by pursuing

compatible occupational fields, such as military service, nursing, and teaching, while

others adjust through adaptations of their career-related role behaviors. However,

when obstacles to identity verification are perceived in a situation, an individual also

can choose to either abort the unverified identity or adapt identity meanings so that

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[49] Only those respondents coded at one or more identity-path nodes are included here.
[50] That single entry represents a respondent who was six months pregnant and who had at time of research planned to stop working prior to giving birth.

they better accommodate the offending situation. As shown previously in

descriptions of careerist identity change, these adaptations take place within the

cognitive realm by processes of redefinition. Definition specification is the

mechanism by which one might maintain a career identity even under conditions of

behavioral discontinuity. As with the behavioral adaptation model, the cognitive

adaptation model can be expanded as follows (see Figure 19):

Figure 19.   Adapting towards congruence: Cognitive strategies.
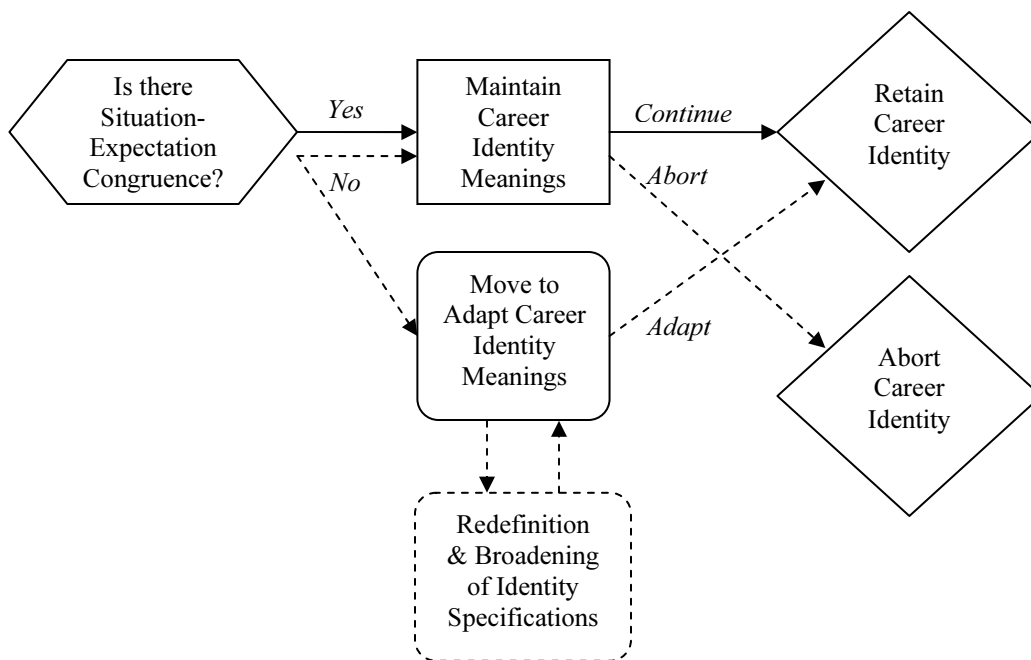
As in the case of the behavioral adaptation model, a career-seeking officer's wife

might at any given time choose one of three cognitive paths: continue a congruent

career identity, abort an incongruent career identity, or adapt – through the

redefinition of identity specifications – an incongruent career identity in an effort to achieve congruence and verification.

Redefinition options. Individuals can broaden, through re-specification, their identity definitions in any number of ways. In fact, one might look at the node tree in Figure 6 in Chapter Three as a veritable "menu" of career re-specification options. For example, several respondents noted that their career continuity was enhanced by simultaneously broadening "career" definition to a big-picture perspective and specifying inclusion of short-term jobs. They emphasized the importance of exploiting short-term career opportunities while at the same time maintaining a broad, long-term perspective. For example, one professional event-planner reflected on the key to her personal career success:

> [When we move], I keep thinking, "We're only here for a certain amount of time." So, my goals have always been more short-ranged. Long-range, it was just to be successful in whatever I would venture into. Short-range, things just came to me. Opportunities presented themselves, and I took them.

Noting this trend among interview respondents, I again returned to the survey data. Observing each response's temporal perspective, I coded two nodes, *longitudinal perspective* and *status perspective*. Classification as a longitudinal perspective indicates that the individual's paired definition and narrative evaluated career identity with expansive, long-term criterion. For example, one might compose a definition that allows for breaks in work activity without necessitating corresponding breaks in career identity. For example, one unemployed, career-identified respondent defined career as "the profession I return to when employed."

Classification of a status perspective instead indicates that the respondent seemed to evaluate career identity with a short-term criterion based on her present status. For example, one respondent who did not claim a career identity defined career as a "paying job," and then summed up, "I am a professional volunteer. No job, no career."

In the end, those respondents claiming a career identity were split relatively evenly between the longitudinal and status perspectives. However, those claiming no career identity were coded almost exclusively at status perspective.[51] As related by interview respondents, survey data supports the claim- and continuity-enhancing effect of a broadened career definition inclusive of a longitudinal career perspective. Although I have highlighted this strategy for the sake of illustration, it is just one of the many ways in which careerist-traditional wives might enhance career claim and continuity through definitional re-specification.

This discussion has explored the ways in which career-oriented officers' wives might, through definitional re-specification, make more inclusive their definitions of career and thereby foster both personal career claim and career continuity. However, these identity-definition processes do not occur in isolation, but instead are subject to perpetual socio-behavioral negotiation.

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[51] Looking at the two anomalous entries (i.e., those claiming no identity but demonstrating a status perspective), both respondents were previously satisfied careerists with standard definitions of career who in narrative described "moving on" to highly satisfying stints in motherhood and volunteerism.

Socio-Behavioral Negotiation

In this section, I embed the concept of cognitive identity definition into a more comprehensive conceptualization of the larger social system. The oral life histories in this study explicitly document the as-lived individual experiences of careerist-traditional wives. They document as well a portrayal of social interaction and the meaning that interaction holds. I frame from this highly personalized narrative data a theoretical framework of socially negotiated identity processes.

The following discussion explores how identity meanings are negotiated through social behavior: I first return to the idea of symbolic interactionism, emphasizing the "action between" it implies. Second, I explore the cognitive-behavioral interplay of identity claim and identity attribution. Finally, I briefly outline a multi-level conceptualization of how such miniscule behavioral interactions might, in cumulative effect, build waves of social change.

Symbolic Action Between

This section recalls the processes by which identity meanings are manifest through social behavior. Addressed are the basic tenets of symbolic interactionism and the role of behavior in identity verification.

Symbolic interaction. I have thus far portrayed identity definition as a largely intra-individual process by which one brings into congruence the contextual situation and individual expectations. However, the symbolic interactionist perspective understands that individuals do not operate within a social vacuum but instead negotiate meaning through behavioral interaction with others. So identity, like all

definitions, entails a complex interface between cognitive and behavioral processes. In short, it entails a social negotiation of personalized meaning.
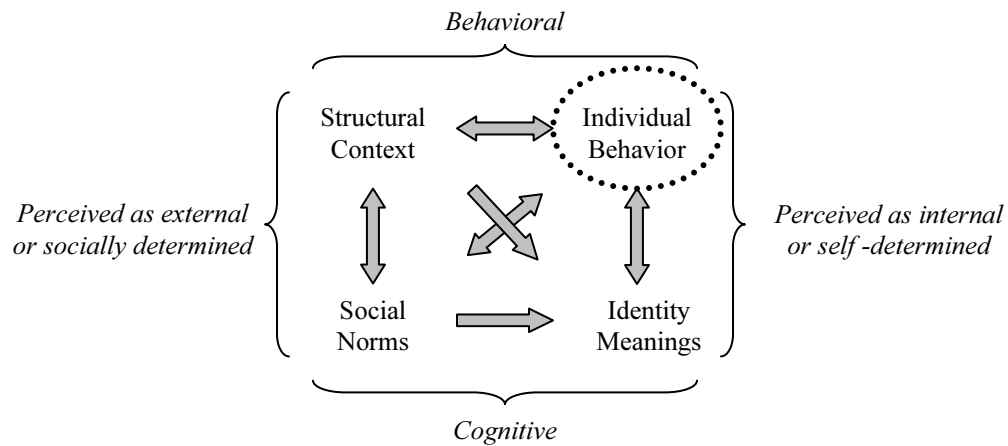
Critical here is the recognition that identity meanings have absolutely no social effect when isolated inside one's head. Identity meanings must be manifest as socially observable behavior in order for interaction and mutual social influence to occur. In short, individuals must communicate. This communication can be understood as a process of behavior and verification.

Behavior and verification. Communicative interaction occurs in any number of ways, through behavioral observation and behavioral response, regardless of whether that behavior takes the form verbal dialogue or symbolic action. As discussed in Chapter Four, career-seeking individuals negotiate identity-related meanings by floating manifest, strategic behavior in effort align their identity meanings and the situation at hand. In this chapter, I outline how individuals might employ not only strategic behavior but strategic cognition, broadening their definitional specifications of "career" in order, once again, to align their identity meanings and the situation at hand. That said, those meanings do not interact in the social realm until they are made manifest through some form of observable behavior.

As emphasized below in Figure 20, identity meanings remain cornered away as internal cognition until they are manifest as behavior in the socio-behavioral realm. (The gray arrows here represent direction of interactive influence.) While individuals might adjust those meanings according to their observations of context and norms, the meanings themselves have no social effect until translated into behavior. Once

enacted, those identity meanings can then indirectly affect – through action on and participation in socio-structural context and norms – external social consequences. When played out via behavior in the social context, identity meanings meet with either congruence or incongruence, in other words, with verification or dis-verification.

Figure 20. Symbolic interaction: The importance of behavior.

Critical here is the recognition that, while identity meanings might be cognitively altered in isolation, they can not be verified until social interaction occurs. Likewise, while highly individualized identity meanings can exist in isolation, they do not bear consequence on external social constructs and norms until manifest as socially observable behavior. In short, there must be "action between."

Role-identity Claim and Attribution

At this point, a brief aside. Role-related norms are here understood to be social constructions, the socially negotiated product of symbolic interactionism. In other words, the behavioral symbolic interaction that takes place at the inter-

individual level generates, when considered as cumulative effect, those more tangible

social constructs we recognize as social role norms. In the following discussion, I

return to the use of the term "role-identity," acknowledging simultaneously both the

intrapersonal meaning and the wider social expectations that come attached to social

position.

As discussed above, negotiating behavior takes many forms – both the direct

behavioral strategies outlined in Chapter Four, *Making It Work*, and the sometimes

more subtle negotiations between individualized identity meanings and external

social role norms. Here, I discuss the concept of role-identity valuation and then call

out two examples of interactive behavior evoked during the social negotiation of

"career" definition: identity claim and identity attribution.

Role-identity valuation.   Implied through this discussion, but made explicit

here, is the idea that role-identities undergo valuation. Individuals, groups, and

indeed, entire societies esteem a given role-identity to varying degrees. While some

individuals might place a high value on career achievement, others might not. And,

of course, differences occur across social levels, too. While one individual might

place a high value on career, a social group – perhaps, one of which she is a part –

might diminish the importance of career. Such values, while certainly mutually

influential, are generally accepted as diverse among individuals or groups yet

relatively robust within individuals or groups.[52]

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[52] However, the retrospective, longitudinal life histories offered by the respondents in this study led me
to suspect that values are much more malleable. Across interviews, respondents shared "re-told tales,"
stories that related sometimes traumatic as-lived experiences, and then concluded with a re-spun
version of the same event. On retrospective telling, however, those experiences were described as

Among the careerist-traditional wives, most held career in high esteem. (Recall, those officer wives who did not value career would have largely been excluded by sample-selection criteria.) In any case, among this specific group of individuals, career can be understood as highly esteemed. Most, as well, understood career to be highly esteemed at larger social levels, if not so much within the military spouse population, then at least by the larger American culture. For instance, interview respondents frequently commented on "the career society expects me to have." Recall, too, the sweeping valuations drawn in the following statement:

> [A career is] more than a job, it is one of your defining
> characteristics. A career is your contribution to society as well as
> your small stake in the battle for women's rights. It affords you the
> financial and emotional freedom that our mothers didn't have. It
> makes you an equal partner in a relationship and a balanced
> individual.

So, among these women, a career is perceived as something to be desired. As such, these careerist-traditional wives are in general motivated to construct, maintain, and claim a career identity.

Role-identity claim and consistency. In the context of this discussion, role-identity claim – in other words, the statement that, "Yes, I have a career" – should be seen as a behavioral reflection of an asserted career identity. Identity claim is, in short, a behavioral act. While much of this research rests on the assumption that identity claim does, in fact, indicate an internal identity, such claims are not necessarily reliable indicators. That said, identity claim is here considered the most

gratifying precursors to positive lessons learned – lessons that ultimately reshuffled values into a "correct" alignment. So, then, I wonder: Are values really stable "guiding lights," or are they after-the-fact byproducts of the perceived opportunities and constraints that bound our contextual lives? In short, perhaps we simply come to "value" the things and potential we already have.

straightforward operative by which to make a presumed identity behaviorally observable.

I found interesting in this study the seemingly contradictory identity claims of many respondents, a trend most prevalent among moms and community anchors. For example, many of these respondents categorically defined "career" in an alternative manner and then claimed a careerist identity. But, even given explicit instruction to utilize their personal definition of career, most of these careerist moms contradictorily reverted to a social standard definition of career when completing the quantitatively scaled portions of the survey.[53] In fact, only two self-professed, career-identified moms carried their career conviction throughout the quantitatively scaled survey. And, during interviews, neither the careerist mom nor the careerist community anchor consistently maintained her alternative conceptualization of career. For example, these three respondents each claimed a careerist identity based on an alternative definition:

> A "career" is something you do that you feel is meaningful and
> rewarding and contributes to your life. My career is my family and
> all the things that go with that.

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[53] This is an interesting distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. Where many moms claim a career identity on the open-ended qualitative portions of the survey, very few carry that conviction through the quantitative portions. It's as if they revert back to "society's standard definition" when asked more structured questions. Do they assume in such circumstances that a standard definition is implied (even when very clearly instructed to use their own definitions)? In any case, certainly, the open-ended questions here elicited multiple alternative meanings of "career." (See Chapter Three, *The Definition of Career*.) Quantitative inquiries, instead, seemed to induce alternative careerists to make an "automatic switch" back to a standard definition. How, then, can quantitative inquiries explore the highly nuanced features of career identity?

"Career" is anything that requires effort, commitment, and dedication, regardless of paycheck. As a stay-at-home mother and homemaker, I feel this is my full-time career.

[A "career" is] something you look forward to when you get up in the morning, something that makes you proud and that you worked hard for. I have had many jobs, but my first career is raising my family.

Yet, even so, each of these alternative careerists scored very low on quantitative measures of career identity, vastly contradicting their original, narrative identity claim.[54] In this study, then, two methodological issues arose in regard to role-identity claim, the first related to instrumentation, the second, to interviewer effect.

So, what's going on here? Two explanations prevail. First, one might expediently assume that the rigor of structured, quantitative, or face-to-face questioning simply exposed these respondents' weakly held careerist convictions. They were, in effect, making a superficial claim on a positively connoted identity. This is possible, but I found a second explanation more fetching. Perhaps, instead, these respondents took into account the presumed attributions of their audience. In other words, once the relative freedom of open-ended narrative response was removed, they gauged their responses to a reflected standard role-identity. This process is explored more fully under *Role-Identity Attribution*, below.

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[54] So, incidentally, what elevates the mom role into a convicted and sustainable alternative careerist identity? Among these survey respondents, it seems that sustainable careerist identity might be facilitated by (1) the complexity of a parallel career path (i.e., a multi-path career) or (2) the embracing of an expanded community-anchor role. In fact, *only* those moms claiming multiple career paths carried their alternative definitions of "career" throughout the quantitative portion of the survey. Across the board, single-path career moms seem to revert to a standard definition and eventually contradict their original career claim.

Role-identity attribution. Much of this manuscript has focused on the act of definition. From a social standpoint, however, such definitional identity standards also include and exclude *others*. Role-identity definitions and the social attributions borne of them necessarily enact exclusionary bounds – those who "are" and those who "are not." While most discussion in this analysis adopts the perspective of the claiming individual, I now briefly adopt an external perspective. Here, I ask, how might labeling and reflective processes affect identity definition?

First, given that a careerist identity is, among these careerist-traditional wives ,considered a valuable commodity, identity verification might be seen as a distributive labeling process – a politically charged situation in which socially interacting individuals award or deny one another the positively connoted "careerist" label. In short, such negotiations can debate the politics of definition. They dialogue, "Who gets to call what they do a 'career'?" During this study, for instance, highly explicit definitional debates took place among survey participants immediately following survey completion, and I eavesdropped on multiple conversations regarding the "true" meaning of career. More subtle, however, was the implicit claim-staking that emerged in survey analysis. This trend was most apparent among survey respondents who at once advocated a standard definition of career and claimed no current career identity. Among these women, two groups were discernable: those who seemingly did not value a career and, in contrast, those who strongly valued a career *and* who had solid histories of prior career achievement. It is this second group that's most interesting here.

These women retained a strictly standard definition of career, yet, sometimes with something akin to pride, disclaimed a careerist identity. This claim profile, it seemed, was often anteceded by the individual's prior achievement of a standardized career identity: In short, those who had previously attained a satisfying career seemed relatively willing to let go of that identity when faced with situational incongruence, perhaps because the prior standard-defined career was valued higher than a present alternatively defined career. These individuals, then, protected the exclusiveness of their career achievement by disallowing the dilution of identity meanings. They, perhaps, excluded themselves from a present career identity in order to preserve the social value of their prior accomplishments. For instance, one officer's wife had previously enjoyed a profitable career as an engineer, and she defines career as "a long-term, paying occupation." She stated succinctly, "I am [now] a professional volunteer, no pay, no career." Consider, too, the comments of three prior career professionals, all currently non-careerists:

> [A "career" is] a vocation one chooses (and hopefully enjoys) in order to broaden oneself in life and to support oneself. My initially chosen career, teaching, was very successful for me. But, according to my definition of career, I currently don't have one. . . I am happy now, but probably only because I have proven myself in the work force. . .

> [A "career" is] work outside the home. . . I had a satisfying career as an RN for 13 years, but I have no desire to go back to that.

> A "career is a job or profession that you pursue throughout your life. [I was] a full-time bank vice president for first eight years of my marriage. . . I enjoyed a past career in banking and finance and progressed quickly to position of VP in charge of commercial credit. I gave up my career when my first son was born, and from that point

forward I've spent my time being a stay-at-home mom and volunteer.

Second, and as noted in Chapter Four, the officers' wives represented here did seem highly aware of the career-related judgments and attributions of others. This awareness to some degree produced a *reflected role-identity* claim, or one founded on the "looking-glass" self (Cooley, 1902/1964), an evaluation of one's own identity based on their perceptions of what others see. So, while primary role-identity claim might express "What I think I am," role-identity attribution represents "What I think you are," and a reflected role-identity claim might reveal "What I think you think I am."

It is at this point that we might reconsider and better understand the inconsistency of survey respondents' career identity claims. Both methodological and interviewer effects seem, in retrospect, highly predictable. Respondents advocating broad, alternative definitions of career and claiming careerist identities based on those definitions might very likely revert to narrow, standardized definitions when interfacing either with a highly structured quantitative survey (as founded on a priori standardized definitions), and/or with an interviewer who, from their perspective, has a history of relatively strong career-related behavioral achievements and who therefore likely retains a standard definition of career. Perhaps, then, respondents were simply acting on reflected judgments regarding how to most clearly communicate in the given interactive situation. While the vast inconsistency observed here might simply be due to low levels of identity conviction, it seems

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likely that much of the contradiction is attributable to their assessments of others' role-identity attributions.

Finally, a handful of respondents, seemingly anticipating a dis-verifying identity attribution, "went offensive" with their survey statements, making a pointed effort to emphasize the validity of their alternative careerist identities. As a case in point, one respondent advocated a highly specified alternative career definition, claiming a careerist identity as a mother and military spouse. She then used a thick black Sharpie to cross out *every* mention of "career" on the survey and replace it instead with the word, "family."

In summary, role-identity claim is a behavioral act. Others observe and respond to that act and, through this interactive process, move to verify or dis-verify the identity meanings underlying the acting individual's claim. From a social standpoint, a role-identity is not only defined through isolated cognitive processes, but is also both bestowed by others and secondarily interpreted by the self. Such self- and other-labeling entails, too, a symbolic interaction, i.e., a social-level dialogue regarding role-related definitional specification. These dialogues are interactive negotiations – micro-level processes with the potential to seed multi-level social change.

Multi-level Social Change

Earlier in this chapter, I asserted that the process of cognitive identity definition might be examined as etymological history – an examination of the origin of a concept and the processes by which that concept arrived at its current form and

meaning. I now broaden that assertion to include larger social concepts. In other words, role-related norms can be construed as social-level definitions, constructs subject to the same evolutionary processes as individual identity meanings. I here briefly conceptualize how the same processes that govern individuals' cognitive adaptations might also govern multi-level, socially constructed change.

First, a perceived social norm might be construed, simply, as an inexact – and as depicted in Chapter Four, often ambiguous – measure of qualitative central tendency. What social forces might move the "mean meaning" within a given group? What might a single individual do, within the bounds of established social norms, to nudge disagreeable standards towards definitional change?

Agent acts. First, individuals ever so slightly move norms towards change simply by floating questionable behavior and thereby eliciting an interactive response. In some cases, that behavior will be accepted and verification will occur. In others, that behavior will be rejected and dis-verification will occur. Regardless of whether those identity-related behaviors are verified or dis-verified, there is a secondary effect in play. Those behaviors have, in effect, ever so subtly forced a negotiation of meaning among acting, observing, and responding individuals.

Even in cases where immediate dis-verification results, all players might perceive at once *both* explicit reinforcement of challenged norms and an implicit, subtle questioning of those norms. When that subtle questioning occurs on multiple occasions, the topic of negotiation is gradually noted as a potential "issue" by those

involved. Socio-behavioral negotiation nudges, however slightly, all players towards a cumulative re-consideration of the issue.

Instigating incongruence. Just as an individual might perceive situational incongruence and individually adapt meaning and behavior towards equilibrium, so might a social group (i.e., a collection of interacting individuals) adapt to incongruence created by an instigative individual. When such negotiations are instigated by many individuals across many situations, incongruence grows within the larger system and, gradually, social expectations, definitions, and norms see shift. For instance, if a group of careerist-traditional military wives gently but persistently instigates behavioral negotiations regarding officer-wife role norms, they in effect force reconsideration – and redefinition – of the role. As more military wives adopt career-related adaptations, a social norm develops within their group. Consequently, traditional, all-or-nothing officer-wife role expectations might give way to accommodate alternative definitions of career, and the part-time participation of careerist-traditional wives might become the norm within the military's contextual social system.

That said, such hard-won change can remain situated within a bounded social group. For instance, if that careerist-traditional wife, with her contextual career definition, identity, and experience, interacts outside the military context, her careerist identity might be met with vast dis-verification – in other words, she may find that the larger society just does not buy it. Her definition of career, regardless of its acceptance within her military social circle, and the larger society's definition of

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career simply do not mesh. So, social change remains situated with the group, at least, that is, until similar negotiations are elevated to the larger social context. In other words, social norms remain bounded within the defining group until those norms are broached again, this time on a larger scale.

The preceding discussion addressed the processes by which cognitive identity definition occurs, in other words, how careerist-traditional wives author the meanings of their own career identities. Through this discussion, we see not only how careerist-traditional wives cope with their own situation/expectation incongruence, but how they themselves might, through interactive behavior, instigate incongruence and, in the end, influence multi-level social change.

Overview

Taking up questions left unanswered in Chapter Five, Chapter Six explored evidence that individuals verify identity meanings not only through behavioral adaptation, but through cognitive adaptation as well. Chapter Seven unites prior discussion with a summary of the substantive, methodological, and theoretical implications of this research.

CHAPTER VII: Implications

This research has explored the career trajectory of the Air Force officer

spouse, the structural and normative sanctions she perceives, the behavioral strategies

and cognitive adjustments she employs, and the individualized identity meanings she

attaches to her self-defined careerist role. Analyses suggest substantive,

methodological, and theoretical implications.

Substantive Implications

The substantive implications are relevant to career-seeking officer wives and

their advisors, military policy-makers, and the social scientists who study related

issues.

Career Pursuit & the Officer Wife

Foundational to the trajectory of any career pursuit is the context in which it

occurs. Foundational to an individual's career satisfaction, however, is the match

between expectations and the opportunities within that context. Career-seeking

spouses would do well to adjust their expectations accordingly, incorporating and

embracing expectations of change and "adventure" rather than stability and steady

career progression.

This is a multifaceted process – a complex negotiation of factors that are to

varying degrees voluntary and malleable. Drawing on the experiences of careerist-

traditional wives, this study conceptualized both behavioral (Chapter Five) and

cognitive (Chapter Six) strategies and outlined how, through behaviorally enacting these strategies, role incumbents might affect the very social norms to which they themselves are subject. Discussed below are context and expectation, behavioral strategy, cognitive strategy, and normative factors.

Context and expectation. Upon marrying into the military lifestyle, it is clear that these wives relinquish much control over their own lives. For instance, they give up control of relocation timing decisions, location of residence, and even family collocation. That said, it is clear from this research both that few wives at that point have a detailed picture of what their new role entails, and few career-seeking wives at marriage abandon their determination to pursue a professional path. After bearing the initial brunt of disillusionment, however, most careerists experience a period of "grieving" for their initial career expectations and eventually either drop their career identities altogether or adopt some form of accommodation. That accommodation occurs through the enactment of both behavioral and cognitive strategies.

Behavioral strategies. As detailed in Chapter Five, *Making It Work*, some Air Force officer wives do negotiate rewarding career trajectories. Few of these wives, however, achieve careers in the form of their original expectations, and few of these careers show the continuous progression traditionally associated with the concept. The contextual factors impacting career trajectory are many and are greatly affected by the military member's career field, position, and location. Other factors are to a greater degree determined by the spouse herself, and it is these that are summarized here.

First, career choice plays an obvious and overriding role in long-term career trajectory. While many of the respondents echo the common presumption that traditionally gendered fields such as nursing and teaching ease career pursuit among military wives, this was not inarguably the case. While nurses do tend to find steady work, their success generally is attributable to civilian demand rather than the military market. When isolated within a military community, officer-spouse nurses most often choose to volunteer or not work rather than except the extremely low wages on offer. Teachers, particularly those specialized at the secondary level and above, experience perhaps the greatest disillusionment. Within isolated military communities, they find local positions typically are occupied by long-term civilian employees. Hence, like nurses, they tend to accept some form of sub-employment, volunteering or substituting part-time. Further, the cyclical nature the academic year does not always fall in sync with the assignment and relocation process, and this mismatch in timing leaves teachers with a very narrow window in which to pursue employment. Finally, many highly specialized and professional fields (e.g., teaching, social services, and law) are governed by credentialing requirements, and wives frequently encounter obstacles to inter-state reciprocity and the availability of targeted continuing education programs.[55]

What career fields then do work in a highly mobile military family? First, some families do maintain dual military careers, wherein both spouses are military

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[55] Again, it's important to note that the military member's career field plays a large role in determining the degree to which relocation and location impact the spouse's career. For instance, a military member that "homesteads" in a single location for an extended period of time greatly mitigates the impact of his military career on his wife's career continuity.

members. This offers both spouses the opportunity to pursue full-time progressive employment but, as outlined in Chapter Four, imposes a distinct set of challenges, too. Similarly, some wives are able to pursue careers in government service but, despite programs orchestrating preference upon relocation, few government-employed wives experience any degree of within-field career continuity. Consequently, many careerist wives eventually settle into some form of sub-employment or alternative work format. For instance, most promising among full-time employees are telecommuting arrangements – a format often arranged as a continuance between an employer and employee who originally collaborated in a traditional work arrangement. Many wives, too, eventually choose to pursue some form of home business – several describing themselves as "accidental entrepreneurs." Finally, others adopt alternative "career" definitions that include multiple, simultaneous part-time endeavors, part-time work, full-time motherhood, and/or volunteerism (see *Cognitive Strategy*, below.)

Of course, behavioral strategies include not only career field choices, but segmental tactics, too – the short-term interrupting, compromising, substituting, or compounding of desired career paths. As detailed in Chapter Five, career-seeking spouses can pursue a wide range of job search options and, like all job-seekers, prioritize their short-term goals to accommodate location, work options, and opportunity costs. Important, too, is recognition that some critical events – such as relocation, motherhood, and first immersion into military life – commonly initiate "turning points" in wives' career trajectories. My data clearly show that career-

seeking wives commonly experience identity distress at these times. In any case, when the military context involves multiple, short-term relocations, the outlook for progressive, professional career pursuit among officer wives remains rather grim.

Cognitive strategies. Expectations and situation can be brought into equilibrium through the adjustment of both career-related behavior and career-related meaning. Hence, I find that respondents adapted not only their behavior, but cognitive career meanings as well. As discussed in Chapter Six and detailed in this chapter under *Theoretical Implications*, such adaptation was made most clear in respondents' gradual broadening of definitions of "career." Those individuals adopting and adapting alternative definitions of "career" were by far more likely to claim a career identity and to maintain long-term continuity in their career identities.

Normative factors. Although this research explicitly addresses the experiences of careerist-traditional wives – those officer wives who both maintain a career identity and participate in the traditional officer-wife role – the discussion above has largely focused on the first part of this characterization, the maintenance of a career identity. Quite simply, this is because the maintenance of a career is the less likely achievement here. While the military context is built around the two-person career format and the traditional expectations it implies, that context does little to foster personal career achievement among military spouses.

That said, study participants question the nature of (and in some cases, the very existence of) the normative expectations placed on today's officer wives. There is, very clearly, great ambiguity regarding what constitutes a "good" officer wife. In

addition, as detailed in Chapter Four, the demands perceived by any individual wife

rest heavily not only on her husband's officer designation, but on her husband's

career field and his position within that career field. So, while social norms are

certainly in flux, and while expectations are only vaguely defined, they do, in

perception, persist. Further, it is clear that much of the positive mutual support,

community activism, and volunteerism traditionally generated by officers' wives

remains reliant on their ongoing participation in the military community – regardless

of the degree to which that participation is perceived as voluntary. Careerist-

traditional wives, then, participate in, perpetuate, and influence these community

support traditions while at the same time maintaining personal career identities.

Policy & the Officer Wife

This research has several implications for the military policies that impact the

career opportunities of the organization's officer wives. First, policy makers should

recognize that, as noted by the participants in this study, many officer wives train for,

expect, and seek continuous, progressive, professional-level careers. Second, these

women as a group seek meaningful, career-building work, not simply "a job." Given

a husband's officer-level salary, it is possible for a family to live modestly on only

one income, and these women often will choose non-employment over labor they

deem meaningless. For these reasons, current employment assistance programs –

most focusing on low-level clerical and labor positions – do not meet the needs of this

population.

Third, the government service system, commonly considered the primary source of employment for professional-level military spouses, in practice offers little opportunity to career-seeking wives. Study participants express great frustration regarding the accessibility, efficiency, and administration of the government service employment program, and those eventually obtaining professional work describing their success as "luck." Further, the oft-touted "spouse preference" hiring system is perceived to have little effect, as other preference groups and internal hires typically take precedence.

Fourth, policy-makers might also facilitate alternative work avenues, perhaps by forging opportunity overseas through status of forces agreements that allow for issuance of host-nation work visas or by pursuing partnerships with and incentives for private corporations that develop spouse-hiring and telecommuting programs. Fifth, recognizing that progressive employment will not always be an option, the military might further develop options for alternative career-related pursuits. For instance, the expansion of educational opportunities, incentives, and financial assistance for military spouses – particularly in remote locales – could offer viable career progression. Likewise, greater formalization of the military's volunteer programs might allow for a detailed tracking of hours, planned skill development, and meaningful supervisory and mentoring relationships – all factors that might build applicable experience, fortify resumes, and expand professional networks.

Finally, and perhaps most critically, this research clearly illustrates that "career" is much more than a financial issue: "Career" for these women is a

foundational aspect of identity. Much, then, might be done to acknowledge the

independent identities of these "dependent" military wives.[56]

Research & the Officer Wife

As detailed in Chapter Two, social scientists have for several decades studied

military family life. However, and while this literature is growingly nuanced,

observers tend to approach the military family experience with an overgeneralized

perspective. Prior research frequently has employed the military member's rank as its

primary categorical differentiation. However, my data illustrate much diversity

among the experiences of rank-based groups of military wives. A great deal of

military life – including the career obstacles, career opportunities, and normative

sanction these wives perceive – seems determined less by rank than by location,

frequency of relocation, and the nature of the military member's work. Future

research therefore should recognize the diversity among the experiences of military

families and explore the use of alternative comparison groups.

Second, as introduced in Chapter Two and as further explicated in Chapter

Four, prior research regarding military spouse employment largely focuses on the

financial consequences of the spouse's military affiliation. However, recent research

suggests that career-seeking officer wives as a group work more for intrinsic than

financial motivations.[57] This research supports that generalization. The careerist-

traditional wives in this study very clearly seek "careers" rather than "jobs." Few

mention financial motivations for employment, and many interviewees at some point

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[56] See *Identity in Play,* Chapter Four
[57] See *Working Around the Military*, Chapter Two

describe choosing non-employment over paid but meaningless work. As elaborated throughout this study, future research should acknowledge that the career issues within this population are not merely work issues – they are deep-seated identity issues.

Finally, research regarding careers in general tends to assume a standardized definition of the term "career." This research indicates that studies using a simple, standardized definition miss much of the individualized re-specification that occurs in the course of identity negotiation.[58] Hence, researchers can either (a) make explicit an *a priori* definition of "career" and accept that subsequent data cannot fully represent the intricacies of individualized career meaning, or (b) embrace the complexities of the identity process, allow for the expression of individualized meaning, and then cope with the messiness of that data. Both methods hold distinct merit. In any case, this research suggests that careerist officer-wives simultaneously negotiate both an ever-evolving behavioral career trajectory and an ever-evolving cognitive career trajectory – the first marked by employment and work-related strategies, the second by identity claim and definitional re-specification. Complex as it might be, the most interesting question here regards how those two longitudinal processes interact.

Methodological Implications

While the primary contributions of this research are the substantive strategies and theoretical expansion outlined above and below, several methodological

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[58] See *Methodological Implications*, above

implications arose as well. Discussed below are some peripheral implications

regarding (1) interview tools and format, (2) the affective commitment variable, and

(3) the juxtaposition of quantitative measures and relativist perspectives.

Interview Tools and Format

This research collected both quantitative and qualitative survey responses as

well as a series of oral life-history interviews. As expected, analysis of these mixed

data enriched understanding of the highs, lows, turning points, and divergences in

each respondent's careerist and traditional-wife paths. In retrospect, however, the

format also revealed some unexpected response patterns.

As outlined in Chapter Three, a personal life event grid and a domain

satisfaction chart served in tandem as a framework for each semi-structured

discussion. The life event grid outlined career and military-related life events and,

when discussing that grid, respondents tended towards concrete, event-reaction

recollections. In other words, their explanations traced forward from event to state,

focusing on their strategic, behavioral responses (e.g., job hunting) to a significant,

easily identifiable event (e.g., a relocation) and the perceived outcome of those

behavioral responses. However, when respondents were subsequently asked to

explain that same period of time based on the domain satisfaction chart, their

responses traced backwards from state to event – eliciting explanations that were

more cognitive than behavioral in nature. It was here that identity-related issues most

clearly surfaced. While event timelines might assist in the accurate recollection of

behavior, emotive and cognitive issues might be better explored using domain

satisfaction charts. Ideally, interactionist research should focus on the interplay of events, behavior, and cognition – an interplay well illustrated in this pairing of tools.

Affective Commitment as a Research Variable

As discussed in Chapter Three, prior research supports a positive correlation between affective commitment for an organization and retention intent (Gade et al, 2003). However, in this study, affective commitment does not appear to predict voluntary participation. Instead, preliminary survey analysis showed that many of those respondents known to be most participative in the military community (e.g., as indicated by volunteer hours) showed low levels of affective commitment. Affective commitment, then, does not appear to predict participation.

Further, analyses of respondents' life course charts, survey data, and affective commitment scores indicate that affective commitment might be related to average years per location and, in fact, that there may be a *negative* correlation between the two variables. This suggests that the relative stability offered by an extended stay in one location does not increase affection and commitment for the military, but decreases it. While somewhat counter-intuitive, this relationship might be better clarified in reverse: The instability created by multiple short tours (i.e., frequent moves) weakens a wife's ties to local civilian support networks and thereby strengthens ties to, dependence on, and identity associations with the military

organization. Her vicarious military association in such circumstances might become, ironically, her strongest source of stability.[59]

A Relativist Perspective on Quantitative Measures

While the symbolic interactionist perspective is often associated with qualitative methods, this project employed as well several quantitative scales – data-collection tools associated more closely with positivist perspectives. The juxtaposition of these two methods proved interesting. First, respondents were directed to complete the quantitative scales based on their own, previously stated definitions of "career." However, great inconsistencies were observed between respondents' qualitative identity claims and their quantitative responses. Apparent within the quantitative scaling was a distinct positivist bias. While many women claimed an alternatively defined career identity on the open-ended qualitative portions of the survey, very few carried that conviction through the quantitative portions. Instead, they reverted to some assumed, positivist definition when asked more structured questions.

This invites a relativist note on quantitative measures: If individuals construct highly individualized identity meanings (as was clearly the case in this research) yet revert to a positivist definition on quantitative measures, it is difficult to imagine how such simplistic, standardized scales can "accurately" reveal the highly nuanced complexities of internalized identity processes. That said, there are issues with

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[59] Interestingly, this relationship bears some semblance to hostage identification syndrome, or the "Stockholm" syndrome, whereby a hostage – gradually perceiving an inability to escape and recognizing that her own well-being rests largely on her cooperation with and the success of her captor – might adopt as her own the needs of her captor, developing an affection for and a commitment to that individual or group.

qualitative measures, too. As noted in Chapter Six, it is likely that individuals gauge their explicit identity claims in light of the audience they are addressing – in other words, they preemptively take into account a reflected appraisal of their identity claim and act accordingly. In any case, individuals might simultaneously hold both an individualized identity meaning (i.e., "what 'career' means to me") and some notion of a social norm (i.e., "what 'career' means to everybody else"), and that ongoing, socio-behavioral negotiations affect both.

Theoretical Implications: Cornering Identity Control Theory

The explorations undertaken here both support and expand current notions of sociological identity theory. This section briefly recalls existing theory then suggests how this research might further inform symbolic interactionist perspectives on identity. Included are discussions regarding (1) symbolic interactionism and sociological identity theory, (2) the self-verification process as outlined by identity control theory, and (3) some suggestions regarding how the explorations undertaken in this research might further expand and elucidate that model.

Symbolic Interactionism and Sociological Identity Theory

The questions addressed in this research are based on the premise that variations in life course trajectory are determined largely by the socially negotiated roles one adopts and adapts and by the identity meanings one attaches to those roles. Such negotiation of meaning is the focus of the symbolic interactionist perspective. Again, this perspective suggests that, through the mutual negotiation of meaning and the exchange of language and symbols, interacting individuals reciprocally shape one

another, their social structures, and in the end, society itself. As such, the self, social structure, and society are always in flux, constantly engaged in mutual influence and redefinition (Blumer, 1969).

This perspective suggests that individuals behave according to the meanings that things have for them, that the meanings of things arise from the ways in which others act, and that those meanings are multiple and flexibly interpreted through interaction. But, important, too, is the notion of agency: Because people act on meanings, and because people reciprocally influence those meanings, people can influence one another to action. Through their micro-level interactions and innovations, individuals create, redefine, and alter the roles, norms, and social structures that make up macro-level society itself.

Sheldon Stryker (1980, 1981) founded the tenets of his sociological identity theory on this symbolic interactionist perspective. As such, identity theory maintains that roles, identities, and their related behaviors arise from the dynamic negotiations that take place between self and social structure. Building on Stryker's foundational work, Peter Burke (1991) developed a complementary model – identity control theory – which elucidates the cognitive-behavioral processes of identity maintenance. My research builds on this latter theory.

Identity Control Theory

Identity control theory (Burke, 1991; Stryker & Burke, 2000) integrates ideas from role theory, structural identity theory, and symbolic interactionism, but focuses most tightly on the interplay between social structures and subjective meaning. This

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identity model delves into the internal processes by which role-identities are formed, redefined, and maintained. Most basically, identity control theory suggests that individuals will act to maintain balance between situational self-meanings and an identity standard, or that set of expectations they associate with the role-identity.[60]
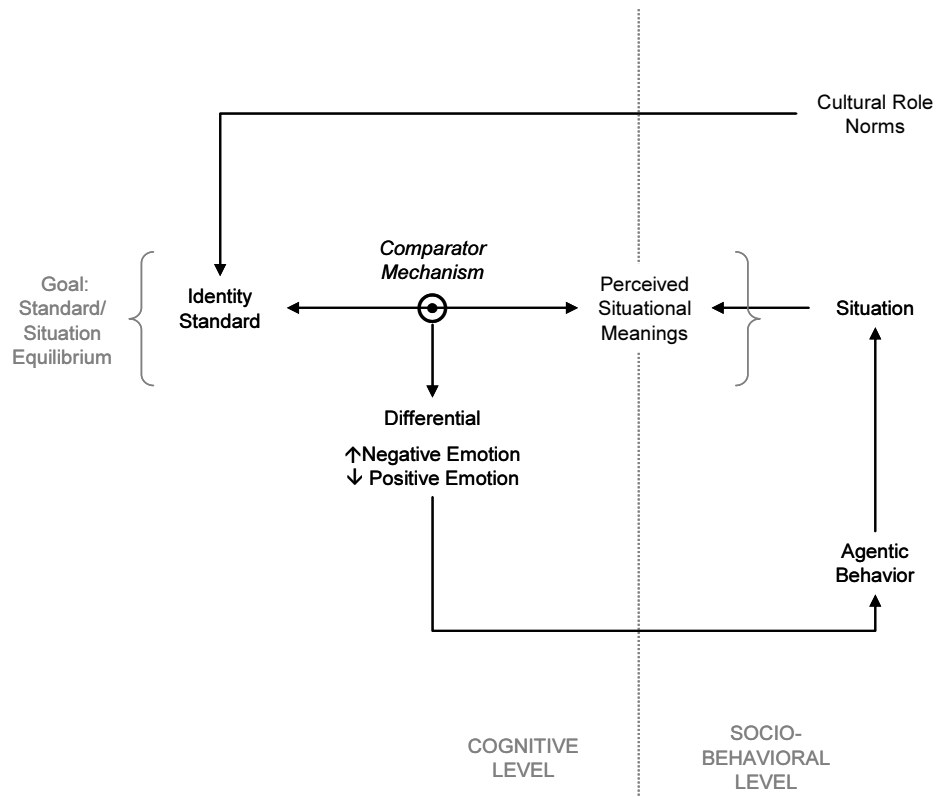
Burke conceptualizes a four-component feedback loop by which individuals pursue "verification," the confirmation of an identity through situation and identity-meaning congruence. This loop ties together both cognitive and socio-behavioral processes: First, an *identity standard* defines for the individual what it means to hold an identity – a benchmark equivalent to socially determined role norms. The second component is an input, i.e., the *situational self-meanings* perceived in the given situation. These first two components are considered in light of a *comparator mechanism* that registers their relative congruence. This comparative process results in output – an emotional response reflecting the degree of the congruence error or *differential*. In other words, when the process registers a large differential between the identity standard and the situation, the individual perceives and experiences negative emotion. As framed by identity control theory, this negative emotion is the motivator that compels individuals to act on the situation – in other words, they

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[60] Like that of most identity theorists, the work of Burke and colleagues focuses largely on the verification of positive identities. This research, too, focuses on the generally positive identity connotations associated with "having a career." The verification processes associated with negative identities, such as "being a hoodlum," might operate differently, particularly in terms of emotional output.

engage in agentic behavior with the goal of bringing the situation into congruence with the identity standard. Figure 21 diagrams this feedback loop:[61]

*Figure 21*. Burke's identity control theory: The feedback loop.

Cultural Role Norms

Goal: Standard/ Situation Equilibrium

Identity Standard

Comparator Mechanism

Perceived Situational Meanings

Situation

Differential

↑Negative Emotion
↓ Positive Emotion

Agentic Behavior

COGNITIVE LEVEL

SOCIO-BEHAVIORAL LEVEL

Cornering Identity Control Theory

The experiences of this study's careerist-traditional wives suggest four ways in which we might fine-tune Burke's identity control model. First, these adjustments emphasize the perceptual nature of social norms and second, explicate two possible

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[61] Burke's four-component identity control theory is most often outlined in verbal form. This visual diagram reflects my own understanding of the theoretical model.

emotional responses to non-verification. Finally, two extensions add "corners" to the original model, one suggesting that individuals might act cognitively on their identity standard (as well behaviorally on the situation) and one explicating the socio-behavioral nature of identity control. These adjustments are diagrammed in Figure 22 and are discussed in more detail below:[62]

Figure 22. Cornering identity control theory.
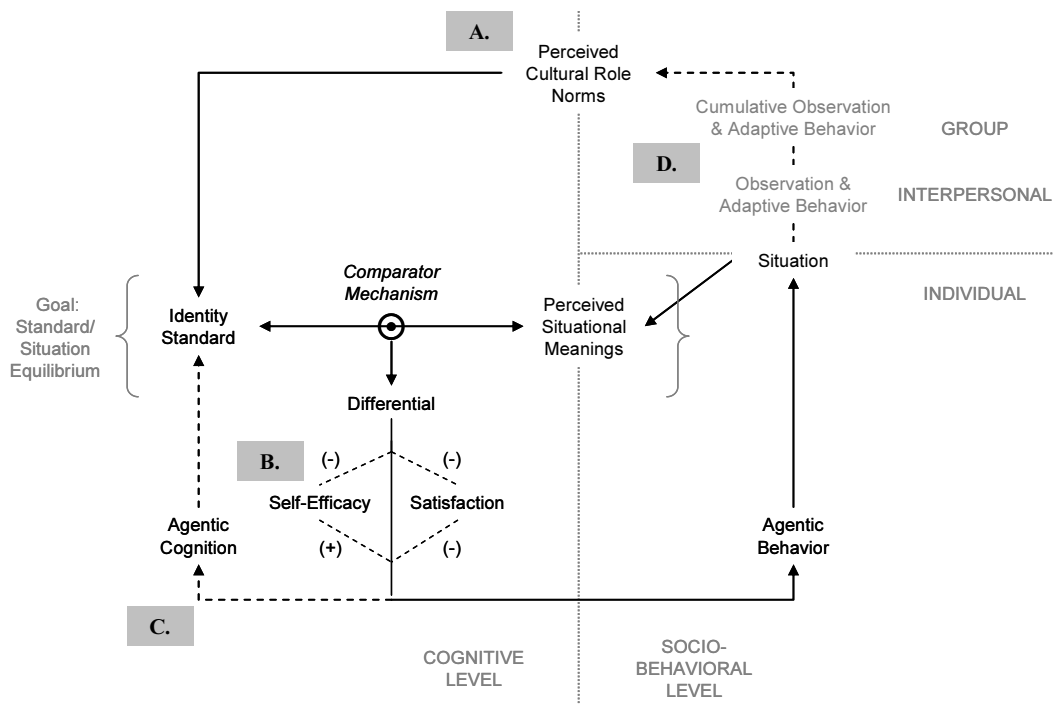
The perception of social norms. First, as noted in Figure 22 at Marker A., I simply specify the relationship of social norms and behavior: While social scientists can discern trends and commonalities that fuzzily depict broad role-associated

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[62] In this diagram, dashed lines represent alterations to the original theoretical model.

expectations, we cannot assume that individuals are acting on some purely objective norm. As evidenced among this study's careerist-traditional wives, each individual perceives role norms differently – for example, what it means to be a "good" officer's wife – and each responds (both cognitively and behaviorally) to their own, individualized perception of those role norms.[63] For these reasons, I specify that the social norms component of the model is not, at the individual level, some hovering, objective entity but is instead a *perception* bridging the social and cognitive domains.

Satisfaction and self-efficacy. Second, as noted in Figure 22 at Marker B., I specify two of the many possible emotions that might emerge from standard/situation disequilibrium or non-verification.[64] As noted by the careerist-traditional wives interviewed here, such incongruence specifically affected two psycho-emotive factors: domain satisfaction and self-efficacy, the belief that one can affect change on the environment. Domain satisfaction reflects an individual's evaluation of the situation, while self-efficacy reflects an individual's evaluation of the self.   Both satisfaction and self-efficacy, however, can be seen at once as outcomes of and motivators in the self-verification process.

As conceptualized here, domain satisfaction is diminished when verification is not achieved. In this study, such a relationship is best illustrated by the behavioral strategies enacted by careerist-traditional wives in their quest for employment. If the individual does not choose to exit the role-identity, then she will be motivated to act

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[63] For example, see *Officers' Wives* in Chapter Four
[64] Identity non-verification has been linked to negative emotional responses such as distress, anxiety, and depression (Burke, 1991; Marcussen & Large, 2003). In contrast, identity verification has been linked to positive responses such as positive self-appraisal, high self-esteem, sense of control, and few psychological symptoms (Thoits, 2003).

to bring the situation into congruence with the identity standard and thereby experience domain satisfaction. In this sense, dissatisfaction can be understood to inspire agentic behavior.

Likewise, self-efficacy can be construed as both an outcome of identity verification and a motivator of behavior. For instance, career-oriented officers' wives frequently noted their perception of lowered self-efficacy when their career identities were stifled by constraints associated with the military lifestyle.[65] Furthermore, satisfaction and self-efficacy are here understood to motivate in opposite directions: While satisfaction is conceptualized to simply maintain or lessen agentic behavior for change (a generally negative correlation), self-efficacy inspires agentic behavior (a positive correlation). So, increased self-efficacy motivates individuals to act, while depleted self-efficacy (like that perceived in situations of continual non-verification) decreases agentic behavior.

Finally, and most interestingly, the self-efficacy built through the verification process proves not only an outcome of verification and a motivator of agentic behavior, but a moderator or buffer in non-verifying situations as well. As a buffer, self-efficacy can be seen as a standing source of motivation, a pooled resource both fed and bled by multiple role-identity processes. Framed in this light, low self-efficacy might be related to inaction or an aborted identity, merely adequate self-

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[65] For example, see *Self-efficacy* in Chapter Four. This relationship has been observed in other research, too. For example, Cast and Burke (2002) found that verification positively impacted both worth-based and efficacy-based self-esteem. Their research suggests that individual role-based identities (e.g., careerist) have a greater influence on efficacy-based self-esteem, while membership-based identities (e.g., military dependent) have a greater effect on worth-based self esteem. These findings may be culturally bound.

efficacy might be related to greater adaptive pliability, and, finally, an abundance of self-efficacy might be related to highly agentic behavior – engagement in that voluntary, identity-related risk-taking that fosters both the acquisition of multiple role-identities at the individual level and instigation of role norm renegotiation at the social level. In other words, highly self-efficacious individuals might be more willing to knowingly undertake potentially non-verifiable behavior in order to both test personal bounds and challenge social norms.[66]

Agentic cognition. As detailed in Chapter Six, the careerist-traditional wives in this study made very definite alterations to their definitions of "career," adapting their identity-related standards to the constraints of military life in order to minimize incongruence and to thereby maximize verification of their careerist identities. Here lies the primary contribution of this research: While identity control theory thus far has focused on behavioral adaptation, the explorations undertaken here indicate that cognitive adaptations are prevalent, too.

Hence, in Figure 22 at Marker C., I expand the original theoretical model to include a cognitive adaptive track. I suggest here that individuals might maximize identity verification by adapting perceived social norms, broadening identity-related definitions, and thereby re-specifying personal identity standards,. Interestingly, as these highly personalized, cognitive adjustments enter into the identity control loop, they also (albeit indirectly) affect a social negotiation of role-related meaning.

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[66] Much of the theorizing surrounding identity control theory emphasizes how the control loop serves to perpetuate social norms – in other words, how role-taking behavior is enforced. As conceptualized in the expanded diagram, however, the process becomes much more dynamic, offering explanation, too, of how individuals, through agentic role-*making* behavior, might instigate negotiation of larger social change.

Individuals, then, can negotiate social meaning both directly, through behavioral adaptation, and indirectly, through cognitive adaptation and the identity claim or other observable behavior that reflects that adaptation. While identity theory in general and identity control theory in particular tend to emphasize the society-affects-self tenet of symbolic interactionism, this expansion of the model illustrates and emphasizes the self-affects-society tenet as well.

The social nature of identity control. Finally, as noted in Figure 22 at Marker D., I expand the original theoretical model to emphasize succinctly the social nature of cognitive identity processes. This expansion rests on the rather mundane assertion that an individual is an active part of her own social system: The behavior of an individual helps construct the social norms to which she herself is subject. Again, the model emphasizes the self-affects-society tenet of the symbolic interactionist perspective, and again, observable behavior is the key component. When an individual acts, others observe that act, then interpret and incorporate it into their own perceptions of "the" group norm. It is here that agentic behavior instigates social change.

Overview

This chapter details the primary substantive, methodological, and theoretical implications of this research. Compiled here were the themes of prior discussions regarding the military context as it is perceived by participants and the behavioral and cognitive adaptations undertaken by these careerist-traditional wives in the course of

their career pursuits. Chapter Eight concludes this research report with general

summary.

CHAPTER VIII: Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore how a military officer's wife might navigate simultaneously her careerist and traditional wife roles. Taken into account were the career pursuit strategies, innovations, and explorations some Air Force officers' wives have employed over the course of their affiliations with the military. Specifically, this study asked the following: In their own words, how do Air Force officer wives define "career"? How does the military lifestyle impact the careers of these women? What obstacles and opportunities do they perceive? By what adaptive processes might career-oriented Air Force officer wives achieve both career satisfaction and commitment to their traditional military role? Finally, what does it mean to be a careerist-traditional wife, and how do such career trajectories proceed over time and multiple relocations?

To address these questions, this manuscript first offers an introduction to the problem under study, a review of relevant literature, and an explanation of methodological perspective and procedure. Subsequent analyses draw on research data to describe the military context as it is perceived by participants, to detail the behavioral and cognitive adaptations undertaken by these women in the course of their career pursuits, and to relate the implications of those findings.   These analyses are outlined in greater detail below.

Summary

Chapter One introduces the problematic relationship between the military and its career-oriented officer wives. Most basically, the negotiations between these two parties center on the structural and normative demands of the military lifestyle and the obstacles that context creates for career-seeking military wives. Furthermore, the personal outcomes of these complex negotiations – in other words, the role-identity behaviors these women adopt at the individual level – are conceptualized as cumulatively influential in the broader scripting of social role norms.

Chapter Two reviews the theoretical and substantive literature, first introducing the symbolic interactionist perspective and the idea that variation among life course trajectories is determined largely by the socially negotiated role meanings individuals adopt and adapt. This premise is developed in line with sociological role and identity theory, focusing on the interplay of identity meanings, agency, and innovation. Discussion then turns to the substantive literature, outlining both scholarly and popular perspectives on the "greedy" nature of the military institution and its traditional assumption of the two-person career model. Finally, a review of the literature on military spouse employment reveals several noteworthy ruts, including an overly wide scope, an over-reliance on snapshot, cross-sectional perspectives, and an over-emphasis on problems and policy. To patch these gaps, this research pursues a narrow, in-depth analysis of subjective meaning and experience. It pursues a longitudinal, retrospective perspective, and it emphasizes the effects of individual agency rather than institutional policy.

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Chapter Three details both methodological perspective and research design. Introductory discussion outlines a general life-course paradigm, collates the life-history and oral-history approaches into a unified qualitative method, and evaluates the validity of oral evidence. The discussion moves to the details of research design, describing the sampling frame, preliminary survey processes, survey response, and survey data analysis. Careerist-traditional wives are identified and interviewees selected from among survey respondents. An overview of this interview selection process is offered, including a detailed exploration of the study's first research question, "How do these military wives define career?" Finally, Chapter Three characterizes the resulting sample of interview respondents, outlines the interview process and the tools employed, and evaluates the delimitations, limitations, and ethical considerations of the project.

Chapter Four, *In Dependence*, describes a paradoxical context in which the military both compels great dependence and demands great independence from its spouses. Here, discussion delves into collected data with a portrayal of military life as it is perceived by interview participants and, in particular, as it relates to their personal career pursuits. Addressed are the questions, "How does the military lifestyle impact the careers of these women, and what obstacles and opportunities do they perceive?" In regards to lifestyle, participating careerist-traditional wives depict a complexity of contextual factors, characterizing the perceived effects of location, the frequency of relocation, and the nature of their husbands' work. Featured here, too, are descriptions of the stigma, normative expectations, and socialization

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processes these women associate with being an officer's wife. Then, personal career

expectations are addressed, as are some of the specific factors that impact career-

seeking military moms. Finally, Chapter Four closes with a discussion of the

interplay between the military context and career identity meanings – a theme that

would gradually emerge as the primary theoretical focus of this study.

Chapter Five, *Making It Work*, is perhaps the most pragmatic of the analyses

offered here. This discussion builds from the relatively static context considered in

Chapter Four to a highly dynamic, longitudinal exploration of behavioral adaptation.

Chapter Five is the first of two chapters to address the questions, "By what adaptive

processes might career-oriented Air Force officer wives achieve both career

satisfaction and commitment to their traditional military role? What does it mean to

be a careerist-traditional wife, and how do such career trajectories proceed over time

and multiple relocations?" First, these wives relate their career-related decisions and

the reasoning behind those decisions while considering the obstacles and

opportunities perceived in their military contexts. Included here are their thoughts

regarding occupational field, paid work, volunteerism, and the unexpected

opportunities that might arise. The discussion outlines the behavioral acts with which

these wives construct a career. Building from those isolated career decisions to a

longitudinal path, analysis turns to the identification of patterns in behavioral

adaptation – both the turning points these wives perceive and the adaptive, long-term

career trajectories they forge.

Chapter Six, *Revisiting the Definition of Career*, continues analysis of the strategies and adaptations by which careerist-traditional wives might verify their careerist identities. Addressed again are the questions, "By what adaptive processes might career-oriented Air Force officer wives achieve both career satisfaction and commitment to their traditional military role? What does it mean to be a careerist-traditional wife, and how do such career trajectories proceed over time and multiple relocations?" However, this discussion shows that adaptive role-identity processes occur not only at the behavioral level, but at the cognitive level as well. To explore this cognitive trajectory, discussion returns to preliminary research data regarding how careerist-traditional wives define "career." This analysis, however, adopts a more dynamic stance than did preliminary inquiries: It asks not *with what words* these women define "career," but *by what processes*. First, these explorations link identity definition and etymology and, second, cast identity redefinition as a form of cognitive adaptation. Finally, discussion frames identity processes as a broader socio-behavioral negotiation – a reflexive cycle in which even cognitive adaptations, once manifest as observable behavior, might instigate social change.

Chapter Seven details the substantive, methodological, and theoretical implications of this research. First, discussion regarding substantive implications outlines for career-hopeful military spouses and their advisors models suggestive of tactics by which spouses might both meet personal career goals and maintain satisfaction in their role as military spouse. It suggests to military policy-makers some of the ways in which employment programs could better assist these wives, and

it provides for social scientists some vectors for future research. Second, this chapter briefly reviews some incidental implications for methodology, discussing interview format, affective commitment as a variable, and the interplay of quantitative methods and relativist ontology. Finally, discussion turns to the implications of this research for identity theory, examining the complex behavioral and cognitive processes by which individuals might verify multiple and often conflicting role-identities.

Primarily, the experiences of these careerist-traditional wives both support and expand the principles of sociological identity control theory as formulated by Sheldon Stryker and Peter Burke. Specifically, the findings of this research suggest that individuals act to verify valued identities not only through behavioral adjustments but through cognitive adjustments, or definitional renegotiation, as well.   This explication extends the tenets of identity control theory, clarifying both how role-identity definitions change over time at the individual level and – in the interactionist perspective – how those meanings are behaviorally negotiated at the social level, cumulatively affecting change in perceived role-identity norms.

Conclusion

In summary, this research examines the adaptive strategies of career-seeking Air Force officers' wives. By qualitatively exploring the adaptations of similar individuals over time, and by subsequently pooling those patterns, this study comes to know individuals of a certain type – careerist-traditional wives who achieve both career satisfaction and commitment to their traditional military role. Most notably,

findings emphasize that "being" a careerist-traditional wife is not a state, but a process always in flux. One senior officer wife describes it well:

> Due to the inherent aspects of military life and frequent re-locations, a military spouse enjoys a broad range of experience and a varied frame of reference that bring richness and strength to her career. . . I can no longer define "a career" with a single descriptive moniker, such as "I am a teacher, or I am a nurse," nor can I consider only "paid time" part of a career. My career has been spent facilitating, mentoring, and helping others meet their goals. Concurrently, I have been able to enrich and enlarge my personal skill set through various degrees, in a wide variety of jobs, and in many types of organizations or institutions. Learning new things, meeting new challenges, and attaining particular goals have provided a level of satisfaction and interest that has been very positive. My present career path is to continue leading, mentoring, and encouraging other military spouses to pursue and accomplish their goals. My future career path is unknown at this time. . . potential and possibilities abound in ways I may not have yet considered.

Echoing the respondent quoted here, these women depict a context of ambiguous traditional norms, inherent obstacles, and unexpected opportunities. They provide, too, concrete strategic models for career-seeking military wives, their advisors, and those policy-makers and social scientists who address these issues. Finally, the experiences of these women indicate that individuals intertwine both definitional and behavioral strategies in the course of their meaning- and role-making activities. As suggested by symbolic interactionism and by sociological identity control theory, it is through these micro-level adjustments that careerist-traditional wives initiate innovation – role transformations that reverberate through multiple levels in their relationships, their communities, their organizations, and their society.

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APPENDIX A: Preliminary Survey Materials

Ramstein Officer Spouses' Club
435[th] Services, Unit 3240
Bldg 412, Box 37
APO, AE 09094
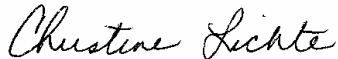
22 March, 2005

To whom it may concern:

This letter confirms that Krista Dana, graduate student at the University of Oklahoma, has been granted permission to conduct her dissertation research within our private organization, the Ramstein Officer Spouses' Club.

We are aware of the research procedures suggested for the proposed study, *Career Wives with Careers of Their Own: Role Innovation and the Military Spouse*. Accordingly, we grant permission for research activities including the distribution of a short survey at a general membership meeting, the solicitation of research participants through an ad in our organization's newsletter, and outside interviews with volunteers from our organization's membership. We extend this permission through May of 2006.

Signed,

Cindy Roberts
President, 2004-2006
Ramstein Officer Spouses' Club

Christine Lichte
Honorary Vice President and Senior Advisor
Ramstein Officer Spouses' Club

Preliminary Survey: Announcement for ROSC Newsletter

Requesting Your Participation. . .

Hello! My name is Krista Dana. I am an ROSC member and a PhD Candidate at the University of Oklahoma.

Although "a career" may in some cases refer to continuous paid employment, today's career-oriented military spouses often chart a less predictable course – pursuing and balancing ever-evolving goals through volunteer work, ongoing education, frequent job changes, home businesses, telecommuting, career postponement while children are at home, part-time employment, and flexible goal-setting.

I am fascinated by the innovative ways in which military spouses redefine their career goals to adapt to the demands of military life. My dissertation research investigates just that. In the study, Careers of Their Own: Role Innovation among Air Force Officers' Wives, I explore how military spouses redefine and pursue personal career paths and, at the same time, adopt and enjoy the traditional military-wife lifestyle – volunteering in their communities, playing sometimes-single parent, participating in spouse organizations, and fostering mutual support among highly mobile military families.

Regardless of your current employment status, I hope that you'll take a moment to share with me your experiences. At our May function all attending members will be asked to complete a brief survey. Your participation is, of course, voluntary. Our ROSC executive board and its senior advisors have agreed to allow this research.

For more information, please contact Krista Dana at kdana@ou.edu or 0631-357-8485.

Preliminary Survey: Informed Consent

COVER LETTER: INFORMED CONSENT FOR SURVEY RESEARCH

Hello! I am an ROSC member and a Ph.D. candidate under the direction of Dr. Wilbur Scott, Professor of Sociology at the University of Oklahoma and Distinguished Visiting Professor at the U.S. Air Force Academy. I invite you to participate in my dissertation research, a study entitled *Careers of Their Own: Role Innovation among Air Force Officers' Wives.*

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which military spouses define, pursue, achieve, and adjust their personal career goals. Findings will benefit military spouses in general by (1) bringing to light the successful strategies by which some military spouses have forged personal career paths and (2) suggesting to policy-makers some of the needs and opportunities of career-seeking military spouses.

I would most appreciate your participation in this phase of my research. Please complete the attached survey – it has 34 items and should take approximately10 minutes. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. Because this survey is administered in a group setting, I cannot guarantee immediate confidentiality; however, once your survey is submitted, any information you provide will remain strictly confidential.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me by phone until 15 July at 0631-357-8485 (home) or 0174-431-2385 (cell), or anytime by e-mail at kdana@ou.edu. For inquires about the rights of research participants, contact the University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Please remove and retain this cover letter for your records. By completing and returning the attached survey, you will be agreeing to participate in the project described above.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Krista Dana
Ph.D. Candidate
University of Oklahoma

Preliminary Survey: Questionnaire

Individuals define, pursue, and balance "careers" in many ways. Although a "career" may in some cases refer to continuous paid employment, today's career-oriented military wives often chart a less predictable course – pursuing and balancing ever-evolving career goals through ongoing education, volunteer work, frequent job changes, home businesses, telecommuting, career postponement while children are at home, part-time employment, and flexible goal-setting.

Regardless of your current employment status, please take a moment to reflect on your own life-long experiences:

In your own words, what is a "career"?

To what extent do you personally have a career?

Using your own definition of career, please check the box that indicates the degree to which you agree with each statement:

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I am g e	Strongly Disagree ☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree ☐
2.	I feel like "part of the family" in the military	Strongly Disagree ☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree ☐
3.	Having a career is an important reflection of who I am	Strongly Disagree ☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree ☐
4.	I am generally satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my	Strongly Disagree ☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree ☐
5.	I am generally satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my	Strongly Disagree ☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree ☐
6.	The military has a great deal of personal meaning for me	Strongly Disagree ☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree ☐
7.	I am generally satisfied with the progress I have made	Strongly Disagree ☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree ☐
8.	I feel a strong sense of belonging to the military	Strongly Disagree ☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree ☐

		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
9.	I have a strong connection with career-oriented women	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	I am generally satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	In general, having a career is an important part of my self-image	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.	I feel emotionally attached to the military	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
13.	At the time I married my spouse, having a career was very important to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
14.	Currently, having a career is very important to	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15.	In the future, I expect that having a career will be very important to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. What year were you born?_____

17. Before becoming a military spouse, how familiar were you with the military way of life?
   - ☐ Not at all familiar
   - ☐ Somewhat familiar
   - ☐ Very familiar

18. Have you ever personally served in the military?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes, active duty
   - ☐ Yes, reserves or guard

19. Are you currently a military member?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes, active duty
   - ☐ Yes, reserves or guard

20. How many children do you have?
   - ☐ None
   - ☐ 1
   - ☐ 2
   - ☐ 3
   - ☐ 4 or more

   a. What is your youngest child's age?
   _____ Years _____NA

   b. What is your oldest child's age?
   _____ Years_____ NA

21. What year did you marry your current spouse?
   _____

22. What year did your spouse join the military?
   _____

23. Approximately how many PCS moves have you made since marrying your spouse?
   _____

24. How many years have you lived overseas since marrying your spouse?
   _____

25. In what branch of the military does your spouse serve?
   - ☐ U. S. Air Force
   - ☐ U. S. Army
   - ☐ U. S. Navy
   - ☐ U. S. Marines
   - ☐ Other_____

26. What is your spouse's military career field/job:_____

27. What is your spouse's current pay grade?
   - ❑ O1
   - ❑ O2
   - ❑ O3
   - ❑ O4
   - ❑ O5
   - ❑ O6 or higher
   - ❑ Civilian or Other

28. What is the highest educational degree *you* have personally completed?
   - ❑ Did not finish high school
   - ❑ High school or equivalent
   - ❑ Some college or Associate's Degree
   - ❑ Bachelor's Degree
   - ❑ Professional Credential: _____
   - ❑ Master's Degree
   - ❑ Doctorate

29. What is/was your personal career field(s)?_____
   a. Not applicable

30. In what ways are you currently "employed"?   (check all that apply)
   - ❑ Full-time paid
   - ❑ Part-time paid / Seasonal paid
   - ❑ Self-employed
   - ❑ Telecommuting / telework
   - ❑ In-home sales (e.g. Pampered Chef)
   - ❑ Stay-at-home parent / homemaker
   - ❑ Volunteer: Ave hours per week ____
   - ❑ Student
   - ❑ Other – _____

31. Please write a few sentences about your past, present, and predicted career path:

32. This survey is part of a larger research project. The next phase of the project undertakes one-on-one interviews with military spouse volunteers. If you would be willing to participate in a 2-3 hour interview process, please indicate your contact information here. If you do not wish to be considered for an interview, simply leave this section blank. (If necessary, and as arranged in advance, babysitting expenses will be reimbursed by the researcher.)

During the interview, we would discuss your experiences as a military spouse, your ongoing career path, and the obstacles and opportunities you've encountered.

Your Name:

Phone Number:

E-mail Address:

Preferred Contact Method*:
   - ❑ **E-mail**
   - ❑ **Phone**

Preferred interview days/times:

Will babysitting be required during these times?

* Please list a private (non-government) e-mail address. Your contact information will be kept private. Please note that the researcher cannot fully ensure the confidentiality of electronic communications.

Preliminary Survey: Key

- Career definition & identity -- Items 1 & 2

- Scales:

Items 3-17 scored as follows:	ongly Disag	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	trongly Agr
	1	2	3	4	5

  - Careerist identity – Items 6, 12, 14
  - Affective commitment – Items 5, 9, 11, 15
  - Career satisfaction – Items 4, 7, 8, 10, 13

- Longitudinal career path – Items 15-17 & 33

- Demographic info – Items 17-32

- Willingness to participate in interview & consent to contact – Item 34

APPENDIX B: Interview Materials

Interview: Notification & Invitation Script

Interview candidates will be contacted by e-mail or phone as preferred as indicated on the preliminary survey. By e-mail or phone, the notification and invitation process will convey the following information:

Hello! My name is Krista Dana. I am a PhD candidate with the University of Oklahoma, and I am conducting research for my dissertation regarding the career paths of military spouses. I am contacting you in response to the preliminary survey you filled out at a recent ROSC function.

I would like to invite you to participate in the interview phase of this research project. You are being invited to interview because your survey responses indicate that you fit this study's definition of a career-oriented spouse. During our one-on-one interview, we would discuss your experiences as a military spouse, your ongoing career path, and the obstacles and opportunities you've encountered. The interview would last approximately 2-3 hours and would take place at a time and location of your choosing.

Would you like to participate in an interview?
- ❑ No
- ❑ Yes – We will need to arrange an uninterrupted quiet time in a location removed from noise and distraction. . .

Meeting Arrangements:

❑ Date:

❑ Time (a 3-hour block):

❑ Location -- We can meet at my hotel if you wish or at some other location of your choosing. Location & Directions:

Babysitting:
- ❑ Will you have to arrange for babysitting?
  - ❑ No
  - ❑ Yes – If necessary, I can reimburse your babysitting costs up to $10/hour for up to four hours. Will you need reimbursement?
    - ❑ No
    - ❑ Yes: _____

Process:
- ❑ At the beginning of our interview, we will together construct a timeline of your relocations and career history. If you have any records (e.g., resumes, address entries, etc.) that might help you remember dates and locations more accurately, please bring those records to the interview. If you do not have such records, we'll do the best we can without them.

- ❑ If you have any questions or concerns prior to our meeting, I can be reached by phone until 15 July at 0631-357-8485 (home) or 0174-431-2385 (cell), or anytime by e-mail at kdana@ou.edu

- ❑ Questions?

Interview: Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

PROJECT TITLE:	*Careers of Their Own: Role Innovation among Air Force Officers' Wives*
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	**Krista Dana, PhD. Candidate**
CONTACT INFORMATION:	**+49 (0)631 357 8485 or kdana@ou.edu**

This study is entitled *Career Careers of Their Own: Role Innovation among Air Force Officers' Wives.* It is being conducted at in Kaiserslautern, Germany, under the auspices of The University of Oklahoma. The persons directing this project are Krista Dana, Ph.D. Candidate, and Dr. Wilbur Scott, Professor of Sociology at the University of Oklahoma and Distinguished Visiting Professor at the U.S. Air Force Academy. This document defines the terms and conditions for consenting to participate in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study
The purpose of this study is to explore the processes by which some military wives achieve both personal career satisfaction and commitment to the traditional military spouse role. Using life history interviews, the study explores each participant's career path and experiences as a career-oriented military spouse. This research is not sponsored by any U.S. government agency.

Procedures
You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. You were selected as a potential participant because your responses on the preliminary survey fit the study's description of a career-oriented military spouse. During this research, each participant will undertake a 2-3 hour, one-on-one interview with the researcher. The interview will discuss topics such as career goals and adaptations, experiences as a military spouse, career obstacles and opportunities, and one's career path over time. Follow-up interviews may be conducted by e-mail as necessary (see below).

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study
Such reflective interviews have in the past proven highly enjoyable for most participants. However, it is possible that some participants may find this experience disturbing, and the researcher will on request provide contact information for confidential community counseling services. This research will benefit military spouses in general (1) by showing the successful strategies by which some military spouses have forged personal career paths and (2) by suggesting to policy-makers some of the needs and opportunities of career-seeking military spouses. Interview participants will be offered an electronic copy of the final research report.

Confidentiality
The records of this study will be kept private. Findings will be presented in summary form in order to deter the indirect identification of participants. Some findings will be reported using anonymous quotes excerpted from interviews. However, participants' names will neither be linked to those quotes nor revealed outside the research team. Research records (including recordings, transcripts, and contact information) will be stored securely by the researcher as password-protected electronic data files.   Interview recordings will be transcribed then destroyed after transcription. Full interview transcripts will not be released. In order to allow for follow-ups and data confirmation, all other records and transcripts will be retained by the researcher throughout the course of this project. Unless additional permissions are obtained, all records and transcripts will be destroyed at the conclusion of this project.

Audio Recording

To assist with accurate recording of participant responses, interviews will be recorded on an audio recording device. Participants have the right to refuse audio-recording without penalty. Please select one of the following:

☐ I consent to the use of audio recording.

☐ I do not consent to the use of audio recording.

Follow-up Questions

If necessary, follow-up questions may be conducted by e-mail. (Please note that the researcher cannot ensure confidentiality of electronic communications.) Your contact information will not be made available outside the research team, and you have the right to refuse e-mail follow-ups without penalty. Please select one of the following:

☐ I consent to be contacted by e-mail for possible follow-up questions at the following private (non-government) e-mail address:

_____

☐ I do not consent to be contacted by e-mail.

Compensation

Monetary compensation is not offered for participation in this study. However, if necessary, and as arranged in advance, babysitting expenses will be reimbursed by the researcher.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw at any time.

Contacts and Questions

Participants may contact the researcher by phone until 15 July at 0631-357-8485 (home) or 0174-431-2385 (cell), or anytime by e-mail at kdana@ou. You are encouraged to contact the researcher if you have any questions or concerns. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

_____	_____
Signature	Date

Interview: Life Event Grid
(Excel worksheet)

RESPONDENT:

TODAY'S DATE:

BIRTH YEAR:

YEAR MARRIED MILITARY:

YEAR	AGE	MOVES/ PCS TO...	PAID WORK (Job/FT/PT)	VOLUNTEER WORK (ORG)	CAREER PURSUIT EVENTS (own graduations, promotions, training, etc.)	FAMILY & OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS (births, illness, deaths, separations, long deployments, etc.)	HUSBAND'S JOB CHANGE / RANK CHANGE	SATISFACTION WITH CAREER PURSUIT (1-10, 10 HIGH)	SATISFACTION WITH MILITARY LIFE (1-10, 10 HIGH)	GENERAL LIFE SATISFACTION (1-10, 10 HIGH)
#N/A	-2									
#N/A	-1									
#N/A	0									
#N/A	1									
#N/A	2									
#N/A	3									
#N/A	4									
#N/A	5									
#N/A	6									
#N/A	7									

Interview: Domain Satisfaction Chart

(Sample chart – Excel output with completed Life Event Matrix)

Domain Satisfaction by Year
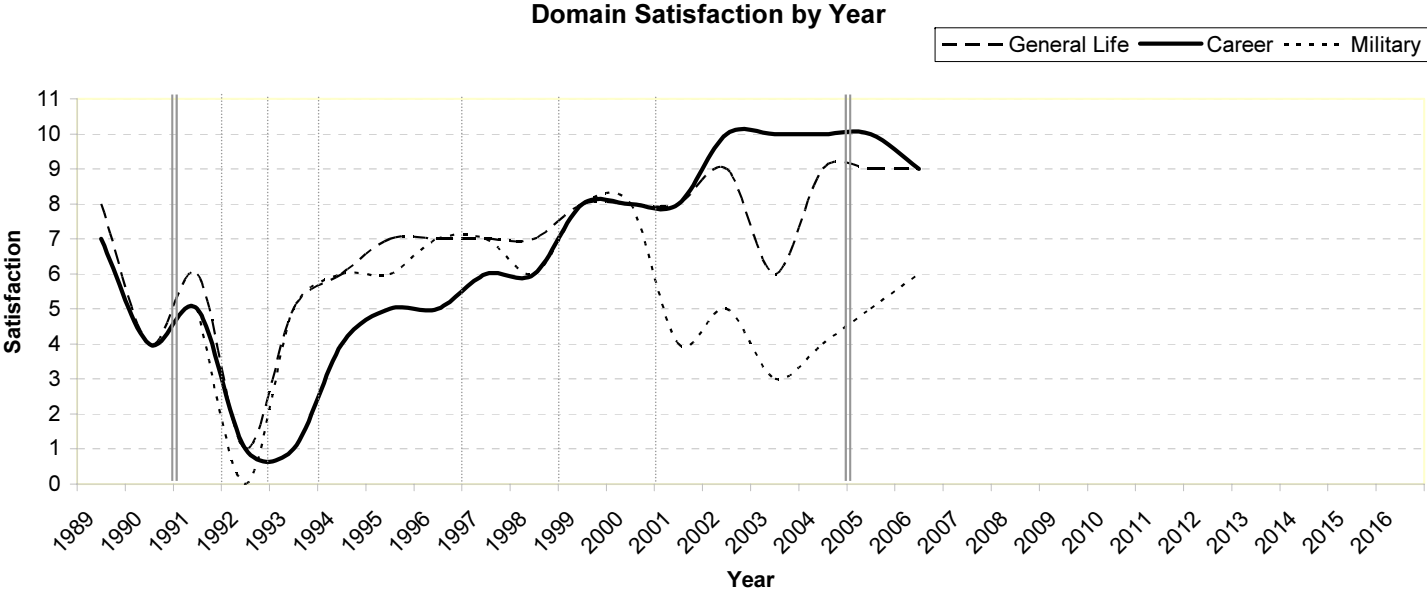
Interview: List of Questions

These oral, life history interviews seek a sequential, segmental accounting of each participant's career path. As this study explores the career paths of military wives, life segments are here delineated by permanent change of station (PCS) moves. Each interview begins with two broad lead-in questions, sequentially covers life course segments, briefly focuses on the details of notable turning points, and then concludes with several summary questions. [67]

Lead-in:
1. Please tell me a little bit about your childhood, where you come from, and your life prior to this marriage.
2. Please tell me a little bit about your life today, your family, your activities, and your current career path.

Segments in Sequence – referencing individual's life event matrix:
3. At the time you got married, what were your career-related expectations?
4. Now, let's look back at your life course and career path since marrying, beginning with (*year*) and your time at (*location*). [*repeat question series for each PCS segment*]
    a. What was life like during your time at (*location*)?
    b. What were your immediate career goals when you arrived at (*location*)?
    c. What career-related obstacles did you encounter while there?
    d. How about opportunities?
    e. In general, how did you spend your time at (*location*)?
5. At this point in time, what are your future plans and career-related expectations?

Turning Points – referencing individual's life course chart:
6. Looking at your life course chart. . . [*briefly summarize observable domain trends*]
7. This is an interesting feature on your chart. What was going on during this time in your life? [*repeat for all notable features*]
    a. Turning points
    b. Low points
    c. High points
    d. Domain divergences

Wrap up:
8. In general, what has it been like to be a military spouse and at the same time pursue a career? What obstacles and opportunities have you encountered?
9. Finally, what advice would you offer to a new military souse who ants to pursue a career?
10. Do you have any questions or comments that you would like to add?

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[67] Although this schedule is laid out in question format, it is likely that participants will move between topics on their own, answering the questions here out of sequence. For this reason, I'll use a topical check list rather than a list of questions for note-taking during interviews.

Interview: Topical Checklist

Lead-in

1) Life prior to this marriage
   - ❑ Locations
   - ❑ Childhood
   - ❑ Schooling
   - ❑ Adulthood
   - ❑ Military Familiarity

2) Today
   - ❑ Family
   - ❑ Activities
   - ❑ Current career status
   - ❑ Time at this location

Segments in Sequence – life event matrix

3) Career expectations at marriage

4) PSC Segments

   a) _____(*location*)
   - ❑ General description of location
   - ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
   - ❑ Career-related obstacles
   - ❑ Career-related opportunities
   - ❑ Activities, how spent time

   b) _____(*location*)
   - ❑ General description of location
   - ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
   - ❑ Career-related obstacles
   - ❑ Career-related opportunities
   - ❑ Activities, how spent time

   c) _____(*location*)
   - ❑ General description of location
   - ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
   - ❑ Career-related obstacles
   - ❑ Career-related opportunities
   - ❑ Activities, how spent time

   d) _____(*location*)
   - ❑ General description of location
   - ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
   - ❑ Career-related obstacles
   - ❑ Career-related opportunities
   - ❑ Activities, how spent time

   e) _____(*location*)
   - ❑ General description of location
   - ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
   - ❑ Career-related obstacles
   - ❑ Career-related opportunities
   - ❑ Activities, how spent time

   f) _____(*location*)
   - ❑ General description of location
   - ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
   - ❑ Career-related obstacles
   - ❑ Career-related opportunities
   - ❑ Activities, how spent time

   g) _____(*location*)
   - ❑ General description of location
   - ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
   - ❑ Career-related obstacles
   - ❑ Career-related opportunities
   - ❑ Activities, how spent time

h) _____(*location*)

- ❑ General description of location
- ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
- ❑ Career-related obstacles
- ❑ Career-related opportunities
- ❑ Activities, how spent time

i) _____(*location*)

- ❑ General description of location
- ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
- ❑ Career-related obstacles
- ❑ Career-related opportunities
- ❑ Activities, how spent time

j) _____(*location*)

- ❑ General description of location
- ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
- ❑ Career-related obstacles
- ❑ Career-related opportunities
- ❑ Activities, how spent time

k) _____(*location*)

- ❑ General description of location
- ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
- ❑ Career-related obstacles
- ❑ Career-related opportunities
- ❑ Activities, how spent time

l) _____(*location*)

- ❑ General description of location
- ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
- ❑ Career-related obstacles
- ❑ Career-related opportunities
- ❑ Activities, how spent time

m) _____(*location*)

- ❑ General description of location
- ❑ Career goals/expectations on arrival
- ❑ Career-related obstacles
- ❑ Career-related opportunities
- ❑ Activities, how spent time

5) Today – plans and career expectations:

Notable Turning Points – life course chart

6) Looking at your life course chart. . . [*briefly summarize observable domain trends*]

7) Discuss notable chart features:
- ❑ Turning points
- ❑ Low points
- ❑ High points
- ❑ Domain divergences

Wrap up

8) In general, what has it been like to be a military spouse and at the same time pursue a career?
- ❑ Summarize obstacles
- ❑ Summarize opportunities

9) Advice to a new military spouse who desires a career:

10) Questions and/or comments to add:

Interview Debrief: Checklist

After the interview, each participant will be offered the following:

❑   A copy of the individual's signed consent form

❑   A copy of the individual's life course grid and life course chart

❑   An request form for an electronic copy of the final research report

❑   Printed information regarding confidential community counseling services

❑   Reimbursement for childcare (as arranged in advance)

Interview Debrief: Research Report Request

Research Report Request

Thank you for your participation in this research. If you would like a copy of the final research report, please complete and return the form below. Thanks!

Research Report Request Form

Please send an electronic copy of the final research report to the private e-mail address listed below. The report should be available approximately one year from now. I understand that the researcher cannot ensure the confidentiality of electronic communications.

E-mail Address: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Interview Debrief: Community Resources

Community Resources

Thank you for participating in this study – I hope you found it an enjoyable experience. If you would like more information regarding career opportunities for military spouses, or if you experience distress related to this interview (or any other event), a good selection of confidential counseling services are available in the local community. The services offered by the organizations below are free of charge to military family members:

Career & Transition Counseling
- Pulaski ACS Employment Readiness Center – DSN 489-7217 or Civilian 0631-536-7217
- Ramstein Family Support Center – DSN 480-5900 or Civilian 06371-47-5900

Chaplains (All Denominations)
- Kapaun Chaplains' Office – DSN 489-7382 or Civilian 0631-536-7382
- Landstuhl Chapel – DSN 486-8399 or Civilian 06371-86-8399
- Pulaski Religious Activities Center – 489-7266 or Civilian 0631-536-7266
- Ramstein Chaplains' Office – DSN 480-6148 or Civilian 06371-47-6148
- Vogelweh Chaplains' Office – DSN 489-6859 or Civilian 0631-536-6859

Education Centers
- Kapaun Education Services – DSN 489-7265 or Civilian 0631-536-7265
- Ramstein Adult Continuing Education – DSN 480-6043 or Civilian 06371-47-6043

General Wellness Counseling
- Ramstein Health and Wellness Center – DSN 480-4292 or Civilian 06371-47-4292

Job & Volunteer Recruitment Offices
- Pulaski Civilian Personnel Advisory Center – DSN 489-7992 or Civilian 0631-536-7992
- Ramstein Civilian Personnel Office – DSN 480-7092 or Civilian 06371-47-7092
- Ramstein Equal Employment Opportunity Office – DSN 480-2250 or Civilian 06371-47-2250
- Pulaski Volunteer Coordinator – DSN 480-6711 or Civilian 0631-536-6711
- Ramstein FSC Volunteer Coordinator -- DSN 480-5900 or Civilian 06371-47-5900
- American Red Cross Ramstein – DSN 480-2171 or Civilian 06371-47-2171
- American Red Cross Kapaun – DSN 489-6145 or Civilian 0631-536-6145
- AAFES Recruitment Office Ramstein – DSN 480-2177 or Civilian 06371-952-177
- AAFES Recruitment Office Vogelweh – DSN 489-4092 or Civilian 0631-350-4092
- Ramstein NAF Human Resources – DSN 480-2672 or Civilian 06371-47-2672

Mental Health Professionals
- Ramstein Mental Health Clinic -- DSN 479-2390 or Civilian 06371-46-2390
- Landstuhl Community Counseling Center – DSN 486-1710 or Civilian 06371-86-1710