

KEEPING THE HOME FIRES BURNING:
THE EFFECTS OF MILITARY INDUCED SEPARATIONS ON
MARITAL INTIMACY FROM A FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

By

Deborah J Cynar

RECOMMENDED:

Sine Anahita

Robert B. Crumdale

Christine E. Cyprien
Advisory Committee Chair

Jim Brown
Chair, Department of Communication

APPROVED:

Ronald Davis
Dean, College of Liberal Arts

Lawrence K. Duffy
Dean of the Graduate School

Apr 24, 2008
Date

KEEPING THE HOME FIRES BURNING:
THE EFFECTS OF MILITARY INDUCED SEPARATIONS ON
MARITAL INTIMACY FROM A FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

A
THESIS

Presented to the Faculty
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By
Deborah J. Cynar

Fairbanks, Alaska

May 2008

© 2008 Deborah Cynar

UMI Number: 1458013

Copyright 2008 by
Cynar, Deborah J.

All rights reserved.

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 1458013

Copyright 2008 by ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest LLC
789 E. Eisenhower Parkway
PO Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Abstract

In this study, a convenience sample of 56 female, married, military wives in northwestern community responded to a survey questionnaire concerning intimacy promoting communication skills, marital satisfaction, and military induced separations. The results indicated a strong correlation between marital satisfaction and intimacy promoting communication skills. This study also explores the difference between the type and frequency of military induced separations and their influence on marital satisfaction and intimacy promoting communication skills.

To further describe this military population, several post hoc tests for difference found significance between military branch affiliation, and between those who had or had not received premarital counseling on levels of perceived marital satisfaction, and intimacy promoting communication skills. Further, no significant difference was found to exist between education level or employment status of the at home spouse on levels of perceived marital satisfaction and intimacy promoting communication skills. A description of the implications of the findings, and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Table of Contents

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Signature Page | i |
| Title Page | ii |
| Abstract..... | iii |
| Table of Contents..... | iv |
| List of Tables | vi |
| List of Appendices | vii |
| Acknowledgments | viii |
| Chapter 1: Introduction and Review of Literature..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Statement of the Problem..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Military Way of Life..... | 2 |
| 1.2.1 Internalizing the Life..... | 2 |
| 1.2.2 Cultural Constraints | 5 |
| 1.3 Communicating Intimacy..... | 8 |
| 1.4 Marital Satisfaction..... | 10 |
| 1.5 Research Questions..... | 11 |
| Chapter 2: Research Methods..... | 15 |
| 2.1 Research Design and Procedures | 15 |
| 2.2 Sample..... | 17 |
| 2.3 Measures | 17 |
| 2.3.1 Communication Skills..... | 17 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 2.3.2 Marital Satisfaction..... | 18 |
| 2.3.3 Demographic Data | 19 |
| Chapter 3: Results..... | 20 |
| 3.1 Analysis of Communication Skills Measure..... | 20 |
| 3.2 Research Questions..... | 23 |
| 3.3 Post Hoc Analysis..... | 26 |
| Chapter 4: Discussion..... | 32 |
| 4.1 Findings and Conclusions..... | 32 |
| 4.1.1 Conclusion One..... | 32 |
| 4.1.2 Conclusion Two..... | 34 |
| 4.1.3 Conclusion Three..... | 35 |
| 4.2 Limitations..... | 36 |
| 4.3 Suggestions for Future Research | 37 |
| 4.4 Conclusion | 38 |
| Endnote | 39 |
| References..... | 40 |
| Appendices | 44 |

List of Tables

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Table 1: Correlations among Variables with Descriptive Statistics | 24 |
| Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Education Level and Marital Satisfaction | 27 |
| Table 3: Results of Difference Tests..... | 30 |
| Table 4: Results of Independent Sample <i>t</i> -test for Military Branch and Dependent Variables | 31 |

List of Appendices

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Appendix A: Participant Letter of Consent..... | 44 |
| Appendix B: Survey..... | 46 |
| Appendix C: Permission to Use Measure..... | 52 |
| Appendix D: Communication Function Questionnaire..... | 53 |
| Appendix E: Quality Marriage Index..... | 55 |

Acknowledgments

“Success is a journey not a destination. The doing is usually more important than the outcome.” – Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr.

Graduate school has been a journey that forced me to embrace ambiguity. Learning to traverse a continuum requires practice and support from people that believe in my abilities and me. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to my committee members, professors, family, and fellow graduate students. I have cried many nights and rehearsed grandiose rational as to why I am not suited for graduate school (all attempts failed, thankfully).

Thank you to my committee members and the Department of Communication faculty for your patience and dedication especially during the final leap toward graduation. Dr. Christie Cooper, thank you for helping me through the hard stuff; we have a simpatico relationship. Dr. Bob Arundale and Dr. Sine Anahita, thank you for your unrelenting encouragement through my graduate school career. Dr. Jin Brown and Dr. Pamela McWherter, both of you are influential through your dedication to pedagogy and professional assistance in my endeavors as a graduate student. A special thanks to Dr. Wanda Martin, Emerita, without your encouragement to educate and challenge myself beyond expectations, I never would have recognized my true potential.

I am grateful to my mother and father, Patricia and William Riffle, you provided encouragement and always took my side. Even though there are thousands of miles between us, you were only a phone call away to shoulder my uncertainties. My brothers and sister are significant in my lifelong success—thank you! You each have a great

strategy to rekindle my competitive spirit and promote my strengths. I am grateful to my son Jake, you are so patient and supportive—I love you. You fill my life with joy and motivate me to be a better person. To my husband Tim, I appreciate the sacrifices you have made to provide me the opportunity to pursue my goals. Our relationship is my inspiration and motivation throughout this search for new knowledge.

This section would not be complete without a “shout-out” to my “commrades”! Each of you provided continuous support; from the days wondering when grad school was “going to get hard” to conniving tactics to extend deadlines; we shared laughs, freak-outs, and tears. Thank you for a great experience and it would not have been the same without you *all*. I extend an emotional “thanks” to Kara, I appreciate your ability to see the big picture especially when I get lost in the details. We are a dynamic duo—I’ll never forget giggling while Mayanna tried to sleep! Our Himalayan whistle kid has your eyes.

Chapter 1

Introduction and Review of Literature

1.1 Statement of the Problem

During a time of war, there are human casualties; the indirect consequences of a Soldier being away from his or her family might create yet another type of casualty—relationships. In reflecting on my personal experience, I find that the military culture is a highly structured organization full of formal and informal expectations and obligations. These expectations are not only of the Soldier, but also of the family members. The military unit is like a family itself; there are expectations to be actively involved with unit functions, celebrations, promotions, and deployments.

Throughout my association with the military, I have experienced different roles, to include the daughter of a retired Army Warrant Officer, a disabled veteran, and currently the spouse of an active duty Soldier stationed in South Korea. These experiences motivate my insatiable search to understand the social phenomenon of relationships within the military culture; more specifically, to explain the communication strategies used to maintain marital intimacy during military induced separations.

In my personal experience with the military, I perceive the institutional structures to be organized to accommodate a single, male Soldier. Social movements led to the accommodation of single female Soldiers into this masculine organization, however, the overall military structure did not change and continues not to adequately incorporate family members. There is relatively little research on military families; therefore, a descriptive study that explores the effects of military induced separations is necessary.

1.2 Military Way of Life

According to Bowen, Mancini, Martin, Ware, and Nelson (2003), the adaptation of military families rely on informal and formal networks such as unit support, informal community support, sense of community, and geographic influences. The level of adaptation depends on the influence of one's sense of community, unit support, and informal community support. The unit support involves the organization of unit representatives and leaders that promote the well being of unit members and their family members. Informal community support and sense of community reflect the involvement with the surrounding civilian community and the attitude toward the military. This feeling of connectedness helps military families adapt to new duty stations.

Military families are required to adapt to new duty stations and adjust when the Soldiers leave for training or a deployment. Wood and Scarville (1995) described the lived experiences of the military spouse's personal journey through a six-month military deployment. Military wives were found to fight on the emotional side of war. In addition to renegotiating family roles and adjusting routines, Army wives experienced physical and mental stressors. The effect of children's well being, financial difficulties, home and car repair, and problems accessing military services caused emotional loneliness, anger, depression, and physical ailments for the military spouse.

1.2.1 Internalizing the Life

In order to cope during a military induced separation, the military spouse relies upon informal and formal sources of support. In addition to established social networks, previous experience with military deployments, marital stability, and employment are

predictors of a spouse's ability to adjust during the separation (Wood & Scarville, 1995). Depending upon the social views of the deployment, the surrounding community provides support to military families. However, many military spouses choose to leave the military base to move closer to relatives. This poses a problem for accessing military support channels, consistency within the military community, and communication with the chain of command. This move could lead to spouse's alienation from existing support from the military community. With the increase in technology available during military deployments, couples often use communicative strategies similar to those of a long distance relationship (Stafford, 2005).

Sociological definitions consider marriage as two people who share residence (Stafford, 2005). With respect to military couples, two people may or may not share residence due to geographical dislocation, but are still considered "married." The Department of Defense has clear criteria of determining eligibility for military benefits: only a spouse, child, or adult dependent is eligible for military benefits. Soldiers must provide proper documents, such as a marriage certificate, so that military spouses are eligible to receive a military identification card, healthcare, and other military benefits. In addition to the fact that divorce among military populations is more common than among non-military populations, divorce rates are even higher among military personnel who have returned from deployment than those not deployed (Stafford, 2005). The combat stress, the duration of the deployment, and family distress contribute to greater chance of divorce.

Spousal satisfaction is key when creating programs that target morale during deployments, such as a two-week rest and recuperation (R&R) trip. Military spouses support these visits, but they seem not to be beneficial due to the repetition of emotional and psychological trauma experienced when the Soldier leaves. With the introduction of computer mediated communication (CMC), Soldiers find the separation to be less difficult, and at-home spouses claim it provides a “stabilizing experience” (Stafford, 2005, p. 45). Stafford reports that communication allows family members to connect briefly and that this connection is more important than the actual content; however, this connection also provides an opportunity for conflict. Phone calls can only be initiated by the Soldier, leaving the at-home spouse feeling tied to the house for fear of missing the call. If the phone call is missed, Soldiers feel abandoned and isolated from the mundane reality at home. In comparison to computer mediated communication and phone calls, letter writing provides an opportunity to reflect, and to describe daily existence to both the deployed Soldier and the at-home spouse. One of Watson’s (2004) co-researchers explained, “letter writing... helped their communication because it allowed them to both think about and freely express their feelings toward each other” (p. 60).

The military culture is a complex social organization with integrated support. Kohen (1984) observes that an all-volunteer service entices married personnel to choose a military career, however, the Army maintains an organizational structure based on the lifestyle of a single, male Soldier. Hence, the well recognized quote among Soldiers, “if the Army had wanted you to have a wife it would have issued you one,” rings familiar whenever family issues arise and jeopardize the unit’s mission (Kohen, 1984, p. 403).

Benefits such as government housing or an allowance for basic housing encourage Soldiers to rush into marriage with little or no long-term consideration. After experiencing military life, many couples reconsider the ramifications of the hasty decision and agree that the only answer is divorce. Consequently, for the military member, the termination of the marriage signals the ending of more than just the marriage. The Soldier seeks a companion to share life experiences, however, military wives struggle to pass the time until their Soldier returns from war.

1.2.2 Cultural Constraints

Brancaforte (2000) identified conflicting attitudes between the hat and glove military wife generation and the growing younger, more independent population toward expectations within the military culture. According to one of Brancaforte's (2000) co-researchers, "a recurring theme among the more seasoned spouses [is]...that the younger generation was unwilling to 'sacrifice' for the good of their marriage and consequently for the continuation of the military way of life" (p. 270). The military way of life includes the formal and informal expectations that military spouses, specifically wives, are required to meet. Their lives are in continuous transition, adapting to long and unpredictable duty hours, experiencing frequent relocations, and repeated separations from their Soldiers and relatives.

Although living life in a constant transition seems daunting, there are several military community services to assist, for example Army Family Team Building (AFTB) seminar. Brancaforte (2000) explains the purpose of AFTB is "to empower the new army wives by demystifying the language they need to acquire and use in order to become accepted as

‘insiders’ ...in the military community” (p. 206). The establishment of formal support services for Army families is an attempt to assist military families; however, there is an underlying understanding that the Army mission comes first.

Even though there is a commitment from military leaders to maintain the tactical readiness of troops and to reduce the stress on families, Army wives rely on characteristics of self-sufficiency, independence, and toughness (Baker, 2005).

Traditionally, the Army depends on the uncompensated labor of Army spouses to provide for and maintain families. However, many military wives attempt “to gain a sense of independence from a lifestyle that is overshadowed by the husband’s profession” by entering the labor market (Marriott, 1991, p. 154). An Army wife’s choice to work outside of the home forces her to straddle the fence between the two worlds of civilian and military life.

Although some military wives challenge the tradition of their military role and choose to prioritize their career, the opportunity for a career is limited by the existing economy of the military duty station. Many military spouses have highly portable skills (like teaching, nursing, and secretarial work), but “some employers prefer not to hire military wives because of their mobility” (Marriott, 1991, p. 156). Although some employers are hesitant of military wives, other “communities are grateful for the labor pool of well educated, mature, and experienced...wives” (Marriott, 1991, p. 159).

Many Soldiers consider family support when making choices to continue a career in the military. Retention and readiness has always been a priority, but the increasing cost of individual training and “war technology” make retention even more of a priority to the

military. Brancaforte (2000) suggests that the unpredictable nature of military life encourages military members to retreat to the civilian world. Baker (2005) indicates that several military wives consider their marriage an “enlistment” (p. 27). Not only are their husbands in the military, they are too.

Since the military expects the spouse to be “on call,” an extensive military community provides an extended family, social opportunities, recreational facilities, and on-post shopping. Findell (2006) reminds, “the military wives as a support system to her husband must respect the military unit and the priority and loyalty that he gives it” (p. 5). Military spouses are also encouraged to have a “stiff upper lip.” The mentality that the “mission comes first” is that the wife is an integral unit of her husband’s occupation and a necessary component of his work related routine. For fear of losing a reliable income and benefits (health services and residence), many military spouses are more tolerant of the limits to their lives to support their husband’s career. Hibben (1990) clarifies, “There is no allowance for the questioning of authority, which would be considered insubordination” (p. 14). This applies to both the wife and the Soldier.

Although earning an income is not indicative of a military wives career, several hidden responsibilities or obligations are implied in the role of “military wife.” Some of these expectations are to organize unit functions and provide support for other wives, especially in time of deployments and emergencies. The conservative organization of the Army requires that the commanding officer’s (C.O.) wife act as a role model to the other wives of the unit (Marriott, 1991).

1.3 Communicating Intimacy

Intimacy is important in a marriage because it confirms the level of commitment to sustaining the marital relationship. The definition of intimacy differs across academic disciplines and research contexts. The definition of intimacy that underpins this research is congruent with Heller and Wood's (1998) explanation that intimacy is a relational essence based upon the "feelings in a relationship that promote closeness, bondedness, and connectedness" (p. 273).

Intimacy is a process that develops over time and is never fully complete. As noted earlier, the rate of divorce is higher among military communities than the civilian population, within the military culture, spouses face high expectations and are required to be flexible. These expectations can cause military spouses to become weary of the military way of life. During routine interactions with military services, military spouses do not have their own identity; they are simply referenced according to their sponsor's information, and even personal medical records are the property of the Department of Defense.

In a study prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Karney and Crown (2007) posit that "the demands of military service may severely constrain the ability of spouses in military marriages to maintain closeness and intimacy" (p. 4). Due to frequent military deployments, the Soldier's time away causes problems in communication, effective problem solving, and limits physical activities that promote intimacy. Morrison (1996) indicates the difficulty to remaining close for a marital partner when the relationship is constantly changing. Those in military marriages live

with the expectations of change (e.g. living together, changing duty stations, living apart), yet suffer relational difficulties of those who don't know the change is coming.

Weigel (2003) determined that commitment is communicated in relationships through displays of affection, physical closeness, performing thoughtful acts, and treating each other with respect. Although physical closeness is impossible during military deployments, communication skills may enhance the connection between the romantic couple. In line with Alder, Rosenfeld, and Proctor's (2007) argument, women place a higher value than men on talking about personal matters as a measure of closeness or intimacy. Komarovsky (1962, cited in Morrison, 1996) concludes that women indicate a greater desire to communicate feelings and listen more intently to ideas communicated by their spouse. Women describe intimacy as a mutual feeling of tenderness, sharing feelings, and openness; conversely, Dowrick (1991) suggests that men associate sexual or physical activity with intimacy. As exemplified in Swain's (1989) study, more than 75 percent of men surveyed indicated that the most meaningful experiences with friends came from shared activities.

Even though intimacy and self-disclosure are not synonymous, facilitating self-disclosure can increase the level of intimacy within a relationship and positively influence other intimate behaviors (Waring & Chelune, 1983). Intimacy, as proposed by Moss and Schwebel (1993), is "determined by the level of commitment and positive affective, cognitive, and physical closeness one experiences with a partner in a reciprocal (although not necessarily symmetrical) relationship" (p. 33). People typically evaluate their relationships, specifically romantic relationships, according to the level of intimacy.

Recent studies found moderate to strong correlations between measures of intimacy and interpersonal communication (Moss & Schwebel, 1993) have equated intimacy with self-disclosure (Carpenter & Freese, 1979; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987).

1.4 Marital Satisfaction

“Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” are inalienable rights granted by the United States Declaration of Independence written in 1776. The search for happiness includes the fulfillment of relationships. Routine confirmation is necessary to create a feeling that marital partners share a world, more importantly, a common goal of marital satisfaction.

Griffith and Graham (2004) define satisfaction in relation to goal attainment and to creating “a sense of accomplishment, which enhance the meaning of life” (p. 25). In a relationship, the goals are unique to each marital dyad; however, mutual devotion is necessary to constructing meaning within the relationship. This enhances marital stability, which in turn Orathnikel and Vansteenwegen (2006) suggest defines the strength of the relationship. For this research, relational satisfaction is a way to assess the partners responses to the relationship over time.

Wood (2000) explains that relationships require stability in order for routines, interaction patterns, and expectations to develop. A military couple’s relationship is in a constant state of flux, which is then compounded by the effects of military induced separations. In a study investigating the relationship between military status and relational satisfaction among military men, McLeland and Sutton (2005) found that deployment alert status negatively affects relational satisfaction among military men.

What might overcome the influence of this lack of stability on partners' satisfaction with their relationship?

Wood (2000) suggests that “mutuality of commitment seems to be a more pivotal influence on satisfaction than the sheer amount of pleasure or benefit individuals receive” while in a relationship (p. 17). Communication of this shared commitment may be requisite for satisfaction in a relationship and one key for partners in a military marriage seeking to maintain intimacy. This suggests the need to explore relational communication among military couples in the context of military induced separations.

1.5 Research Questions

The military population provides a unique context due to the highly regulated environment, the hierarchical design throughout the organization is apparent in the mundane reality of the Soldiers and their Families. Although some research explores military deployments and the impact on Families, little or no research addresses the communicative action necessary to maintain an intimate relationship during the geographical separation of a deployment from the perspective of military wives. Wood (1995) suggests a direct link between communication and relational satisfaction indicating that “partners who are satisfied with their relationship are more likely to engage in positive interaction” (p. 35). However, the lack of stability experienced by military couples and its likely influence on satisfaction suggests the need to explore these variables in this population. Therefore, this study posed the following research question.

Research Question 1: How do intimacy promoting communication skills relate to perceived marital satisfaction?

Due to the diminishing number of troops and current high demands for military presence around the world, military separations have become routine in the lives of Soldiers and families. Among the military community, it is common knowledge that military orders mobilizing troops are inevitable. In the military culture the phrase, “hurry up and wait,” suggests that Soldiers must be ready to deploy, but might not know where they are going or when they are leaving. There are several different types of military induced separations, which differ by duration and location.

For the purpose of this research, the different types of military separations were: military training, deployment, and non-command sponsored duty station. Typically, military training is characterized by shorter, temporary separations from family members. Instances of training are basic training, advanced individual training (AIT), National Training Center (NTC), or Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). During training routine communication is possible, but the Soldier is the limiting factor for the initiation of communication. Similarly, non-command sponsored duty station allows for predictable communication, but the duration of the separation is one year or more. Non-command sponsored tours are a permanent move for the Soldier; however, the military will not pay for the travel and living costs for family members. Conversely, deployments are temporary relocations of a brigade, battalion, or unit and the duration can range from one year to 18 months. There is nothing routine about deployments; therefore, some military spouses are compelled to adopt the waiting wife syndrome that is observed during Vietnam War memoirs. Many wives cope with the absence of their Soldier by

living in government quarters and participating in military sponsored events, almost as if life was on hold until the return of her Soldier.

Reasons for a military induced separation would differentially limit the level of communication that could transpire. The Soldier, or dislocated marital partner, is the constraining factor on the relational communication because of the uniqueness of their context, which leads to the following research questions:

Research Question 2: How do the presence of intimacy promoting communication skills differ based on military induced separation type?

Research Question 3: How does marital satisfaction differ based on military induced separation type?

Additionally, the number of military induced separations might create a sense of routine and influence the intimacy promoting communication skills employed during the separation. The repeated absence of the dyadic partner could affect the military wives marital satisfaction.

Research Question 4: How does the presence of intimacy promoting communication skills differ based on the number of military induced separations?

Research Question 5: How does marital satisfaction differ based on the number of military induced separations?

Based on research investigating the effects of education on marital satisfaction, Laner and Russell (1994) posits that college texts tend to focus on “problematic aspects of courtship, marriage, and family life” (p. 11). Colleges and universities are social institutions where known assumptions are challenged and exploring diverse perspectives

is encouraged. Education leads people to have more realistic expectations of relationships (Laner, 1994). During academic achievement, one explores one's expectations and learns to negotiate in interpersonal relationships. Additionally, the process of education promotes self-actualization (Beck, 1996). Therefore, this study posed the following research question.

Research Question 6: How does marital satisfaction differ based on the at home spouse's educational level?

Chapter 2

Research Methods

2.1 Research Design and Procedures

This descriptive study utilized a cross-sectional design collecting data through a confidential, self-report survey. Descriptive research is necessary to provide knowledge to explain social phenomena and to demonstrate the existence of social problems. The cross sectional research design is best suited for descriptive analysis of populations with existing differences such as the situational factors found in the military culture.

The university where this research was conducted requires that its Institutional Review Board (IRB) review research involving human participants. This Board ensures that all research conducted protects human participants, and is in accordance with ethical principles. An IRB Protocol application form describing the purpose of the study and the proposed procedures, including a participant consent form, was submitted before beginning the research. In addition, the graduate student researcher completed an online course exploring research integrity.

The final sampling frame was determined in the following way. During the admission process at a northwest university, students respond to various demographic questions to include information about military status. There is an option to indicate a connection with the military as a dependent spouse, dependent child, veteran, or active duty member. With assistance from the Office of Student and Enrollment Services, a list of university email addresses was obtained for current or recent students who indicated an affiliation with the military.

The questionnaire was designed using an Internet survey resource called surveymonkey.com. This service allowed participants to respond to the survey on-line. In addition to convenience for the respondent, this technology ensured confidentiality and efficient data handling. The technology design assured that participants' email addresses were never connected to their individual responses. This strengthened assurances of confidentiality made by the researcher. Data were captured in digital form and could be imported into an Excel file for use in statistical analysis. Bypassing data entry saved time and removed the potential for human error during that process.

To solicit participation, an email was sent to potential participants, which included an electronic link that directed participants to the survey if they decided to participate in the study. Participation in the study was optional. Participants were provided documentation assuring confidentiality within the text of the email.

Since the focus of this study was to explain the effects of military induced separations on marital satisfaction and intimacy promoting communication skills, participant identification was unnecessary. Given the sensitive nature of marital intimacy, many participants might be concerned that information obtained could lead to the identification of respondents. This could detract from the study's design, and discourage participation. Therefore, confidentiality was of utmost importance and clearly explained in the participant's letter of consent (see Appendix A) found in the body of the email.

2.2 Sample

The target population for this research was married, female Army wives who have experienced a military induced separation.¹ From 508 recent or current students indicating military affiliation, and those approached through snowball sampling, 68 surveys were received. Of these 68 surveys, eight were incomplete and subsequently dropped from the sample. Due to qualifying questions based on gender and experience of being separated, four further respondents were omitted from the data set. The total number of participants included in the data set was 56. The participants ranged in age from 21 to 46 years old with a mean age of 29.5.

2.3 Measures

The questionnaire consisted of two existing scales and a demographic section (see Appendix B). The first scale assessed the spouse's perception of her Soldier's communication skills during a recent military induced separation. The second scale measured the at home spouse's perceived marital satisfaction.

2.3.1 Communication Skills

The Communication Functions Questionnaire (CFQ) developed by Burleson and Samter (1990) was used to measure the communication skills (see Appendices C & D). The CFQ was developed to evaluate the importance of communication skills associated with relationship characteristics and outcomes, and was modified to include negatively stated items that would require reverse coding. This was done to confirm that participants were reading the items rather than consistently choosing a high or low response. The scale is a thirty item, self-report, measure to evaluate partner communication skills, as for

example “Is an attentive listener when I need to talk to someone.” After reading descriptions of communication behaviors typically performed in relationships, participants indicated how important that behavior was in their marriage using a Likert scale including: *agree* (1), *somewhat agree* (2), *neither agree nor disagree* (3), *somewhat disagree* (4), and *disagree* (5). Following collection, all items were reverse coded to create responses where one equals lowest level of agreement and five equals highest level of agreement. The behaviors describe the enactment of ten different communication skills, including comforting, conflict management, ego support, listening, regulative, expressiveness, conversation, informative, narrative, and persuasion. For the 10 factors, the Cronbach alpha reliability ranged from .84 to .89 in an earlier study (Burlison & Samter, 2005). The original instrument was modified so that the participant indicated the degree to which she agreed that her spouse used the communication skill during the military induced separation. The overall Cronbach alpha for the 30-item measure in this study was .86; the Cronbach alpha for each of the 10 factors ranged from .32 to .74.

2.3.2 Marital Satisfaction

The instrument to measure marital satisfaction was the Quality Marriage Index (QMI) (Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 1994; see Appendix E). This instrument measured the participant’s perception of the quality of her marriage and therefore was used to assess marital satisfaction. The scale was a five item, self-report, measure of the perceived marital satisfaction, including items such as “My relationship with my partner is stable.” Participants evaluated their marital satisfaction by responding using a Likert scale ranging from *very strong disagreement* (1) to *very strong agreement* (7). The

Cronbach alpha for the measure in this study was .98.

2.3.3 Demographic Data

In order to describe the context of the relationship, the survey contained 15 demographic questions. Participants were asked to provide their current marital status, gender, age, year they were married, number of times they've been married (including current marriage), their spouse's military branch, the reason for the most recent military induced separation, the number of times they've been separated from their spouse, current living arrangements, employment status, and the highest level of education completed (see Appendix B). Additionally, the demographic questions asked participants to indicate whether they had received pre-marital counseling, if they had experienced a separation due to military orders, and if currently they were separated from their spouse due to military orders.

Chapter 3

Results

3.1 Analysis of Communication Skills Measure

Two steps were taken to enhance the reliability and validity of the Communication Function Questionnaire (CFQ) measure used for the multi-factor, dependent variable intimacy promoting communication skills (Burlison & Samter, 1990). First, to address consistency of the subscales, principal component factor analyses with varimax rotation were conducted on the responses to the intimacy promoting communication skills measurement scale in order to determine internal consistency and a set of factors specific to this sample. The process for determining the best solution is interpretive, meaning that the strategy for accepting a solution was based on conceptual rationale.

The open factor analysis of the measure of intimacy promoting communication skills resulted in five factors. For a factor to be included it, had to contain at least four items. Items were removed for three reasons: (a) low loading, suggesting that respondents were not reading the statement in the same manner, (b) items included a communication behavior that had a negative connotation or were ambiguous, or (c) items did not collapse conceptually with any other factor. This reduced the measure from 30 to 24 items. Statements 2, 12, 21, 22, and 24 of the original scale loaded on factor 1. Examination of these items indicated that they were compatible, and referred to Soldiers as *encouragers* when relating to the participants during separations. More specifically, encouragers used a set of communication skills that are supportive, comforting, and disclosive (shares his feelings). Statements 1, 3, 6, 10, and 28 of the original scale loaded on factor 2, and

examination of these items indicated that they were also compatible, and refer to *cooperative* communication behaviors, defined here as the communication skills that convey engaged, expressive, interpersonal communication. Statements 14, 15, 16, 18, and 25 of the scale loaded heavily on factor 3. Examination of these items indicated that they were compatible and referred to an *optimist*, defined here as someone who is upbeat and generally exhibits positive communication behaviors with his marital partner. Statements 5, 20, 29, and 30 of the scale loaded on factor 4, and examination of these items indicated that they were compatible, and referred to a Soldier as a *facilitator* meaning that he employs communication skills that work with, and improve the marital relationship with his spouse. Finally, statements 4, 11, 17, 23, and 26 of the scale loaded on factor 5, and examination of these items indicated that they too were compatible, and referred to an *open communicator* meaning he employs authentic behaviors and self-discloses with his marital partner. Reliability was high for the original 30-item scale with a Cronbach alpha of .86, and increased for the resulting 24-item scale with a Cronbach alpha of .94. The 5 factors determined had acceptable reliabilities ranging from .811 to .872.

The second step was done to address the validity of the measure and included a series of comparisons. Although the intimacy promoting communication skills measure was found to have acceptable Cronbach alpha reliability, data were found to be potentially ambiguous because the word anchors on the two ends of the 1-5 Likert type scale were transposed, instead of standard ordering of agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, and disagree, therefore obscuring the results.

Participants may have responded in one of two manners. Either they responded to the anchors of *somewhat agree* (1), and *somewhat disagree* (5) with 1 having greater value than 2 and 5 having a lower value than 4, or they responded with the typical Likert type scale in mind with 1 and 5 representing extremes.

First, in order to determine the most representative data set, the responses on intimacy promoting communication skills were compared for consistency of extremeness with responses from the marital satisfaction scale, as well as with the open-ended question provided for participant's commentary. This examination allowed for a comparison of participants that indicated extremely high or low responses across several variables. Those with extremely high levels of satisfaction as well as those who indicated their support for the military way of life through comments responded with both levels of agreement; therefore, preventing the conclusion that when the participants indicated 1's or 5's that they were indicating an extreme.

Second, the data on intimacy promoting communication skills were transformed creating a total of three different data sets, the first of which collapsed the Likert type scale to a 1-3 response set of *agree* (1), *neither agree nor disagree* (2), and *disagree* (3). The second transformation reverse coded the end pairs to a 1-5 scale with one being the highest level of agreement and 5 indicating the lowest level of agreement. The third set included the original data. Using the overall intimacy promoting communication skill score, several statistical tests were computed using all three forms of the data.

Specifically addressing research question 1 and 2, a correlation and an ANOVA were

conducted and in all instances, a pattern of non-significance and significance for the parallel tests was consistent across the three data sets.

Next, a one way repeated measures ANOVA was calculated comparing the 3 different data sets. A significant effect was found ($F_{(2, 110)} = 31.58, p < .001$). The statistical difference confirmed the need to select the most representative data set. Mean scores are not reported because they were not germane to the determination of data consistency. Given both that the results for the ANOVA and correlation were consistent (for significance or non-significance) across the data sets and that significant difference was found among the data sets for the mean score of intimacy promoting communication skills, it was decided to select the collapsed response set as the most valid because although participants indicated varying levels of agreement or disagreement in the original data, the collapsed data most directly represented the indication of agreement or disagreement.

3.2 Research Questions

Research question one queried how intimacy promoting communication skills relate to perceived marital satisfaction. Pearson correlations were calculated examining the relationship between the combined intimacy promoting communication skills scale, and each of the five subscales with marital satisfaction (see Table 1). A strong positive correlation was found ($r = .640, p < .05$), indicating a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and intimacy promoting communication skills. Intimacy promoting communication skills accounted for 41% of variance with marital satisfaction ($R^2 = .409$).

The sub-factor, facilitator, with the greatest strength of relationship accounted for 53% of variance with marital satisfaction ($R^2 = .527$).

Table 1

Correlations among Variables with Descriptive Statistics

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1. Marital Satisfaction | | | | | | | |
| 2. Intimacy Promoting Comm. Skills | .640** | | | | | | |
| 3. Encourager | .584** | .866** | | | | | |
| 4. Cooperator | .539** | .797** | .611** | | | | |
| 5. Optimist | .372** | .762** | .576** | .513** | | | |
| 6. Facilitator | .726** | .813** | .697** | .605** | .564** | | |
| 7. Open Communicator | .495** | .880** | .656** | .565** | .708** | .625** | |
| N | 56 | 56 | 56 | 56 | 56 | 56 | 56 |
| M | 6.136 | 3.608 | 3.512 | 3.384 | 3.668 | 3.614 | 3.505 |
| SD | 1.524 | .610 | .861 | .675 | .943 | .831 | .486 |
| Minimum/ | 1.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 1.80 | 1.00 | 1.20 | 2.17 |
| Maximum | 7.00 | 4.50 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 4.80 | 5.00 | 4.30 |
| Coefficient Alpha | .98 | .940 | .872 | .811 | .816 | .847 | .839 |

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Multiple linear regression was used to examine intimacy promoting communication skills as predictors of marital satisfaction. A significant regression equation was found

($F_{(5, 50)} = 12.749, p < .001$), with an R^2 of .560. The facilitator factor ($t=4.191, p < .001$) was found to drive the relationship between marital satisfaction and intimacy promoting communication skills. Interpretation of the standardized beta weights for this model indicated that the facilitator factor ($\beta = .599$) significantly contributed to the equation; however, the encourager factor ($\beta = .125$), the cooperater factor ($\beta = .142$), the optimist factor ($\beta = -.162$), and the open communicator factor ($\beta = .072$) did not significantly contribute.

Research question two asked how the overall scores of intimacy promoting communication skills differ based on the type of military induced separation. A one-way ANOVA was used to determine whether significant differences exist in the means of intimacy promoting communication skills based on the type of separation. The ANOVA was not significant ($F_{(2, 52)} = .299, p > .05$). The military wives experiencing different types of military induced separations did not differ significantly in their overall scores of intimacy promoting communication.

Research question three asked how marital satisfaction differs based on military induced separation type. A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze differences in the means on marital satisfaction with respect to the type of separation. No statistically significant difference was found ($F_{(2, 52)} = .026, p > .05$). Military wives reporting different types of military induced separations did not differ significantly in their levels of marital satisfaction.

Research question four inquired how the presence of intimacy promoting communication skills differs based on the number of military induced separations. The

observed number of separations ranged from 1 to 25, which were consolidated into three groups: 1-8 number of separations ($N = 37$), 9-17 number of separations ($N = 11$), and 18-25 numbers of separations ($N = 6$). Using a one-way ANOVA, no statistically significance difference was found ($F_{(2, 52)} = .715, p > .05$). Military wives reporting different numbers of military induced separations did not differ statistically in their overall perception of their husbands' intimacy promoting communication skills.

Research question five sought to examine whether marital satisfaction differs based on the number of military induced separations. A one-way ANOVA was used to test for difference between the number of military induced separations and marital satisfaction. No significant difference was found ($F_{(2, 52)} = 2.16, p > .05$). The groups based on the number of military induced separations experienced did not differ significantly with respect to marital satisfaction.

Research question six explored how marital satisfaction differs based on education level. The observed responses were reduced into three different groups: high school education, college level education, and graduate/professional educational level. After a one-way ANOVA, no statistically significant difference was found ($F_{(2, 52)} = .841, p > .05$). However, the greatest mean for marital satisfaction was reported by the group with the highest level of education (see Table 2).

3.3 Post Hoc Analysis

In order to explain other connections between contextual factors that affect Soldiers and military spouses, a series of post hoc tests for difference were conducted with additional demographic variables, marital satisfaction, and communication skills.

Table 2**Descriptive Statistics for Education Level and Marital Satisfaction**

| Education level | N | M | SD |
|------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| High school | 6 | 6.533 | .2231 |
| College | 46 | 6.017 | 1.6475 |
| Graduate/Professional | 4 | 6.900 | .2000 |

These additional tests helped to further describe the factors that effect marital satisfaction and intimacy promoting communication skills within military marital relationships.

A *t* test was calculated to compare the mean score for marital satisfaction of participants who indicated receiving premarital counseling with participants not receiving premarital counseling ($t_{(49.69)} = 2.526, p < .05$). The mean of the group who received premarital counseling was significantly higher than the mean of the group who didn't receive premarital counseling (see Table 3). A *t* test was calculated comparing mean scores for intimacy promoting communication of military spouses who indicated receiving premarital counseling with the mean score for military spouses didn't receive premarital counseling. No significant difference was found ($t_{(53)} = .778, p < .05$). The mean of the intimacy promoting communication score of spouses who received premarital counseling is slightly higher than the mean score for those who did not receive premarital counseling (see Table 3).

A *t* test was calculated comparing mean scores of marital satisfaction for military spouses who are employed with those who are not employed. No significant difference

was found ($t_{(53)} = .226, p < .05$). The mean of military spouses that work was slightly higher than the mean of military spouses that don't work (see Table 3). A t test was calculated comparing mean scores of intimacy promoting communication skills for military spouses who are employed with those that are not employed. No significant differences was found ($t_{(53)} = -.175, p < .05$). The mean of employed military spouses was nearly identical to that of military wives who are not employed (see Table 3).

The marital satisfaction mean of military wives working part time, full time, and as volunteers was compared using a one-way ANOVA. No significant difference was found ($F_{(2, 30)} = .031, p < .05$). However, the mean score for those who volunteer was higher than for those who work (see Table 3). The intimacy promoting communication mean score of military wives working part time, full time, and volunteer was compared using a one-way ANOVA. No significant difference was found ($F_{(2, 30)} = .031, p < .05$). However, the mean score for those who work part time is slightly higher than those who work full time and those who volunteer (see Table 3).

A t test was calculated comparing the mean scores of marital satisfaction for participants based on the number of times married. No significant difference was found ($t_{(9,66)} = .384, p < .05$). The mean marital satisfaction of participants married once was slightly higher than for participants who were married twice (see Table 3). A t test was calculated comparing the intimacy promoting communication score for participants married once with participants married twice. No significant difference was found

($t_{(9.99)} = .314, p < .05$). The mean intimacy promoting communication score for participants married once was higher than the mean score of participants who were married twice (see Table 3).

A *t* test was calculated comparing the marital satisfaction mean score for Air Force wives with Army wives. The mean marital satisfaction of Air Force wives ($M = 6.78, SD = .338$) was significantly higher than the mean of Army wives ($M = 5.99, SD = 1.65; t_{(52.7)} = 2.93, p < .05$). A *t* test was calculated comparing the intimacy promoting communication mean score for Air Force wives with the mean score from Army wives. The mean score for intimacy promoting communication skills indicated by Air Force wives ($M = 3.75, SD = .283$) was significantly higher than the mean of Army wives ($M = 3.50, SD = .542; t_{(21.7)} = 2.04, p < .05$). The subscales indexing optimist, facilitator, and open communicators drive the overall difference in intimacy promoting communication scores (see Table 4).

Table 3**Results of Difference Tests**

| Independent Variable | Marital Satisfaction | | Intimacy Promoting Communication Skills | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|--|-----------|
| | M | SD | M | SD |
| Pre-marital Counseling | | | | |
| Yes (N=10) | 6.76 | .420 | 3.66 | .506 |
| No (N=45) | 6.11 | 1.48 | 3.52 | .518 |
| Employed | | | | |
| Yes (N=29) | 6.18 | 1.43 | 3.50 | .544 |
| No (N=26) | 6.09 | 1.68 | 3.52 | .532 |
| Employment Type | | | | |
| Part time (N=12) | 6.15 | 1.31 | 3.56 | .454 |
| Full time (N=17) | 6.19 | 1.54 | 3.51 | .610 |
| Volunteer (N=4) | 6.35 | .500 | 3.43 | .423 |
| Number of Marriages | | | | |
| Once (N=47) | 6.18 | 1.44 | 3.56 | .508 |
| Twice (N=9) | 5.91 | 2.00 | 3.32 | .644 |

Table 4

Results of Independent Sample *t*-test for Military Branch and Dependent Variables

| | <i>t</i> | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Military Branch | M | SD |
|--|----------|-------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|------|
| Marital Satisfaction | 2.93 | 52.7 | .005 | Air Force | 6.778 | .338 |
| | | | | Army | 6.00 | 1.65 |
| Intimacy Promoting Communication Skills | 2.04 | 21.65 | .054 | Air Force | 3.75 | .282 |
| | | | | Army | 3.50 | .542 |
| Encourager | .550 | 53 | .585 | Air Force | 3.64 | .433 |
| | | | | Army | 3.51 | .682 |
| Cooperator | .567 | 53 | .573 | Air Force | 3.51 | .693 |
| | | | | Army | 3.38 | .653 |
| Optimist | 2.17 | 33.88 | .037 | Air Force | 3.87 | .200 |
| | | | | Army | 3.64 | .531 |
| Facilitator | 3.16 | 43.9 | .003 | Air Force | 3.92 | .177 |
| | | | | Army | 3.58 | .591 |
| Open Communicator | 2.53 | 21.32 | .019 | Air Force | 3.84 | .343 |
| | | | | Army | 3.47 | .650 |

Note: Air Force N=9; Army N=46

Chapter 4

Discussion

This study examines the effects of military induced separations on intimacy promoting communication skills and marital satisfaction. More specifically, this study investigated the relationship between the numbers of military induced separations and perceived marital satisfaction as well as the relationship between the number of military induced separations and the presence of intimacy promoting communication skills. In addition, this study examined the relationship between type of military induced separation and perceived marital satisfaction as well as type of military induced separation and the presence of intimacy promoting communication skills.

4.1 Findings and Conclusions

This study found a relationship between marital satisfaction and intimacy promoting communication skills for this sample of military wives, which leads to a few conclusions about military induced separations. The first conclusion relates to marital satisfaction and intimacy promoting communication skills, the second focuses on the relationship between education level and marital satisfaction, the third is a conceptual application for marriage counselors working with military couples: within the context of military marriages, the only constant is that of change.

4.1.1 Conclusion One

In light of Findell's (2006) study, which reminds military wives of the priority the military unit has, this research found that facilitator aspects of Soldier's intimacy promoting communication skills drove the at home spouse's marital satisfaction. Given

the increased responsibility assumed by the at home spouse during military induced separations, she seems to place great value in the Soldier's willingness and ability to promote togetherness by encouraging her to work through issues despite being geographically separated.

The observed strong correlation between marital satisfaction and intimacy promoting communication skills indicates a positive relationship between the two variables; for example, if there's an increase in intimacy promoting communication skills this will cause an increase in marital satisfaction; conversely, if the use of intimacy promoting communication skills decreases then so does marital satisfaction. During a military induced separation, a situation might arise where the at home spouse needs help accessing information. If the Soldier simply says "I don't know go ask the Rear Commander", the spouse may perceive "I don't have time for this." The content of the words may not be offensive yet the underlying message could create feelings of unimportance for the at home spouse and eventually decreased marital satisfaction.

Participants overall indicated high levels of marital satisfaction. Military troops are deployed multiple times, and according to the media, this trend will continue. The military indicates a drop in retention rates and low enlistment rates; however, this wear and tear on the troops and their families does not seem to translate for this sample of military wives. Even though the marital dyad was separated, they perceived their Soldier was communicating encouragement and assisting in processing everyday issues from afar.

My observations, as a member of this population, suggest that the indication of high levels of satisfaction could be related to the halo effect. The halo effect explains the way wives rate their spouses in terms of measured factors with a general satisfaction and not considering different characteristics. People tend to think of others in general terms and are unable to distinguish various opinions; for example, “my husband is generally a good person.”

Another explanation to the unexpectedly high marital satisfaction is that military spouses might relate marital satisfaction with patriotism. In a New York Times article, Kaufman indicated results from “internal studies show that couples are deeply stressed by the war and contemplating divorce at a much higher rate” (2008, April 6). However, at home spouses may confuse feelings of dissatisfaction with not being patriotic and ascribe higher levels of satisfaction to their marriages than they actually feel.

4.1.2 Conclusion Two

Drawing from existing research, education provides the opportunity to form realistic expectations of relationships and creates a sense of self-awareness, which facilitates the acknowledgment of one’s own ideals (Beck, 1996). Although no significant difference in marital satisfaction was found among participants with different levels of education, the sequence of the mean scores was unexpected. This research found that participants, who attained a high school education level, were more satisfied with their marriage than those with a college education. Perhaps for this population a college level education makes areas of dissatisfaction apparent. However, the participants who indicated a graduate or professional level of education were the most satisfied with their marriage. Perhaps these

participants have attained skills that support communication of their expectations for their relationships and are better able to then manage the relational dynamics.

4.1.3 Conclusion Three

Given military spouses' differing approaches to identification with the military, this research described the positive influences of premarital counseling and military branch affiliation on marital satisfaction. In light of this evidence, military programs should incorporate aspects of counseling that might increase marital satisfaction within military families. Counselors might remind couples who are experiencing marital dissatisfaction from a recent military induced separation that the relationship requires mutual devotion (Wood, 2000).

Given the strong relationship between communication and satisfaction, counselors should discuss the importance of intimacy promoting communication skills to maintain and increase levels of marital satisfaction in the face of military induced separations. This counseling could be valuable before and following separation for the couple and during separation for either partner separately. Communication exercises are necessary in order for marital partners to identify the expectations each brings into the relationship. When building communication skills, the counselor must keep in mind the turbulent nature of the military and understand how the military culture permeates the Soldier's life, as well as that of the family. Since military induced separations are becoming more prevalent for career Army Soldiers, military programs need to incorporate a communicative perspective when creating family support models to promote adaptation and transition.

My observations, being connected to one branch and knowing spouses affiliated with the other military branch, suggest differences between the culture of the Army and that of the Air Force. The Army deploys in larger groups and more frequently than do Air Force personnel, thus leaving Army wives more often struggling to communicate intimacy during these geographical separations. Another observation focuses on the difference in lifestyle among Air Force families and that of Army families; more specifically, Air Force families are made to feel essential to the mission whereas Army families are treated as if they jeopardize the mission.

4.2 Limitations

The first limitation of this study is the limited access to the military community in order to conduct formal research, which is perhaps why there is a lack of research that focuses on understanding the military community. This limited access to the target population resulted in a non-representative sample. According to de Vaus (2005), representative samples are necessary if results obtained are to be generalized to a wider population; therefore, these results are not generalizable to the general population.

A second limitation to this study is the transposing of the response set for the intimacy promoting communication skills measure. Although this oversight occurred, the choice to use a collapsed scale assured validity. The determination of significance was not affected by statistical error. However, this oversight reduced the variance of the data.

Both a limitation and an advantage to this research is my personal experience with military induced separations and the military community. Many current military induced separation from my spouse, enhanced my ability to recognize and target specific elements

that would be relevant to this unique population. Although I paid great attention to employing a systematic approach to producing new knowledge, I experienced difficulty when attempting to make my culture opaque.

4.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should focus on military wives' identification with the military community. In light of the increasing number of military induced separations, this study's finding of high marital satisfaction suggests that there are other factors contributing to marital satisfaction such as the job security that a military career offers, or the sense of community promoted with the inclusive services provided on military installations. Additionally, the sense of community may also differ based on the branch of the military. Given the observed differences between Air Force wives' and Army wives' perceived marital satisfaction for this sample, it is necessary to further understand the differences in the military wives' sense of community and personal identity experienced across branches.

Due to the amount of qualitative comment received on the last item of the survey, future research should employ mixed methods to present an encompassing view of the effects of military induced separations. Many of the participants wrote to clarify and contextualize their responses as one partner in a dyadic relationship. Many responses indicated that participants felt a sense of duty to their relationship, suggesting they did not want to portray their husband in a bad light. Several comments addressed the need for research regarding communication and military induced separations.

Additionally, future research should look at comparing the type of communication channels employed to facilitate intimacy during military induced separations. With increasing access to technology, deployed Soldiers have the ability to communicate asynchronously with the at home spouse. Drawing from the results of this study, future research should explore the influence of technology on the communication channels used to promote intimacy.

4.4 Conclusion

This research responded to Karney and Crown's (2007) call for research on the military community given increased suicide rates and degradation of relationships. This study demonstrated a strong relationship between intimacy promoting communication skills and marital satisfaction in military marriages experiencing separation. Overall, this study suggests that the communication skill set of facilitation by the absent spouse has the greatest impact on at home spouse's feeling of marital satisfaction. The findings from this research suggests that marriage counselors need to attend to the communicative needs of this population. If the approach presented here serves as a catalyst for research that helps us understand more about ways to strengthen relationships for military families, this work will make an important contribution.

Endnote

¹ Initial plans included on-post access to spouses of a local United States military base to create the sampling frame. The proximal location of this military installation provides an immediate access to participants; furthermore, the fact that Army personnel deploy in larger groups and more frequently than do Air Force personnel provides the opportunity for a larger more diverse population. A proposal was prepared for Office of Public Affairs for this installation. After four weeks, the request to conduct formal research was disapproved but left the door open to informally contact Family Readiness Groups.

References

- Alder, R. B., Rosenfeld, L. B., & Proctor, II, R. F. (2007) *Interplay: The process of interpersonal communication*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, A. P. (2005). Daughters of mars: Army officers' wives and military culture on the American frontier. *The Historian*, 67(1), 20-42.
- Beck, S. (1996). *Education for self-awareness*. Retrieved April 11, 2008, from the Founder of the World Peace Communications website: <http://san.beck.org/Self-Awareness-Ed.html>
- Bowen, G. L., Mancini, J. A., Martin, J. A., Ware, W. B., & Nelson, J. P. (2003). Promoting the adaptation of military families: An empirical test of a community practice model. *Family Relations*, 52, 33-44.
- Brancaforte, D. B. M. (2000). Camouflaged identities and army wives: Narratives of self and place on the margins of the U. S. military family. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61(02A), 662. (UMI No. 9962008)
- Buhrmester, D., & Furman, W. (1987). The development of companionship and intimacy. *Child Development*, 58, 1101-1113.
- Burleson, B. R., & Samter, W. (1990). Effects of cognitive complexity on the perceived importance of communication skills in friends. *Communication Quarterly*, 50, 192-203.
- Burleson, B. R., Kunkel, A. W., & Birch, J. D. (1994). Thoughts about talk in romantic relationships: Similarity makes for attraction (and happiness, too). *Communication Quarterly*, 42, 259-273.

- Burleson, B. R., & Samter, W. (2005). The role of communication in same-sex friendships: A comparison among African Americans, Asian Americans, and European Americans. *Communication Quarterly*, 53(3), 265-283.
- Carpenter, J., & Freese, J. (1979). Three aspects of self-disclosure as they relate to quality of adjustment. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 43, 78-85.
- de Vaus, D. (2005). *Research design in social research*. London: Sage.
- Dowrick, S. (1991). *Intimacy and solitude: Balancing closeness and independence*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Findell, T. (2006). Anxiety, depression, and stress levels among military spouses. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 44(06), 2626. (UMI No. 1434636)
- Griffith, B. A., & Graham, C. C. (2004). Meeting needs and making meaning: The pursuit of goals. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 60(1), 25-41.
- Heller, P. E., Wood, B. (1998). The process of intimacy: Similarity, understanding, and gender. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 24(3), 273-288.
- Hibben, J. (1990). When a dyad is not a dyad: Communication and marital disruption. *Dissertations Abstracts International*, 28(04), 475. (UMI No. 1340117)
- Karney, B. R., & Crown, J. S. (2007). *Families under stress: An assessment of data, theory, and research on military and divorce in the military*. Pittsburgh, PA: RAND: National Defense Research Institute.

- Kaufman, L. (2008, April 8). After War, Love Can Be a Battlefield. *The New York Times*, Retrieved April 17, 2008, from http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/06/fashion/06marriage.html?_r=2&scp=1&sq=After+War%2C+Love+can+be+a+Battlefield&st=nyt&oref=slogin&oref=slogin
- Kohen, J. (1984). The military career is a family affair. *Journal of Family Issues*, 5(3), 401-418.
- Laner, M. R., & Russell, J. N. (1994). Course content and change in students: Are marital expectations altered by marriage education? *Teaching Sociology*, 22(1), 10-18.
- Marriott, B. (1991). The use of social networks by naval officers' wives: A study of organizational relationships. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 53(02A), 542. (UMI No. 9219213)
- McLeland, K. C., & Sutton, G. W. (2005). Military service, marital status, and men's relationship satisfaction. *Individual differences research*, 3(3), 177-182.
- Morrison, H. (1996). *Intimacy*. Unpublished master's thesis, Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas.
- Moss, B. F., & Schwebel, A. I. (1993). Defining intimacy in romantic relationships. *Family Relations*, 42(1), 31-37.
- Oranthinkel, J. & Vansteenwegen, A. (2006). Marital stability defined in terms of status of the relationship. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 28, 497-504.
- Rubin, R. B., Palmgreen, P., & Sypher, H. E. (Eds.). (1994). *Communication research measures: A sourcebook*. New York: The Guilford Press.

- Stafford, L. (2005). *Maintaining long-distance and cross-residential relationships*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Swain, S. (1989). Covert intimacy in men's friendships: Closeness in men's friendships. In B. J. Risman & P. Schwartz (Eds.), *Gender in intimate relationships: A microstructural approach* (pp. 71-86). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Waring, E. M., & Chelune, G. J. (1983). Marital intimacy and self-disclosure. *Journal of clinical psychology, 39*(2), 183-190.
- Watson, S. (2004). Effects of the war in Iraq on military marriages. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 66*(01B), 582. (UMI No. 3160025)
- Weigel, D. J. (2003). A communication approach to the construction of commitment in the early years of marriage: A qualitative study. *The Journal of Family Communication, 3*(1), 1-19.
- Wood, J. (1995). *Relational communication: Continuity and change in personal relationships*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Wood, J. (2000). *Relational communication: Continuity and change in personal relationships* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Wood, S., & Scarville, J. (1995). Waiting wives: Separation and reunion among Army wives. *Armed Forces & Society, 21*(2), 217-237.

Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Communicating during Military Induced Separations

IRB# 06-70 Date Approved: October 3, 2007

Description of the study:

You are being contacted about a research study exploring the strategies used to maintain relationships during military induced separations. As a military spouse who has experienced several military induced separations, I am exploring this topic for my graduate thesis with the Department of Communication at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). I need your help to explain the effects of the military lifestyle on maintaining effective communication within couples and families.

During the UAF admission process, you indicated on your application a connection with the military (i.e. dependent spouse, dependent child, or active duty). I obtained your email address in a report pulled from the UAF directory system through Student and Enrollment Services.

If you are female, married to a Soldier, and have been separated because of military orders, please accept this invitation to participate in this study. (If you do not meet these criteria but a member of your family or a friend is willing to participate, please share this letter with her).

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to read descriptions of communication behaviors thought to be typical in marital relationships and then asked to indicate the degree to which you experience this type of communication from your husband while separated. The behaviors describe communication such as informing, responding, and storytelling. The following statement is an example from the survey: "Is an attentive listener when I need to talk to someone." Not all questions will apply to you, please provide as much information that pertains to your situation as possible.

Benefits and Risks of Being in the Study:

By participating in this study, you will be helping friends and future military wives understand the communication that helps maintain relationships during military induced separations. Our experiences as military wives are valuable and this is an opportunity for you to share yours. The data will be helpful in explaining the effects of military separations on marriages and provide information to improve family and Soldier readiness. There are no anticipated risks involved in the research process, however, if this survey affects you emotionally, please make an appointment to talk to a professional. As a military spouse, you can receive free support and counseling at Fort Wainwright through the Community Health Center at 907.353.6059, Chaplain Counseling

907.353.6059, Army Community Service at 907.353.4227, Red Cross at 907.353.7234, or by contacting Military One Source 1.800.342.9647 available 24/7.

Confidentiality:

Your participation is voluntary. The information you share in this study will be confidential. To protect this, your name will not be requested and your responses will not be connected to your email address. The data will be examined in groups and as a whole but never individually. Your responses are only available to me as part of a group with other participant responses. Filling out the survey indicates your willingness to participate in the study. The information will be stored securely in the Department of Communication of the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Contact Information:

If you have questions about the questionnaire or any other portion of this research project, please feel free to contact me, Deb Cynar, Gruening 503H, fdjc@uaf.edu, 907.356.1862, or you may contact my thesis advisor Dr. Christie Cooper, Assistant Professor of Communication, Gruening 503H, ffcecl@uaf.edu, 907.474.5060. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Research Coordinator in the Office of Research Integrity at 907.474.7800, or fyirb@uaf.edu. Please reference IRB #07-60.

Your response to this survey is an indication of your willingness to participate.

Thank you,

Deb Cynar

Appendix B
Communication Survey

Section I:

Instructions: Please mark the response or fill in the blank that best describes you.

What is your current marital status?

- Married
 Separated

Sex/Gender:

- Male
 Female

Indicate the year you were married: _____

Did you have pre-marital counseling before your current marriage?

- Yes No

How many times have you been married including your current marriage?

- Once
 Twice
 Three
 More than three

What branch of the military is your spouse affiliated?

- Air Force
 Army
 Coast Guard
 Marines
 Navy
 National Guard/Reserves

Due to military orders, have you and your spouse been physically separated?

- Yes No

For the most recent military separation, please indicate the reason:

- Training (i.e. basic, AIT, NTC, JRTC)
 Deployment
 Non-command sponsored (i.e. Korea, Guam, Japan)

Due to military reasons, are you and your Soldier currently separated?

- Yes No

Including the most recent or current military separation, how many times have you been separated from your spouse? Please indicate a specific number. _____

Indicate the year you were born? _____

What are your current living arrangements?

Rent

Own

Government housing

Other--please explain: _____

Are you employed?

Yes No

If yes, I work:

Part time (less than 20 hours a week)

Full time (40 hours or more a week)

Volunteer (not paid but regular work schedule)

Please indicate the highest level of education you completed:

less than high school

high school diploma/GED

some college

certificate/specialize training

2 year college degree (AA, AAS, AS, associate)

4 year college degree (BA, BS, BBA, BSW, BT, bachelor)

Master's degree (MA, MS, MSW)

Doctoral degree

Professional degree (MD, JD)

Section II:

Instructions: Think of your marital relationship with your husband. For each item below select the answer that best represents your belief about or attitude toward the quality of your marriage. Circle the response that indicates your degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement from the choices below. For items 1 through 5, use the following scale:

Very strong disagreement (VSD) = 1

Moderate disagreement (MD) = 2

Slight disagreement (SD) = 3

Neutral (N) = 4

Slight agreement (SA) = 5

Moderate agreement (MA) = 6

Very strong agreement (VSA) = 7

| | VSD | MD | SD | N | SA | MA | VSA |
|---|-----|----|----|---|----|----|-----|
| 1. We have a good marriage. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. My relationship with my partner is very stable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. Our marriage is strong. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. I really feel like part of a team with my partner. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Section III:

Instructions: Below are descriptions of several different kinds of communication behaviors. Think about your husband and his communication with you during your current or most recent military induced separation. Read through the description carefully, then circle the number that best represents the degree to which you agree with the statement. For each item, please use the following scale:

| | Agree 1 | Somewhat Agree 2 | Neither agree Nor disagree 3 | Somewhat Disagree 4 | Disagree 5 |
|--|------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree |
| 1. Does not listen carefully when I am speaking. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Can help me work through my emotion when I'm feeling upset or depressed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Shows me it's possible to resolve our disagreements in a way that won't hurt or embarrass each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Is a good conversationalist. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Makes me feel like I'm a good person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Doesn't explain things clearly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Can get me laughing because he is so good at telling a joke or story. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Makes me feel like I've made my own decision even though I do mostly what he wants. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Shows me that I have the ability to fix my own mistakes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Is not open in expressing his thoughts and feelings to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Is an attentive listener when I need to talk to someone. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| 12. Does not comfort me when I am feeling sad or depressed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Persuades me that doing things his way is the best. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Makes me realize that it is better to deal with conflicts we have than to keep things bottled up inside. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Is able to start up a conversation easily. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Encourages me to believe in myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Makes me understand exactly what he is referring to. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Is able to tell a story in a way that captures my attention. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Can convince me to do just about anything. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Encourages me to feel like I can learn from my mistakes by working through things with me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Gives me his full attention when I need to talk. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. Helps me feel proud of my accomplishments. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Lets me know what's going on in his world. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. Helps make me feel better when I'm hurt or depressed about something | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. Can make conversation easy and fun. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. Shares his joys, as well as sorrows, with me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. Can't express complicated ideas in a direct and clear way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree |
|---|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|
| 28. Can work through our relational problems by addressing the issues rather than engaging in personal attacks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. Helps me see how I can improve myself by learning from my mistakes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. Can make even everyday events seem funny or exciting when telling a story. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

31. Please use the space below to provide comments related to this survey or additional information that you believe to be relevant to this study about the effects of military separations on marriages.

Thank you for your time!

Appendix C

Letter of Permission

From: "Brant Burleson" <brantb@insightbb.com>
Subject: RE: graduate student request
Date: Thu, January 31, 2008 8:28 pm
To: "Deborah Cynar" <fndjc@uaf.edu>

Hi Deb.

Sure, feel free to use the CFQ in your research. Attached is the latest version, a scoring key with some reliability and validity notes, and some research reports that have used the CFQ. Hope this helps. Let me know if you need anything else.

Regards,

Brant

-----Original Message-----

From: Deborah Cynar [mailto:fndjc@uaf.edu]
Sent: Thursday, January 31, 2008 6:07 PM
To: brantb@purdue.edu
Subject: graduate student request

Hello Dr. Burleson,

I am a graduate student currently working towards a Master of Arts degree in Professional Communication at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. I am asking permission to use the Communication Functions Questionnaire for my thesis.

If granted permission may I include a copy of the Communication Functions Questionnaire in the Appendix of the thesis? In addition, I am requesting permission to copy the inventory so that I may distribute it to the subjects for data collection.

I am very interested in using your questionnaire in my search for data concerning the maintenance of marital intimacy during military induced separations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Deb Cynar

Appendix D

Communication Functions Questionnaire (CFQ-30)

Instructions: Below are descriptions of several different kinds of communication behaviors. Think about your husband and his communication with you during your current or most recent military induced separation. Read through the description carefully, then circle the number that best represents the degree to which you agree with the statement. For each item, please use the following scale:

Agree 1 ----- 5 Disagree

1. Does not listen carefully when I am speaking.
2. Can help me work through my emotions when I'm feeling upset or depressed.
3. Shows me it's possible to resolve our disagreements in a way that won't hurt or embarrass each other.
4. Is a good conversationalist.
5. Makes me feel like I'm a good person.
6. Doesn't explain things clearly.
7. Can get me laughing because he is so good at telling a joke or story.
8. Makes me feel like I've made my own decision even though I do mostly what he wants.
9. Shows me that I have the ability to fix my own mistakes.
10. Is not open in expressing his thoughts and feelings to me.
11. Is an attentive listener when I need to talk to someone.
12. Does not comfort me when I am feeling sad or depressed.
13. Persuades me that doing things his way is the best.
14. Makes me realize that it is better to deal with conflicts we have than to keep things bottled up inside.
15. Is able to start up a conversation easily.
16. Encourages me to believe in myself.

17. Makes me understand exactly what he/she is referring to.
18. Is able to tell a story in a way that captures my attention.
19. Can convince me to do just about anything.
20. Encourages me to feel like I can learn from my mistakes by working through things with me.
21. Gives me his full attention when I need to talk.
22. Helps me feel proud of my accomplishments.
23. Lets me know what's going on in his/her world.
24. Helps make me feel better when I'm hurt or depressed about something
25. Can make conversation easy and fun.
26. Shares his/her joys, as well as sorrows, with me.
27. Can't express complicated ideas in a direct, clear way.
28. Can work through our relational problems by addressing the issues rather than engaging in personal attacks.
29. Helps me see how I can improve myself by learning from my mistakes.
30. Can make even everyday events seem funny or exciting when telling a story.

Note: Adapted from Burlison, B. R. & Samter, W. (1990). Effects of cognitive complexity on the perceived importance of communication skills in friends. *Communication Research, 17*, 165-182.

Appendix E

Quality Marriage Index

Think of your marital relationship with your husband. For each item below, select the answer that best represents your belief about or attitude toward the quality of your marriage. Circle the response that indicates your degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement from the choices below.

Very strong 1 ----- 7 Very strong
Disagreement Agreement

1. We have a good marriage.
2. My relationship with my partner is very stable.
3. Our marriage is strong.
4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.
5. I really feel like part of a team with my partner.

Note: Adapted from Rubin, R. B., Palmgreen, P., & Sypher, H. E. (Eds.). (1994). *Communication research measures: A sourcebook*. New York: The Guilford Press.