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The Impact of British Military Foreign Postings on Accompanying Spouses

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THE IMPACT OF BRITISH MILITARY FOREIGN POSTINGS ON ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

By

GILLIAN BLAKELY

A thesis submitted to Plymouth University
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Nursing and Midwifery
Faculty of Health, Education and Society

September 2012

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Abstract

Gillian Blakely

The Impact of British Military Foreign Posting on Accompanying Spouses

In this thesis I report an investigation into the psychological, emotional and social impact of British military foreign postings on accompanying spouses. I adopted an ethnographic methodology utilising a four phase mixed method approach consisting of one quantitative and three qualitative components. The thesis was based on research data collected in Phase 1 from a systematic review of British and US military research focusing on the experiences of accompanying spouses on overseas postings. Data from Phase 2 focused on the experiences from 34 British military spouses based in one location in southern Europe and were collected via individual interviews or focus groups. In Phase 3 data were collated via an online forum from 13 other British military spouses, who had experienced postings to alternative worldwide locations, rather than the single one identified in Phase 2. The final phase represented the study's quantitative component, which further examined the findings from the previous qualitative phases through 136 responses to an online survey.

The systematic review highlighted that the impact of a foreign posting could be detrimental to the military spouse's well-being particularly if support resources were inadequate. Thematic analysis of data from Phases 2 and 3 corroborated the importance of support networks on international postings, but also identified the fundamental influence of individual differences and personal meaning-making of the military spouse. Ultimately, in Phase 4 multiple linear regression analysis determined that a person's level of tough-mindedness, their self-efficacy and available instrumental support were all significant predictors of the perceived level of support provided by the British military.

Overseas relocations are not beneficial for all military spouses. To have a greater understanding of this impact, it is necessary to examine and combine principles in the domains of sociology and psychology. The outcome of this then feeds into adjustment theories and contributes to the field of healthcare practice. Nonetheless, the military are in a constructive position to maximise the effectiveness of support resources alongside health professionals to provide the holistic support that military spouses may need. Specifically, regular informal checks from a healthcare professional or a support worker to assess the well-being of the military spouse could help early identification of any coping problems. This together with cross-cultural awareness training and a greater involvement of the military spouse throughout the relocation process could enhance their foreign posting experience.

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Finally, to my wonderful husband Nick, because of you I am very proud to be a military spouse. You have been there for me through every stage of this study, including reading the whole thing at the end! You mean, and will always mean the world to me.

This thesis is dedicated to all the military spouses out there, past, present and future.

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Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

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Dated _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

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"...people with normal lives can't possibly understand what it's like to be sent from England to Brussels to Trinidad to Barbados to India to West Africa and then to Syria without a break in between [...] I know exactly what it feels like to be an Autumn leaf – detached, insecure, tossed helplessly around in [my husband's] slipstream" (Keenan, 2006, p.10).

1.1   Introduction to the research

The quotation above depicts the experiences of Brigid Keenan, who frequently relocated to many overseas settings due to her husband's career within the diplomatic services. In this quotation Brigid succinctly illustrates what she felt to be an extraordinary and rather unpredictable lifestyle. Equally, military spouses are also renowned for experiencing the upheavals of frequent mobility due to their husband's or wife's employment, and these moves can also incorporate international postings. Therefore, in considering the impact of British military foreign postings on accompanying spouses, the aim of this thesis was to address the complex experiences of military spouses as a unique cohesive group temporarily assigned to overseas locations. Consequently, it was an ethnographic study exploring the perspectives of a sub-cultural unit.

From my own experience of relocation due to my husband's career within the Royal Navy, I understood the potentially temporary nature of residence within a particular place. Nonetheless, this did not necessarily make it any easier when faced with an international relocation. Having established a network of friends, employment and a private home, I was leaving that all behind to travel to a country where I could not

speak the language, had no employment, friends or family, but it did mean that I would have quality time with my husband.

Unmistakably, the move would bring many challenges and new experiences but I was unsure how I was going to react to them. Fortunately, the military lifestyle was not unusual to me, due to my 13 years of service within the Royal Navy Reserves, however living overseas was completely novel. Prior to the move I experienced a diverse range of emotions and found myself becoming quite irritated when individuals would remark "You are going on holiday for two years, what have you got to be anxious about?" Consequently, I just felt compelled to agree with them. This made me question whether other military spouses were also experiencing similar quandaries and what their reasons were for accompanying their serving spouse overseas. Furthermore, due to being trained as an adult nurse I also considered the potential implications such a life event may have on a military spouse's well-being.

I found the whole international move quite unsettling and, initially, could not adjust to my new surroundings. During this period I attended a 'wives' coffee morning' and my first greeting was to be asked who my husband was and whether I had any children. Following my response I was told "Oh, you don't have any children, you should go and talk to [name] she doesn't have any either". Although the individual thought she was being helpful, her statement had a profound impact on me. It was at that point I realised I was now a 'wife of' and that I appeared to have no other identity. Nonetheless, over time I developed some cherished friendships and was able to tolerate my new environment. However, my initial encounter at that coffee morning always held resonance. It extended my interest about the experiences of other

military spouses on my posting and on other foreign postings, and how and to what extent they were able to readjust to their new environment.

1.2   Background of the study

To allow a greater understanding of a military lifestyle the following section provides a brief background into the routine often experienced within military families. Section 1.2.2 then indicates the impact of relocation on accompanying spouses. When necessary these individuals will be referred as 'trailing spouses' a phrase endeared to those who frequently relocate due to their husband or wife's employment (Keenan, 2006), and encompasses both military and non-military (e.g. corporate, clergy or diplomatic) spouses.

1.2.1   Military life

The British Armed Forces consists of three services: Royal Navy (including Royal Marines), British Army and Royal Air Force (RAF) (Ministry of Defence (MoD), 2012). Generally, deployments[1] encompass four scenarios:

1. The serving member relocates on their own during week days to attend a domestic base unit and returns at weekends to their family and usual residence.

2. The military spouse (and children) relocate with the serving member to their domestic base within the United Kingdom (UK) and generally reside in a married quarter (service family accommodation) located on or near the base.

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[1] Temporary assignments to new locations

3. The serving spouse is deployed for an extended period (often six months) whilst being posted outside of the UK, during which time the military spouse is unable to accompany.

4. The serving spouse is posted for between two and three years to a foreign posting when it is possible for their spouse (and children) to accompany.

(Browning, E., Royal Navy Mobilisation and Nursing Officer, personal communication, January 8, 2009).

According to the latest available data, 23 570 British military personnel are stationed overseas (Defence Analytical Services Agency, DASA, 2011). Data are no longer collected with reference to marital status and location (UK Parliament, 2008) and the most recent existing data by DASA stated that in 2007, 760 Royal Navy married personnel were serving overseas, as were 11 980 Army and 1 815 RAF married personnel in 2006. Clearly, these would not all have been married accompanied postings, but the figures do provide an indication for the potential number of current married accompanied positions. Similarly, in the latest tri-service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS), completed by a stratified sample of service personnel spouses, 15% of the respondents had accompanied their spouse on overseas assignments in the previous 12 months (MoD, 2011), again indicating the proportion of military spouses that may experience overseas postings. Specifically, the most common locations of these foreign postings within Europe were reported to be Germany, Cyprus, Belgium, Gibraltar, Italy and the Netherlands (DASA, 2011). Nonetheless, Asia, North Africa, the Middle East, Sub Saharan Africa, North America, Central America, Caribbean, South America, South Atlantic and Oceania are also

documented as potential overseas locations (DASA, 2011), the majority of which have facilities that enable military spouses to accompany their husbands or wives.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) Research and Technology Organisation (RTO) recognises that the health and well-being of military personnel is a fundamental factor in the effectiveness of military operations: an intrinsic element of this is the happiness and welfare of the military families (Dandeker et al., 2006). In particular, military spouses are recognized for their enduring ability to cope with extended periods of separation while their partners are deployed from their domestic residence (Fernandez-Pol, 1988a, Burrell et al., 2006). However, there may be less understanding of the impact of collective relocation of military families to overseas postings. Burrell et al. (2006) reported that the health and well-being of individuals is affected by many social situations. It is reasonable therefore to suggest that relocation to unfamiliar surroundings can have an impact on an individual's health and lifestyle, which has specific significance for military families who are placed under a large amount of stress while spouses are serving in the Armed Forces (McNulty, 2003). They may not have joined the services, but when a spouse is a serving member, it is often a necessity to relocate to new settings in order to retain their immediate family unit.

Research examining the effects of separation deployment, with particular reference to the mental and emotional impact on wives and children when a husband or father is deployed, is a common topic for study (Padden, 2006, Elliott and Patterson, 2007, Di Nola, 2008). Due to recent (and current) political tensions, such research has focused

on the effect of operational deployments[2], particularly to Iraq and Afghanistan (Ryan-Wenger, 2002, Barnes et al., 2007). Such work looks at the health impact the separation of the serving person from the family can cause, whereas in many cases for military families they often actually relocate together as a unit. This is a topic more widely investigated with reference to the United States (US) Forces and within the non-military environment of corporate, diplomatic, and clergy spouses, who are also prone to frequent relocations due to their husband or wife's employment, and will be discussed further in the following section.

1.2.2 Trailing spouses on international postings

Prior to the commencement of this research I was not familiar with the expression 'trailing spouse', which has been credited to Mary Bralove (1981) in her article written for the Wall Street Journal, discussing the problems of two-career families. It conjures up an image of a forlorn spouse dragging a suitcase whilst following behind their husband or wife on a work assignment. As such, the comparable circumstance of the accompanying military and non-military spouse suggests commonalties may also exist in their respective research backgrounds.

Stress is defined by Lazarus and Launier (1978) as the difference between demands and coping resources. Consequently, the manner by which individuals cope with the demands of a stressful period makes a difference in how they feel emotionally (Folkman and Lazarus, 1988). McNulty (2003) examined the impact of a foreign relocation on the health care use of US military families stationed in Okinawa, Japan.

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[2] Postings to potentially volatile areas

She identified that intense stress was placed on all military families, particularly amongst those who served in an overseas location and whose spouses were subsequently operationally deployed. The stress experienced by a family member was believed to negatively impact the active duty member, impinging on their ability to perform their operational role. Therefore, the need for adequate health care support and coping mechanisms for such families was highlighted. Puskar (1990) also investigated the coping strategies of trailing spouses by comparing those of military and of corporate wives when they were relocated internationally. Specifically, data were collected to examine the impact of relocation on the trailing spouse's emotional state, their coping behaviours, and other life experiences. The findings revealed those who coped well used active coping behaviours, whereas those coping poorly demonstrated more passive behaviours. Thus, a recommendation to healthcare providers was to offer guidance and counselling for women prior to an international move.

In non-military research, Black et al. (1989) determined that the adjustment of the accompanying spouse on an international assignment was highly correlated to the subsequent adjustment of the employed expatriate, which then influenced their intention to remain on the assignment. This adjustment of expatriate spouses was also noted by Shaffer and Harrison (2001) to hold a significant relationship to the individual (in particular the loss and then re-establishment of identities), to interpersonal relationships (the social bases of identity e.g. extended family support and the strength of relationship between the expatriate and their spouse), and to environmental sources of identity (e.g. cultural novelty and contentment with living conditions). The authors discussed the identity (re)formation of trailing spouses with

relation to Burke's (1991) Identity Disruption Theory, which states that individuals who adopt new cultures or roles experience disruption in their identity process. Conceivably, this could also be extrapolated to the specific experiences of British military spouses overseas.

The diversity of potential reactions of trailing spouses was also emphasised in the findings of research by De Verthelyi (1995) based on the cross-cultural adjustment process of international student spouses based in the US. The results highlighted that personal variables such as personality traits and personal history appeared to predominate over situational factors and held a greater influence on the accompanying spouse's psychological well-being. Again, such individualistic circumstances could also potentially be a pertinent factor in British military spouse adjustment and subsequent well-being on an international assignment.

The trailing spouse literature (as discussed above) has identified coping, well-being and the individual context of the trailing spouse as having a significant influence on their adjustment ability. From an alternative perspective, Rosen and Moghadam (1990) researched the stress-buffering effects of different social supports on military wives. The only significant perceived support to buffer the stress of a husband's absence was that obtained from other unit wives. Similarly, Dandeker et al. (2006) investigated the experiences of British Army wives during a six month deployment period and, as with Rosen and Moghadam's research, these wives also chose informal social support networks instead of the available military support system. Arguably then, Cohen and McKay's (1984) buffering hypothesis, which refers to the moderating effect of social

support mechanisms on the stress of relocation and subsequent readjustment, strikes a notable resonance with the experience of the trailing spouse.

For military families, informal support links are frequently disrupted due to relocations (Darcy, 2000). Consequently, the significance of social support on international locations was believed to be intensified due to the changes in available support networks and the challenges of formulating new ones (Copeland and Norell, 2002). In Jervis's (2009) research investigating relocation and the British military spouse, with reference to the *formal* aspect of support (provided by the military) she concluded that despite the military enquiring about spousal dissatisfaction, the support offered was felt to represent only what the military deemed necessary. Similarly, it was reported in the latest FAMCAS (MoD, 2011) that 43% of respondents who had accompanied their spouse overseas felt there had been problems with the information obtained prior to their relocation.

In 2005 McNulty produced the findings of a four-year survey analysing the issues of international corporate assignments for spouses. This study focused on non-military spouses, however it presented significant areas of concern that may be applicable in military foreign relocations, in particular the need for improved communication between the organisation and the spouse. The impact of losing a career or having an extended period of time away from the workforce was also a concern to spouses. Similarly, within the military environment Jervis (2009) commented that wives became unemployed or under-employed, in particular when they were overseas, resulting in considerable emotional and financial impact. Concurring with this finding, in the FAMCAS (MoD, 2011), of those respondents who had accompanied their spouse

overseas, 61% had experienced difficulties obtaining paid employment. The FAMCAS does not specify the subsequent implications of this dilemma, but as indicated by Jervis (2009), this loss of a career/employment could potentially have had a negative impact on these military spouses.

This brief background into the experiences of trailing spouses identifies the potential key areas of personality variables and support (both formal and informal) as significant predictors of adaption on a foreign posting. Anxiety and stress associated with relocations and the coping strategies employed also appear to be fundamental areas of previous research. Nonetheless, these findings relate mainly to US Forces and non-military research on accompanying spouses in foreign locations.

1.3   Need for the study

Armed Forces personnel have a duty to serve their country and in doing so accept deployments and frequent relocations within the UK and abroad as part of their role, however this often requires their spouse to also relocate. Current literature involving analysis of the mental and emotional impact of separation on the military spouse focused largely on operational deployments. Nonetheless, in the initial review of the literature, the experience of spouses on a foreign posting was a recognised phenomenon that has been researched in depth within the US Armed Forces. Conversely, to date only one piece of sustained research focuses exclusively upon British military spouses and their emotional responses to any relocation (Jervis, 2009).

Despite the absence in literature depicting the international relocation experience of the British military family, the review of other research highlights that there may be

serious health impacts of moving due to the disruption of family members and their lifestyles. Therefore, this thesis is based on an investigation of the psychological, emotional and social impact of relocating overseas with respect to the accompanying British military spouse. This study incorporates the views of spouses from the three British services (Section 1.2.1) and in doing so allows their perspectives to be addressed. This tri-service approach may enable recommendations on best practice and areas of improvement to be made for each military service. The study findings may also enhance knowledge of what influences the short and long term well-being of the British military spouse, and could potentially be useful to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and health professionals in planning support services.

1.4   Research aim, objectives and questions

In order to fulfil the aim of investigating the experiences of the accompanying spouses of British military personnel based overseas, this thesis has the following objectives and research questions (presented in Table 1.1 and Table 1.2 respectively).

Objectives
To investigate how British military spouses perceive the impact of being relocated to a foreign country.
To assess the social influences that may impact on the military spouse experience such as the development of interpersonal relationships, the spouse's role in the community or their altered family role.
To investigate how military spouses adjust to an unfamiliar environment and whether this was dependent on a particular location.
To examine the issue of leaving a foreign posting and returning to a normal place of residence.
To identify principles of best practice from each of the three British Armed services and the potential areas of improvements in supporting families posted to a foreign country.

Table 1.1 Study objectives

Research questions
What is the emotional, social and psychological impact on spouses of British military personnel when relocated to a foreign country?
What methods are employed by the spouses to adjust to a new environment and are these a reflection of individual coping strategies and location-specific factors?
What types of emotional and social support are desired or used by spouses when living in a foreign community?
How do the families approach the task of moving back to their usual place of residence following a foreign posting?

Table 1.2 Research questions

1.5 Structure of thesis

This thesis comprises four phases. The first three phases are qualitative and the final

one quantitative. Phase 1 involved a systematic review of previous research

investigating the experiences of British and non-British military spouses on overseas

assignment. In Phase 2 qualitative methods were used to provide spouses of British

military based in one foreign location (in southern Europe) the opportunity to express

open and honest opinions in relation to their current experiences on an overseas

posting. The sample of military spouses was extended to worldwide locations via

online methods of data collection, utilising an online forum and a quantitative online

survey in Phases 3 and 4 respectively.

Over the remaining chapters a chronological representation of the study will be

provided. Table 1.3 provides a précis of each chapter.

Chapter	Content
2	A discussion of the proposed ideas and concepts forming the basis of the study, alongside a critique of the chosen methodology and a brief outline of the study research design
3	A comprehensive account of the systematic review (Phase 1)
4	Separated into two sections: Part 1 Methods, data collection and analysis employed for Phase 2 (individual interviews and focus groups) Part 2 Methods, data collection and analysis employed for Phase 3 (online forum)
5	Separated into three sections: Part 1 Key themes from the thematic analysis of individual interviews Part 2 Key themes from the thematic analysis of focus groups Part 3 Discussion of findings from Phase 2
6	Findings and discussion from the thematic analysis of the online forum (Phase 3)
7	Separated into two sections: Part 1 Methods, data collection and analysis employed for Phase 4 (online survey) Part 2 Findings and discussion of the data analysis
8	Overall thesis discussion and conclusions

Table 1.3 Chapter précis

1.6   Explanation of terms

Throughout the thesis 'spouse' refers to a wife/husband or civil partner. Military

spouse or service spouse will both represent an individual who is married to, or in a

civil partnership with a member of the Armed Forces. When appropriate, military and

non-military spouses will be referred together as 'trailing spouses'.

Overseas/international/abroad or foreign are all interchangeable terms with reference

to relocating outside of the UK (if literature refers to British military) and outside of

America (if referring to US Forces). Posted/assigned or stationed are all military terms

specifying the process of being transferred to a new location.

An officer is determined as a serving person with a commissioned status. A rating/non-

officer or 'other rank' specifies a serving person without a commissioned status.

1.7   Summary

This four phase mixed-method ethnographic study differs from previous research by

investigating the perspective of British military spouses who accompanied their serving

spouse overseas. Ultimately, I hope that this thesis will provide a more substantial

understanding of the experiences of these spouses and reduce preconceptions about

foreign postings. In doing so, I hope any associated challenges are highlighted

alongside potential sources of support that will enhance the well-being of the

accompanying military spouse.

The next chapter provides a discussion of the methodological background of the study

and introduces the subsequent research design.

Chapter 2   Research Design and Methodology

2.1   Introduction

The proposed ideas and concepts that form the basis of the study will be examined in this chapter in order to demonstrate the appropriateness of the chosen methodology. A critique of the qualitative paradigm will provide an outline of possible alternative methodologies that may have been suitable for the research but ultimately were not selected. The components of the chosen methodology, ethnography, will be critiqued along with recognised strengths and weaknesses of the approach, and the possible methods available to improve the rigour of the study. A brief outline of the proposed research design will be given at the end of this chapter but more comprehensive accounts will be provided in Chapters 3, 4 and 7.

2.2   How the research project was approached

Two main criteria guided the research project and ultimately led to the chosen methodology (discussed in this chapter) and methods (to be discussed in Chapter 4 for Phases 2 and 3, and Chapter 7 for Phase 4).

The first criterion underpinning the choice of study methodology was the objective to investigate the experiences of military spouses who accompanied their serving husband/wife or civil partner on a foreign posting. Fundamentally, this was to determine their response to relocating to a new environment, in particular to understand the potential social, psychological and emotional impact, and personal coping and adaption strategies. The depth of description required for this was not felt

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to be attainable through purely quantitative methods. Specifically, quantitative research was described by Parahoo (1997) as focusing on quantity and numbers rather than quality and description, and according to Vivar (2007), it would be impossible to achieve the richness of data that qualitative research provides. Such a quantitative paradigm is based on positivism, with the ontological position of assuming a single apprehensible reality, existing independent of human perception (Healy and Perry, 2000, Sale et al., 2002). Therefore, Guba and Lincoln (1994) believe the researcher and the investigated phenomenon are independent entities and as such "inquiry takes place as through a one way mirror" (p. 110). In contrast to this, the qualitative paradigm is based on the humanistic model of social research premised on the methodology of naturalism, which is also referred to as the interpretive or hermeneutical paradigm (Brewer, 2000). It is assumed that there is no objective reality, instead multiple realities are constructed by those experiencing the phenomenon of interest (Krauss, 2005 , Sale et al., 2002). Krauss commented that qualitative researchers believe the optimal way to understand a phenomenon is to view it in context and become immersed in the culture or organisation being investigated. Hence the investigator and object of study are interactively connected and findings are mutually created in context (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The study of phenomena in their natural environment is therefore believed by Davison (1998) to be fundamental to the interpretivist philosophy, alongside the recognition that researchers cannot avoid affecting those phenomena they study. Consequently, the proposed study was based on an interpretive epistemology. In view of the fact that qualitative methodologies employ methods that allow interpretation of data in context (Morse and Richards, 2002), and emphasize the holistic aspects of human behaviour

(Silverman, 2000), it was determined that a qualitative methodological approach

would be more applicable for the research.

A second influence lay in my role as an active member of the field under investigation.

Specifically this meant that I was a military spouse who had accompanied my husband

on a foreign posting and subsequently became a member of the British and military

community. As a military spouse this allowed me the opportunity to become

immersed in this field for a prolonged period (two and a half years).

As I would be functioning as a military spouse and a researcher, it would be possible

that these roles may not remain exclusive. Being part of the group I would be

studying, my interpretation of the data may subsequently be influenced by my own

experiences. Hence there was a prospect of potential subjective bias in my own

interpretive epistemology (further discussion in Chapter 8).

2.3   The qualitative paradigm and rationale for chosen methodology

The concept of qualitative research is to investigate social phenomena, to gather an in-

depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons governing such behaviour

(Hancock, 2002, Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Various qualitative research methods

provide different perspectives on reality, and different approaches to organising and

handling data, generating distinct interpretations (Morse and Richards, 2002). Morse

and Richards determine the integrity of qualitative research to be founded on two

principles: methodological purposiveness and methodological congruence. The former

is "how particular research *purposes* and questions lead the researcher to particular

data sources and analysis strategies, sketching the links for three major methods"

(Morse and Richards, 2002, p.23), and the latter "the way in which what the researcher asks, where he or she asks it, and how he or she works toward an answer all fit together" (p.23). The 'three major methods' refer to phenomenology, grounded theory and ethnography. These potential approaches were reviewed in order to determine the most applicable for the proposed study.

The first option of phenomenology is a framework for understanding individuals' lived experiences (Smith et al., 2011), a concept introduced by Husserl in the early 20th Century (Jones, 2001), with a more interpretative form developed later by Heiddeger and Gadamer (Koch, 1999). According to Husserl, phenomenological researchers are required to 'bracket' preconceived ideas or experience about the topic (Pringle et al., 2011), which was suggested to protect the rigour of the research as conclusions reached would emerge from the data and not from the researcher's preconceptions (Jasper, 1994, Rose et al., 1995). However, Heidegger (1962) argued that the primary concern of phenomenology was in terms of 'being-in-the-world' referring to the manner human beings exist and act, or are involved in the world (Van Manen, 1990). Consequently, Heidegger believed it would be impossible to bracket one's 'being-in-the-world', the presupposition being that it would only be possible to interpret a phenomenon according to the researcher's own lived experience which would originate from their 'being-in-the-world' (Walters, 1994). For that reason Heidegger stated "Inquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought" (1962, p.25).

Expanding this concept of 'bracketing', some Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) scholars (Smith et al., 2009, Smith and Osborn, 2003) state that it is not possible

for a researcher to bracket off all experience during the interpretation of the data. The aim of IPA is to examine how individuals interpret their major life experiences (Smith et al., 2009), with an emphasis on the research as a dynamic process with an active role for the researcher, dependent on their own conceptions (Smith and Osborn, 2003).

My interpretation of the study data would be influenced by my own life experiences and personal biases, and I felt that it would not be possible to achieve the suggested bracketing by Husserl (Pringle et al., 2011) for my study, due to the fact I would be living in the same field as my potential participants and would be directly involved in the community. Consequently, if I chose phenomenology it would have been necessary to incorporate the IPA and Heidegger approach. Nonetheless, I had further concerns regarding the philosophy of phenomenology being founded on the *individual* experience.

As phenomenological research focuses on the lived experience, Porter and Ryan (1996) comment that its exclusivity on the 'emic' (participant or insider) perspective causes the rejection of the 'etic' (researcher or outsider) perspective, and prevents phenomenological researchers from incorporating the influence of large scale social issues. This may overlook information leading up to the experience, the particular consequences of it and other associated factors (Brown, 2009). Furthermore, the most frequent data collection method for phenomenology is reported to be in-depth, audio digitally recorded 'conversations' without predetermined questions (Morse and Richards, 2002). Consequently, due to the focus on the 'emic' perspective and use of unstructured interviews, I felt it would not adequately provide the necessary data for

the study objectives. Additionally, I preferred to have more control over the content

and process of interviews, as commented on by Walker (2011), to ensure that the aims

of my study would be achieved. But ultimately, I sought to incorporate focus groups as

a data collection method and due to the phenomenological philosophy of the

individual lived experience nurse researchers have highlighted the potential

incompatibility of phenomenology and focus groups. Webb and Kevern (2000) argued

that the goal of phenomenological research was to seek the *essences* of phenomena

requiring an individual to describe their experiences in a relatively uncontaminated

manner, therefore a group approach was not considered to be appropriate. Although

this view was challenged by Bradbury-Jones et al. (2009), I decided that

phenomenology would not be suitable for my study, as the inclusion of focus groups

was going to be a prominent data collection method in my research, during which I

hoped the group discussions would offer a medium of accessing data that may not

emerge through purely individual interviews (Webb and Kevern, 2000) due to the

interaction of the military spouses.

The second possible methodological approach, grounded theory, has origins suggested

to be in symbolic interactionism (Polit and Beck, 2006), focusing on individuals'

perceptions of social interactions and their interpretation of social symbols(Moore,

2009). Originally the approach was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), while

later a different application of the grounded theory method was adopted by Strauss

and Corbin (1990) as a relevant framework for developing theory. A split between

Glaserian and Straussian paradigms resulted, as Glaser assumed grounded theory to be

an inductive approach requiring the researcher to have minimal preconceived ideas

about the study phenomenon, as such the literature review was to be conducted at

the end (Walls et al., 2010); whereas Strauss and Corbin (1990) permitted some depth

of reading in the early stages of the research. Ultimately Glaser sought an accurate

interpretation of data that was independent of the researcher, while Strauss and

Corbin accepted variations in interpretations according to the influences of the

researcher (Pettigrew, 2000). Therefore, grounded theory is a general inductive

method, and as the names implies, it ends with a theory that has emerged from the

data, rather than commencing with a hypothesis (Onions, 2006).

The principle goal of grounded theorists and ethnographers is to conduct a

comprehensive investigation of a phenomenon as it occurs in normal life (Streubert

and Carpenter, 2011). Streubert and Carpenter also state that grounded theorists

believe the only beneficial theory is the one grounded in the beliefs and practices of

the individuals studied, but research based on such cultural groups is also recognised

as the foundation of ethnographers. Nonetheless, the resulting difference is that

integrating data collection and analysis in grounded theory ends by reporting a

substantial theory explaining the patterns of the study phenomenon, whereas in

ethnography it provides a more enriched description of the meaning of the

phenomenon in the culture (Aldiabat and Le Navenec, 2011).

As a systematic review was to be conducted in my research prior to the

commencement of any data collection, my study would be founded on a conceptual

framework. Straussian grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) would have been a

possible choice for my study but, as my work would incorporate a strong cultural

context, incorporating the culture of military spouses and also the impact of being

transplanted into a new culture, ethnography was more applicable. Additionally,

although I sought to investigate the experiences of military spouses including the

social, psychological and emotional impact, the generation of a theory was not a

specific aim of my study. Therefore I rejected grounded theory as a possible approach

for my research.

Finally, the origins of the third potential study methodology, ethnography, are within

social anthropology and focus on the study of a specific social group or culture in their

natural settings (Brewer, 2000). Consequently, an ethnographic approach was chosen

for the study as the military spouses can be considered as a social group and their

natural setting at that time would be the foreign posting location. Furthermore,

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state that "the ethnographer participates, overtly or

covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time" (p.2). As such, I would

already be spending a lengthy period within this environment as a military spouse,

observing and participating in the daily lives of the British and Military communities.

Undertaking fieldwork would enable the direct investigation of the experiences of the

military spouse in context and allow the aims of the study to be addressed.

Within ethnography, the researcher and the research cannot be freely separated

(Brewer, 2000), and according to Hand (2003) researchers influence and are influenced

by the research process used. Hence, reflexivity is a significant component of

ethnographic research that necessitates researchers to reflect upon the contingencies

during the research that may have influenced the data production (Hammersley and

Atkinson, 1983). As a participant observer my presence as a researcher would be overt

and as a military spouse I would also be an active member of the group. Therefore,

recognising and accounting for these roles would be crucial to the research.

2.4   Ethnography

Ethnography has been a prominent methodology in the social sciences since the early 20th Century. Its use was pioneered within the British anthropological tradition by anthropologists such as Malinowski in his studies of the Trobriand Islanders (Van Maanen, 2011), and in sociology in the work of the Chicago School in particular the urban sociologist Robert Park (Brewer, 2000). Nonetheless, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) remarked that ethnography had on occasion been regarded as inappropriate for social science due to its subjectivity and its inability to provide rigorous scientific analysis. Other research they felt demonstrated that "only through ethnography can the meanings that give form and content to social processes be understood" (p. 2). Thus there exist two conflicting paradigms of positivism and naturalism, the former representing the natural science model of social research premised on quantitative methods, and the latter the humanistic model and qualitative approaches (Brewer, 2000). The principal methodological justification for ethnography comes from the naturalistic approaches and humanistic model of social research (Brewer, 2000, Cohen et al., 2007).

Despite being the primary research methodology for anthropologists, ethnographic research is utilised by social scientists in other fields including cultural studies, education, health care and criminology (Riemer, 2012). Brewer (2000) who completed extensive ethnographic research in sensitive locations across Northern Ireland with the Royal Ulster Constabulary, defined ethnography as:

> "[...] not one particular method of data collection but a style of research that is distinguished by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings

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and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting, and its approach, which involves close association with, and often participation in, this setting" (p. 11).

Key features of ethnography were highlighted by Brewer (2000) as infringing the principles of the natural science model. He argued that advocates of natural science criticized ethnography due to the active involvement of the researchers in the field and the utilisation of unstructured methods of data collection. This was felt to prevent the minimization of extraneous variations and the elimination of the effects of both the researcher and the data collection tool (Brewer, 2000). Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) also stated that where unambiguous and standardized procedures were not employed, such research had been claimed as only being able to consider causal relationships due to the lack of grounding for hypothesis testing. In reaction to such positivist criticism, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) commented that naturalism proposed that the social world should be studied in its natural state in ways that were sensitive to the nature of the setting. As such, using standardised methods would not ensure comparable data, instead participant observers could experience and interpret the culture or subculture of the study participants in the same way as the participants themselves.

Ethnography was also said to breach scientific principles concerning the nature of data (Brewer, 2000). The natural science model sought to describe and measure social phenomenon through the collection of numeric data, but ethnography was used to describe and measure a phenomenon through extracts of language, for example, verbatim quotations (Bryman, 1988), with quality and meaning invested in them (Dey, 1993). Fetterman (2010) stated "The ethnographer is both storyteller and scientist, the closer the reader of an ethnography comes to understanding the native's point of

view, the better the story and the better the science" (p. 2). Hence, the more rigorous

the ethnographer's practice, the more accurate the account and the science (Brewer,

2000).

Ethnography is described as providing the means of exploring cultural groups based

on the assumption of "shared values, beliefs, and behaviours within a cohesive group"

(Morse and Richards, 2002, p. 49). Smaller sub-cultural units such as closed

institutions (e.g. hospitals), loosely connected groups of individuals (e.g. sporting

teams, gangs) or individuals sharing a particular characteristic (e.g. nursing mothers)

have also been researched through ethnographic methods (Morse and Richards,

2002). Military spouses represented such a sub-cultural unit.

Brewer (2000) succinctly summarizes ethnography as "'telling it like it is from the

inside'"(p. 17). Hence, phenomena are explored within cultural contexts from the

'emic' perspective (Morse and Richards, 2002, Riemer, 2012).   In order to fully

comprehend this insider or 'emic' experience (Riemer, 2012), participant observation is

defined as the data collection method most closely associated with ethnography

(Brewer, 2000). Specifically, participant observation is one role depicted in a

continuum of roles that ethnographers may adopt in field settings (Brewer, 2000,

Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, Riemer, 2012). Junker (1960) provides four

theoretical social roles for fieldwork extending from the complete participant,

participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, to complete observer. Respectively,

the relationship and interaction with the informants varies from intense contact to

none at all (Brewer, 2000, Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, Hong and Duff, 2002).

Most ethnographic research involves a mixture of participant and non-participant

observation (Riemer, 2012), nonetheless "role negotiation, balance and trust are

significant and difficult" (Cohen et al., 2007,p. 179). Brewer (2000) warns that 'going

native' (p. 60) is a danger wherein the researcher loses their objectivity and becomes a

regular member of the field. At the other extreme, remaining an 'outsider' (p. 60) who

is distant and has no rapport with the members is believed by Brewer (2000) to

completely negate the method. Arguably then, the issue of balance in the participant

observer's role is complex, one in which they need to simultaneously be an insider and

an outsider, allowing participation whilst also critically reflecting on what is observed

(Brewer, 2000, Cohen et al., 2007).

Within my study I adopted both the insider and outsider roles on the

participant/observation continuum, being a military spouse and also a researcher.

Consequently, it was necessary for me to balance these roles. On one hand, as an

insider, I needed to develop a trusting relationship with the other military spouses to

allow normal activities within this group, and then at the other extreme I also needed

to maintain an outsider status allowing myself to be a critical observer. The impact of

this duality is discussed in depth later in Chapter 8.

Although participant observation is recognised primarily as the main method of data

collection in ethnographic research, frequently interviews with key informants are

used alongside observation and occasionally as an alternative method (Hammersley

and Atkinson, 1983). Brewer (2000, p. 63) states such a method involves "a verbal

stimulus (the question) to elicit a verbal response (the answer) from a respondent (or

set of respondents where groups are interviewed by means of focus group

interviews)". For these face-to-face meetings between the researcher and

respondents(s), the interview schedules utilised are represented on an interview

format continuum. One extreme represents highly structured, closed questions often

identified with quantitative approaches; and the opposite end unstructured, open-

ended responsive questions, which are more associated with ethnographic data

collection (Brewer, 2000, Morse and Richards, 2002).

With respect to ethnographic interviewing, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) argue

that the interviewer may appear passive in non-directive (open-ended) questioning

but, in fact they must maintain an active listening role in order to determine how the

responses relate to the research focus and the circumstances of the interview.

Nonetheless, the non-directive technique is not a prerequisite for ethnographic

interviewing. For example, to examine hypotheses arising from developing theory,

directed and specific questions may be required, hence the format of semi-structured

interviewing allows a combination of closed and open-ended questions (Brewer, 2000)

to be used for the interview.

Focus group interviews are also a recognised data collection technique to elicit

"perceptions, information, attitudes and ideas from a group in which each participant

possess experience with the phenomenon under study" (Kelly, 2003, p.50). A

homogenous group of individuals can provide rich qualitative data in a focused

discussion (Krueger and Casey, 2000). Focus groups are also argued by Wilkinson

(1999) to be a more naturalistic process of data collection and as such avoid what the

author considered to be the artificiality of other methods. Wilkinson believed that

focus groups captured an individual's normal, daily experiences of talking and arguing

with friends, family and colleagues about everyday life events and issues. This 'social

nature' of talk (Wilkinson, 1998, p.121) was then perceived to allow a researcher to

appreciate the person in the context of a social world.

The incorporation of such informal groups may be used within ethnography (Morse

and Richards, 2002) as a technique of acquiring qualitative data. Opportunity arises in

focus groups to 'clarify and modify' (Kelly, 2003, p.50) ideas due to the interactive

discussion among participants. Subsequently, the data add to the thick description

synonymous with ethnography, which represents a comprehensive account of the

phenomenon investigated acknowledging its context (Brewer, 2000).

2.4.1 Strengths and limitations of chosen methodology

In order to improve the rigour of the chosen study, the strengths and limitations

associated with ethnography and in general the naturalistic approach to research

needed to be investigated.

Ethnography offers unstructured and flexible methods of data collection and in doing

so recognises the dynamic nature of qualitative research (Brewer, 2000, Cohen et al.,

2007). As such, the role of participant observation as a method minimises the need for

other resources due to the researcher being the main instrument for data collection

(Denscombe, 2010). Additionally, as ethnographic research is normally conducted in

the natural setting (Morse and Richards, 2002) this accepts the importance of

observing peoples' activities, rather than a reliance on an individual's description

(Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Therefore, not only does this provide the 'emic'

perspective but also a richer holistic understanding (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010).

Nonetheless, observation situations are noted to carry an increased risk of bias and subjectivity (Cohen et al., 2007), along with extensive logistical commitments of fieldwork (Denscombe, 2010). Cohen et al. (2007) also recognise the potential problems of such fieldwork, in particular selective data entry and memory. Specifically, personal judgement could influence which data are recorded rather than the phenomenon itself, and recording information after an event could cause some data to be neglected. Additionally, Cohen et al. caution the influence of interpersonal matters and counter-transference, warning that interpretations could be affected by personal judgements and preferences; as a result researchers are encouraged to address the situation reflexively.

As previously mentioned, due to my dual role within the study there was potential for my analysis to be biased by my experiences and relationship with the community under study. Within the interviewing environment I was required to represent my role as a researcher and as an outsider, and as such I needed to remain independent and non-judgemental, as depicted by Bonner and Tolhurst (2002). Reflexivity was crucial to ensure that I remained aware of the context of the interview data and interpretation, as recommended by Brewer (2000) (discussed further in Chapter 8). Furthermore, any material I obtained from participant observation was used only to inform data collection and the formulation of question schedules, none of this data were used without consent.

Interviewing is a flexible, powerful data collection tool for researchers (Cohen et al., 2007), which captures the richness of people's experiences providing the 'thick

description' essential for fieldwork (Brewer, 2000). However, unavoidable problematic features of the interview situation were depicted by Cicourel (1964). The author remarks that the respondent may adopt avoidance tactics if the questioning is too profound, furthermore, variables of each interview will inevitably differ and it would be impossible to control every element of the encounter. According to Brewer (2000) interviewees can also seek 'social approval' through censoring their responses and providing opinions they believe to be more socially acceptable. Brewer also highlights the so-called 'interviewer effect', in which communication can be distorted due to respondent's concerns as to being chosen for the research and the exact reasoning for the study, potentially affecting honesty and openness. Authors have also identified social concepts such as race, religion, gender and social class to be sources of bias (Scheurich, 1995). These can affect the interviewee's anxieties and further alter replies (Brewer, 2000). Indeed Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) recognise that the characteristics, composition and interpersonal skills of the respondent interact with the interviewer forming a particular social situation, and they felt it to be inevitable that the researcher would have some influence on the interviewee and hence the data.

These problems were addressed in my research by not just encouraging open and honest opinions by the participants, but by reassuring them of the confidentiality and anonymity of any discussions. I provided information about my own research and nursing background to try to improve the credibility of my own expertise and hopefully emphasize my role as a nurse researcher and not just as a military spouse. Nonetheless, Fielding (1994) remarked that respondents often react more favourably to interviewers who are similar to themselves, and in this instance being a military

spouse would provide a comforting commonality. Potentially though, hierarchical issues could also have arisen due to my presence as an officer's spouse, but again I stressed my role as a nurse researcher and attempted to empower the participant by giving them the choice of location and time for the interview to alleviate any such concerns.

2.5 Rigour of chosen research design and methodology

Qualitative research is criticised for lacking scientific rigour, in particular it is felt to be subjected to researcher bias, to lack reproducibility and to lack generalisability (Mays and Pope, 1995). Guided by a naturalistic paradigm, Lincoln and Guba (1985) described criteria by which trustworthiness of qualitative research could be formulated. They proposed that inquirers needed to question themselves on 'truth value', consistency, applicability and neutrality. The evolved criteria are now termed internal validity, reliability, external validity and objectivity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Brewer, 2000). These terms are more associated with positivistic approaches but have been appropriated by the naturalistic epistemology as credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) respectively.

Credibility is identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a key factor in establishing trustworthiness. According to Shenton (2004) provisions can be employed by the researcher to promote confidence that the phenomenon being investigated has been accurately recorded, therefore, ensuring credibility. The suggested strategies include utilising well-established research methods in particular the incorporation of multiple methods (triangulation, see Section 2.5.1); providing reflexive commentary (Section 2.5.2) and examining previous research findings.

In addressing the issue of reliability/dependability, from a positivist viewpoint, the results would be similar if the work was repeated in the same context, with the same methods and participants (Shenton, 2004). Within the qualitative paradigm, to ensure rigour Mays and Pope (1995) recommend a "systematic and self-conscious research design, data collection, interpretation and communication" (p. 110). In particular, such a systematic account was a concept derived by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to be an audit trail, and was recommended to establish dependability. The process is designed to enable a thorough understanding of the implementation of the research design, of what was completed in the field and the overall effectiveness of the process of inquiry (Shenton, 2004). Rogers and Cowles (1993) suggest four types of documentation to incorporate in an audit trail: contextual documents to contain excerpts of field notes for example from observations and interviews; methodological documents to comprise details of decision-making and accompanying rationales; analytic documents to provide reflections on data analysis and insights gained; and personal response documents to describe thought processes and to demonstrate self-awareness of the researcher. The provision of such a thick description, where a thorough account of the research, its process and context (Brewer, 2000) is represented, also facilitates transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), allowing comparisons of the circumstances of the phenomenon described with those emerging from similar situations under investigation.

Within positivist research external validity is represented by the extent the results of one study can be generalised to the wider population, cases or situations (Cohen et al., 2007). Within the qualitative paradigm Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to this validity as

transferability, and they suggest it to be dependent upon the degree of 'fittingness' (p. 124). The authors determine this is established when an adequate description of both contexts is presented so that the judgement regarding transferability can be made by the readers. Consequently, a sufficient thick description of the study phenomenon is deemed as a necessity by Shenton (2004) in order to provide readers with an ample understanding, allowing comparisons to be made with other similar research.

Ultimately, confirmability, which is seen to parallel objectivity and highlights how researchers arrived at their conclusions (Irvine, 2007), ensures that the study findings are a reflection of experiences and opinions of the informants rather than the researcher's preferences, and is achieved when the other three criteria are addressed (Shenton, 2004). Thus, confirmability is strengthened in the final report by the presentation of a comprehensive description of the study progression, including a discussion of how and why decisions were made (Vivar, 2007). Miles and Huberman (1994) also highlight the importance of a researcher's self-awareness of their predispositions as a key facet to achieving confirmability.

2.5.1   Triangulation

Brewer (2000) describes ethnography as a research style "distinguished by its objectives" (p. 59), which are to understand social meanings and activities of individuals in a particular setting. To achieve such rich information, use of several methods of data collection is a characteristic feature of ethnography (Brewer, 2000, Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

As detailed in Chapter 1, a mixed methods approach divided over four phases was adopted for the present study's design, with ethnography as the dominant method. Therefore, ethnography presented the organizing framework for the study and as such was extremely applicable in the second phase of the study (individual interviews and focus groups). However, in later phases I was unable to directly participate and ultimately a triangulation of methods guided by thematic analysis (Joffe and Yardley, 2004), directed the final phases of research. Although I was not able to observe the participants in Phase 3 (the online forum) the questions posted and discussed were replicated from the schedule used in Phase 2. As depicted by Wolcott (1999, p.144) an "*ideal* ethnography would be the story people tell about themselves" with the ethnographer acting as a facilitator. Therefore, the online forum participants continued to provide the experiences of a unique cohesive group in their particular natural settings, and thematic analysis of these transcripts allowed comparisons to be made with the findings from the previous phases. In Maydell's (2010) study, ethnographic methods were used to investigate the identity of Russian immigrants to New Zealand. Thematic analysis was subsequently employed to identify prevalent patterns, which was then followed by a more comprehensive analysis to illustrate a particular identified phenomenon. Such an application of thematic analysis identifies the most applicable and prevalent themes across a data collection (Grbich, 1999, Braun and Clarke, 2006). In my study the dataset comprised of individual interviews, focus groups and an online forum; thematic analysis was then used to direct a detailed analysis of significant phenomena using a quantitative survey in the final study phase. Accordingly, Chapter 3 provides a detailed account of Phase 1; Chapter 4 of Phases 2 and 3; and Chapter 7 of Phase 4. However, Table 2.1 provides an overview of these phases.

Phase	Approach	Method
1	Qualitative	Systematic review
2	Qualitative	Semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups
3	Qualitative	Online forum
4	Quantitative	Online survey

Table 2.1 Summary of research design

Strategies associated with a mixed methods approach incorporate the collection and analysis of qualitative field data (e.g. observations or interviews) in combination with quantitative data measurements (e.g. questionnaires), but in a single study (Creswell, 2003). This use of multiple methods, or triangulation, is felt by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) to "[reflect] an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (p. 5), and one which adds "rigor, breadth, richness and depth to any inquiry" (p. 5). Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state that within social research reliance on a single piece of data has the inherent danger that undetected errors may render the analysis false. Whereas, they believed if diverse formats of data were to converge to the same conclusion, this would instil greater confidence in the outcome. Therefore, the triangulation of data sources was identified as a process of seeking convergence across qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell, 2003). This use of triangulation for confirmation through convergent validity was argued by Fielding and Fielding (1985) to have limited relevance for qualitative researchers, as it depicted a discrete concept. Furthermore, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) warned that triangulation provided no guarantee that inferences involved would be correct and as such the data must not be taken at face value. Instead they identified triangulation as "an attempt to relate different sorts of data in such a way as to counteract various possible threats to the validity of our analysis" (p. 199).

Adami and Kiger (2005) argued that there appears to be support for two distinct

functions of triangulation: the original purpose of confirmation and now a second

purpose – completeness. The completeness of triangulation is asserted to offer a

greater holistic view of the study phenomenon by complementary data contributing to

a fuller perspective (Knafi and Breitmayer, 1991), and it is also felt to augment the

researcher's level of understanding (Fielding and Fielding, 1985). Silverman (1985)

stated that "what goes on in one setting is not a simple corrective to what happens

elsewhere – each must be understood in its own terms" (p. 21). Therefore, Begley

(1996) believed that triangulation was a tool that provided information for different

settings not just for comparative purposes, but as an approach to fully understand the

world of the study participants.

Denzin (2009) recognised triangulation could relate not just to multiple methods (data

triangulation) but also to multiple investigators (investigator triangulation) and

multiple theoretical and methodological frameworks (theoretical and methodological

triangulation respectively). The final example of methodological triangulation is

divided into two approaches – 'within-method triangulation' which combines two or

more data collection approaches to measure the same phenomenon (Kimchi et al.,

1991), and 'across-method triangulation' (also referred as 'between method

triangulation') where strategies from two or more research approaches, such as

qualitative and quantitative are combined (Begley, 1996).   In particular, triangulated

studies may be conducted simultaneously or sequentially (Morse and Richards, 2002),

for example, if a qualitatively driven project is sequentially conducted with a

quantitative project, then the qualitative elements will explore a phenomenon, with

the quantitative component following to determine some part of the same

phenomenon, thereby increasing the description (Morse and Richards, 2002, Begley, 1996). Creswell (2003) identified this approach as a sequential exploratory strategy, in which the findings of the qualitative and then quantitative phases were integrated in a final interpretation phase. This particular stance was applicable to the present ethnographic study design. Findings from each of the study phases were presented as conceptual maps (Figures 3.6, 5.1, 5.2 and 6.1), finally culminating with a model of the integrated findings (Figure 8.1).

2.5.2 Reflexivity

Within qualitative approaches it is recognised that the researcher and researched cannot be significantly separated and remaining neutral is an impossibility (Hand, 2003). Therefore, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) suggested that instead of what they felt to be the obsession with eliminating the effects of the ethnographer on the data, the solution was to be reflexive in trying to set the data against this context. Streubert and Carpenter (2011) felt that such reflexivity could lead to a greater appreciation of relationships and meaning within a specific culture. Consequently, Brewer (2000) remarks that ethnographers need to be explicit and open about the circumstances which produced the data, and Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) highlight that researchers are part of the social world studied. Hence, they believe that reflexivity assists in the identification of contingencies during the research process which influenced and helped produce the data. As such, an awareness of the manner by which the researcher can affect both the research process and outcomes must be communicated (Williams, 1995, Manias and Street, 2001).

To increase the credibility of ethnographic research, it is suggested that the researcher includes a reflexive account in their report (Pellatt, 2003). The acknowledgement of the researcher's assumptions, prejudice and influence is recognised to be an important resource and one which can be integrated into the research (Hand, 2003). Koch and Harrington (1998) also appeal for a reflexive journal to be maintained throughout a research process, believing such ongoing self-critique and self-appraisal to characterise reflexive research, and the provision of such an account to enhance the reliability of the study. Such an account is included in Chapter 8.

2.6   Ethics

An emphasis on four overlapping guidelines is determined by Christians (2005) to represent the code of ethics for professional and academic associations within social science. Firstly, informed consent insists that research participants have the right to "be informed about the nature and consequences of experiments in which they are involved" (p. 144). The prerequisites of this being their voluntary participation; agreement based on extensive information; competence, implying the ability to determine correct decisions if given relevant information; and comprehension of the nature of the study (Cohen et al., 2007).

The second guideline emphasizes that the social science codes of ethics uniformly oppose deception (Christians, 2005). Nonetheless, Christians stresses that a degree of deception is permitted when explicit constructive reasons are present. Brewer (2000) refers to this as 'avoidance of deception', suggesting when complete honesty is difficult, general statements which are not in themselves false should be used. Burgess (1984) also believed that within field research, situations may arise where

'white lies' are expressed not with the view of harming others but to gain authentic data.

The third guideline represents a crucial safeguard within ethnographic research of protecting individual identities, the research location and to prevent any unwanted exposure (Christians, 2005). This respect for privacy, confidentiality and anonymity are customary standards of behaviour for researchers (Brewer, 2000, Cohen et al., 2007). Recognition of the sensitivity of information provided, the setting being observed and any subsequent dissemination of information means the researcher is obliged to inform participants of their rights of refusal to take part and to obtain their permission to conduct the research (Cohen et al., 2007). Cohen et al. state that the promise of confidentiality and anonymity further protects the participant's right of privacy through preventing any public connection between information provided and their identity.

The final guideline of accuracy is a fundamental principle in social science (Christians, 2005), "Fabrications, fraudulent materials, omissions, and contrivances are both non-scientific and unethical" (p. 145). Clearly findings must be reported precisely with an avoidance of error, thus the factual accuracy of the account is determined by Maxwell (1992) to be a component of descriptive validity.

In addition to these guidelines for informal permission, ethnographic research also requires formal approval to ensure the project is judged as ethical by the appropriate Research Ethics Committees (Polgar and Thomas, 2008). But, ultimately Cohen et al. (2007) regard the researcher's integrity and conscience, founded on an awareness of

ethical issues and standards, as allowing the ability to decide the best approach to

exceptional situations and to be able to defend such choices.

The ethical considerations required for this study are presented in Sections 4.3.2, 4.4.2

and 7.3.4.

2.7   Summary

Discussions of possible methodological approaches for the study have been reviewed

in this chapter. Ultimately, an ethnographic approach was chosen to provide the

framework for the study, incorporating a mixed methods construction of three

qualitative and one quantitative phase. The strengths and limitations of ethnography

were also examined in conjunction with an outline of the theoretical components of

rigour for an ethnographic study.

Chapter 3 will provide a comprehensive account of the systematic review conducted

for Phase 1.

Chapter 3   A Systematic Review of the Impact of Foreign Postings on Accompanying Spouses of Military Personnel

3.1   Introduction

To provide a comprehensive background to the study, a systematic review of the available studies assessing the impact of military spouses who had accompanied their serving spouse on an international posting was conducted. The following sections provide a detailed account of the process carried out in order to complete the review for Phase 1 of the study.

3.2   Systematic review aim and objectives

From October 2009 to March 2010 a systematic review of relevant literature was conducted in order to provide a complete summary of previous research concerning the experiences of spouses of military personnel, on any foreign posting. This allowed the identification of both existing evidence and unexplored research issues to provide support for the study.

The aim of the review was:

1. To identify previous published research investigating the experiences of a military spouse on an overseas posting

2. To investigate the views of spouses married to British and non-British military personnel

3. To investigate the views of military spouses on any location defined as overseas/foreign or international

4. To identify gaps in the existing body of research.

The specific objectives were:

1. To determine the potential emotional, social and psychological impact of a relocation overseas on military spouses

2. To ascertain the coping strategies used by the spouses when relocated overseas

3. To examine evidence regarding the types of emotional and social support used by the spouses when living in a foreign community.

3.3 Review methods

3.3.1 Identification of studies

In this study, the experiences of military spouses in general were of interest. Therefore, for the purpose of the systematic review, studies incorporating the spouses of military personnel from any country were included. An initial search provided three studies from the last ten years, consequently the search was broadened. Further relevant papers were identified, therefore no restriction of publication year was enforced in order to establish a greater depth of knowledge.

A summary of the inclusion/exclusion criteria used is provided in Figure 3.1.

Inclusion	Exclusion
• The complete study or an element of it must have focused on the experiences of spouses who accompanied their serving husband/wife or civil partner to an international location • The serving member could belong to the military of any country • If a study examined the experiences of children posted overseas, this was only to be included if the impact was reflected on the non-military parent • The study must have specifically differentiated any findings so that those relating solely to the military spouses overseas could be clearly identified • No restriction to year of publication • Any research which completed a secondary analysis of a previous data set.	• Any study which focused only on non-military spouses e.g. corporate, clergy or diplomatic spouses, on an overseas posting • Any research focusing on separation issues due to the spouse remaining in their normal residence whilst the military member was posted overseas, or was deployed on operational duties (e.g. to Iraq or Afganistan) • Any research which considered only the direct experiences of children posted overseas with the military family • Any study which provided general results of trailing spouses and did not individually specify military spouses' responses.

Figure 3.1 Inclusion/exclusion criteria for systematic review

3.4   Search Strategies for Studies

3.4.1   Databases

Figure 3.2 provides a complete description of the databases and journals used in the

search.

Following advice by a subject librarian for health an initial selection of applicable

databases was produced. These included sociology, psychology, health and nursing

databases incorporating PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Medline, UK PubMED Central,

CINAHL, ASSIA, IBSS, PILOTS, BNI and Science Direct. Additionally, two full text journal

packages Taylor and Francis, and SwetsWise were explored. SwetsWise provided links

to two journals, Military Medicine and Military Psychology. These journals were also

predominantly featured among the articles produced from the database search.

Consequently, these journals were manually searched in their own right.

In accordance with the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination's Guidelines for

systematic reviews (CRD, 2009) the Campbell Collaboration, DARE, CDSR, NICE,

DoPHER, NGC, SIGN, NIHR HTA and NHS Evidence were searched.

References within selected articles were inspected to identify supplementary work.

PsycARTICLES	•Full text articles from journals published by the American Psychological Association (APA), the APA Educational Publishing Foundation, the Canadian Psychological Association and Hogrete Publishing Group •Articles from 1984 - present
PsycINFO	•Electronic bibliographic database providing abstracts and citations to the scholary literature in the psychological, social and behavioural, and health sciences •Articles from 1806 - present
Science Direct	•Provides 25% of the world's science technology and medicine, full text and bibliographic information •1823 - present
Medline	•Authoritative medical information on medicine, nursing, dentistry, vetenary medicine, health care system, pre-clinical sciences and more •1949 - present
Taylor & Francis	•Leading provider of specialist information to the global academics and scientific, professional and commercial communities •1923 - present
UK PubMed Central	•Free digital archive of biomedical and life sciences journal literature at the US National Institutes of Health •Mid-to late-1800s or early 1900s - present
CINAHL Plus (Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature)	•International database indexing nursing and allied health journals •1937 - present
ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts)	•Indexing and abstracting tool covering health, social services, economics, politics, race relations and education •1987 - present
IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Science)	•Focuses on four core social science disciplines: anthopology, economics, politics and sociology •1951 - present

Figure 3.2 Description of databases and journals used in search

Wiley Interscience Journals	•Online service providing access to 3 milllion articles across 1500 journals and 7000 online books •1799 - present
PILOTS (Published International Literature on Traumatic Stress)	•Bibliographic database covering published literature on traumatic stress •1871 - present
British Nursing Index (BNI)	•Index of over 230 nursing and midwifery related journals •1985 - present
Database of Abstracts of Reviews and Effects (DARE)	•15000 abstracts of systematic reviews including over 6000 quality assessment reviews and details of all Cochrane reviews and protocols
Cochrane Library	•Collection of six databases containing different types of evidence to inform healthcare decision making: Cochrane Dissemination and Systematic Review; Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials; Cochrane Methodology Register; DARE; Health Technology Assessment; NHS Economic Evaluation ; Cochrane Groups •1972 - present
National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)	•Independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health
National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Programme	•Contains over 8000 completed and ongoing worldwide health technology assessments •Brings together Government support for research in the NHS in England
Campbell Collaboration	•International research network that produces systematic reviews of the effects of social interventions •Assists individuals making well informed decisions by preparing, maintaining and disseminating systematic reviews in education, crime and justice, and social welfare
Database of Promoting Health Effectiveness Reviews (DoPHER)	•Provides a focused coverage of systematic and non-systematic reviews of effectiveness in health promotion and public health worldwide
National Guidelines Clearinghouse (NGC)	•Public resource for evidence-based clinical practice guidelines
Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN)	•Develops evidence-based clinical practice guidelines for the NHS in Scotland

Figure 3.2 continued

NHS Evidence	• Free access to clinical and non-clinical information - local, regional, national and international • Includes evidence, guidance and Government policy
Military Psychology (Journal)	• Quarterly journal of Division 19 (Society of Military Psychology) of American Psychological Association • Seeks to facilitate scientific development of military psychology by encouraging communication between researchers and practitioners • 1989 - present
Military Medicine (Journal)	• Official monthly journal of Association of Military Surgeons US (AMSUS) • Promotes awareness of federal medicine • Mission is to increase healthcare education by providing scientific and other information to readers; to facilitate communications; and to offer a prestige publication for members writings.

Figure 3.2 continued

3.4.2   Other resources

Internet search engines Google (http://www.google.co.uk/webhp?hl=en&tab=sw) and

Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.co.uk/schhp?hl=en&tab=ws) were extensively

searched for peer-reviewed publications. Through these search engines and via

personal communication further searches were conducted through websites of

unrestricted Military and Government data and other military affiliations. Figure 3.3

provides a list of the main websites identified.

Ministry of Defence (MoD)	• www.mod.uk • UK government department responsible for implementing defence policies • Head Quarters of British Armed Forces
Royal College of Defence Studies	• www.da.mod.uk
RAND Corporation	• Research organisation providing analysis on challenges facing the public and private sectors • www.rand.org
Defence Analytical Services and Advice (DASA)	• www.dasa.mod.uk • A statistical unit within the MoD
National Archives	• www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
The Stationery Office (TSO)	• www.tso.co.uk • Offical publisher and distributer for legislation, command and house papers
UK Parliament	• http://www.parliament.uk
RAF Families Federation	• www.raf-families-federation.org.uk • Provides an independent voice for serving RAF and their families
Army Families Federation	• www.aff.org.uk • Provides an independent voice for Army families, aiming to improve the quality of life for Army families worldwide
Navy Families Federation	• www.nff.org.uk • Independent voice of the Royal Navy and Royal Marine families
Soldiers Sailors Airmen Families Association (SSAFA)	• www.ssafa.org.uk • British based charity established to help former and current serving members of Britsh Armed Forces and their families
King's College London	• www.kcl.ac.uk • King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR) • Academic Centre for Defence Mental Health (ACDMH)
Royal Navy and Community Website (RNCOM)	• www.rncom.mod.uk • Naval Personnel and Family Service (NPFS) and Royal Marines (RM) Welfare.

Figure 3.3 Description of other resources used in search

3.5   Keywords

Initially keywords used were based on permutations of the three main themes of

relocation, military and spouse.   Relocation was ultimately expanded to incorporate

variations of 'foreign' in particular 'overseas' which was found to be a frequent

expression in United States (US) Forces research. Similarly, other common wording for

'military' and 'spouse' as dictated by article titles and abstracts were included. When

possible the database's thesaurus was also utilised to provide alternative search terms.

All search terms are presented in Figure 3.4.

Military	Spouses	Relocation
• Military • Military personnel • Armed Forces • Army • Navy • Air Force	• Spouses • Wives • Partner • Dependent • Family • Trailing spouse • Accompanied	• Relocation • International • Overseas • Posting • Stationed • Global assignment • European • Foreign posting

Figure 3.4 Key search words/terms

3.6   Search results

3.6.1   October 2009 – March 2010

The search of all databases, journals and websites produced 5507 potential resources.

Of these, 5083 were instantly deemed not applicable, based on examination of their

title or short description. Subsequently, an initial selection of 424 resources was

reviewed in greater detail. These resources were segregated into three main study

groups:

1. Accompanied (ACC) – any resource which discussed or included the views of spouses who moved with their husband/wife on an international relocation

2. Accompanied and deployment separation (ACC&DS) – resources that discussed both relocation and deployment separation issues for military spouses

3. Deployment separation (DS) – resources investigating the impact of a spouse/family being separated from their serving military member due to operational deployments e.g. to Afghanistan, Iraq or Bosnia.

Overlaps between topics frequently occurred causing difficulties at this stage to determine the relevance of a resource.   It was found that pertinent information not included in the abstract could be hidden within the data. Hence, logistically this segregation into three areas made the search more manageable.

Deployment Separation (DS) resources (n = 191) were ultimately judged as immaterial as they did not fall within the inclusion criteria. The remaining resources comprised of ACC (n = 199) and ACC&DS (n = 34). Accompanied (ACC) resources were then subdivided into military (ACC(M)) and non-military (ACC(NM)) i.e. corporate, clergy or diplomatic spouses. The non-military research was excluded due to not meeting the inclusion criteria. The remaining ACC(M) resources (n = 95) provided 61 duplicate and 34 original works, while ACC&DS produced 28 resources that were either duplicates or did not meet the inclusion criteria, and six original sources.

Of these 40 original resources, 23 were scientific journal articles all of which were accessible either via the university or through British Library loans. Upon review, 13 of these articles were not specific to spouses and did not comply with the inclusion

criteria so were excluded. The remaining 17 original resources were represented by six books, seven theses, one report and three website pages. Of the books, three were not available and the remaining three were non-peer reviewed book chapters and were subsequently excluded from the review. With regards to the theses, one was accessed directly from the author, three were requested through ProQuest and the final three were not selected due to unavailability and uncertain significance of their abstracts.   The three requested theses ultimately were excluded from the review due to content not being specific to international postings. Finally, the report and website pages were deemed only applicable for background information and did not fulfil the inclusion criteria.

Ultimately, after analysis of the content of all eligible papers, 12 research studies (11 quantitative and one qualitative) were selected for the review. This included an additional article found through a hand search of references.

Appendix i provides a flow diagram for the selection procedure for each database or journal, detailing the date of each search.

3.6.2   October 2011 - systematic review resources update

In October 2011 the PsycINFO database was explored to identify background and complementary resources to corroborate the analysis of Phase 3 findings (Chapter 6). The PsycINFO database was now housed within the ProQUEST platform alongside seven other databases, six of which were from academic disciplines without a specific health focus. As a result of this search a subsequent quantitative resource for the systematic review was identified through the Education Resources Information Centre

(ERIC) which is known to possess bibliographic records of education literature. Due to the discipline of ERIC falling within the field of education, it was not previously identified as a primary source of articles relating to the study and therefore was not discovered in the original systematic review search. The resource identified was a Technical Report by Gary L. Bowen (1989) for the United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. This report provided a secondary analysis of the data set already included within the review by McCubbin and Lavee (1986) and Lavee et al. (1985).

A subsequent search of the ERIC database using the key search words depicted in Figure 3.4 did not deliver any further resources fulfilling the inclusion criteria. Ultimately, with the addition of Bowen's (1989) report, 13 research studies were included in the systematic review (12 quantitative and one qualitative). Figure 3.5 provides a summary of the selection process of all resources for the review and Table 3.1 presents a list of these studies.
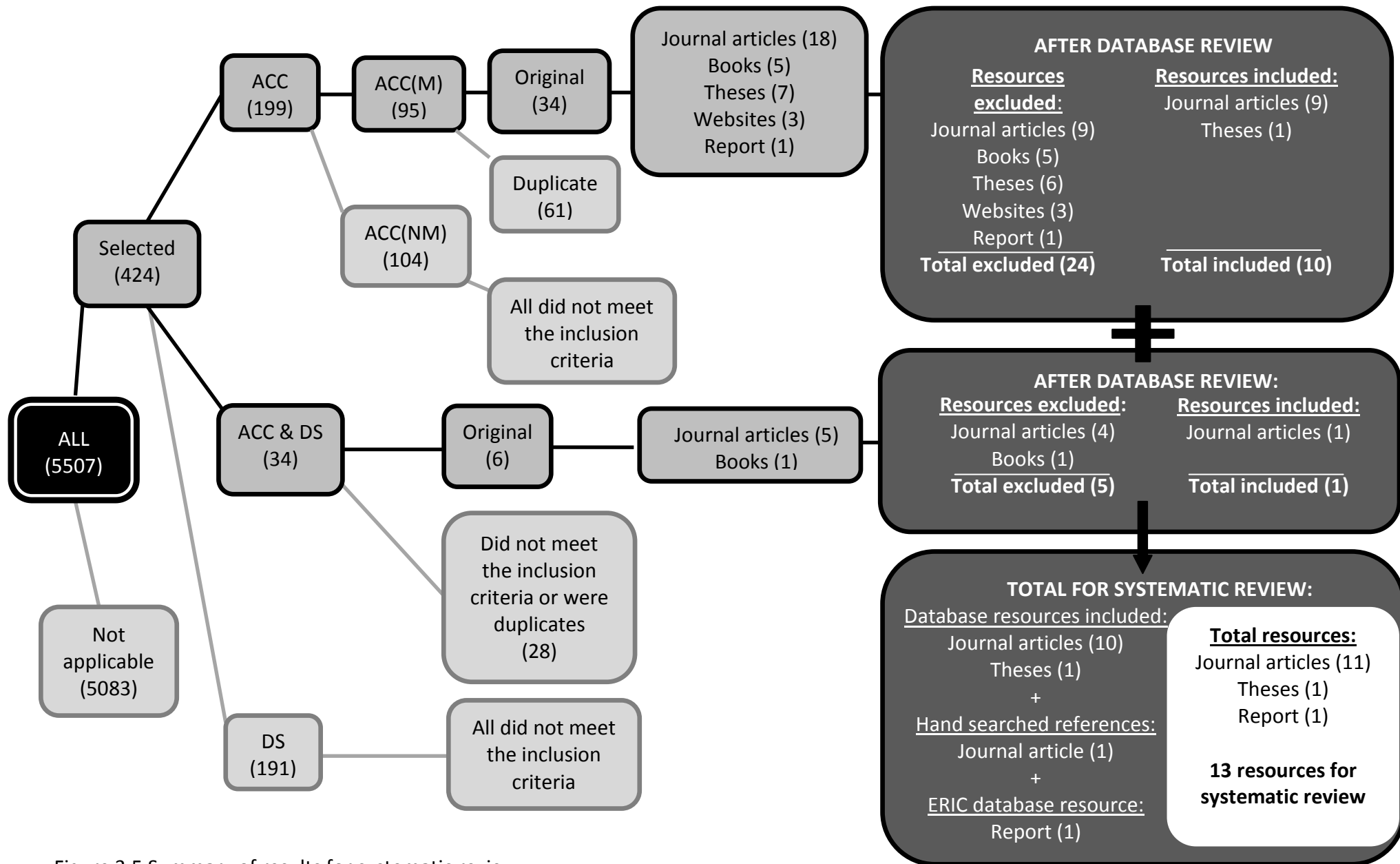
Figure 3.5 Summary of results for systematic review

Author(s) (Year)	Title of Research
Manning, F. J. & DeRouin, E. M. (1981)	Employed wives of US Army members in Germany fare better than those unemployed.
Lakhani, H., Thomas, S. & Gilroy, C. (1985)	Army European tour extension: A multivariate approach.
Lavee, Y., Hamilton, I. M. & Patterson, J. M. (1985)	The Double ABCX Model of Family Stress and Adaptation: An Empirical Test by Analysis of Structural Equations with Latent Variables.
McCubbin, H. I. & Lavee, Y. (1986)	Strengthening army families: A family life cycle stage perspective.
Bowen, G. L. (1987)	Wives' employment status and marital adjustment in military families.
Fernandez-Pol, B. (1988a)	Does the military family syndrome exist?
Fernandez-Pol, B. (1988b)	Ethnic differences in psychophysiological distress among American- and Asian-born military wives.
Bowen, G. L. (1989)	Family Adaptation to Relocation: An Empirical Analysis of Family Stressors, Adaptive Resources, and Sense of Coherence.
Rosen, L. N. & Moghadam, L. Z. (1991)	Patterns of seasonal change in mood and behavior: an example from a study of military wives.
Lakhani, H. (1994)	The Socioeconomic Benefits to Military Families of Home-Basing of Armed Forces.
McNulty, P. A. (2003)	Does deployment impact the health care use of military families stationed in Okinawa, Japan?
Burrell, L. M., Adams, G. A., Durand, D. B. & Castro, C. A. (2006)	The Impact of Military Lifestyle Demands on Well-Being, Army, and Family Outcomes.
Jervis, S. (2009)	Military Wives and Relocation: A Psycho-Social Perspective.

Table 3.1 Titles and authors of included systematic review studies

3.7 Applicable Studies

3.7.1 Data extraction

Details of the eligible studies were extracted using criteria suggested by CRD (2009).

Due to the nature of the chosen studies, some of the suggested information

requirements were not applicable. For example description of interventions, control

groups and costs were not relevant. Therefore, criteria were confined to

methodology, the number of participants and, if available, their location during the

study, the methods of data collection, method of analysis, the reported findings and limitations of the work.

3.7.2 Methodological quality

Checklists by Kmet et al. (2004) for determining the quality of quantitative and qualitative studies were utilised to assess the studies. Appendix ii provides a summary of these quality indicators and specifies the key factors that were reviewed for the critical analysis of the chosen research. These checklists provide an overall summary score, however Kmet et al. acknowledge that this approach could be prone to bias. Therefore, to improve the inter-rater reliability of the scoring one of my supervisors and I completed the checklists independently for three of the studies and demonstrated consensus of results. Altogether eleven papers scored between 77.3 – 100.0% with the remaining two (Manning and DeRouin, 1981, Lakhani et al., 1985) scoring 59.1%. Due to the low number of relevant studies, any scoring more than 50.0% were included. Thus, all studies contributed to the synthesis and development of themes. The studies were chosen due to their content in informing the purpose of this review; however their limitations are discussed within Section 3.10.

3.8 Method of analysis

For the purpose of a preliminary synthesis, the text of each paper was uploaded onto a database using QSR International Inc (2008) NVivo8 software. This software was developed to support qualitative analysis in allowing the management of data and ideas, to query data and formulate analytical models, and ultimately construct reports (Bazeley, 2007). The analysis focused on the findings and discussion section of each study. The text was coded in a line-by-line process according to its meaning and

content with respect to the impact of the military spouse accompanying their husband or wife overseas. This was in relation to the objectives of the study identifying the emotional and psychological impact of readjusting to a new lifestyle, identifying coping strategies utilized, and the necessary support required. This created a bank of 'free nodes'. Assessing for similarities and differences between these nodes, then allowed them to be grouped into a hierarchical 'tree structure', providing overarching themes.

As advised by CRD (2009) a formal pooling of results was not appropriate for a diverse selection of non-randomized study types. Therefore, a narrative was written to indicate and evidence the development of descriptive themes and provide a summary for the selected study findings.

3.8.1 Assessing the robustness of the synthesis

The narrative analysis allowed the development of descriptive and then theoretical themes of the selected study findings. As discussed in Section 3.8 this was completed with the aid of suitable analytical software which allowed the explicit recording of the development of these themes, seen as central to the method (Thomas and Hagen, 2007). I completed the initial thematic analysis and my findings were corroborated by my Director of Studies.

Structural summaries for each study (Appendix iii) detailing the methodologies, samples and settings, attempts to preserve the context of each research and in doing so allows reviewers to judge the complete work for themselves, as suggested by Thomas and Hagen (2007).

The quality of the included studies was assessed and is reported in Appendix ii and Section 3.7.2. All studies contributed to the synthesis and development of themes.

3.9 Description of included studies

Altogether 13 studies have been included in the review; all were published between 1981 and 2009. Twelve were based on a quantitative design, one qualitative. The selection incorporates one thesis (Jervis, 2009), one report (Bowen, 1989) and 11 peer-reviewed articles from the following journals: Armed Forces and Society; Evaluation and Program Planning; Journal of Behavioural Economics; Journal of Marriage and the Family; Military Medicine; and Psychological Reports. One study was focused on British military foreign postings (Jervis, 2009). The remaining 12 related to US military families on overseas postings.

In eight studies the sample sizes of military spouses ranged from 15 to 675. A further four studies (Lakhani et al., 1985, Lavee et al., 1985, McCubbin and Lavee, 1986, Bowen, 1989) drew their samples from the Army Family Survey, a data set from the research project One Thousand Army Families by McCubbin et al. (1983, cited in McCubbin and Lavee, 1986, Lavee et al., 1985) in conjunction with the Department of the Army and the University of Minnesota. Finally, information gathered from two other Army survey databases completed by the US Army Research Institute in 1987 and 1989, provided data from 12 000 and 11 000 families respectively, for Lakhani's (1994) research.

The geographic locations of the subjects were either given as the generic descriptions of Europe, north-west Europe, Far East and Asia or the specific settings of Italy,

Germany, West-Germany, Texas, California or Okinawa (Japan). Other expressions

used were OCONUS (outside continental US) and CONUS (continental US).

Across the range of quantitative studies, questionnaire completion was the primary

method of data collection. In Rosen and Moghadam's (1991) study, 1200

questionnaires were mailed to wives who had previously been stationed in Germany,

Texas or California. Seasonal variations in moods and behaviour were then examined

utilising 24 bipolar scales to assess levels of Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.). The

welfare of US spouses based in Italy or Germany were also studied by Burrell et al

(2006). In their research, the relationship between four specified military lifestyle

demands (fear for soldier's safety, impact of moving, impact of separations, and

impact of foreign residence) with well-being, army life satisfaction and marital

satisfaction was investigated through eight scales incorporated in 3886 mailed

questionnaires.

Self-administered questionnaires provided the same original data set for four other

studies. Two of these studies were based on the experiences of enlisted[3] families

relocating to West Germany (Lavee et al., 1985, McCubbin and Lavee, 1986) and were

framed on a theoretical model, which will be discussed in more detail later in Section

3.11.2. Studies by Lakhani et al. (1985) and Bowen(1989) also analysed data based on

this set but incorporated both enlisted and officer families. Bowen developed

separate models for members and their spouses in order to incorporate the opinions

of both enlisted and officer spouses in his analysis.

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[3] Any rank below that of a commissioned officer or warrant officer in the US Military

Fernandez-Pol (1988a) distributed self-administered questionnaires to spouses stationed in the Far East to measure their psycho-physiological distress level. In the first study report, a subsample consisting of wives only born in America was investigated. The second study (Fernandez-Pol, 1988b) incorporated the complete sample allowing the views of American, Japanese and non-Japanese born wives to be compared.

In the four remaining quantitative research pieces, questionnaires were employed by Manning and DeRouin (1981) to evaluate previous study results of unstructured interviews with spouses. They chose to investigate spouses' experiences within a military community in West Germany. In a descriptive, correlation study completed by McNulty (2003), she investigated the health care needs of US military families based in Okinawa, Japan. In this study the well-being of the families in a deployed and non-deployed status[4] was compared using four assessment tools. In Lakhani's (1994) evaluative study, inferential statistical analysis was based on two complementary US Army Family surveys (completed by the US Army in 1987 and then in 1989), to investigate if there were any socio-economic benefits of home-basing in the US. The final quantitative study by Bowen (1987) incorporated a marital adjustment scale consisting of four components to allow comparisons of the overall marital adjustment level of families in CONUS with those OCONUS.

The only qualitative study was completed by Jervis (2009). This incorporated a reflexive psychoanalytical methodology using unstructured interviews to collect data.

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[4] This refers to whether the serving member was deployed or remained with the family at the base in Okinawa during the time of the study

Within the quantitative papers a variety of statistical analysis methods were used to test the significance of the data. Standard inferential analysis of binomial testing, χ^2 or analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used in four studies (Manning and DeRouin, 1981, Fernandez-Pol, 1988a, Fernandez-Pol, 1988b, Rosen and Moghadam, 1991). More complex regression analysis was used in five other studies (Lakhani et al., 1985, Lakhani, 1994, McNulty, 2003, Burrell et al., 2006, Bowen, 1989). In the final three papers theoretical or factorial models were used in their analysis. In Lavee et al. (1985) a theoretical double ABCX model was translated into an empirically testable model. A statistical package LISREL[5] was used to assess the structural equations formulated. The Family Adjustment and Adaption Response (FAAR) model was used in McCubbin and Lavee's (1986) study in conjunction with a stepwise regression analysis. Finally, Bowen's (1987) study used the factorial analysis of variance model to test the data.

In the non-quantitative work Jervis (2009) transcribed the unstructured interviews and reflected upon each interview to consider not only what was said, but what may have impartially been imparted. The transcriptions were then compared to identify recurring themes.

3.10 Results of the review

The results presented here relate to spousal experiences on an overseas posting. Any other reported findings in the studies were not included in the synthesis.

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[5] LISREL – Linear Structural Relations

The following themes will be reviewed:

- Functioning of a military family on an international posting

- Loss

- General well-being

- Support.

3.10.1 Narrative analysis

3.10.1.1 Functioning of a military family on an international posting

The quality of life experienced by military spouses posted OCONUS[6] was considered by Lakhani (1994) to be inferior to those living within CONUS[7]. This was believed to be influenced by the associated stress of frequent deployments of the service member whilst overseas, combined with the limited opportunities to have quality family time. McNulty (2003) also reported that 16% (n = 34) of families of both deployed and non-deployed status based in Okinawa, Japan, demonstrated a moderate declination of family functioning over a six month assessment period.

Comparing the military spouse lifestyle to that of their civilian counterparts, Fernandez-Pol (1988a) rejected the hypothesis that military wives would report higher number of psycho-physiological symptoms. The study sample was based in the Far East and indicated that during peacetime American born military wives were similar to their civilian counterparts in reporting distress symptoms.

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[6] Outside continental US
[7] Continental US

Spousal satisfaction with the quality of Army life was found to be dependent on location and their employment status. In Lakhani's (1994) study, of spouses who reported being "very satisfied" with their military lifestyle, 73% were located in CONUS and 27% OCONUS (p ≤ .05). Additionally, the results revealed that spouses had greater problems finding employment in OCONUS than CONUS. Bowen's (1987) study also concluded that the effects of wives' employment status on marital adjustment was situationally specific to the combined effect of base location and the service member's rank. In general, employment among wives of officers stationed overseas was beneficial to marital satisfaction but was identified as being unfavourable for those stationed in the USA. However, enlisted men stationed in the USA needed greater marital adjustment when the wife was employed; overseas the situation was reversed and having an employed wife was felt to be functional.

Manning and DeRouin (1981) report that housewives who were involved in voluntary activities were more likely to be satisfied with life, the US Army and their time in Germany, than those who had been seeking employment for a long time. In addition to this they found that the spouse's employment status and satisfaction with military life influenced the service member's contentment. The husbands of better adjusted working wives were themselves more satisfied than those with unemployed spouses. Likewise, the results of Lakhani et al.'s (1985) factor analysis revealed that satisfaction with family life and their employment, were crucial determinants in influencing officers and enlisted servicemen to wish to extend their tours in Europe. Overall, family and Army life satisfaction were pivotal on the spouse's perception of the military member's happiness and social opportunities.

3.10.1.2 Loss

Difficulties with employment overseas or the voluntary loss of employment due to an overseas posting can also have a significant individual impact on the spouse. The ability to obtain any employment was seen by Manning and DeRouin (1981) as positive to adjustment and satisfaction among these wives. Similarly, Jervis (2009), reporting the analysis of unstructured interviews with British military spouses on a foreign posting, stated that meaningful employment whilst overseas was desired by spouses to provide some personal credibility and individuality. The prior loss of a job in order to move overseas instilled feelings of worthlessness and left individuals feeling insecure about their identity. Therefore, spouses felt the need to occupy themselves with activities that would provide a sense of personal belonging.

Military relocation was believed to undermine established identities (Jervis, 2009). The patriarchal military community was accused of failing to recognise wives' individualism. In particular the title 'wife of' was found disturbing by some and this concept of losing one's individuality was seen as a result of being integrated with the military. It was argued that personal identities were replaced with those of the serving members which also inflicted loss of personal autonomy. Nonetheless, there was a reluctant acceptance of the 'dependent' role in order to mix with the British military community, even though this would ultimately define the spouses purely as servicemen's wives and deny them recognition as individuals.

The rebuilding of identities took on a different perspective with Jervis's (2009) sole male interviewee. Less disturbance and fewer losses were experienced in comparison to the female counterparts. Additionally, there was no incorporation into the military

institution and no expectations of carrying out the traditional role of a military spouse. However, this classical role was being challenged by some female spouses who considered it an intrusion of their identity.

It was reported by Jervis (2009) that valued relationships were lost when a spouse accompanied their husband/wife on a foreign posting. Close friendships overseas were considered a rarity as they were believed to be an emotional investment that could result in further painful loss. This caused a sense of loneliness that could not be shielded by superficial relationships. The time limiting factor of postings was identified as a barrier to the formation of strong friendships which would often only last the length of the posting. In addition to the loss of personal relationships, spouses also felt they lost rich, interpersonal relationships with their children who had been sent to boarding school.

Jervis's (2009) results also extended into the loss of a familiar environment. The general disorientation of new surroundings, in combination with a language barrier, meant some spouses reported experiencing a form of culture shock, which also led to feelings of social isolation (Manning and DeRouin, 1981). Jervis (2009) also reported that ambivalence to their changed circumstances was a common reaction and prevented some spouses from engaging with their new environment. Nonetheless, despite an initial reluctance, other spouses appreciated the importance of acquainting themselves with their new location.

3.10.1.3 General well-being

Disenchantment with the military and the necessity to continually adapt to new locations were key issues reported by interviewees in Jervis (2009). McNulty's (2003) research showed that the well-being of non-deployed families decreased over time spent in a foreign residence (p = .06), whereas the families of deployed spouses became more resilient.

In Burrell et al.'s (2006) research, which surveyed US spouses based in Europe, the results of a hierarchical regression indicated a positive and significant (p < .05) relationship between the impact of moving and physical well-being, contrary to the authors' expectations. Additionally, the results of a bivariate correlation demonstrated that the number of relocations was positively associated with well-being and Army satisfaction, but the actual impact of such a move produced a negative relationship with satisfaction. Overall, the impact of relocating was not significantly related to psychological well-being or marital satisfaction.

Correlation analysis also showed that living in a foreign residence was negatively associated with both physical and psychological well-being (Burrell et al., 2006). It had a negative relationship with Army life satisfaction but adjustment to a foreign posting had no relationship with marital satisfaction. In the second step of the hierarchical regression analysis, beta regression coefficients for individual variables also indicated a significant negative relationship between the impact of a foreign residence and psychological well-being.

Investigating the occurrence of Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.), Rosen and Moghadam (1991) reported that subjects living in Germany retrospectively stated significantly more symptoms (p < .001) associated with winter S.A.D. than those living in Texas or California. Wives located in Germany reported feeling worst in winter (47%) compared with California (24%) and Texas (34%). Additionally, of the sample of wives in Germany in relation to the winter months, 65% reported feeling least energetic, 49% socialised the least and 62% reported sleeping more than others in the study. Significantly fewer wives (p < .001) in California and Texas reported corresponding changes.

It was reported that the military wives studied in Fernandez-Pol's (1988a) work were not only subject to the stresses of military life but had the additional stress of residing at a foreign post. The author reported that to avoid being an encumbrance to their husbands, some spouses may have under-reported symptoms that may have been considered socially objectionable. Furthermore, the service member's rank appeared to influence the reporting of symptoms, enlisted spouses reporting more than those married to officers. Jervis (2009) also stated that although one wife was particularly willing, for research purposes, to discuss her distress experienced on new locations it was not something that she would have normally made public. An additional wife from Jervis's research noted that the admission of feeling uneasy about being at a new location was not acknowledged, as it was unacceptable to appear weak. This was also evident when discussing the loss of interpersonal relationships with children attending boarding school, again the unhappiness was not expressed directly. Consequently, Jervis reported that distress was experienced but was borne in stoic silence and felt such unprocessed post-relocation distress could undermine the spouses' well-being.

Differences in ethnic origin of spouses in Fernandez-Pol's (1988b) work was recognised as a factor affecting stress. Non-Japanese Asian-born military wives reported significantly higher psycho-physiological symptoms than American (p < .0001) and Japanese (p < .001) military wives stationed in Okinawa, Japan. One suggested cause was the need of this group to adapt to two alien cultural environments: the military (including the overriding culture of the other military spouses) and Japan.

As a result of McNulty's (2003) research it was reported that while stationed overseas spouses of deployed and non-deployed families demonstrated alarming levels of sadness, anger and signs of depression. This was believed to then impact on the stress of the active duty member, potentially reducing their effectiveness on an operational setting. Furthermore, the family were recognised to not only struggle with relocation itself, but with the accumulation of stresses resulting from current and previous unresolved family life changes (Lavee et al., 1985). This lowered the family's satisfaction with their lifestyle, depleted personal well-being and increased the probability of health, emotional and relationship problems within the family unit.

Overall, McNulty (2003) noted that when stressors were identified, spouses in a deployed group were more receptive to interventions. The Family Coping Inventory scores also indicated (p = .05) that coping increased with families who had experience of previous overseas postings. Likewise, self-reliance during deployment increased proportionately with number of family overseas assignments. Manning and DeRouin (1981) also discovered when a spouse was employed whilst in Germany, this

occupation enhanced their coping skills thus improving their adaptability and gave

them greater satisfaction with life, marriage and the Army.

McCubbin and Lavee (1986) reported couples without children adapted best to a

foreign posting if pre-travel difficulties were minimised, if the serviceperson had basic

coping skills and they felt a sense of community support. Those families with

preschool and school age children adapted best if family events and travel

complications before relocation were minimised and if spouses felt valued and

affirmed. Comparative analysis also indicated that this group experienced the greatest

amount of post-arrival strain. Families with adolescents adapted best if their post-

arrival difficulties were minimal, if the service member felt valued and affirmed, and if

the family unity was strong. Finally, families with children who had already left home

adapted best if the accumulation of family life events was limited, if the service

member had basic coping skills and the family unity was strong.

Research by Bowen (1989) investigated the approaches available to improve 'family

wellness' during a period of family stress, depicted as the adaption to relocation

overseas. In particular, the importance of congruency of expectations and actual

experiences of life in West Germany for officer and enlisted personnel's spouses was

highlighted in Bowen's work. A positive and significant relationship with family

adaption (p <.01) was demonstrated, with the best predictor of this family adaption

shown to be a spouse's sense of coherence. Consequently, the more that the military

spouses' expectations were matched the greater was their reported family well-being

and adaption.

Ultimately, Jervis (2009) reported three adaption techniques utilised by her interviewees in order to become more settled and content in their new environment. Firstly, possessions were arranged in their houses to make them more homely. Second, they tried to become orientated with their new environment and finally, they did endeavour to develop friendships.

3.10.1.4 Support

Overseas base facilities were recognised in Lakhani et al.'s (1985) study as an extremely important institution. The economic provisions and American products assisted families in maintaining continuity with their American lifestyle. The authors reported a combination of intra-family support systems and a sense of coherence contributed to the family's adaptive power. Friendship networks and a supportive community were also recognised as playing an important buffering role. Not only did this make the posting a more positive experience, it gave a better perception of coherence and control, allowing the family to become more flexible and able to adjust. Likewise, Lavee at al. (1985) determined that the external environment (social support) had a greater impact on the family experiences than their own internal resources. This importance of community support was also highlighted in Bowen's (1989) research. The extent to which spouses believed that they could rely upon individuals in the community during challenging periods and their perception of living in a supportive community, emerged as a significant ($p < .01$) positive predictor for family adaption.

The Social Support Index was used by McNulty (2003), who recorded a difference in support ($p = .02$) over a six month assessment period, which suggested that social support decreased in families who had experienced previous foreign postings.

Manning and DeRouin (1981) identified via interviews the importance of employment in the development of social support networks by enhancing self-confidence and building friendships. Amongst these working wives, 'friend' was the third most popular choice of support, whereas it was sixth among the unemployed wives. However, it was also reported that some spouses found it unwise to develop friendships because they would be temporary and could actually cause conflict. Additionally, the authors reported that a wife could sometimes be isolated from their traditional support system of other spouses if their husband desired to distance himself from his work when off-duty.

3.10.2 Generating analytical themes

To explore the relationships within and between the selected studies, the visual method of conceptual mapping was used to construct groupings and associations. This is a technique suggested by CRD (2009).
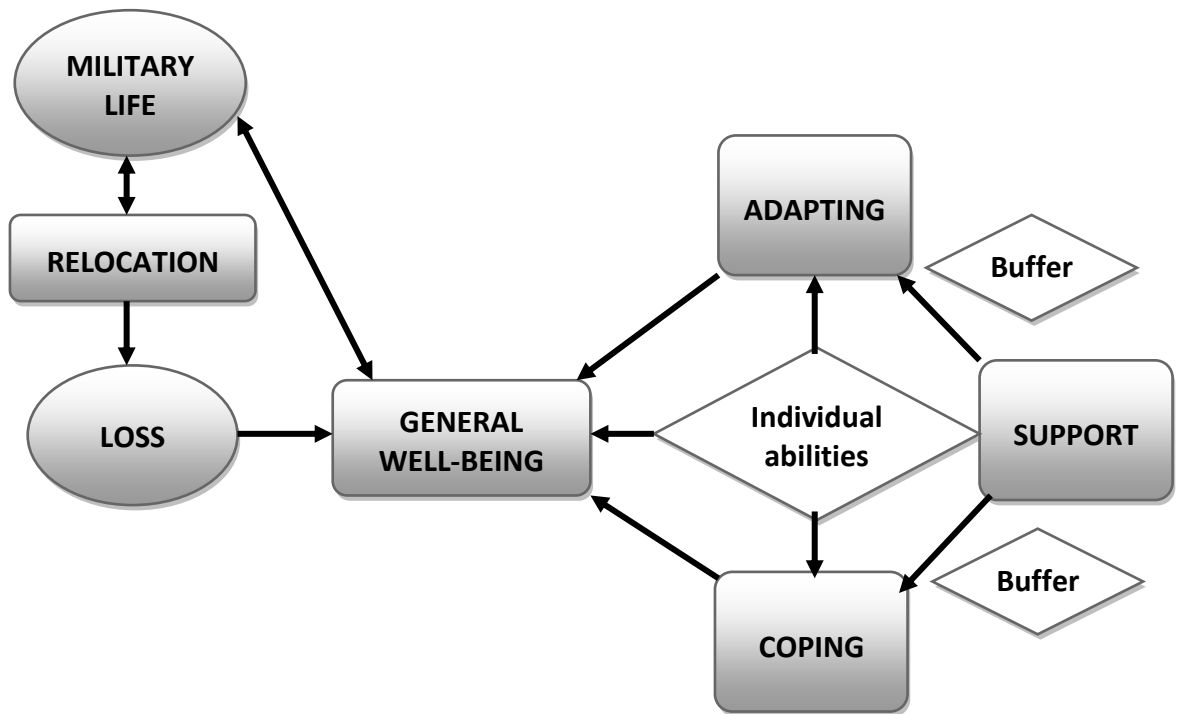
Figure 3.6 Conceptual map of descriptive themes

From the narrative analysis of selected studies, it can be determined that frequent

relocation, sometimes involving overseas locations, is an accepted phenomenon of

military life (Fernandez-Pol, 1988a, Burrell et al., 2006, Jervis, 2009). Therefore,

'military life' and 'relocation' are shown in Figure 3.6 as having an interlinking

association. Additionally, military lifestyle can be argued to be the governing factor in

a military spouse's existence, and for this reason is given a position at the top of the

conceptual map.

Not only has the military been compared to a controlling institution (Jervis, 2009) in

which a spouse becomes integrated, but the spouse's satisfaction with this lifestyle has

a direct impact on their well-being and on the service member's work effectiveness

(Lakhani et al., 1985, Lakhani, 1994). Hence, a double ended direct relationship between a spouse's well-being and the military life is shown.

Relocation creates what has been considered a 'crisis event' (Lavee et al., 1985) from which a spouse can experience many losses (Jervis, 2009) having a direct impact on their well-being. How they deal with such an impact stems from the individual's own capabilities and available support. Their own aptitude can have an immediate effect on their welfare particularly if they have previous experience of relocations (McNulty, 2003, Jervis, 2009) or it can be dependent on their own background (Fernandez-Pol, 1988b). In addition to this, individual abilities can allow a spouse to adjust through the development of adapting and coping skills for example through seeking employment or learning a new language (Bowen, 1987, Jervis, 2009). The concept of 'Individual abilities' is shown in Figure 3.6 with a direct link to general well-being and having an association with adapting and coping. It demonstrates the diversity of individual circumstances that can contribute to a person's well-being. Likewise, available support whether through internal sources such as family and established friendships, or external supports from the military community, is shown to the right of Figure 3.6 and provides an indirect buffering action on the impact of relocation.

3.11 Discussion of reviewed studies

The specific objectives addressed by this review (Section 3.2) will structure the discussion of results, whilst incorporating the limitations of the review studies. The experiences of non-military spouses, such as those affiliated to the corporate, diplomatic, and academic or clergy environments, who are also accustomed to frequent international relocations due to their husband/wife's work, provide

supplementary data at the end of each section. Similarly, research examining forced or involuntary relocations for example due to a war or a natural disaster, will provide an alternative perspective to the impact of relocating to an unfamiliar environment, but also allows similarities with the military and non-military spouses to be discussed.

3.11.1 To determine the potential emotional, social and psychological impact of relocation overseas on military spouses

In order to examine the overall emotional, social and psychological impact of a foreign posting, it will be considered in terms of the associated stress, well-being and satisfaction with military life.

The stress related with being a military spouse was well documented (Fernandez-Pol, 1988a, McNulty, 2003, Lavee et al., 1985, Jervis, 2009). While there was much acceptance of their role, there was limited research examining the impact of relocation on an accompanying military spouse to an overseas posting. Only three of the studies included in the review were completed in the last ten years (McNulty, 2003, Burrell et al., 2006, Jervis, 2009). This suggests there is limited contemporary evidence on the effect of international relocations on the military spouse.

From the review the quality of life for a military spouse whilst on an overseas posting was reported to have additional stressors in comparison to domestic locations (Fernandez-Pol, 1988a, Lakhani, 1994, Lavee et al., 1985, McNulty, 2003, Jervis, 2009, McCubbin and Lavee, 1986). However, the influence of social desirability, was reported in Fernandez-Pol's (1988a) study to be a potential hindrance in assessing military spouses stress levels. Therefore, any symptoms judged as socially

objectionable could have been under-reported; consequently this failure to recognise and rectify such predicaments could have a detrimental effect on a spouse's well-being. This stoicism in conjunction with the added variable of the military wife's ethnicity in Fernandez-Pol's second study (1988b), highlighted the individual influential circumstances of military spouses in relation to their experiences on a foreign posting. For this reason, no generalised statement can be made about the impact of a specific location to a spouse's well-being, as the permutations of personal beliefs and situations prevent this.

The report of spousal satisfaction levels on an overseas posting in Lakhani's (1994) work was based on the analysis of two Army database surveys. The quality of employment and family life was examined, however it was noted that the data reviewed were only cross-sectional and it was not possible to conduct an adjustment for selectivity bias which would have required longitudinal data, and hence the authors believed that subsequent results may have been imprecise and bias. Nonetheless, this concept of employment status was a frequent significant factor in studies, and was seen as highly influential on a spouse's well-being. As such, Manning and DeRouin (1981) recognised spousal satisfaction as a reflection on their employment status whilst overseas. The variability of this circumstance was discussed, but an ambiguous study design and incomplete explanation of their results limited the robustness of their findings. Bowen (1987) also provided evidence on the effect of a wife's employment status, utilising a stratified sample to proportionately represent families in different geographical locations. Despite incorporating an overall sample of 675 couples, Bowen felt the small number among the groups compromised the external validity of the findings. However, Bowen's work drew attention to the repercussion of a spouse's

satisfaction level on the serving member. Likewise, Lakhani et al.'s (1985) research

linked this contentment with Army retention levels but, an incomplete description of

results and no provision of the questionnaire response rate reduced the

generalisability of their results. However, in conjunction with Bowen's work, it could

be argued that a spouse's well-being could have an impact on the military retention.

Completing the review allowed the identification of the theme 'loss' as having a

significant impact on military spouses based on an overseas location. This loss can be

considered in two formats, one of an internal loss – loss of identity, role and

autonomy; and the other an external loss – loss of familiar environment, a job, family

and friends. This analysis was primarily reported in the findings of Jervis's (2009)

thesis but reference was also made within the background discussion of McNulty's

(2003) study. Jervis's work produced 450 pages of transcribed data from unstructured

interviews that were thoroughly analysed with support provided through consultation

with other psychosocial researchers. The sample size of 15 spouses was considered

small but the author felt the sample to be fairly representative of individuals married

to British personnel on a foreign posting. However, it was suggested that further

research was necessary to confirm the results. Regardless of this, Jervis's study

differentiated loss as having a pivotal role with a spouse's health. This implied if the

impact of loss was not suitably rectified the spouse could experience long term effects

to their well-being.

As the overall well-being of a spouse was suggested to be directly related to their

satisfaction with military life and through the experience of loss following relocation,

Burrell et al. (2006) considered the effect of these factors on a spouse's physical and

psychological well-being, and martial satisfaction. A series of two-step hierarchical

statistical regression analysis was conducted with an unambiguous description of

results. However, a response rate of 13% limited the generalisability of their findings.

Additionally, the majority of responses were provided by older, well educated and

content spouses, indicating that self-selection could have occurred. This study

identified the need to incorporate a greater diversity of military spouses in research to

establish more robust findings in reference to their well-being.

The well-being of spouses was reviewed from a different perspective by Rosen and

Moghadam (1991). This provided the only study that specifically investigated the

geographical location of a posting with respect to the spouse's well-being, in this case

analysing the occurrence of S.A.D.[8] symptoms. A questionnaire response rate of 30%

from spouses in three locations provided the foundation for their study. However, the

results were based on retrospective reporting of symptoms which reduced their

credibility. Furthermore, it was noted that the findings could not conclusively prove

that symptoms associated with S.A.D. were experienced in greater numbers in

populations located further from the equator, but it did increase awareness of the

potential physical impact of an overseas posting that was not related to the stress of

the move itself.

Overall from the review studies, it could be implied that a foreign posting could have a

negative influence on the emotional, social and psychological well-being of a military

spouse. Nonetheless, it was clearly illustrated that this was a reflection of individual

and personal circumstances. Within the non-military environment, the well-being of a

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[8] Seasonal Affective Disorder

spouse was also a fundamental area of research, and demonstrated that the military spouses' experiences were similar to their civilian counterparts (Gullotta and Donohue, 1983, Wiggins-Frame and Shehan, 1994, Puskar, 1990). As already discussed, retention within the Armed Forces was seen as a reflection on the spouse's satisfaction with the military (Lakhani et al., 1985, Bowen, 1987). Similarly, within a multinational company (MNC) global assignments were seen as the pinnacle for career growth and for international success (Caligiuri et al., 1998), but again was dependent on the spouse's adjustment. Therefore, the trailing spouses were acknowledged to have an influential role in their husband/wife's affiliated work.

Certain internationally relocated women were identified in Puskar's (1990) study to be at risk of developing emotional distress, but this study was limited by a small sample size. Additionally, it was reported within Brett's (1982) literature review that such wives were also expected to have lower self-concepts and poorer physical and mental health (Seidenberg, 1973, Weissman and Paykel, 1972). Brett's study ultimately refuted this claim as no significant association was found between mobility and well-being in her work, except with respect to social relationships, but Brett did acknowledge the questionable reliability of the data. Regardless of their merit, these conflicting studies draw attention to the irresolute psychological impact on a spouse's well-being following an international relocation. The results implied whether the research is associated with the military or other organisations, individualism of spouses and specific locations could influence the overall experience.

Despite only being reported in one military study (Jervis, 2009), the theme of loss was a key concept within the non-military research field (De Verthelyi, 1995, Makowsky et

al., 1988) and also had distinctive ties to the experiences of those who were forced to relocate due to war or natural disasters (Gonsalves, 1992, Gerrity and Steinglass, 2003, Kobayashi et al., 1997). As in Jervis's work, loss was manifested not just via the internal factors of identity or autonomy, but also through unfamiliarity of environment and culture. Specifically, research investigating international students' spouses as sojourners, depicted their loss of purposeful activity and professional identity as distressful, "Now I am just a house wife, a nobody" (De Verthelyi, 1995, p398). In addition they were also felt to potentially experience uncharacteristic frustrations due to the loss of their independency status. Furthermore, the lack of perceived control in decision making for spouses (who generally were the wives) impacted on their sense of importance, yet despite this exclusion they were still then expected to be accountable for incorporating these changes into the family life (Makowsky et al., 1988, Copeland and Norell, 2002). Hence, these studies implied that military and non-military life could potentially erode another layer of a spouse's autonomy and further impact the psychological losses already felt. Consequently, the non-military research supported Jervis's argument of the losses endured by the military spouses.

An alternative perspective for reviewing loss, and the subsequent emotional and psychological impact, is through the experiences of families who due to hostilities or natural disaster, have been forced to relocate. Undoubtedly, this would be considered as a highly intensified version of the trailing spouses' experiences, however common links do exist. Research completed in this field reviewed family experiences rather than the direct repercussions on the spouse, but the commonalities of interfamily role change, confrontation with an alien culture, built environment changes and extreme emotional distress (Kobayashi et al., 1997, Gerrity and Steinglass, 2003, Gonsalves,

1992) were identified. Furthermore, Gonsalves (1992) recognised that refugees who were forced to leave their homeland were subsequently compelled to alter their own perceptions and behaviours. A similar sensation was also experienced by the trailing spouse, particularly for those individuals who felt they had not been involved in the decision to relocate (Makowsky et al., 1988). Overall, Kobayashi et al. (1997) discussed that a successful adjustment was accomplished when an individual took command of their new surroundings and restructured their identity according to their new environment. Obviously the physical traumas and complete loss of personal articles for families forced to relocate, were more extreme than that tolerated by trailing spouses, but the underlying stress and loss of the comforting familiar were replicated.

The review and non-military research identified the perceptions of loss and role change as key influential factors for an individual's well-being. In social psychology an individual's socially defined category (e.g. mother, wife) is a perspective which is considered to encapsulate specific norms or behaviors, determined as Role Theory (Biddle, 1979). It considered most of everyday activity to be living up to the roles, or expectations, of others. Therefore, the military and non-military spouses, plus those who experienced the impact of a forced relocation, experienced the 'loss' of such roles and consequently were compelled to redefine their way of life accordingly. Hence, it could be argued that establishing a new role could be perceived as being accepted into a new society, and thus appease the sense of loss and anguish commonly experienced in unfamiliar surroundings.

3.11.2 To ascertain the coping strategies used by the spouses when relocated

      overseas

The overall adaption abilities of military spouses recognised in the review resources

will be considered to develop an understanding of factors influencing these personal

experiences and readjustment to a new lifestyle.

The ability of a spouse to adapt was shown to depend not only on the presence of

children, but also on the deployment status of the service member during the posting

(McCubbin and Lavee, 1986, McNulty, 2003). McCubbin and Lavee assessed families

across four stages of the life cycle: no children; preschool and school age children;

adolescents and young; and children who had left home. Their results indicated a

significant variation of adjustment levels required by families at different stages of the

life cycle. However, the authors believed due to the exploratory nature of their

research and the relatively small samples in each group that their results needed to be

interpreted with caution. Yet, this work identified the structure of the family unit to

have a significant impact on the spouse's ability to cope with certain situations.

Therefore, potentially it could be inferred that when there are dependents in a family

this could compel the non-military spouse parent to adjust unconditionally in order to

gain control. However, it could also be argued that the presence of children could

contribute additional stressors to a situation beyond the capability of the parent to

cope.

A spouse's ability to adapt was also encompassed within Bowen's (1989) examination

of the approaches required to improve family wellness following an overseas

relocation. He reported the positive influence of family adaption when a spouse's expectations equated to the actual experiences whilst on a foreign posting. Nonetheless, Bowen advised caution in the interpretation of the study findings due to its exploratory nature and what he believed to be a small sample size of two of the four sub-groups analysed. Clearly though Bowen demonstrated a link between expectation and adaption, and it can be argued if a military spouse feels that his or her needs have been recognised, then the transition to their new lifestyle may then be eased.

McNulty's work (2003) examined the phenomenon of a service member's deployment position during a foreign posting. Her work demonstrated another variable that infringed on a spouse's posting experience and was something that would normally only be associated with residing in a domestic location. McNulty produced a robust study, however, generalisations for all deployed and non-deployed families in an overseas location was not possible due to limitations of gender, location and the Armed Service reviewed. Overall, this temporary separation from the service member and the presence or absence of children, all while on a foreign posting again drew attention to the diversity of circumstances which influenced overseas adaption. This concept appeared to orientate around the family status and the individual's ability to either continue as normal or to have the aptitude to become accustomed to the new situation.

Coping strategies, in a similar vein to the psychological impact of relocation, were a very personal response of the trailing spouse. Within De Verthelyi's (1995) study it was epitomised by Kim (1988, p131) "[...] nor are [migrants'] adaption experiences

uniform - even if they are all exactly in the same host country". Puskar (1990)

investigated the coping behaviours of trailing spouses on an international relocation.

Her findings reported wives of corporate employees, as with their counterparts in the

military, were not only believed to be exposed to additional stressors, but they were

also seen to play a pivotal role in influencing the family adaption. This judgment was

also extended into clergy families where spouses too experienced the added pressure

of playing an essential part in their husband's career, but one which was in

combination with representing a model wife and mother, to maintain the appearance

of a problem-free life (Mace and Mace, 1980). These findings concurred with previous

military research (McCubbin and Lavee, 1986, McNulty, 2003) and it could be argued

that additional roles and expectations of all trailing spouses could escalate the

perceived pressure felt by the wife to become quickly accustomed to their new

surroundings. This pressing need to adapt to the new location could result in the wife

feigning happiness to comfort immediate family, which again demonstrates the

concept of stoicism (Fernandez-Pol, 1988a, Jervis, 2009, Sluzki, 1992).

This use of unhelpful coping strategies was an element incorporated within the Double

ABCX Theory of Stress and Family Adaption (McCubbin and Patterson, 1983), a

framework previously integrated in military and non-military research (Lavee et al.,

1985, Wiggins-Frame and Shehan, 1994, Caligiuri et al., 1998, McCubbin and Lavee,

1986). The model extends Hill's (1949, 1958) theory of family stress and crisis, which

focused on the key concepts of the stressor event, the family's resources and the

family's perception, all jointly determining the family adaption. McCubbin and

Patterson extended the stressor dimension with the 'pile-up of demands' concept

which reflected the other life tensions affecting the family pre- and post- crisis. In this

review the crisis event is defined as relocating overseas, and a spouse's apathetic

adaption could be seen as a maladaptive response within the model, so there would

be a continued imbalance between demands and their capability for meeting them.

Additionally, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) believed that stress and coping were

dependent on each individual and his or her chosen response to a situation. This

relationship is also a framework for the welfare of military wives during a foreign

relocation. The manner by which these individuals cope with the demands of

relocation, is evidently connected to how they feel emotionally. Again, this suggests

any suppositions of a trailing spouse's ability to cope in varying circumstances cannot

be generally applied. In fact studies have shown that a reciprocal relationship exists

between expatriates and their spouses, thereby positively or negatively influencing

coping and cross-cultural adaption (Takeuchi et al., 2002, Caligiuri et al., 1998). Thus,

the critical role of a spouse's adjustment on an international relocation has been

recognised in non-military research as a principal consideration when a married

expatriate is chosen for an overseas assignment (Takeuchi et al., 2002, Makowsky et

al., 1988). Within the review, the military spouse's ability to cope was also seen to

impact on decisions to extend overseas and on retention in the services (Lakhani et al.,

1985, Bowen, 1987). Hence, determining the appropriateness of a foreign posting for

some spouses could potentially prevent detrimental relocations not only for the

spouses but for the company/military service.

3.11.3 To examine evidence regarding the types of emotional and social support

used by the spouses when living in a foreign community

References to support sources within the review will be compiled to give background

information on the support available to the military spouse and whether it is accepted.

The mediation of support was suggested to assist in the well-being of spouses and their families through appropriate resources (Lavee et al., 1985). It was discussed that some individuals had a predisposed ability to adjust to a change in circumstance, potentially due to previous experiences (McNulty, 2003, Jervis, 2009). Others felt they were unable to complain and should not appear weak (Jervis, 2009), thus choosing to remain stoic which was considered as harmful for their health. Lavee et al.'s (1985) study recognised that families struggled not only with relocation but with their own unresolved family events, the accumulation of which could potentially produce negative outcomes. However, they also noted that positive experiences of external support mechanisms e.g. community support, had a greater impact on family experiences than their own internal resources. Bowen (1989) also recognised the positive contribution of community support with adaption, but in his study the family support network was only significant to officer spouses.

The review demonstrated that there were a variety of needs for families to become accustomed to a new environment. Social support played an important role alongside in some cases the families own sources. However, whether a spouse was open to such support still remains questionable. The traditional support network of other spouses was not fully accepted by all due to their temporary and rather superficial nature. The Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1958) defined such social behavior as a result of an exchange process, in which benefits were maximized and the 'costs' minimized. Therefore, with respect to military spouses, the decision to avoid the spousal/friendship support network follows that risks outweigh the rewards and hence this relationship was abandoned.

Social support networks were described by Sluzki (1992, p360) to "define one's social niche and [to] contribute substantially to one's own recognition of personhood". This implied not only did social networks contribute to an individual's sense of identity but was a continual resource for comfort. For all trailing spouses this network was constantly being restructured and potentially contributed to an added sense of isolation (Bikos et al., 2009). Military and non-military research highlighted the necessity of finding and belonging to a social support network to aid adjustment to a new environment (Puskar, 1990, Copeland and Norell, 2002, Arnault, 2002, Schwartz and Kahne, 1993, Lavee et al., 1985, Jervis, 2009). However, it was argued that these circumstances could enforce false relationships (Jervis, 2009).

Bikos et al. (2009) completed a longitudinal study examining the first-year adaption of female expatriate spouses incorporating their usage of support mechanisms. Their support network was initiated within the first three months by familiarising themselves with their new environment and forming new relationships, then at six months support was provided by immediate family and new friends. At nine months a shift towards new friends and social contacts primarily provided the support, but ultimately at the 12 month mark, global support was focused on people that were now simply referred to as friends. It was recognised that the study's small sample limited the credibility of the findings however, the work demonstrated the transition and significance of an active support network for a spouse's adjustment.

The spouse was also seen to represent the prevailing pillar in a family's support network, and was habitually expected to become the source for emotional and social

support, and to assume the responsibility for re-establishing the family in the

community (Sluzki, 1992, Wiggins-Frame and Shehan, 1994). Previously this role was

fulfilled by other family members and friends, however, the working spouse was seen

as the initial and main source of support to their accompanying partners (Copeland

and Norell, 2002). This reassurance was particularly important for the wives of

international students who experienced difficult adjustments and periods of exclusion

primarily due to language barriers and a sparse support network (De Verthelyi, 1995).

The scenario of reliance on domestic support structures could place uncharacteristic

stress on a marriage (Bikos et al., 2009) but Copeland and Norell (2002) argued that it

could actually provide the opportunity for a positive bonding experience. Such

experiences were described by corporate spouses in De Cieri et al.'s (1991) research as

creating a more cohesive family in which they relied on each other rather than those

'outside'. But interestingly it was reported in Gerrity and Steinglass's (2003) research,

which investigated relocation stress following catastrophic events, that some families

intentionally avoided all social contact and even withdrew from extended families, and

allowed themselves to become isolated. This dimension of support clearly would be a

reflection on the marriage satisfaction and family unity in all trailing spouses, but

reliance purely on internal family factors could potentially lead to an isolation of

experiences and sever chances of forming a proactive support network.

As discussed in Sections 3.11.1 and 3.11.2, support, whether desired or used by trailing

spouses again is an individual reaction. De Verthelyi (1995) remarked such an assorted

range of responses indicated a predominance of personal variables over situational

factors, and according to this review, this quality is very apparent in military and non-military spouses.

3.12 The need for further research

Research incorporating the opinions of British military spouses is very limited. To date only one piece of research by Jervis (2009) investigates spouses experiences of British military relocations. Additionally, the specific effect of the geographic location of a posting on the overall impact on a military spouse has not been considered. Rosen and Mogahdam's (1991) work focused on the occurrence of S.A.D. symptoms in specific locations but did not investigate the spouses' experiences further. Therefore, further research specifically incorporating qualitative methods, focusing on the experiences of British military spouses from all three services, Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force, would help clarify the impact of a foreign posting. Relating this work to specific overseas locations will allow further interpretation of the findings.

In order to establish the complete military spouse experience overseas, one further recommendation for research would be to incorporate the subject of a spouse leaving a foreign posting to return to their usual residence or a domestic location.

3.13 Conclusion of findings from Phase 1

Although the complexities of a military lifestyle are generally accepted by the military spouse, relocation to an overseas posting does incorporate further demands. How this experience impacts emotionally and psychologically appears to be very dependent on individual circumstances. Likewise, mechanisms of adjusting to a new environment

are very much reflected on the person. Ultimately, the level of support from within the family or externally from the community has a varied outcome.

Further research to improve awareness of the complete experience of a military spouse on an overseas posting is necessary to enable appropriate mechanisms for support to be identified.

Please see Appendix xv for a copy of the published paper of this systematic review (Blakely et al., 2012).

In the following chapters the methods, design and findings of the remaining three phases of the study are provided. Part 1 of the next chapter reviews Phase 2, which incorporated individual interviews and focus groups with military spouses based in one location in southern Europe. Part 2 then provides a review of the online forum conducted with military spouses based in worldwide locations for Phase 3 of the study.

4.1   Introduction

In Chapter 3, the methods and findings of the systematic review conducted in the first study phase were presented. In this chapter the methods, data collection and analysis employed in the next two phases will be provided. As such, Chapter 4 comprises two parts, addressing the methods for both Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the programme of work. Initially, Section 4.2 provides an overview of the procedure required to gain ethical approval for the study.

4.2   Gaining ethical approval

As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.6) formal permission is required to conduct ethnographic research. Accordingly, full and unconditional ethics approval was obtained from Plymouth University Research Ethics Committee (Appendix iv) to complete the study.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) was also approached to determine if ethical approval from the MoD Research Ethics Committee (MoDREC) was required. At the time of the study neither I nor any participants were members of the British Armed Forces, and no funding for the study was provided by the MoD. It therefore appeared that, in accordance with their terms of reference (MoD, 2008), ethics approval from the MoD would not be necessary. Out of courtesy the MoD was initially contacted and I was subsequently informed that I required their ethical approval to proceed with my study; however no rationale for this advice was provided. Nonetheless, the application

became a prolonged process and the justification for their necessary approval was stated only after direct communication between my Director of Studies and the head of MoDREC. It was believed by MoDREC that my study could have an impact on MoD personnel. Although this seemed to be a very broad rationale, an ethics application was resubmitted and reviewed by different committee members, and ultimately approval was granted (Appendix v).

4.3   Part 1: Phase 2 methods – individual interviews and focus groups

4.3.1   Design

Ethnography refers to the direct study of people in their natural, everyday settings (Cormack, 2000), and provides the means for exploring a phenomenon within cultural contexts (Morse and Richards, 2002). This study was conducted from the perspective of the military spouse on an overseas posting, with the intention of providing a holistic interpretation of their experiences (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993). Consequently, ethnographic data collection for this phase consisted of semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups to be audio-digitally recorded for transcription. These transcriptions were used in conjunction with my and a note-taker's field notes relating to these sessions.

These data collection methods provide different conditions for disclosure of experiences, with individual interviews allowing personal circumstances to be discussed (Cormack, 2000, Britten, 1995), and focus groups providing an alternative setting for participants to discuss more general experiences (Stewart et al., 2007). In particular, semi-structured interviews are frequently used by health professionals to allow personal and intimate encounters in which "open, direct, verbal questions are

used to elicit detailed narratives and stories" (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p.317). Focus groups instead, allow the collection of a wider range of experience, but due to the public nature of the process, in depth probing is not appropriate (Curtis and Redmond, 2007). As such, focus groups are also felt to be unsuitable where a hierarchal relationship exists, such as employers and employees (Krueger and Casey, 2000) or potentially in my case, officer and non-officer spouses. It is recommended that data gathered should also incorporate observer descriptions of the group dynamics (Morgan, 1997) and I arranged for a note-taker to be present in my focus group sessions. My note-taker was a Police Officer who had been trained by the Police in interviewing techniques and as such had extensive experience in recording information captured from an oral discussion in note form. Her role was to amass what was said and expressed (including non-verbal cues), the order in which people spoke as well as any significant phrases or statements made. Additionally, a sketch of the seating arrangements was to be noted. These observations were to be used to supplement the transcription of the sessions, ensuring information would be correctly matched (Wong, 2008) to support the data analysis. Furthermore, field notes were also to be made immediately following each meeting by me and the note-taker in a 'debriefing session' to also facilitate data analysis, a technique recommended by Mack et al. (2005). Please see Section 5.3.1 in Chapter 5 for a review of the information collated from the note-taker and the debriefing sessions.

It was decided that participants would be offered a choice of data collection method, based on the principle of participation and collaboration, a philosophy employed by Dearnley (2005) to ease the balance of power between researcher and participants. Focus groups were determined by Curtis and Redmond (2007) to allow the group

participants to "comment, explain, disagree, and share attitudes and experiences" (p. 25). Additionally, discussion of the research topic was seen to yield a collective rather than an individual perspective due to the interaction within the group allowing their views to emerge (Morgan, 1997). I felt that collecting data via focus groups would not only be time efficient, but could potentially empower military spouses to speak out about their shared experiences. Additionally, it would provide the opportunity to establish groups consisting of either only officer or rating spouses, or a combination of both (this would be dependent on the number of volunteers). Despite introducing a potential hierarchal structure with a 'mixed' group I felt it would offer an opportunity to investigate this dynamic and whether it encouraged or discouraged dialogue.

It could be argued that some spouses may find the group situations too intimidating to share their thoughts and they would therefore be given the opportunity of an individual interview. As such, the option of an interview was felt to eliminate any 'peer pressure' from other spouses due to the rank or the role of their serving spouses, adhering to Krueger and Casey's (2000) advice on potential hierarchal relationships. Although discussing the experiences of being an accompanying military spouse on a foreign posting was not necessarily considered a sensitive research topic, as Lee and Renzetti (1990) remark it is possible for any topic to be sensitive. Therefore, it was feasible that in recalling past or even current events that the participant may have felt emotional due to their specific personal circumstances, consequently I believed that for this reason some participants may have preferred the option of an individual interview. Finally, from a pragmatic viewpoint, if a participant was unable to attend any scheduled focus groups and still wished to take part they could then be offered the option of an interview.

4.3.2   Ethical considerations

Cohen et al. (2007) remark that as interviewing concerns interpersonal interaction with

the production of information about the human condition, ethical questions must be

answered prior to the initiation of any data collection. Specifically, four ethical issues

were highlighted by DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006): reducing the risk of

unanticipated harm; protecting the interviewee's information; informing the

interviewees about the nature of the study; and reducing the risk of exploitation (p.

319). Whilst this is by no means an exhaustive list, it provided the foundations for the

ethical component of my research.

Following the initial advertisement, each potential participant was able to contact me

via email or telephone and then would receive an introductory letter and a participant

information sheet. These would clearly state the nature of the research, their

potential involvement, any confidentiality concerns, the intention to make an audio-

digital recording of the interview/focus group and other relevant information

(Appendix vi). My contact details were provided and respondents were freely invited

to ask further questions about the study with no subsequent obligation to volunteer.

At the start of each focus group/interview, a further opportunity was given to ask

questions, and an advice sheet was provided, suggesting that the participant should

contact their medical representative if they felt concerned about themselves or

distressed by the discussion of any particular topic (Appendix vii). If they were still

happy to proceed, the participants were asked to sign a consent form (for an example

of an individual interview consent form please see Appendix viii). The participant was

made aware throughout this process that they were under no obligation to proceed

and could withdraw at any point without reason. For further details regarding the data

collection please see Sections 4.3.5 and 4.3.6.

4.3.3   Sampling

In qualitative research the sampling technique used is determined by the chosen

methodology and research topic, rather than a need to establish generalisability

(Higginbottom, 2004). Therefore, the desire is to meticulously investigate the research

topic and provide information-rich data (Grbich, 1999). Advocates of the antirealism

approach, where realism is the belief that reality exists independently of the research

or the researcher (Higginbottom, 2004), argue that qualitative research represents a

distinctive paradigm and cannot be critically assessed according to the same criteria as

quantitative methods and as such the principles of sampling also differ (Mays and

Pope, 2000). Normally, within qualitative research, probability sampling (when each

member of the research population has a known probability of being included) is not

employed (Oliver, 2004). Typically non-probability sampling techniques are found

within the interpretative approach (Murphy et al., 1998). One method used to

generate such a sample is purposive sampling.   Specifically, the researcher selects the

cases for inclusion in the sample based on "their judgement of their typicality or

possession of the particular characteristics being sought" (Cohen et al., 2007, p.114 -

115). The main rationale for this method is highlighted by Cohen et al. as acquiring in-

depth information from, as Brewer (2000) describes them, 'key informants'. Bernard

(2006), believes that purposive sampling is exemplified through the key informant

technique, when these informants are selected for their ability to represent and make

aspects of the field available.   Clearly there is an element of subjectivity in this

method, as it falls on the researcher to judge informants on basis of demographics and

research topic (Brewer, 2000). Nonetheless, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) believe

that many variations of data in context need to be investigated to ensure the full

degree of phenomena are represented. Achievement of such heterogeneity in

purposive samples is termed maximum variation sampling (Miles and Huberman,

1994).

Purposive sampling was employed to obtain data from the military spouses with a

range of characteristics (please see Table 4.1 for the sampling frame utilised) in order

to obtain a maximum variation sample (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). Eleven

dimensions were chosen to establish a wide range of cases reflecting both male and

female military spouses; the three service affiliations (Royal Navy, British Army and

Royal Air Force); the role of the serving spouse (whether an officer or non-officer); the

stage of family cycle (i.e. the absence or presence and age of children); and the age of

the military spouse in order to reflect not just life experience, but also to potentially

draw on the experiences of spouses who had been married to service personnel for an

extended period. Furthermore, accessing military spouses who themselves were ex-

members of a military service, whether in a reservist or fulltime capacity, introduced a

different dimension allowing the exploration of their experiences founded not just on

being an accompanying spouse, but also from direct experience. The final dimensions

of previous foreign postings and time on current posting recognised that in some cases

a military spouse may have experienced more than one assignment overseas. This

variable recognised that previous postings may have been influential to the current

one, arguably producing the 'expert' accompanying spouse. Placing no restrictions on

time in the current posting allowed the cases of the 'new' to the 'accustomed'

accompanying spouses to be explored.

	Participant					
1. Gender						
2. Affiliated to Royal Navy						
3. Affiliated to Army						
4. Affiliated to Royal Air Force						
5. Spouse of a commissioned personnel						
6. Spouse of a non-commissioned personnel						
7. Age						
8. Children						
9. Ex-member of Armed Forces						
10. Previous foreign postings						
11. Time on posting						

Table 4.1 Sampling frame

Each focus group was aimed to consist of approximately six individuals, the lower limit

specified by Wong (2008) and considered to be an adequate number to produce

significant findings (Polit and Beck, 2006). Anything smaller than six is believed to not

provide significantly more coverage than would be expected in an individual interview

(Mertin et al., 1990). In addition, I felt I would not be able to facilitate a greater

number than this and it could potentially prohibit adequate participation by all

members. Ultimately, the objective was for the groups and individual interviews to

provide an equal representation of officer and other rank spouses of the three British

services.

4.3.4   Recruitment

Any spouse of British military personnel who accompanied their serving

husband/wife/civil partner to a specific base in southern Europe was eligible for

recruitment. The use of one base enabled me to access the participants in person. An

advertisement was sent in the weekly online British Bulletin (a simplistic newspaper),

and advertised on the community website. Additionally, recruitment posters were

displayed in the local British Community Centre, the British Forces Post Office (located

on the base) and the Help, Information and Volunteer Exchange (HIVE) in order to

reach the potentially isolated groups. The following inclusion criteria were employed

for participant selection:

1. Married to or in a civil partnership with a member of the British Armed Forces
   who was currently serving in the host area

2. Of either gender

3. With or without children

4. Present in host area for any length of time – whether newly arrived or resident
   for an extended time

5. From any ethnic background

6. Able to give informed consent.

Ultimately, as advised by Morgan (1997), I aimed to over recruit by about 20% for the

focus groups to ameliorate the fact that some individuals might have changed their

mind about participating or failed to arrive on the day of the session.

4.3.5   Description of sample

Altogether 34 military spouses participated in 13 individual interviews (one response by email) and five focus groups each consisting of between three and six individuals (totalling 22 participants, of which one chose to then complete an individual interview to provide further information – her data provided separate content for each analysis).

The study participants had a modal age range of 40 to 49 years, as this range incorporated the highest frequency of 18 out of the 34 participants. One participant was male and the remainder were female. Twenty-two respondents were affiliated with the Royal Navy, six the British Army and six the Royal Air Force. Twenty-five of the respondents were officer spouses and the remainder were married to personnel of other ranks (see Table 4.2 for full details, but please note all military spouses have been assigned a pseudonym).

Military spouse's pseudonym	II/FG	Gender	Affiliation of serving spouse:			Rank/rate of serving spouse:		Age range	Children	Ex. member of military services	Previous foreign posting(s)	Length of time on current posting (months)
			RN	Army	RAF	Officer	Other rank[c]					
Zoe	FG	F	✓			✓		40 – 49	Y	N	N	30
Yvonne	FG	F		✓		✓		40 – 49	Y	N	Y	12
Wendy	FG	F	✓			✓		40 – 49	Y[a]	N	Y	24
Vivienne	FG	F		✓		✓		50 – 59	Y[a]	N	Y	30
Sandra	FG	F	✓			✓		40 – 49	Y[a]	N	N	12
Rose	FG	F	✓				✓	40 – 49	N	Y	N	24
Alma	FG	F			✓	✓		50 – 59	Y[a]	N	Y	30
Olive	FG	F			✓	✓		40 – 49	Y[a]	N	Y	1
Naomi	FG	F	✓			✓		40 – 49	N	Y	Y	10
Justine[b]	FG	F	✓			✓		40 – 49	Y[a]	N	N	8
Leona	FG	F	✓				✓	40 – 49	Y	N	N	30
Kylie	FG	F	✓				✓	40 – 49	Y	Y	N	30
Jasmine	FG	F	✓				✓	30 – 39	Y	N	Y	19
Hayley	FG	F	✓			✓		30 – 39	Y	Y	N	24
Gemma	FG	F		✓		✓		40 – 49	Y[a]	N	N	9
Emily	FG	F	✓			✓		40 – 49	Y	N	N	60

Table 4.2 Participant details for focus groups and individual interviews

| Military spouse's pseudonym | II/FG | Gender | Affiliation of serving spouse: | | | Rank/rate of serving spouse: | | Age range | Children | Ex. member of military services | Previous foreign posting(s) | Length of time on current posting (months) |
			RN	Army	RAF	Officer	Other rank[c]					
Daisy	FG	F	✓			✓		30 – 39	Y	N	N	15
Amy	FG	F	✓			✓		30 – 39	Y	N	N	16
Bridget	FG	F	✓				✓	30 – 39	Y	N	N	18
Adele	FG	F	✓				✓	30 – 39	Y	N	Y	6
Grace	FG	F			✓	✓		30 – 39	Y	N	N	12
Susan	FG	F	✓			✓		30 – 39	Y	N	Y	12
Abby	II	F			✓	✓		18 – 29	N	N	N	13
Beverly	II	F	✓			✓		50 – 59	Y[a]	N	Y	24
Caroline	II	F	✓			✓		30 – 39	N	N	N	12
Daniel	II	M			✓	✓		40 – 49	Y	Y	N	33
Esther	II	F			✓	✓		40 – 49	N	N	N	9
Fiona	II	F	✓				✓	40 – 49	Y	N	Y	39
Gail	II	F		✓		✓		40 – 49	Y	Y	N	35
Helen	II	F	✓			✓		18 – 29	N	Y	N	18
Ivy	II	F	✓				✓	30 – 39	Y	N	N	24
Jessica	II	F	✓			✓		40 – 49	Y[a]	Y	Y	24
Kelly	II	F		✓		✓		40 – 49	N	Y	N	5
Linette	II	F		✓			✓	30 – 39	N	N	Y	15

Table 4.2 continued

[a]Child(ren) either aged over 18 or not on posting, [b]completed focus group and individual interview, [c] non-commissioned status. F, female; FG, focus group; II, individual interview; M, male; RAF, Royal Air Force; RN, Royal Navy.

4.3.6   Data collection

A schedule of open ended questions was designed to explore the participants'

understanding of experiencing an overseas posting and variations of this schedule

were used for interviews and focus groups. These questions reviewed: a) the initial

reaction towards going on a foreign posting; b) the subsequent impact of being on the

posting and how individuals coped and adapted; c) the factors influencing the ability to

settle; d) how their husband/wife's role in the services influenced their overall

experience; e) whether the presence or absence of children influenced their

experience; f) what support networks they felt were available; g) if they felt they

changed during the posting; h) thoughts of returning to the UK, and i) advice for others

about to go on a foreign posting. Full versions of the individual interview and focus

group schedules are provided in Appendix ix and Appendix x respectively.

Semi-structured interviews are described by Dearnley (2005) as enabling the same

questions to be asked to each participant within a flexible framework. This open

structure was used to allow the participants the opportunity to share as much

information as they chose about their experiences as an accompanying spouse on the

foreign posting. Presenting the same questions to each participant and to the focus

groups allowed some conformity as to the data collated but also allowed a degree of

flexibility as to what was chosen to be discussed.

The questions were developed from the themes identified in the systematic review

(Chapter 3) and extended to include facets from my own informal observations and

discussions with other military spouses on my posting prior to the commencement of

my study. The schedules were originally formulated to allow presentation in

chronological order to encapsulate the 'complete' experience of being on a foreign posting i.e. from the initial reaction when informed about going on a foreign posting; the impact on arrival; to the ability to adapt and cope; and then thoughts of leaving. This was to guide the participant through their experiences and to assist their recollection, particularly if they had already been on the posting for several months. It was also hoped that it would provide some structure and management mainly for the discussions held within the focus groups. Additionally, this schedule was a useful prompt for the individual interviews, particularly when a more profound experience was revealed and flexibility of discussion was then needed.

The questions were initially piloted with two individuals independent of the study to determine the appropriateness of wording, to ensure no questions were felt to be leading and the relevance of questions asked. Accordingly, minimal wording changes were required and three questions were reordered to assist in the flow of questioning. Ultimately, included data were collected between July and October 2010 from the 34 military spouse participants. The interviews lasted on average approximately 60 minutes, while focus groups lasted between one and two hours. Table 4.3 provides a summary of the meeting durations, and of the group and individual interviewees' military affiliations.

	No. of participants	Military affiliation		Duration of meeting
		Officer spouse	Other rank spouse	
Focus Group 1	5	4 RN 1 Army	x	1 hr 5 minutes
Focus Group 2	5[a]	2 RN 2 RAF	1 RN	1 hr 15 minutes
Focus Group 3	3	x	3 RN	1 hr 10 minutes
Focus Group 4	3	2 RN 1 Army	x	1 hr 12 minutes
Focus Group 5	6	3 RN 1 RAF	2 RN	1 hr 35minutes
Individual Interviews	13[a,b]	5 RN 2 Army 3 RAF	2 RN 1 Army	61 minutes [c]

[a] One RN officer spouse completed focus group and individual interview, [b] one individual requested to participate but preferred if she could answer the questions via email, [c] average of 12 individual interviews.
RAF, Royal Air Force; RN, Royal Navy.

Table 4.3 Summary of focus groups and individual interviews demographics

In accordance with Wong's recommendations (2008), seven participants were

arranged for each focus group meeting, in the hope that at least six would participate.

However, as can be seen in Table 4.3 this number was only achieved for the final group

due to non-attendance of some volunteers to the other meetings. Individuals who

were unable to attend were offered the opportunity of another meeting, but as

specified in my participation information sheet, I did not pursue them as they were

free to withdraw without reason. On one occasion a single participant arrived for a

scheduled focus group but she was happy to continue as an individual interview with

the note-taker also present. For Focus Group 2, one participant arrived who had

already scheduled an individual interview. I felt her circumstances were particularly

unique in that she did not work on the posting, did not drive, her grown-up children

were all in the UK and she chose to remain within her accommodation and was quite content to do so. During this focus group, my note-taker and I felt that Justine was quite introverted and perhaps did not fully express her experiences. A few days later after discussing the issue with my supervisors, I contacted Justine to offer her an individual interview again, stating that I believed her circumstances were of value to the study. She was more than willing to participate again and we arranged a meeting at her house.

Finally, Fiona was very keen to participate in the study but she did not like the idea of an interview, she was concerned that she would "say something stupid" and preferred to have time to think about her responses. I did try to address her concerns but instead she asked if it would be possible to provide some form of written responses, consequently I emailed her a question schedule to complete in her own time.

The individual interviews were held either within my house, the participant's own accommodation or (in one case) at their work place. On each occasion I offered the individuals the opportunity of choosing a setting and time, a procedure recommended by Elmir (2011) again to minimise any power imbalances between the researcher and participant, and to create a comfortable environment. The focus groups in contrast required more logistical organisation. Specifically, five individuals who knew each other comprised Focus Group 1; they organised the location to suit their requirements. Similarly for Focus Group 3, these participants were neighbours and socialised together and again were easily drawn together for the study. Focus Groups 2 and 4 were held at the local HIVE centre and my house respectively, these participants were groups of spouses who were familiar with one another but did not socialise. Finally,

Focus Group 5 was held at my house and I had previously met four of the participants socially.

Due to the different dynamics of the focus groups I recognised that this could have potentially influenced my findings and this will be discussed in Chapter 8.

In ethnography, data analysis is not a distinct research stage, accordingly Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state "It begins in the pre-fieldwork phase, in the formulation and clarification of research problems, and continues into the process of writing up" (p. 174). Hence, Brewer (2000) remarks that as ethnography is perceived as a process, data analysis is simultaneous with data collection. Furthermore Mack et al. (2005) state that purposive sample sizes are often determined based on theoretical saturation, when there is a repetition of themes and no new information is shared (Pope et al., 2000, Cameron, 2005, Guest et al., 2006). Therefore, Mack et al. (2005) believed purposive sampling to be most successful when data analysis was in conjunction with collection. As such, focus group and interview data analysis was concurrent with data collection, which was conducted until it appeared that saturation point had been reached. Additionally, time was a limiting factor for this phase of data collection and volunteers for the study also naturally began to reduce.

4.3.7   Analysis

4.3.7.1   Transcriptions

The recording and transcription of interviews is regarded as an inherent format of data generation and a prevailing manner to study human behaviour (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In view of this, a transcript is defined by Kvale (1996) as an "artificial

construction from an oral to a written form of communication" (p. 163). He argues

that this process of translation incorporates a series of personal choices; hence it is

seen as an interpretative process (Poland, 2003) and one which is open to questions of

reliability and validity (Alcock and Iphofen, 2007). Consequently, Bazeley (2007)

believes that the goal of transcribing is to be as authentic as possible, yet realistic in

handling the data.

I transcribed all but two of the individual interview and focus group audio-digital

recordings. Due to time limitations a reputable transcriber, who was independent of

the study and signed a confidentiality agreement form, transcribed the remaining two

interviews by Jessica and Ivy. All transcripts were typed verbatim and the standards to

which the transcription conformed are displayed in Table 4.4., these were based on

suggestions by Bazeley (2007, p.45).

	Example
Neutral vowel sounds recorded	Um, eh, mmm, emm
Repetition of words recorded	"actually and, and...and be quite lonely"
Notes of interruptions e.g. due to telephone ringing, an individual entering the room	[DOORBELL RINGS] [INTERRUPTION]; [INTERRUPTED BY MOBILE RINGING]
Nonverbal elements including mannerisms and nuances	Short pause (...); long pause (pause), [LAUGHTER]; [COUGH]; [RAISING OF ARMS]; [WHISPERED]
If dialogue was unclear it was noted as such	(*unclear*); (*talked over each other*)
If I or the interviewee was providing a non-intrusive affirmation of what the other was saying it was recorded within square brackets within the text	... but the there's a parco somewhere with two on, that's not a bad idea stick people together [**yeh, simple solution**]. But mmm...
If there was a digression from the topic which had no significance as to what was being discussed this was omitted and noted with the time duration	(1hr 28mins 36s) [IRRELEVANT CHAT ABOUT TV SHOW] (1hr 29mins 14s)
If an individual's name was mentioned this was omitted	[*wife's name*], [*husband's name*]
The researcher and the interviewee(s)' dialogue were presented in different fonts, with the researcher's input being in bold	**-how did you feel actually about bringing your kids as well then, after seeing it?** Amy – well, worried...very worried, mmm but then having to, then we went to the...

Table 4.4 Standards incorporated in transcriptions

Presenting the interviews and focus groups discussions in this format I felt helped to

contextualise the encounter. Additionally, being pedantic about how the content was

incorporated contributed to the quality of the transcript, therefore maximising its

accuracy as a representation of the meetings (see Section 4.3.8)

4.3.7.2   Computer-aided data analysis

Debate exists as to the effectiveness of using qualitative data analysis (QDA) software

in qualitative research. One belief is that such software cannot substitute for the

ethnographer's imagination (Okely, 1994) and therefore may only reflect the ability of

the ethnographer to enter data. Hence the software provides the tools but it is not

capable of doing the analysis for the researcher (Weitzman, 2000). It is further argued

by Weitzman that although the positive attributes of utilising this software are to assist

time management, to improve consistency of approach, be an aid to theorizing and

give the ability to consolidate all work in one location, it may also produce "false hopes

and fears" (p.807). Specifically, he was concerned with the temptation of the

researcher to take shortcuts within their analysis, and Richards (1998) also believed

that QDA software could be a threat due to potentially distancing the researcher from

the data without maintaining its validity.

Having previously completed qualitative data analysis using the original manual

technique (Smith et al., 1992) on earlier research projects, and then also utilising a

computer software program for subsequent work, I was aware of the potential

advantages and disadvantages of both methods. Nonetheless, ultimately I choose to

complete the data analysis of the focus groups and individual interviews utilising the

specialist QDA software NVivo 8, by QSR International Inc (2008). Having previously

used this software in other research and within Phase 1 of my study for the systematic

review (Section 3.7), I was familiar with its functioning and manipulation, and had also

attended introductory training in NVivo. I also choose this software for pragmatic

reasons in that its licence was available though Plymouth University and ongoing

training and support were remotely accessible from the internet, allowing me to

maximise my use of the software. Due to the amount of transcription produced from

the individual interviews and focus groups (358 pages in total), I believed that the

management and analysis of this data would be more efficiently conducted using

NVivo 8.

For thematic analysis "there is a need to create conceptual tools to classify and

understand the phenomenon under study" (Joffe and Yardley, 2004, p.58) and this is

completed through the process of coding. Coding data in NVivo 8 incorporates the

formation of nodes, each node representing a collection of references regarding for

example, a precise theme or area of interest (Bazeley, 2007). Specifically, Bazeley

describes a free node as an individual node with no explicit connection with others and

as particularly useful at the start of coding when a node structure has not been

formed. Extending this, free nodes can subsequently be converted into a hierarchical

format of tree nodes moving from a general category or theme into specific categories

or subthemes. Therefore, such themes emerging from the data illustrate the

experiences of the informants and allow an understanding of their viewpoint (Polgar

and Thomas, 2008).

The data collection methods of individual interviews and focus groups created

different dynamics and a different research environment. Hence, the interview and

focus groups transcriptions were imported into two NVivo 8 files and I commenced a

separate thematic analysis of each data collection method. This required

reorganisation of the data into themes that initially involved the use of a coding

system to break the text into segments (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). The text

was coded in a line-by-line process according to its meaning and content in relation to

the objectives of the study (please see Table 1.1 for a reminder of these), and created

a bank of free nodes. Assessing for similarities and differences between these nodes

then allowed grouping into a hierarchical tree structure, providing overarching themes.

Ultimately, the individual interview analysis produced 973 references coded into 28

subthemes and four main themes. The focus group analysis produced 619 references

coded into 12 subthemes and four main themes. Please see Table 4.5 for a worked

example of the analysis for the individual interview transcripts.

During the coding I created memos for each transcript and a journal within NVivo to

document when and how concepts and insights developed. The note-taker's feedback

of the focus group sessions along with the field notes made in the debriefing

immediately following each session, also helped to facilitate the data analysis.

Theme	Subtheme	Tree node example	Free node example	Quotation
Support	External formal - Military	Sponsor	Appropriateness of arrival support	"I think one of my most, one of the most important people is my sponsor, I think that has been a *huge*, huge help to us" [Kelly] "...when we actually got here in terms of sponsorship, he spent one day with us. He helped us move in. He got us our passes. Mmm he took my husband to get a pass, never included me in the process at all and we never saw him for the rest of the week and we were left floundering" [Ivy]
		Welfare/ healthcare	Apprehension of approaching military for support	"... I would be cautious about going to anybody in the authority because things, you know I've seen the military...things can be blown out of proportion" [Gail] "...there's nothing out here, ye can't even really talk to our local social worker 'cause, heaven forbid it gets, it gets out. So no it's...it's really hard to know who to trust out here." [Helen]
	Internal informal	Community	Perceived effect of spouse's rank/role	"...the people I get on well with all tend to be officers wives. The non-officers wives, the other ranks are, see me as something of a turncoat for hanging out with officers and they think, one of them used the term, you're, you're posh you're a snob." [Ivy] "...you're judged unfairly at times by your husband's role and he, he's there to do his job he's not there to be popular and you have, you have to take, you have to learn how to be tactful enough and rise above it and not get into pettiness..." [Beverly]

		Communication	Importance of feeling connected with family at home	"...internet is very sporadic here and that's a lifeline for a lot of people" [Beverly] "...we have a Skype phone so that I can call . . . back to the UK and it's been really, really important...and you just feel completely lost I find ye know I go and I wanna call somebody and I just got no access to a phone at all other than a mobile" [Kelly] "...without the internet I'd feel very, very isolated" [Esther]

Table 4.5 Example of thematic analysis for individual interview transcripts

4.3.8   Ensuring rigour

I conducted all of the individual interviews to ensure that the respondents were subject to a constant interviewer effect. I also facilitated all of the focus group sessions but had a note-taker present for feedback, and I attempted to incorporate all participants in the discussion through direct questioning when necessary. All participants received the same information via email or in hard copy format prior to the meeting. No leading questions were asked and when responses were explored this was done using open-ended questioning such as "Tell me more about...", "Explain to me..." or "Describe to me...", an acronym referred to as T.E.D by my experienced note-taker.

All transcripts were re-read in conjunction with the audio recordings to ensure the content was accurate. Standards of transcribing to ensure consistency in the transcription process, and to aid interpretation from the data are displayed in Table 4.4. The analysis of the data was completed independently by my Director of Studies and myself and demonstrated conformity in the findings. Additionally, researcher field notes and note-taker data improved the accuracy of the session transcriptions ensuring information was correctly matched (Wong, 2008).

4.4   Part 2: Phase 3 methods – online forum

4.4.1   Design

In order to expand the sample size of the study, the experiences of military spouses who had either previously been on, or were currently on any foreign posting with the British military were explored via an online forum in Phase 3. Therefore, this

incorporated the opinions of military spouses who had experienced foreign postings to

other locations, rather than the single location depicted in Phase 2.

Electronic communications have facilitated new approaches to the traditional format

of focus groups (Rezabek, 2000). The wide availability of computer-mediated

communications (CMC), for example e-mail, accessible to researchers is felt by Murray

(1997) to extend the opportunities of using the conventional method of face-to-face

interactions. As a consequence of this digital influence of social societies Kozinets

(2009) argued that, in order to understand a society, social scientists are turning to the

investigation of the usage of the internet and other "technologically-mediated

communications" (p.1). Thus, the innovative term 'netnography' refers to online

research methods that adapt ethnographic methods to study cultures and

communities online (Kozinets, 2009, Bowler, 2010). This notion of a virtual form of

ethnography is suggested by Crichton and Kinash (2003) to be a "method in which one

actively engages with people in online spaces in order to write the story of their

situated context, informed by social interaction"

(http://www.cjlt.ca/index.php/cjlt/article/view/40/37). These conversations are noted

to be text-based and argued by Crichton and Kinash to be an essential element of

virtual ethnography.

Although I utilised an online method of data collection for Phase 3 through establishing

an online forum, it was not a direct demonstration of netnography per se, but with the

extensive popularity of the internet there is evidence that individuals are inclined to be

more candid and uninhibited online than in real life (Reid, 1996). Furthermore, Xun

and Reynolds (2010) felt that not only was such a method more economically viable

and time-saving, but one that provided a greater continuity of access to a broader

cohort of potential respondents. Xun and Reynolds also defended netnography to be

consistent with the Glaser and Strauss (1967) concept of grounded theory. They

argued that the availability of a digitally archived data trail (e.g. via blogs, discussion

forum threads and posts) condensed the transcription process, but also allowed the

continual generation of concepts, a principle of grounded theory.

Clearly, uncertainties and questions of robustness also exist with the employment of

netnography, and in the case of Phase 3, the conduction of online methods of data

collection. Authenticity of the respondents is highlighted as a significant concern by

Xun and Reynolds (2010) due to the usage of pseudonyms and avatars. Therefore, to

minimise the chance of false respondents, participants of the military spouse forum

were required to initially register and supply mandatory information. Although not an

infallible method, it provided an opportunity to assess their information prior to giving

permission to participate (Section 4.4.2).

Xun and Reynolds (2010) also believed that poor standards of textual discourse could

limit the quality of online discussion. They argued that respondents required a certain

degree of literacy to participate in online discussions, with the additional need of such

focus groups to be moderated to maintain the flow and order of dialogue. Although

some level of literacy was presumed of those military spouses registering for the

forum, clearly the opinions of illiterate individuals may have been unintentionally

excluded. The direct communication methods used in Phase 2 would have potentially

alleviated such a circumstance, but with the nature of online forums this would not

have been achievable. As can be seen in Section 4.4.6, attempts were made to

moderate the forum through the controlled addition of questions and their

chronological ordering, in accordance with the recommendation of Xun and Reynolds

(2010).

The use of such an electronic data collection method allows individuals in different

geographical locations to communicate and to share opinions from the ease of their

own residence (Eun-Ok and Wonshik, 2006). Arguably, this reflects the circumstances

of military spouses who have accompanied their serving spouse to various overseas

locations. Eun-Ok and Wonshik depict online forums as the prominent method of

permitting asynchronous interactions through which participants have the flexibility to

join the discussions at their convenience. As I was hoping to communicate with

military spouses in different worldwide locations and therefore different time-zones,

an online forum optimised the opportunity for this to occur. Additionally, as online

forums are normally held over a longer timeframe of several months (Eun-Ok and

Wonshik, 2006) this would also reduce the burden of participation and time pressure

(Kollock and Smith, 1999), and would allow the military spouses freedom from time

constraints and the opportunity for reflection.

The forum was attached to a secure study website

www.operationspouseoverseas.co.uk that I established, administrated and

subsequently moderated (Figure 4.1 – homepage). The website was designed for

military spouses who had accompanied their British military husband, wife or civil

partner on a foreign posting. It was accessible to the public but only registered forum

members would be able to answer a topic ("thread") of discussion, and reply with

typed comments ("posts").
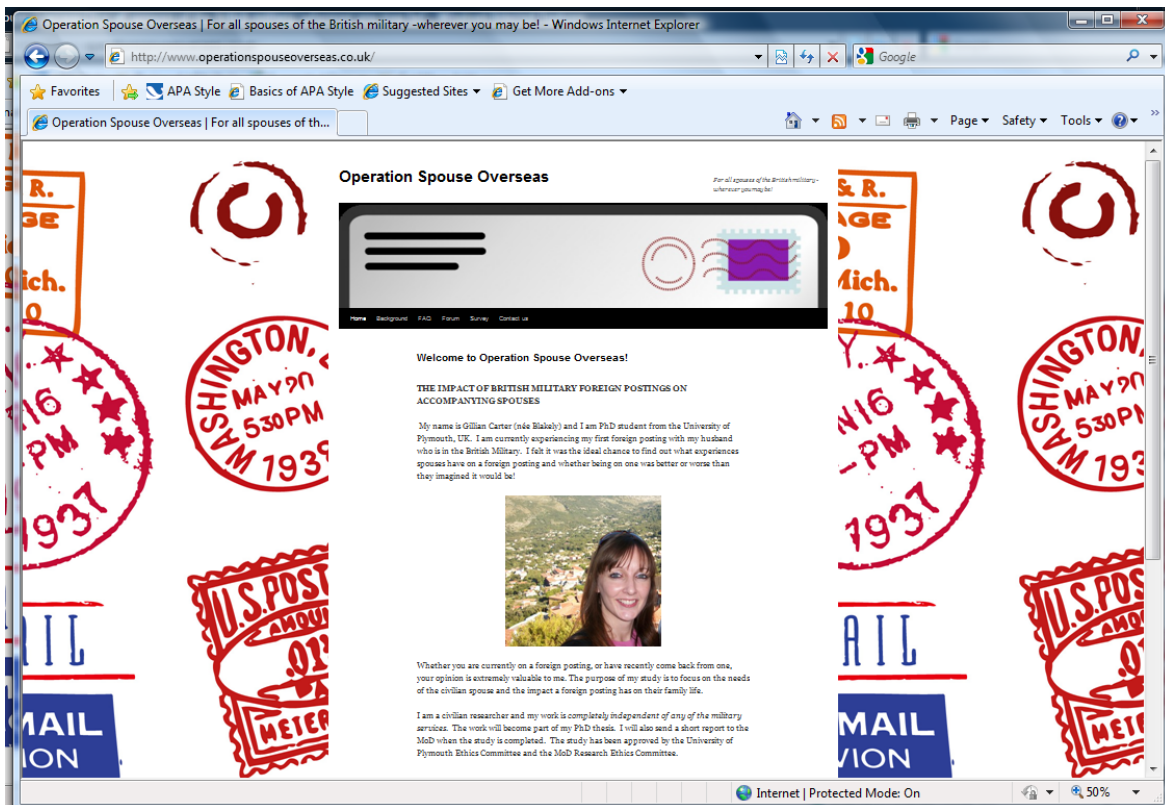
Figure 4.1 Homepage of website www.operationspouseoverseas.co.uk

4.4.2   Ethical considerations

As in Section 4.3.2, it was necessary to ensure that I reduced the risk of harm to the

'forumites' (registered forum users), protected their information, informed them

regarding the nature of the study and reduced their risk of exploitation. Therefore, an

introduction to the study, my research background and a participant information sheet

(in the format of a 'Frequently Asked Questions' webpage) were provided via the

website. A substantial list of forum rules and etiquette were also easily accessible on

the website and reading these was a prerequisite to registration. Additionally if

necessary, it was possible to remove a registrant if they did not abide by these

regulations. For example, user guideline number 14 stated:

"Respect is the name of the game. You must respect your fellow members. Please refrain from inflammatory and defamatory comments as well as flaming, taunting, and general disrespect. Do not simply put down the opinion or advice given by others. If you don't agree with it, say why – respectfully. Don't just tell them they're wrong. Do not make uninvited remarks about typos, duplicate posts, posting styles, etc." (http://www.operationspouseoverseas.co.uk/forum/forum-guidelines, accessed 2 September 2011).

Consequently, if any derogatory comments were posted then the individual concerned would have been contacted by me in my role as administrator/moderator and their account blocked.

To protect anonymity and confidentiality, participants recruited were required to register for the forum; the link to this registration page was only possible after they had provided online consent. The participants were asked to select a pseudonym for their username to be displayed in the forum and to choose their own password, which would be required each time for login to the online forum. Nonetheless, it was necessary to provide a further alias for the participants for the purpose of report writing, due to some chosen usernames consisting of their initial and surname.

Each registration was checked and approved by me as the website administrator before access was granted to the forum discussions. The participants were informed that if they consented to register and to post messages, their posts would be monitored and analysed for the purposes of research. Demographic details provided on registration were only accessible by the administrator.

At the start of the forum and detailed in the online information, an end date for the closure of the forum was clearly provided allowing the participants significant advanced notice. Again as in Phase 2, the participants were advised that if they found any of the topics as particularly sensitive to contact their medical representative. When the forum closed, the link to the forum homepage displayed a thank you message and also links to other eminent support sites such as the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) site if further support was necessary.

4.4.3   Sampling

As in Section 4.3.3, purposive sampling within Phase 3 allowed the recruitment of military spouses on foreign postings to participate in what O'Keefe (2008) referred to as a new impartial community. The sampling frame (Table 4.1) was also used to achieve maximum variation of the sample (Polkinghorne, 2005) with recruitment extended to all three services and spouses of officers and non-officers (Section 4.4.4). Stevens (1996) and Mann and Stewart (2000) determined that six to 12 participants was an ideal size for focus groups including online forums. Therefore, in order to account for those who potentially would withdraw from the military spouse forum, it was hoped to recruit approximately 20 - 30 military spouses who had been relocated on a foreign posting, in order to retain at least ten individuals for the study. In accordance with the recommended sample sizes, this number was felt to be able to generate an interactive discussion from which the written discourse would provide a rich source of data to supplement the focus groups/interviews (Anderson and Kanuka, 1997) from Phase 2. In particular Eun-Ok, Lee and Wonshik's (2010) research focusing on menopausal transition amongst black women, commenced an online forum with 20 participants, but ultimately 15 fully completed the research, which they believed

produced sufficient in-depth discussion. Furthermore, Murray (1997) conducted

research using what he termed as Virtual Focus Groups (VFG) in which asynchronous

computer-mediated communication (CMC) discussions were held. In his experience

he chose six to eight members in each group to mirror the suggested size of off-line

focus groups (Patton, 2002, Wong, 2008). Nonetheless, Murray advised that this

number may not be applicable in all circumstances, with a larger group potentially

being required to promote the discussion level and interaction, depending on the

dynamics of the group in question.

4.4.4   Recruitment

Any spouse of British military personnel who had completed or was currently on a

foreign posting was eligible for recruitment. An online forum advertisement was

provided by the Royal Air Force (RAF) Families Federation in their website and they

also provided a small advert in their journal (the two other service Family Federations

were contacted but were unable to advertise at that stage). Advertisements were also

placed within previously established public military forums that were independent of

the Ministry of Defence (MoD): ARmy Rumour SErvice (ARRSE – affiliated to the Army),

Rum Ration (Royal Navy affiliation) and Rear Party (forum for friends and family of

serving personnel) at this time a RAF affiliated forum was not available. Participants

were also recruited indirectly through military spouses and serving members known to

me, who kindly placed advertisements within their current military bases, which

provided displays in Portugal, Belgium, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Cyprus (including a

Facebook page run by service wives in Cyprus) and Oman.

In order to recruit participants who had not previously been involved in the Phase 2 data collection (individual interviews and focus groups), the demographic details requested on registering for the forum not only aided authentication of the respondent, but also provided an opportunity to compare the registrant's information with that of the Phase 2 participants in order to identify any recurrences.

Recruitment continued throughout the duration of the online forum. I stressed to any late registrants that ample time would be provided for them to fully participate.

4.4.5   Description of the Sample

Altogether 19 participants registered for the online forum, although only 13 actually participated in the forum discussions. The final six to join did so within the remaining two weeks of the forum and despite being informed they would be allocated sufficient time to participate, they subsequently chose not to contribute. Therefore, their details are omitted from the data. The modal age range of the active forumite sample was 40 – 49, all registrants were female and 12 were born within the United Kingdom (UK), one in Ireland. The military affiliation of their husbands were: five Royal Navy (all officers), six Royal Air Force (five officers and one other rank), and two Army (one officer, one other rank). Three of the registrants had previously served in the military. The combined total of foreign postings experienced by this sample was 25: three to America, five Germany, four Belgium, four Cyprus, two Portugal, one Hong Kong, one Russia, two Italy, one Bahrain, one Falkland Islands, and one Oman (see Table 4.6 for full details). Of these participants, five were actually on a foreign posting at the time of the forum.

On reviewing the demographic information provided by the forum registrants, none of them appeared to have participated in Phase 2 of the study.

Military spouse's pseudonym	Gender	Affiliation of serving spouse:			Rank/rate of serving spouse:		Age range	Ex. member of military services	No. of foreign posting(s)	Location(s) of foreign postings
		RN	Army	RAF	Officer	Other rank				
Angela	F	✓			✓		40 – 49	Y	1	USA
Claire	F		✓			✓	18 – 29	N	1	Germany
Debbie	F			✓	✓		40 – 49	Y	2	Germany, Belgium
Leah	F			✓	✓		40 – 49	Y	3	Cyprus, Belgium, Portugal
Lucy	F			✓		✓	40 – 49	N	1	Hong Kong
Jenny	F	✓			✓		50 – 59	N	1	Belgium
Ruth	F			✓	✓		30 – 39	N	1	Portugal
Marian	F	✓			✓		30 – 39	N	2	Russia, Italy
Kathy	F	✓			✓		40 – 49	N	2	USA, Bahrain
Lillian	F		✓		✓		40 – 49	N	4	Germany x 2 Cyprus x2
Diane	F	✓			✓		30 – 39	N	1	Italy
Pauline	F			✓	✓		30 – 39	N	2	Cyprus, Germany
Sharon	F			✓	✓		50 – 59	N	4	Belgium, Falkland Islands, USA, Oman

F, female.

Table 4.6 Participant details for online forum
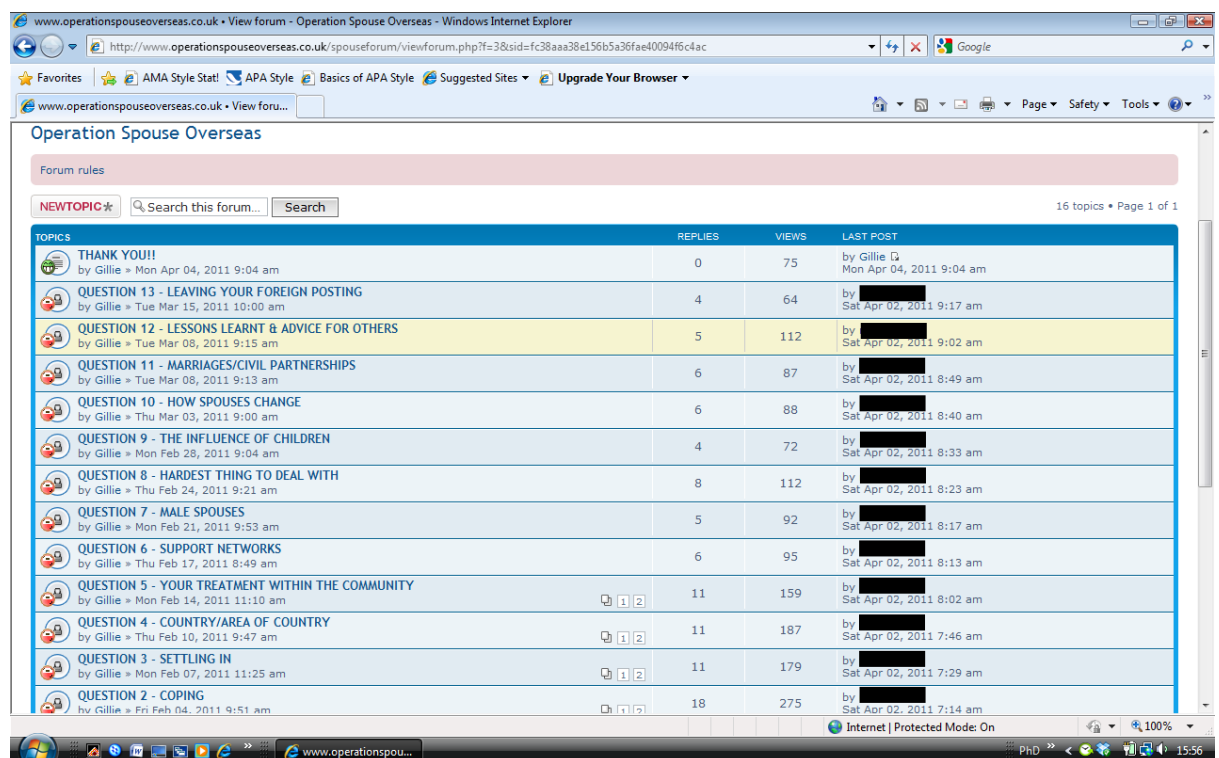
4.4.6   Data collection – discussion threads for online forum

The online forum was conducted from January to March 2011. Open-ended questions were used as topic threads and were generated from the previous two phases of study, incorporating some of the experiences of the Phase 2 participants to test emerging themes. Again these topics followed a chronological order to aid recollection and to allow a natural progression of the discussion. The 13 discussion topics explored: (a) initial reactions after being informed about going on a foreign posting; (b) how spouses cope in general during the first few months and the ways they adapt; (c) different abilities to settle and to cope; (d) the influence of the location; (e) treatment within the British community due to the serving spouse's role or rank; (f) support networks; (g) gender influences; (h) greatest difficulties associated with living overseas; (i) influence of children; (j) how spouses change during a posting; (k) impact on relationship with serving spouse; (l) lessons learnt and (m) thoughts about the end of the posting (Appendix xi – online forum topic threads).

The home page of the online forum detailed the current topics of discussion (Figure 4.2). Two topics were systematically posted online each week in order to regularly produce fresh topics of discussion but at the same time avoid deluging the forumites with posts. This was felt to keep the forum interesting and current, as recommended by O'Keefe (2008). Additionally, Murray (1997) experienced a lack of interactive discussion when all his questions were posed at the start of a VFG, due to the overwhelming nature of questioning. Instead he recommended that fewer questions should be initially presented, with additional points introduced as the discussion progressed.

All posts and threads were accessible throughout the three month data collection period of the military spouse forum. Participants were invited to post messages about the topics at their own convenience. Additionally, the number and length of messages was not restricted to allow the freedom of responses from the forumites and to improve usability, however, abuse of such access would result in an infringement of the forum guidelines and the individual being blocked from further access (O'Keefe, 2008). When the forum reached its closure date and when all identified topics were fully discussed with no further concepts emerging and no additional comments given, the forum discussion ended. Altogether the respondents contributed 103 posts to the forum. Table 4.7 presents the response patterns of each forumite to the 13 question topics.

Figure 4.2 Homepage of online forum for Operation Spouse Overseas

		Question topic												
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Posted response(s) by:	Angela	X	X	X	X	X								
	Claire	X												
	Debbie	X	X	X	X									
	Leah	X	X	X										
	Lucy	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	
	Jenny	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Ruth	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
	Marian	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
	Kathy	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X		
	Lillian	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Diane	X	X		X									
	Pauline	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Sharon	X	X		X	X								

Table 4.7 Forumite topic response patterns

Automatic emails were delivered to each registrant's email address when a new discussion topic was introduced. This retention strategy was incorporated alongside sending personal emails to individual registrants to notify them of the forum's progression and time available to respond. Nonetheless, despite this six of the original registrants did not contribute to the online discussions.

4.4.7   Analysis

The online forum discourse was directly available from the website and was not altered for grammatical or spelling errors, such automatic transcripts are believed to be a major contributor to the credibility of the data (Eun-Ok and Wonshik, 2006). Again, as in Phase 2, I chose to complete a thematic analysis of this data using the QDA

software NVivo 8 (QSR International Inc, 2008). Altogether the threads and posts

produced 54 pages of transcript and these were uploaded into a NVivo file. The

transcript for each discussion topic was analysed systematically using thematic analysis

as described in Section 4.3.7.2 in a line-by-line process in relation to the objectives of

the study (Table 1.1). Consequently, the online forum analysis produced 211

references coded into ten subthemes and four main themes.

Continuing the approach used in the Phase 2 analysis, I also created memos for each

discussion topic and a journal within NVivo for the online forum analysis to document

when and how concepts and insights developed.

4.4.8   Ensuring rigour

On registering for the forum the individual chose an alias and password to access the

site. This prevented the contribution of any visitor to the online forum who was not

registered and not approved to participate. As part of this registration process it was

mandatory to complete basic demographic details (as shown in Table 4.6) to improve

their credibility and to later use as part of the data analysis.

I chose not to alter any grammatical or spelling errors within the forum discourse, even

though it would not have altered the context. I felt that it therefore provided an exact

account direct from the individual and made it more authentic.

Inter-rater reliability was improved by using more than one researcher to

independently analyse the data. One of my supervisors and I independently

conducted the thematic analysis. As detailed in Section 4.4.7 I chose to use QDA

software for this purpose, whereas my supervisor conducted the analysis using a manual technique. Ultimately we discussed our findings to reach a consensus.

4.5 Summary

In order to investigate the impact of being on a foreign posting as an accompanying spouse, the ethnographic data collection for Phase 2 consisted of conducting 12 semi-structured individual interviews (and one written response) and five focus groups with a purposive sample of military spouses based in one location in southern Europe. Phase 3 extended this sample to military spouses who had experienced other worldwide locations with their serving spouse. To facilitate their understanding of such postings and to create an impartial community, the experiences of 13 participants were discussed through the medium of an online forum. The data from both of these phases were examined using the QDA software NVivo 8 and by conducting a thematic analysis. Chapters 5 and 6 provide the findings and discussion of these two phases respectively.

Later, in Chapter 7 the final phase of data collection (Phase 4 – a quantitative online survey) will be described and the findings discussed.

5.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the methods and design utilised in order to conduct the qualitative data collection for Phases 2 and 3 of this study. To discuss the analysis and findings of these phases this chapter comprises three parts. Part 1 provides the key themes determined through the thematic analysis of the 13 individual interviews conducted in Phase 2. Part 2 provides the corresponding results from the thematic analysis of the five focus groups also conducted in Phase 2 (Section 4.3). Finally, Part 3 includes a discussion of these findings, commencing with a reflexive account of my initial experience of the foreign posting and living in an unfamiliar environment.

5.2   Part 1: The findings of individual interviews

5.2.1   Themes

Following the analysis of 12 individual interview transcripts and one question list completed by a participant via email, four main themes emerged: marriage and relationships, support, change, and individual differences and personal meaning-making. Each theme will be described separately in Sections 5.2.2 - 5.2.5. A general discussion of Phase 2 will be provided in Section 5.4.

Please note all names are pseudonyms.

5.2.2 Marriage and relationships

The obvious link between the military spouses was being married to a member of the British Armed Forces. Such a pivotal relationship was seen to be the overriding influential feature of choosing to accompany the serving spouse on a foreign posting, resulting from determination to either maintain or re-establish unity of the marriage. The posting was seen as an opportunity to not only live together as a family, but to share the memories of a new culture, with the added benefit in some instances of having more flexibility for quality time together:

> "[...] it's a new experience, so it was weighing up new experience and actually really wanting to be with my husband because that's why we got married" [Abby, lines 679 - 681].

> "[...] I left everything to be out here to help be with [my husband]" [Helen, line 58].

> "[...] we hadn't been married, we'd been married about ...mmm...about six months...when we heard, and but he'd been away for most of that time anyway and it was the opportunity to go to [*name of foreign location*] spend some time together" [Jessica, lines 69 - 72].

Nonetheless, in order to achieve this level of unity, personal sacrifices were made. In particular, this was demonstrated by the need of the military spouse to end or postpone employment. Again this was seen as an inevitable factor to preserve their military marriage, but also a personal choice:

> "[...] you've got to really trust somebody enough that you, eh put your career on hold and potentially shaft your own career because you rate your relationship that highly, you rate it above" [Abby, lines 1220 - 1222].

> "[...] you feel you want something but in order to have it you have to give up something of great importance to get it" [Beverly, lines 424 - 425].

> "So I was giving up everything to come, my whole life really was...being given up" [Justine, line 40].

The relocation was seen by other respondents in a slightly different perspective. They

felt such an assignment was harmonious to their chosen lifestyle, and consequently

felt it was their duty to accompany the serving spouse:

> "[...] he's in the Army, I always felt that I had to follow him" [Linette, lines 99 - 100].

> "[...] I knew when I got married that one of the things was, this isn't like marrying an accountant so mmm, I kind 'of thought, well right that's the way it is" [Esther, lines 38 - 39].

Nonetheless, the potential detrimental effect the foreign posting could pose on a

marriage was noted. One respondent remarked:

> "[...] if you've got the slightest chink in your relationship with your partner this place will open it to a crevice" [Ivy, lines 822 - 823].

In another instance Helen believed that being on the posting had made her husband

uncharacteristically selfish and described the agonizing feeling that:

> "[...] [my husband is] almost thinking it would've been easier if I wasn't here...and I sometimes get that, it's hard we always seem to be quite [*sic*], arguing about everything"[lines 538 - 540].

This sentiment was also reflected through the initial transition period of adapting to a

new environment, which was believed to add strain to a relationship. This adjustment

in conjunction with cohabiting, which for one couple occurred for the first time in their

five year marriage, inflicted a different level of stress not previously experienced.

Similarly, personal circumstances of some marriages due to illness and conception

difficulties led to atypical complications, which were felt to be escalated by being on a

foreign posting:

> "[...] at most I feel like I'm hitting my head against a brick wall and being penalised for coming on here on this posting. And in affect ye know I'd like to go back. If it means that I can't have a child or know we have to wait until we go back to the UK" [Esther, lines 392 -393].

Ultimately, the positive influence of having the serviceman/women's spouse with

them on the foreign posting was believed by the informants to create a happier, more

stable atmosphere, not just for the military personnel but for their children.

Consequently, strong relationships were felt to evolve, principally due to the

reassuring comfort of a familiar home life offered by the presence of the spouse on the

posting:

> "[...] home is where your heart is, I think number one. But, home will always
> be for *me* with [my husband] because he's my heart" [Beverly, lines 768 - 769].

The relationship between parents and their children was also felt to alter during the

foreign posting. For infants and primary school aged children, the posting instantly

offered quality time with both parents:

> "[...] I've had three years where I've actually had far more contact with my
> children than I would expect to normally have, fantastic" [Daniel, lines 220 -
> 222].

However, the educational requirements of the children could result in different

sources of anguish for the parents. For older and secondary school aged children

decisions regarding the option of boarding school had to be made. This was a unique

occurrence for some military spouses, but a well-accustomed experience for others.

While the rapport with the children who were sent to boarding school was seen

occasionally to be disrupted due to missing stages of their development, generally the

bond was ultimately felt to intensify:

> "[...] there was a big chunk of their growing up that I missed, but at the same
> time, we're very good friends, we get on really well as a family, we enjoy each
> other's company, which because all the teenage angst was taken away really,
> was all directed at the house master" [Jessica, lines 999 - 1002].

Nonetheless, the distance from children at boarding school remained a major concern.

Consequently, the ability to retain communication with them was felt to rectify some

of this anguish, but the separation of siblings was seen as potentially detrimental to

their well-being:

> "[...] I had one at home to worry about, one away who didn't write to worry
> about" [Jessica, lines 202 - 203].

A related perspective was provided by spouses who had children at university. Despite

their now deemed adult status, the priority was to provide these immediate family

members with a home base:

> "[...] they're just beginning and they're first year or second year, they still need
> a home to come home to" [Beverly, line 502 - 503].

> "[...] she didn't settle at school until she'd come home for the half term,
> because she couldn't picture where we were" [Jessica, line 1024 - 1025].

These education circumstances created further stress for some military spouses,

particularly with reference to the air travel and ongoing journeys required to settle

children at boarding school or to be established in tertiary education. This was seen as

an additional strain and consequently made the circumstances difficult for the military

spouse to then adjust to the foreign posting.

Communication was also a fundamental factor in retaining relationships with extended

families and friends not on the foreign posting. The essential facilitators for this were

standard mail and e-communications via the internet and the telephone:

> "[...] well at least you can keep in contact with your family more because of
> BFPO and Skype and all the rest of it and you've still got the...[SIGH] normality,
> a connection to something that makes you go [LONG SIGH]" [Abby, lines 519 -
> 521].

This allowed an important two-way connection with those outside of the posting.

Thus, the internet was also described as a "lifeline" [Beverly, line 120] in particular for

military spouses whose family were based at international locations. Personal

possessions and photographs were also utilised to further enhance this feeling of

connection:

> "[...] we always have out personal belongings around and lots of family photos,
> umm and we go back to the telephone and lines of communication, those are
> the important things yeh, I think" [Beverly, lines 775 - 777].

During the foreign posting the formation of new associations and interaction with the

community as a whole created a different dimension for relationships. Consequently,

varying degrees of involvement with the communities, both local and British, provided

diverse experiences. One respondent, Daniel, used the expressions "excluded from"

[line 158] and "have no friends" [line 173] when referring to the British community.

Similarly, it was also felt by some respondents that there was a distinct segregation

within the community due to the officer and non-officer positions held by the serving

personnel. The words and phrases "cliquey" [Caroline, line 420], "like apartheid" [Ivy,

line 601] and "pigeon hole" [Abbey, line 756] were used to depict the impact of this

perceived segregation. Unfortunately, such an alleged circumstance was felt to

potentially discredit the military spouse:

> "[...] you're judged unfairly at times by your husband's role and he, he's there
> to do his job, he's not there to be popular, and you have, you have to take, you
> have to learn how to be tactful enough and rise above it and not get into
> pettiness" [Beverly, lines 308 - 311].

> "[...] normally you're just...equal in your own right, ye sort of, you're all on the
> same plane and suddenly it's differentiating somebody where I have never had
> that attached to me and suddenly I do by the way of fact that I'm his wife"
> [Abby, lines 619 - 622].

It also left one spouse, Caroline, feeling "revolted" [line 312] at the apparent hierarchy

amongst the military spouses. Additionally, this experience was replicated on the

parco[9] and was found by another spouse to be relatively "intimidating" [Gail, line 54]

---

[9] Walled in private area containing a small number of villas

and similar to being the "new girl at school" [line 54]. Nonetheless, the ultimate

formation of relationships was seen to be a personal choice:

> "[...] if they're happy to talk to me I'll talk to them, they don't want talk to me
> then I'll leave them be" [Justine, lines 344 - 345].

> "[...] I don't understand this whole business of how we have to be in each
> others' lives out here, how we have to know everything about the next person"
> [Helen, lines 221 - 223].

This aspect of individualism will be represented further in Section 5.2.5.

Finally, the affiliation of a male spouse with the community was seen to be one initially

offered as a "token" [Daniel, line 78] or a "novelty" [line 78] factor. However, it was

deemed that being a male spouse must offer some unique challenges as ultimately

they were described as being "a man in a women's world" [Daniel, line 165]. It was

considered that they could potentially experience isolation due to the predominantly

female orientated environment and formulating platonic relationships with female

spouses was conceived to be problematic.

5.2.3   Support

Support will be segregated into two areas – the internal informal support (the

individual, personal support provided by family and friends), and the external formal

support (provided by the military in the form of welfare, housing and medical services).

5.2.3.1   Internal informal support

Forming a social network was recognised to be a key initial step of establishing a

support system on the foreign posting. There was a certain element of "fortuitous"

[Abby, line 395] meetings in creating contacts but actively joining clubs and societies

were seen as an avenue to forming friendships. The respondents felt that these

networks were the focal point not just of support but also to enhance their ability to

settle in a new environment, allowing the establishment of a secure surrounding:

> "[...] I need to know that there's somebody that actually I really don't mind
> calling at two in the morning and I'm not umming and arring over it, and vice-
> versa" [Abby, lines 266 - 268].

> "[...] I've actually got friends of my own, in my own little life and that's really
> nice" [Abby, line 405].

However, not participating in such groups was considered to be potentially

detrimental to a spouse's adjustment on any foreign posting. Nonetheless, the

formation of friendships was an individual decision. One respondent, Gail, believed

that you should "take your friends where you find them" [line, 457] whereas, Esther

was quite specific about the friendships she intended to build:

> "I made the decision that I only wanted to be friends with people that if I was
> at home...they would be my friends . . . I'm only gonna ye know...invest the
> time and effort because this is the sort of person that you'd like to spend time
> with if you're at home" [Esther, lines 58 - 61].

Due to the nature of military life and frequent relocations, it was a common

occurrence that such friendships were lost. Therefore, the need to actively construct

new acquaintances to maintain a social network was predetermined by Abby:

> "[...] my closest friends will have left and I know that I need to always keep up
> the effort because otherwise I'm going to sort 'of find that suddenly I'm...my
> friends are gone and I don't want to have that, I want to sort of already
> counteract that"[line 247].

The lack of, or the inability to form a friendship network was identified as a substantial

drawback for some spouses. Without the outlet of work and academia, Daniel,

believed he would have been "very sad and lonely" [line, 91]. This concept of social

isolation was a recognised phenomenon but was not always resolved:

"[...] I have to say I am massively lonely here . . . I am just massively lonely and everyone else seems to have a social circle" [Gail, lines 78 - 79].

"Book clubs, mmm fitness sessions...any of those things, if you're not into that and you don't get into any of those it can be a very isolating experience being abroad" [Jessica, line 769].

"[...] everybody else...assumed that I knew because [*husband's name*] had already been here for three months...so oh, 'what about so-and-so'...'sorry I don't know what you're going on about', they didn't take that into account, they would talk about places and things, assuming that I knew what they were going on about" [Justine, lines 200 - 203].

Furthermore, male spouses were believed to have a limited support network, in particular the opportunity of socialising with a female spouse was believed to be open to misinterpretation. Therefore, this apprehension limited these associations.

Not having children present on the posting was felt to also limit opportunities of forming a friendship network as the automatic means of association through participating in school runs or having direct involvement with schools was not available. This left the impression that the individual was a recluse because the immediate connection of children with other spouses was not possible:

"[...] a lot of the ladies tend to work in the school, or people work in the school, so that tends to be some form of them and us, [it's a] natural one, [but] again not necessarily a bad thing" [Caroline, lines 422 -424].

"[...] I got ye know a warm enough reception from the [guys] but the women...no it was dead nothing, nothing at all, there was nothing there it was just hell..[*sic*]....hello and welcome, but we didn't have children with us, they all had children, they all knew each other" [Abby, lines 175 - 178].

"[...] you [*sic*] gonna be put into [a box] when you come to a new place is...you do have kids or you don't have kids...so if you don't have kids the people who do have kids don't really talk to you because you've got nothing to talk about apparently" [Linette, line 246 - 248].

In parallel, children were seen as a catalyst in formulating a social network, providing an instant structure to the day and compelling spouses to leave the house:

> "[...] I hadn't realised actually what a massive asset children are! Mmm, they really are, they are a great social facilitator" [Gail, lines 364 - 365].

> "[...] you're pulled out into the community because you are going places to keep your, your children stimulated" [Beverly, lines 483 - 484].

As within Section 5.2.2, communication of all formats was also identified as a fundamental factor in the theme of 'Support'. In addition to maintaining relationships with friends and family not on the posting, e-communication also served as an expedient support network. It was seen to be a crucial component, without which Esther felt it would cause her intense isolation on the foreign posting. This feeling was also extended by another respondent expressing she would feel "completely lost" [Kelly, line 168] without the communication links. Furthermore, due to the need for e-communication facilities (internet and telephone), anger was articulated at the unwarrantable time needed to establish such an amenity within married quarters:

> "[...] it took months to get the phone line established which was another stressful side" [Jessica, lines 339 - 340].

> "[...] it took us two months to get the internet . . . that's something else that drove me round the bend" [Caroline, line 118 - 120].

Transportation links also contributed a significant role in support. The combination of internet and local transport facilities provided a reassuring comfort of the feasibility to return to family and friends at short notice. Equally, this network permitted visitors to reach the foreign posting without any complications:

> "[...] the fact we can see [*sic*] transport connections so good, mmm it means that people have come and visited loads . . . so you always, always feel connected" [Abby, lines 203 - 206].

> "[...] the internet's there to book the ticket, the airport's 40 minutes down the road, so that's one thing being here, at least within four hours at a pinch I could be home" [Justine, lines 584 - 586].

Respondents described how support was also received through the work environment and the community. Work colleagues provided a close network for military spouses

and also provided motivation to socialise with the community. Additionally, despite

residing in what was considered by some as a "small minded" [Abbey, line 829]

community and akin to living in a "goldfish bowl" [Helen, line 154], this was also seen

as beneficial due to the associated sense of security it created:

> "[...] can be quite *reassuring* in some ways because everybody knows when you
> are on your own, or ye know when the kids have gone back, and looking out for
> you in that way" [Jessica, lines 424 - 426].

5.2.3.2   External formal support

The physical relocation to a foreign posting was recognised as an exciting yet stressful

experience. Pre-visit reconnaissance trips and subsequent choice of transportation for

the actual move had added financial burdens due to the level or lack of

reimbursement:

> "[...] you've got very little with you and there's no support from the military
> they just sort of say well you're on your own figure it out" [Kelly, lines 291 -
> 293].

From a different perspective, however, it was believed that having a central point

through which the relocation was organised was "wonderful" [Abby, line 562], as an

independent move was known to require extensively more effort.

On arrival the allocation of accommodation was not without complications:

> "[...] to put someone [with] a young family in a non-child friendly house is
> madness" [Daniel, lines 439 - 440].

> "[...] health and safety nightmare for an 18 month old" [Ivy, line 86].

> "[...] it's a rude awakening you think that you are arriving to, to a dream [...] but
> [it] was a rude shock to arrive to that" [Caroline, lines 246 - 248].

This seemingly inappropriate housing provision wasn't reflected by all, there was also the recognition that just living abroad was quite satisfactory in itself irrespective of the accommodation.

The onward provision of support from the parent unit[10] was questioned by the respondents. Many personal experiences were expressed but generally this formal provision of support was viewed negatively. The slightly cynical interpretations of the title of 'Support' indicated the level of scepticism. It was believed to be a "misnomer" [Ivy, line 995] being referred to instead as "unsupportive" [Caroline, line 510] or "lack of support" [Gail, line 286]. One respondent felt that spouses were in a no-win situation. Registering a fault with the house often required several complaints, but this risked being labelled as fractious. Kelly agreed believing the only way accomplishment was achieved was by the military serviceman/women protesting.   It was also further alleged that spouses in general were disregarded:

> "They don't really listen to you, they don't treat you with respect" [Ivy, lines 1006 - 1007].

> "[...] some guy who yesterday was the electrician, today's the plumber turns up with a hammer, a spanner and a pair of muddy boots and just traipse through my house . . . there is no respect, there's no respect for the spouses" [Gail, lines 305 - 309].

One respondent expressed confusion over the availability and arrangement of support facilities. This created much frustration and was found to be quite obstructive:

> "[...] I don't feel like when you get here, there's that friendly little group of people that are approachable, it's sort of well there's a little bit [of the] support unit there and then there's a housing support unit over there, and then there's a . . . HIVE support unit . . . so there's oddments of support all over the place" [Abby, lines 944 - 948].

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[10] The military organisation

On joining the foreign posting in general a sponsor[11] was allocated to each respondent.

The success of this pairing varied considerably. In some instances the sponsor was

seen as irreplaceable and one who became an amalgamation of a tour guide, a

confidant and an administrator:

> "[...] one of the most important people is my sponsor, I think that has been a
> huge, huge help to us" [Kelly, lines 183 - 184].

> "[...] [the guy] who oversaw us coming in was sort 'of our mentoring guide he
> was fantastic, he couldn't have done anymore for us" [Beverly, lines 65 - 67].

At the other extreme some sponsors were completely ineffective, and spent a minimal

amount of time with their new arrivals:

> "[...] in terms of sponsorship, he spent one day with us . . . never included me in
> the process at all and we never saw him for the rest of the week and we were
> left floundering" [Ivy, lines 362-365].

> "[...] when I turned up there was nobody to sponsor me" [Gail, line 126].

 Additionally, the appropriateness of the pairing was questioned. It was felt that the

sponsor's circumstances should reflect those of the newly joined in order to achieve

maximum success.

A certain level of doubt emanated with respect to other facets of support. In some

instances refusing to ask for help was preferred in order to preserve dignity and to

avoid perceived labelling as difficult. Accompanying this was the concern that it could

reflect negatively on the serving spouse, or could be embellished by the military:

> "I would be cautious about going to anybody in the authority because things
> [...] can be blown out of proportion" [Gail, lines 236 -237].

Additionally, disappointment and distrust were explicitly articulated by some

respondents. The expressions "really let down", "nowhere to turn", [Beverly line 526;

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[11] An individual/married couple currently on the foreign posting selected to provide support to new
arrivals

585] and "really hard to know who to trust" [Helen, line 617], characterised this sense

of extreme apprehension and disenchantment at the support offered. This was further

emphasized by the concern that the plight of some spouses could be overlooked:

> "[...] there could be a few people who [have] easily slipped through the net,
> that are sat at home everyday feeling very, very alone and actually no one
> would know and nobody would care" [Esther, lines 217 - 219].

Complex circumstances were also felt to be inadequately met by the services. In one

instance the described insufficient support was halting the plans of a childless couple

to adopt a family, resulting with the attitude of being "penalised" [Esther, line 392] for

being on the foreign posting. Furthermore, the sacrifices made by spouses to

accompany serving members on the posting were felt to be completely overlooked:

> "[...] I left everything to be out here to help be with him and I got nothing, no
> help, no nothing!" [Helen, lines 58 - 59].

Nonetheless, compassionate leave for military spouses was greatly appreciated and

similarly respondents were especially enthusiastic about the available resources from

other base facilities, for example the healthcare and retail provisions from the local

American military base. This allowed care that was not as readily available in their

usual residence:

> "[...] the health care has been a, a mmm, speaking as somebody who has
> [experienced] the American system ye know it was absolutely fantastic [...] as a
> client of the health care system out here it's been fantastic" [Gail, lines 414 -
> 415].

> "[...] the fact that we have access to the American base makes a huge
> difference" [Beverly, lines 467 - 468].

5.2.4   Change

Change is inherent in a foreign posting and a clear element of this for the military

spouses interviewed was the associated identity and role alteration it encompassed.

The combination of postponing/leaving employment with adjusting to an unfamiliar

environment was welcomed by some but bitterly accepted by others. A key issue was

the concept of being perceived as a 'dependent' or 'wife of' by the military:

> "[...] at the end of the day you are this damned dependent. And [the military] do see you as an issue rather than an individual and I think that's a real big problem" [Ivy, lines 808 - 810].

> "[...] I think I really struggle with that whole concept of being a dependent and I don't like feeling a bit like a second class citizen and I still think that's how [the military] view dependents" [Kelly, lines 195 - 197].

However, the dependency status was also deemed to be an unavoidable position:

> "[...] I know there are some who get very, don't like being mmm, what's the word, dependents, but actually wouldn't be here if I wasn't his other half and I've been a dependent, wife of, for longer than was not!" [Jessica, lines 379 - 382].

> "[...] if you're married to somebody in the military you have to accept to a certain extent you are defined by what your spouse is and does" [Gail, lines 60 - 61].

Spouses further described themselves as "a non-entity" [Justine, line 385], "secondary"

[Esther, line 590] or "I'm just a wife" [Gail, line 324]. Whereas prior to the posting, for

those that were in employment felt their work defined them and they were evaluated

on that rather than by virtue of their serving spouse:

> "Now I'm a [house wife] ye know that's my role and that is very, very difficult from a self-esteem perspective I think because you've always had an identity outside" [Kelly, lines 368 - 369].

> "If I was back in the UK no one would know that my husband worked in the military and no one would care what rank he was, I'd be judged on whether or not I'm good at the skill" [Helen, lines 139 - 141].

> "It's weird leaving it behind and suddenly not being independent with a career I'm just 'wife of'" [Abby, lines 695 - 696].

Justine defined herself as being in "limbo" [line 370]. She believed that her current

position was purely as a wife because all her other roles had been postponed until she

returned to the UK. Conversely Abby thought it was essential to re-establish a new

identity whilst on the foreign posting in order to feel "worthwhile" [line 729]. But

Fiona was adamant that her identity or role was not altered by being on the posting and declared "no I am me" [line 85]. Nonetheless, Gail found this shift of roles to be troubling:

> "[...] but it's the fact that you go from having a career, having a person in your own right, to being somebody who...who has no rights, who has no privileges...unless they're because of their husband. And I found that, I found it very disorientating" [Gail, lines 339 - 343].

Role change was predominantly linked with no longer having employment or a significant career. Consequently, this difference was a concern for some respondents due to the added implications of continuing their work on return to the UK. The employment available to spouses on the posting wasn't necessarily seen favourably and was actually felt to reflect negatively on their curriculum vitae (CV), so would be omitted. Therefore, the concern was that the two to three year gap on their CVs would be detrimental to regaining employment in the UK:

> "[...] the knock on my career, it's really [messed] me up big time and now I'm actually looking at the reality of trying to move back into work, I'm realising how [messed] up I am" [Daniel, lines 811 - 813].

> "[...] I feel sad that I left it behind because I feel there were endless opportunities for me in that position and I don't feel . . . I'll have that opportunity again to do it" [Beverly, lines 419 - 421].

> "[...] I am unemployable in that field now and I will never be able to get back into [it]" [Gail, lines 430 - 431].

The foreign posting was seen instead by other respondents as an opportunity to develop new skills and to potentially alter their career. Employment on the posting in roles not previously experienced provided the insight into new interests. Additionally, not being in fulltime employment gave the opportunity to extend qualifications.

As a consequence of a spouse's altered employment, for some respondents there were considerable financial implications. The supplementary allowances provided on a

foreign posting assisted in rectifying some of this loss. However, the long term effects

of temporarily being a single income family not only resulted in reduced earnings but

again had significant repercussions for careers:

> "[...] If we go back to the UK [...] I will be looking at a severely reduced salary and a severely...curtailed career structure, which is something which...it doesn't matter how much money we earn here, I'm not going to make up for three years lost time" [Gail, lines 433 - 436].

> "[...] we've lost quite a lot of money out here and it's, it's [messed] up my career to be fair" [Daniel, lines 219 - 220].

How individuals subsequently coped in order to become accustomed to the significant

changes imposed by the foreign posting varied considerably. Not only did it reflect on

their past experiences, but also their proactive nature. This particular individualism

will be described in more depth in Section 5.2.5, but for the purpose of this section,

the general methods of coping and adjusting to change as described by the

respondents, will be provided.

Preparation allowed the opportunity for some spouses to visit the new location of

their foreign posting and to appreciate the expected lifestyle changes:

> "[...] it got a real sense of what [the country] was all about" [Kelly, line 50].

> "[...] anyone who doesn't do their research before they come down here, ye know, I think is making a big mistake" [Ivy, lines 912 -913].

Consequently, expectation levels were a barometer for the impending ability to cope

with a new environment:

> "I was very excited, then I was told yes [the country] is nice but [the area] not so much" [Linette, lines 37 - 38].

> "[...] I mean it's so different than what I expected, I sort of expected quite glamorous and very, very eh [nationality of country] and it's not" [Kelly, lines 51 - 52].

"[...] I think my expectations weren't managed properly . . . if we had been posted to North Africa I would have expected it to be like this and I would've taken it on the chin" [Gail, lines 278 - 281].

Developing some form of daily structure or remaining preoccupied were key influential factors in adjusting to the foreign posting. Children were recognised as providing a suitable distraction to any apprehensions:

"[...] I think it's easier to settle in a place when you've got the children because you worry about what, them, rather than what you're doing" [Jessica, lines 295 - 297].

"[...] If you're involved in your children's life then of course you are not concentrating on the niggly stuff, you're, you're busy, you're life's too busy" [Beverly, lines 490 - 491].

Without children, it was felt that there was an absence of routine which could be inhibiting:

"There's no structure to the day...you get up and you think 'What shall I do today?'...'Shall I put the kettle on?'...'mmm yeh I fancy a cup of tea I better get up'" [Justine, lines 310 - 311].

Simple coping mechanisms were engaged to become accustomed to the new lifestyle. Hobbies, sporting activities, and academia were examples of standard interests utilised by the spouses interviewed. Establishing a friendship network within the British and/or international community was also felt by some to further promote the ability to adjust, and doubled as a support framework (Section 5.2.3.1), whereas other respondents found it necessary to withdraw themselves from the community in order to feel comfortable in the new environment:

"I don't think I've settled very well, so I don't, I know people but not really friendly people...so I find it...very cliquey...I just stay out of that, so I keep myself to myself" [Justine, lines 108 - 109].

"I try and keep myself to myself now because I realised that it doesn't matter, it's a goldfish bowl out here and it's very, very difficult" [Helen, lines 154 - 155].

Furthermore, an element of stoicism was used by some of the spouses to conceal true

feelings:

> "[...] I thought yeh that is actually the attitude for a lot of military wives
> because you cope, because you do the duck syndrome and you appear all swan
> and serene on top, even if you are paddling madly underneath, people think
> because you look like you're coping you are" [Jessica, lines 942 - 946].

> "You have to deal with it by getting on with life" [Fiona, line 154].

> "I put up with it. Because I said I would. I said I would come and I'd come"
> [Justine, line 98].

Maintaining an element of normality also assisted the ability to adjust. For some this

involved retaining a portion of independence through driving or gaining employment:

> "[...] I couldn't, I don't think you could live here without having a car . . . I think
> it must be very, very debilitating, cos [*sic*] I think you're really stuck" [Kelly,
> lines 150 - 152].

> "The job at the time made a big difference, the job came up within a month I
> was here and the car after three months so after those three months I was a lot
> happier" [Caroline, lines 111 - 112].

For others, being surrounded by home comforts was considered to be a psychological

necessity in order to establish a family abode. Personal possessions and photographs

were depicted as the essence of any home:

> "The initial month and a half I would say is the most stressful because not only
> are you adapting, well you're adapting to lots of things, but it's like all at
> once...but I think the magic moment is when your home is together and you get
> all of the things you need" [Beverly, lines 258 - 261].

> "[...] when we first arrive, the first fortnight is a bit of a whirlwind to try and get
> as much out, as much out particularly the pictures, because once the pictures
> are up, it looks like home" [Jessica, lines 269 - 271].

Once a familiar home was established the next step was deemed to explore and

become accustomed to the new environment. These surroundings were considered to

consist not just of the particular area, but local culture and the military community.

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The first obstacle for some respondents was the change of language. Being posted to

a non-English speaking country was seen as a barrier by some and was felt to "severely

[limit] your options" [Kelly, line 129]. The available language classes were attended,

but were found to be too challenging by some, thus restricting their ability to

communicate.

The trepidation of the new surroundings was overcome through opportunities of travel

to local destinations:

> "[...] you're very close to places that are nice so it's fine. I can't imagine being
> put in an area where I didn't like any of it, that would really get me down . . .
> and I would imagine that would put a lot of strain on relationships" [Esther,
> lines 288 - 290].

> "[...] you just go away and think 'oh gosh this is refreshing' and then come back
> to it" [Jessica, line 471].

Additionally, exploring the local culture provided a buffer to some of the uneasiness

experienced. Nonetheless, it was remarked that the area posted to could have a great

influence on the spouse's experience:

> "[...] people who love being abroad in one place...frequently will detest being
> here, because it doesn't come up to what you expect" [Abby, lines 487 - 489].

> "[...] when I came to [name of area] it was like crashing back down to earth
> from dizzy heights, that's the only way I can describe it. It was a contrast and
> with a shock and I, I was very depressed when I first got here, which is unusual
> for me, I'm not that kind at all" [Caroline, lines 52 - 55].

Part of the adaption was achieved through the acceptance of local practices including

differences in etiquette and sanitation:

> "[...] There was [sic] a lot of cultural things to learn and understand and adapt
> to" [Kelly, lines 94 - 95].

> "[...] you can't come to [name of area] and live like a Brit. You will not enjoy
> your stay here" [Fiona, line 151].

> "[...] the other downside is the fact that it is so dirty here. Umm, [rubbish] all along the streets, there's...when we first arrived it was in the middle of the [rubbish] strike and mountains of [rubbish]...we've had rats in our [gardens]" [Beverly, lines 715 - 718].

> "[...] I hate the rubbish and I hate the lack of respect that they give to their...eh land, area it, that's awful it's criminal" [Abbey, line 1180].

Experiencing a military lifestyle was also a new attribute for some spouses. It prompted a double adaption of the foreign country and the military:

> "[...] I think I coped quite well...it's just the military thing is completely different isn't it, I've learnt a lot in the last 18 months" [Caroline, lines 181 - 182].

> "[...] you can't really compare this to real life because this is sort of a...this is an interesting type of living and not one that I have ever lived before as a person who lived in a completely civilian lifestyle, so it's...just adapting to military life as a military wife is...has been interesting" [Beverly, lines 220 - 223].

This recognition of lifestyle change was also influenced by an altered appreciation for the respondents' usual places of residence. Consequently, the posting experience was described as an "eye opener" [Helen, line 578] and generated a more objective view of both lifestyles:

> "I mean there are things about England that are not perfect, but there are many things I'll never complain about again!" [Gail, lines 544 - 545].

> "[...] it makes me think about what each of [the] countries [has] to offer, which is quite different. So it makes me sort of mmm...well aware of the good and the bad elements of each" [Kelly, lines 617 - 619].

> "It has given me a greater appreciation because when you go back you realise how ...polite people are, how straight people are, mmm yeh I think very typical British values which I really appreciate when I go back, which is really nice" [Abby, lines 1165 - 1167].

Experiencing this new lifestyle was also believed to influence the respondents' health and well-being. Isolation and discontent were of particular concern. Not only did they have negative consequences for support (Section 5.2.3.1), they were also felt to contribute to anxiety:

"[...] I have been hugely lonely here, I've just and I've often, I've thought, it makes me sound suicidal, I'm not, but I thought ye know if I had an accident here or decided to hang myself, and [my husband] wasn't around, nobody would notice" [Gail, lines 113 - 115].

"[...] I actually found myself driving to the airport to get a flight out of here" [Ivy, lines 125 - 126].

Relocation stress was also an issue. The impact of a secure and familiar environment being replaced with somewhere unknown, combined with the emotional aspect of leaving loved ones was quite distressful for some spouses:

"[...] it was not knowing when I was going to be going back home...or how often I could go back home. Would the [family] be alright without me?" [Justine, lines 159 - 161].

"[...] had to leave the job, the comfort zone I was in, to come out to the unknown, unsure, while I was flying in on the plane I was just aware of, what has he brought me to!?" [Helen, lines 31 - 33].

Additionally, the thought of returning to their usual residence had worrying implications. Despite returning this time to a generally familiar environment, housing and children's educational needs had to be re-established. Likewise, opportunities for employment were a huge concern. One respondent also highlighted the potential difficulties of carrying on with their normal friendship network:

"[...] you expect to pick up where you left off and yes friends are still great, but they've had two years without you and life moves on and I think going home can be, it's stressful in a different way, because you are suddenly like the new girl on the block, but you don't feel like the new girl on the block" [Jessica, line 827 - 831].

During the posting, in some cases not being in fulltime employment allowed more liberty to recuperate and to indulge in pastimes or cultural activities:

"[...] I've just let myself relax a bit more 'cos [sic] I think sometimes ye know when you're working and you've constantly got, have things on the go and thinking about things...it's hard to relax" [Kelly, lines 565 - 567].

"I'm a lot more relaxed out here because I'm, yeh I guess I'm living the kind of life I enjoy living" [Abby, lines 1049 - 1050].

However, this luxury also had a negative influence due to an excessive amount of time

to dwell over predicaments:

> "[...] I've got more time to worry but I don't think I'd have to worry about it
> quite so much if I was in the UK because I'd be doing something about [it]"
> [Esther, line 745].

Further suspected health implications were weight gain due to an altered diet and

social life. Concern was also noted regarding the suspected unhygienic conditions of

the immediate environment. Nonetheless, change of family well-being was related to

children's educational needs, time together and the safety of the environment:

> "This foreign posting has been a gift for our family so health and well-being has
> been super" [Fiona, line 128].
>
> "[...] you've got to feel safe in your home . . . to know that when you close the
> doors in your home that there's not going to be any intrusion...that's the
> biggest thing" [Beverly, lines 230 - 232].

5.2.5   Individual differences and personal meaning-making

Acceptance of a new lifestyle induced by a foreign posting was deemed as a very

individual reaction:

> "[...] make your own mind up...it's very personal, this place is definitely not for
> everyone...some people think they are living the dream, some people
> think...they're in hell" [Caroline, lines 542 - 544].

The respondent's personal circumstances were seen to influence this reaction. Stage

of life, with reference to presence or absence of children, produced different scenarios

that varied the complexities of the relocation. Therefore, the foreign posting

experience was believed by the respondents to be correlated to the altered phases of

marriage, careers and families. Nonetheless, previous personal experiences were

noted as a contributing factor. In particular, key aspects were prior foreign postings or

exposure to travel:

"[...] because we had done it before . . . we were pretty much prepared for things that would arise" [Beverly, lines 161 - 163].

"The fact that I've done it before, and I think mmm, each time...each time you do it...makes it easier the next time to cope with an obstacle, because you know, you know that you've, you've overcome once, so that you can do it again" [Jessica, lines 405 - 408].

"[...] I travelled on my own for quite a bit so maybe then, maybe a little easier for me" [Linette, lines 201 - 202].

The nationality of the respondent also played a significant role in their former experiences of travel and adaption. Primarily this was linked to their ability to become accustomed to a new homeland (the UK) before any military foreign postings. This ability to adapt was believed by some to be aided by the culture and the surroundings of particular foreign postings to be more akin to native countries. Furthermore, emigration and experiencing subsequent military foreign postings was felt to encourage a more open-minded perspective with respect to recognising the advantages and disadvantages of each posting.

Individual responses to altered roles and identity were seen as a reflection of personal adaption to change. Whether this was achieved through academic studies, employment or through retaining some form independence, this was seen as improving their self-worth, which gave some respondents the justification they needed to be on the posting:

"So starting my studies meant that I suddenly felt like I've got a point again and I could sort of justify me being out here rather than what everybody said 'oh you're having a permanent holiday and little house wife for a while' and they joke about it, but I hated that" [Abbey, lines 108 - 110].

"[...] not being able to drive, it took me about three months to get a car and after that my life changed, I had [...] my freedom which is very important for me. And, then I felt a lot more [settled], then I started to settle at work as well" [Caroline, lines 105 - 107].

Whereas others did struggle with the altered concept:

> "I've never been dependent on anyone, I've always been independent . . . and I just find the whole thing quite difficult" [Ivy, lines 738 - 739].

Other respondents were also angry at what appeared to be the compulsory loss of their autonomy. In particular this focused on the fact that all responsibility during the posting was channelled through the serviceman/women, which left some spouses in the unique position of not being able to contribute to daily household or financial management:

> "I just wish it wasn't so distinct that you are a wife of, a dependent of...and that most of the paperwork, most of the responsibility, most of the connection with what's going on in the community is true, Adam's work, Adam's email, Adam's ye know everything, it's Adam's say so if we are going to do this, Adam had to countersign everything or have to get him to do everything" [Abby, lines 712 - 716].

The spouse's autonomy was also believed to be reflected in the support choices made. Some were quite content to retain their privacy and not become involved in the community activities, whereas others actively sought friendships. But again, either way it was considered to be a personal choice:

> "I've also heard negative comments from other wives about people who stay at home and don't get involved but really that's up to the individual that's not, I mean as long as they're, they're happy and they're supporting their husband and they're doing what they need to do." [Beverly, lines 210 - 213].

Generating a changed perspective was a further response to the posting. This was accomplished through personal development and the appreciation to not "accept anything on face value" [Ivy, line 1140] or to not "take anything for granted" [Fiona, line 131]. Consequently, it presented the opportunity to flourish:

> "[...] I've left a job where I felt that I was really inadequate and I came out here and thought I'm not doing that again, I don't want to be the person that's always sort of a little bit reserved and a bit uncomfortable about situations and not quite sure, and I didn't really see the necessity, and I thought well actually I can come out here and say 'sod it' actually I'll do it" [Abby, lines 422 - 426].

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"[...] it's just [a] very rich experience living in another country and learning"
[Caroline, line 474].

Complementary to this altered perspective was the expressed confidence change

experienced by several respondents. This was a positive reaction for some in the form

of building up "resilience" [Jessica, line 970] to accept different environments.

Additionally, this new found confidence and strength of personality inspired a

determination to retain these new behaviours:

"[...] it's definitely made me stronger being out here" [Helen, line 209]

"[...] my personality has been drastically different from when I was working and
I need to take that back with me, I don't want to lose sight of that" [Abby, lines
1127 - 1129].

Conversely, due to specific circumstances evoked by being on the posting, it had a

detrimental effect on some previously self-assured individuals:

"[...] I am not gaining any confidence anywhere and from a work point of view
it will be sort of like, 'oh no, can I still do that, can you do this?'" [Esther, lines
827 - 828].

"[...] my confidence has taken a major nosedive because of what I went
through" [Ivy, lines 269 - 270].

A spouse's attitude in general to the foreign posting was seen as a viable precursor for

their willingness to adjust. In particular this "zest for life" [Kelly, line 249] was evident

through pursuing a foreign posting:

"We actually sought the foreign" [Jessica, line 53].

"It was my idea and I egged my husband on a lot to do it, because I'd had a
personal period of very unsettled times" [Ivy, lines 42 - 43].

"I said let's try somewhere completely different, let's do something exciting
mmm ye know see what options are available" [Kelly, lines 66 -67].

However, this need for adventure was not experienced by all. Differences in attitude

and proactive nature of spouses were highlighted as factors contributing to the

reaction of a foreign posting. Open-mindedness and certain vivacity were considered

major constituents in adjusting successfully:

> "[...] you've got to get yourself out and about" [Esther, line 754]

> "[...] I think the people who sort of put themselves forward, who are interested
> in coming here have a certain vitality [...] and want something a little different"
> [Kelly, lines 238 - 240].

> "[...] so I think it's your own initiative, you either sit at home . . . you feel sorry
> for yourself or you go out there and actually make a go" [Linette, lines 231 -
> 233].

> "[...] I think if you were quiet and you don't naturally go out and thrust yourself
> out there [...] that would really make it difficult" [Abby, lines 136 - 138].

In general a person's willingness to acclimatize appeared to be the predictor of a

successful posting:

> "[...] we're quite adaptable people, the secret of everything in life now is to be
> adaptable to change and I think we are quite good at that" [Daniel, lines 631 -
> 633].

> "[...] I find it exciting being somewhere where I am meeting new people and
> always...don't take anything for granted...and I like that...makes life more
> exciting" [Abby, lines 1143 - 1145].

> "[...] you have to I think, want to be here and you have to be fairly confident
> about mmm...ye know making your way, having a bit of independence, I think
> that is vital" [Kelly, lines 208 - 210].

Ultimately, the appropriateness of some spouses going on a foreign posting was

questioned with the concern that some form of suitability assessment should be a

prerequisite:

> "[...] it's not just about looking at the servicemen, it's about looking at their
> wives and deciding are the wives suitable too" [Ivy, lines 208 - 209].

> "[...] I think as a man you could, if you're not outgoing, I think you could really
> struggle actually and [...] be quite lonely" [Daniel, lines 101 - 103].

> "[...] I think that the military before sending anybody on a posting should be
> confirming both people want it" [Kelly, lines 249 - 250].

5.2.6   Conceptual map of findings from the Phase 2 individual interviews

Following the analytical approach utilised in Phase 1, a conceptual map of the findings

of the individual interviews was completed and is presented in Figure 5.1.
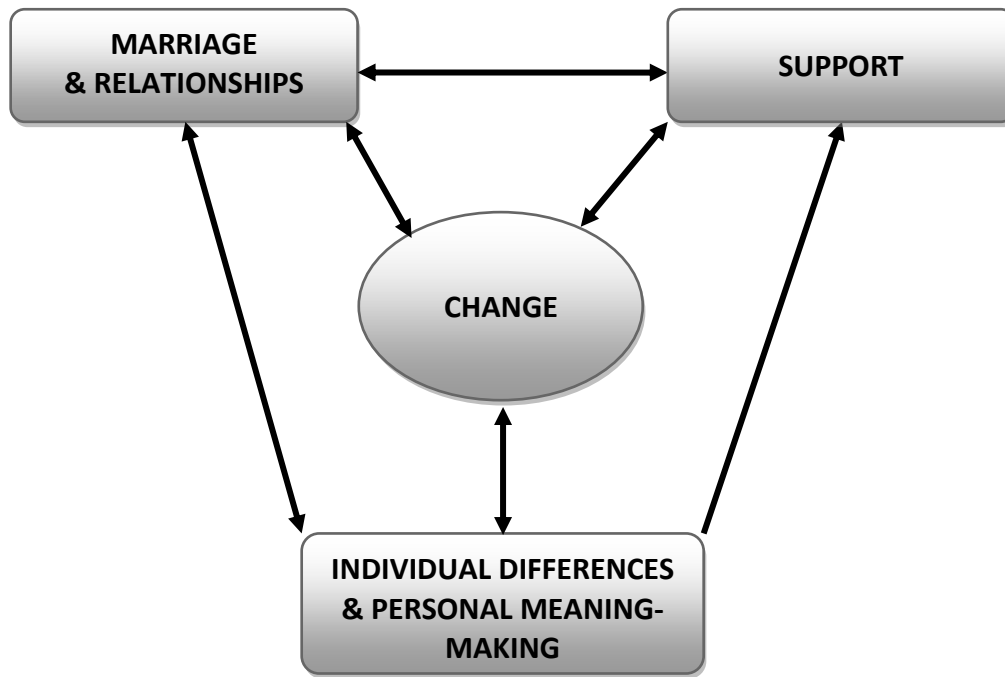
Figure 5.1 Conceptual map of findings from individual interviews

The theme of 'change' is centralised in the model as it represents the definitive

outcome associated with a foreign posting. It encapsulates not just the military

spouse's ability to adapt to change, but also the situational and personal changes that

they may encounter. This is influenced by three interlinking variables: marriage and

relationships, support, and the personal meaning-making and individual differences

aspect, each presented as the points of a triangle surrounding the central outcome.

The cyclical representation of these three variables starts with the influential nature of

a military spouse's personality and individual circumstance guiding their choice of

support. The availability of formal or informal support is linked to personal

relationships and strength of marriage, and as such these guide what support is

sought. Finally, completing the triangle, the interconnection of marriage and

relationships with the individual circumstance of the military spouse emphasises the

uniqueness of each spouse, highlighting the macro-perspective of their history and

personal backgrounds.

Each of the points on the triangle has a direct influence on change. Specifically the

support facet is shown to have a two-way influence on change, highlighting the

significant influence support can have on a military spouse's ability to accept and adapt

to a new environment, and the level of adjustment then reflects the amount of

support required. The marriage and relationship facet is also demonstrated as having

a two-way relationship with change. This indicates that the strength of marriage and

personal relationships can direct a response to change. Nonetheless, how successful

this response is may then be a contributory factor in marital contentment. Finally, an

individual's personal meaning-making and specific circumstances are shown to not

only directly contribute to the ability to adapt to change, but that the change

experienced is also recognised to influence personal beliefs and outlooks.

5.3   Part 2: The findings of the focus groups

5.3.1   Dynamics of the focus groups

As discussed in Section 4.3.1 of the previous chapter, following each focus group I held

a debriefing session with my note-taker to discuss the overall session and the

information she had collated from the meeting. From this, it was immediately

apparent to us which groups consisted of spouses who would normally socialise

together or who lived within close proximately of each other. Specifically, Focus Group

1 (consisting of five officer spouses) and Focus Group 3 (consisting of three rating

spouses) offered this impression, due to the ease of their conversations or from the

'in-house' jokes that they shared. As expected from such a homogenous group, they

had very similar outlooks and attributes, viewing the foreign posting in a generally

positive perspective. Also, these groups reflected the participants' own social support

networks, and initially I was concerned that such a strong association may potentially

hinder some discussion or actually embellish other topics. However, each of these

groups' discussions appeared to be very genuine with no hesitation of responses,

additionally, in both cases no participant was seen to dominate the conversation.

One final point to note with regard to Focus Groups 1 and 3 was the commonality for

each group with respect to their husbands' ranks/rates. Both of these groups were

pre-arranged by the participants and were offered to me for the purpose of

participating in my research, I only organised the time and location. Nonetheless, the

provision of a group of 'officer spouses' and of 'rating spouses' conveniently provided

groups offering uncensored views with respect to the influence of the officer/rating

role. The fourth group also offered the opinions of a group of officer spouses,

however, on this occasion I had randomly established this group and they were only

acquaintances to each other. Their discussion was more reserved, and there was a

very slight sense of tension, something that was independently observed by my note-

taker. One individual in this group was known to be quite a formidable character, and I

and my note-taker speculated whether this potentially could have influenced the

group dynamics. Nonetheless, all questions were answered, but I had to actively

ensure that all members were given the opportunity to express their opinion.

In the remaining two groups, both consisting of a mix of officer and rating spouses, as with Focus Group 4 I had randomly arranged both of these groups' participants. Focus Group 2 was held in the local HIVE centre, which provided the space for us to all sit in a circle. This group had very stunted conversations and it was difficult and quite exhausting to keep the discussion flowing. One member did 'dominate' the group, but as I and my note-taker believed this was an action to encourage a discussion rather than to take-over. Again these individuals were acquaintances and none appeared to have particularly overbearing personalities, so we felt that potentially their combined reserved nature meant that answers were succinctly provided and subsequently needed to be teased out.

Finally, Focus Group 5 consisted of four officer spouses and two rating spouses. These members were all very familiar to each other predominately due to their respective children attending the British school in the local area. The session was held at my house and unintentionally due to the arrival times of the participants the four officer spouses sat at one end of the table (where I was positioned) and the rating spouses at the other. I had hoped this would not be an issue due to the prior association of the members. However, there was a distinctive tension (again independently noted by me and my note-taker) when the topic referring to the influence of the husband's rank/role was discussed, which was potentially inadvertently accentuated due to this seating arrangement. Despite this dimension, this group was quite challenging to control. One member was very dominant at the start of the session and unfortunately had a tendency to interrupt other members, and at another point I had to actually stop the discussion as individuals were talking over each other.

In the de-briefing session with my note-taker, we discussed that five of the six

participants had very strong personalities, and although there was no unfriendliness,

we felt that they were just very passionate in ensuring their opinions were heard.

5.3.2   Themes

Following the analysis of five focus group transcripts, four main themes emerged:

family lifestyle and well-being, support, acclimatizing to a new culture and social

environment, and personal meaning-making and individual differences. Each theme

will be described separately in Sections 5.3.3 - 5.3.6 and will then be discussed in

general in Section 5.4.

5.3.3   Family lifestyle and well-being

The everyday life of military families was an obvious characteristic seen to be altered

on a foreign posting. The prosperity, health and happiness of these families were

argued to be significantly influenced by their overseas experience. The descriptions of

"living in a bubble" [Jasmine, line 898] or "taken away from reality" [Kylie, line 903]

were used to depict the overarching impression of such a posting. For some,

commitments associated with living in the UK were temporarily set aside which

allowed them to have the opportunity to recharge:

> "People come out to visit you...they've got to put themselves out to do it and
> you kind of appreciate that, whereas, when you're at home it's kind of an
> obligation" [Leona, lines 577 - 579].

> "[...] it's absolutely frenetic [in the UK] there is so much going on, there is so
> much pressure, I have to do, I'm obliged to do things, whereas here I mean it's
> like a, there's isn't really no [*sic*] rules, so that actually suits me, you can do
> what you want when you want" [Gemma, lines 466 - 469].

Despite this belief, the altered standard of living prohibited some respondents from

continuing normal daily routines. The location of one housing area was described as

being "in the middle of nowhere" [Bridget, line 1420], thus it was believed to restrict

inclusion in the community and accessibility to other locations. Furthermore, the

quality and ambience of available pedestrian routes caused some discomfort which

prevented their use. Instead, no matter what the journey length, cars were the main

source of transportation:

> "[...] the conditions of the pavements, the roads and also the fact that you get
> stopped and so I think that ye know is, disadvantages us ladies that we tend to
> put on weight" [Alma, line 768 - 770].

> "I resent not being able to walk because I do generally walk everywhere, ye
> know I leave my car at home and just walk quite long distances from me
> normally at home" [Olive, lines 782 - 784].

> "[...] [being approached] puts you off doesn't it? Often I will jump into my car
> to go somewhere when I really, I would, it would be easy for me to walk there"
> [Naomi, lines 761 - 762].

> "[...] walking to [place name] and someday it's a five minute walk, it's
> horrendous, the rubbish, the rat traps, beeping cars...it's very, very traumatic
> and I'd love to be able to walk here but oh no" [Daisy, lines 1408 - 1410].

The quality of life caused other anxieties for some respondents. Vulnerability due to

perceived lack of safety was revealed as one issue. Primarily the security of housing

was deemed as quite intimidating:

> "Well there's something about [...] living behind an electric gate with a high
> wall and metal shutters and alarm systems. We could be living in the safest
> place in the world and you'd feel vulnerable living behind that lot" [Grace, lines
> 1283 - 1285].

Additionally, Grace also felt that children actually created a buffer for some perturbing

circumstances:

> "[...] I feel safer if I've got my kids with me because it's very benign, it's very ye
> know...everybody will smile and talk to the children, whereas when you're on
> your own, very, very different" [Grace, lines 1576 - 1578].

The new lifestyle was also described as being akin to "living on the edge" [Amy, line 1315] or being "an hour away from a crisis" [Adele, line 1313], which created some distressing emotions:

> "[...] I'll tell you how I feel here is that I am one step, I don't realise that I am one step away from losing it, the whole time, so I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine, happy, no problem, loving it, but it's actually the tiniest little thing [...] it's like having permanent PMT because one thing will just make me blubber" [Amy, lines 1308 - 1316].

> "[...] we ended up in [name of shopping centre] on a Saturday morning and I was stood in the middle of the fruit and veg section and I was crying because I was just, I couldn't believe I'd left [home] for this!" [Naomi, lines 800 - 803].

Concern was also expressed for those individuals who remained in the house on a daily basis. This was termed by Vivienne as "social isolation" [line 302] or "self-imposed isolation" [line 303]. Alma and Grace also referred to the sense of isolation due to the husband temporarily working outside of the host country, or due to family being unable to visit:

> "[...] but sometimes there's a sense of isolation, I think and me in particular I arrived at the end of September within a week [*husband's name*] had gone off for two weeks" [Alma, lines 147 - 149].

> "[...] there are people who don't get very many visitors because they come out once and don't come back, and I mean that's got to add to the feeling of isolation" [Grace, lines 1445 - 1447]

Either way it was remarked that potentially these spouses could be liable to suffer depression as they did not have any transport, communication facilities or a support network, and could simply be overlooked:

> "[...] if the women got depressed say, she then maybe can't help herself . . . and I think the community will close, because some people will only knock the door so often, do you want to go out shopping, do you want and they'll say no, and then after a while I do think people fall behind and can just fade into the background" [Vivienne, lines 316 - 320].

The hotter climate also impacted on the well-being of some spouses. Despite generally being regarded as an advantage to their new lifestyle, it did cause some health complications:

> "[...] when I'm out I'm miserable because I'm so hot, throbbing headache, can't get enough...fluid in me" [Justine, lines 706 - 707].

> "Well it's so hot, it's too hot, it's such a, I mean I felt like I'd been hit by a mystery virus the first sort of two months because I was so tired" [Gemma, lines 88 - 89].

A further consequence to a spouse's lifestyle due to the foreign posting was acknowledged to be the detrimental impact on their career. The decision to accept a foreign posting was noted to inhibit further employment opportunities or chances of promotion:

> "[...] very conscious that the military can have a negative effect on your career and most women do take a backward slide" [Vivienne, lines 479 - 481].

> "[...] the downside of it is, ye know everywhere you go, you're adding more jobs, more locations [to your CV]" [Naomi, lines 589 - 590].

> "[...] it will be like just starting all over again isn't it" [Rose, 596].

A constructive reaction to this loss was the ability to experience alternative work on the posting that would normally not have been pursued; this was deemed to allow the development of new proficiencies and pursuits. Additionally, the posting was seen to create an environment in which not choosing fulltime employment was justifiable. Therefore, this was alleged to produce greater recreation possibilities:

> "[...] being abroad ye know gives me the excuse if you like, or the opportunity not to work fulltime, I like to work but I also like having some time" [Naomi, lines 1162 - 1164].

> "[...] it's wonderful because I am not working! I have time and guess that's the thing that I appreciate the most of all being here is I've actually got time" [Gemma, lines 464 - 465].

Nonetheless, financial implications due to relocating overseas in conjunction with the

loss of a salary were heeded. Additional overseas fiscal allowances (Living Overseas

Allowance – LOA) were welcomed, however due to the commented loss of the military

spouse earnings, these payments tended to present "no financial advantage"

[Vivienne, line 456] to the family lifestyle:

> "[...] I gave up my job, so we had to drop a grand a month to come here, so we haven't been able to afford to do all those things at weekends, so we've literally done nothing" [Bridget, lines 329 - 331].

Further financial predicaments caused by the relocation overseas were identified.

These were particularly apparent during the initial stages of the posting, when the

financial expenditure was quite extreme due to the re-establishment of a particular

standard of living including acquiring appropriate transportation:

> "I would say the initial financial expenditure...just haemorrhage the first three or four months" [Adele, lines 1059 - 1060].

> "[...] you think of LOA oh great we are going to get more money, but actually ye know it took a few months . . . because we just shelled out all this money" [Amy, lines 1064 - 1067].

> "[...] you're still recovering [financially] seven, eight months later" [Grace, lines 1074 - 1075].

> "[...] the amount of money actually every one of us spends on the car [...] is excruciating" [Daisy, lines 1407 - 1408].

 These supplementary strains were mitigated for some by the predominant reason for

going on a foreign posting, family unity. The posting was believed to have given the

rare opportunity of having quality family time and the ability to share parental

responsibilities:

> "I was really, really, really excited, couldn't wait mmm, because it gave us the opportunity to actually be together as opposed to doing weekends" [Wendy, lines 47 - 48].

> "[...] it's made a huge difference for the children, definitely having Daddy around" [Zoe, lines 466 - 467]

"[...] this is the only time we've ever had as a family, we've never had family time before together" [Bridget, lines 317 - 318].

"[...] this is our only and I mean only chance to be together as a family" [Amy, lines 385 - 386].

"I wanted family time, I mean to be honest if you could have guaranteed me two and a half years in Portsmouth where I didn't have to work and I could be a mum and my husband was home I'd probably been as nearly as excited, it was family time that I wanted and the only way we'd get that is by going foreign" [Leona, lines 32 - 35].

This family unity was embraced by the respondents however it was tentatively accepted due to an underlying suspicion of pacification:

"This is almost a sweetener ye know, if you manage to get the overseas posting, they'll give you something really grotty just before it and after it, so it's almost like a bit of a payoff" [Grace, lines 366 - 367].

"Well [my husband's] just come off a [long] sea draft so time together is precious...but it's a holding pattern for going back to sea and that's all it is" [Adele, lines 401 - 402].

 A further apprehension for the children's lifestyle was the education limitations on the posting. It was remarked prior to relocating there was insufficient emphasis on the lack of British secondary education. Furthermore, references to the different educational standards offered by other international schools were deemed to "significantly disadvantage" [Emily, line 244] the British children. This resulted with some children attending boarding school in the UK. Consequently, resentment was expressed at being unexpectedly separated from their children, but this was principally due to the perception of a forced decision:

"[...] [the children] are not with me...we're not a family, we've split the family up which we would never have considered being back in the UK" [Kylie, lines 342 - 343].

 "[...] I felt very torn about [boarding school], we're supposedly enjoying ourselves in the sun, family time and I've sent my [child] off...so it completely

dismisses the myth of family time here because my son's in the UK, what family
time is he having?" [Adele, lines 1639 - 1642]

"I think it will be really, really hard to suddenly not have them in the same
country, it's a very difficult decision, but I think it's the right one educationally
for them" [Zoe, lines 937 - 939].

The parents of university aged children could also relate to the sense of being a "bit

too far away" [Wendy, line 915] but were reconciled by available transport networks

and functioning e-communications. Despite having similar reservations for children at

boarding school, these children were described as "happy" [Kylie, line 342] and

"thriving" [Adele, line 1638] in their new environment. Additionally, boarding school

was noted to provide continual friendship sets, as prior to this the constant

readjustment of friends was highlighted as a troubling issue:

"[...] I think it's quite hard for children ...to mmm have friends that disappear all
the time, it's, it's much harder, we're obviously, we can rationalise that, but I
think for the children it's much, much harder" [Gemma, lines 269 - 270].

"[...] [my daughter] doesn't like the fact that she's gone through three
complete sets of friends at school and now she's in a school group of people
she doesn't like" [Emily, lines 213 - 215].

The foreign posting lifestyle was also recognised to positively influence children's

development. It was felt by some that their children had become more confident and

independent whilst on the posting. This was considered to be the result of the extra

freedom the children had to socialise in the safe parco environment with other

children of varying ages.

Accompanying serving husband/wives on the foreign posting was recognised to

produce positive and negative influences on the marriage. This change of lifestyle was

warned to not be conducive to the well-being of all relationships. In particular it was

commented that the shift of what would have normally been shared responsibilities,

such as paying utility bills, mailing correspondence, or vehicle administration to now

being predominantly maintained by the serving spouse, created concerns of excessive

stress for this spouse due to the necessity of undertaking further non-work duties.

Therefore, in some cases there was believed to be an added pressure on couples and

in general it was felt that every marriage would entail a "wobble" [Emily, line 846] at

some point. However, already troubled relationships were deemed inappropriate for

the adjustment required in an overseas relocation:

> "[...] don't come out if your relationship is a bit rocky, thinking it will sort things out, it's bit like a new baby, I think if I had come out here...as some people have, where things are a bit touch and go, then I would have been going back because I think there are too many changes" [Emily, lines 919 - 922].

Furthermore, the announcement of going on a foreign posting was not welcomed by

all respondents. However, through an understanding of the serving spouse's lifestyle it

was done out of loyalty for their relationship:

> "[...] I said there is just no way on God's earth that I could live there and then he got offered this job, it was a promotion job, so I couldn't ask him to turn that down. That was it" [Naomi, lines 88 - 90].

> "[...] he'd already been to the doctors with high blood pressure and his way of life and everything like that, I thought yeh maybe for him it would be better if he came here, so I gave in" [Alma, lines 988 - 990].

> "[...] this is the first time I have lived with [my husband] for ten years now, ye know really since the children came along, so from our point it was a no-brainer ye know I was going to come out whatever" [Zoe, lines 461 - 464].

In fact residing together in the same location was a novel experience for some

respondents, and this produced concerns of it potentially being damaging to their

relationship:

> "The hardest thing for me actually was having 24/7 with my husband because it's never happened before" [Kylie, lines 783 - 784].

> "I thought we'd struggle [...] because we've never spent this long together" [Leona, line 793].

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Nonetheless, relationships were seen to mutually prosper and become more resilient

due to having time to reconsider priorities and a new environment to share:

> "[...] it's been cathartic, totally cathartic experience from the day that we found
> out that we were coming . . . been a fantastic experience and we've been able
> to re-evaluate everything" [Wendy, lines 834 - 837].

> "This has been the best two and a half years of my life" [Leona, line 812].

> "[...] I have more time with [my husband] and I'm also so much more relaxed
> because this is for me quite a relaxed environment to be, so my state of mind is
> much better which obviously reflects because I am running a happy home so
> he's finding it better to come back" [Gemma, lines 810 - 813].

The foreign posting also acted on occasion as a catalyst to reunite relationships with

extended families:

> "My relationship with my dad's improved being out here which is really odd, I
> didn't have a very good relationship with my dad ...at all" [Leona, lines 564 -
> 564]

The posting gave an opportunity for these families to spend quality time together.

Unfortunately, it was also remarked that the area of the posting discouraged some

relatives from revisiting and this was believed to impact greatly on the feeling of

seclusion and a degraded family structure:

> "[...] there are people who don't get many visitors because they come out once
> and don't come back" [Grace, lines 1445 - 1446].

> "[...] [my sister] decided that she wasn't going to bother coming back. So I
> haven't seen my nephew for over a year" [Bridget, lines 1450 - 1451].

> "My parents won't come back" [Adele, line 1453].

5.3.4   Support

Support will be categorised into three areas – prior support and preparation for the

foreign posting, the internal informal support, and the external formal support (as

defined in Section 5.2.3).

5.3.4.1   Prior support and preparation for the foreign posting

The awareness of going on a foreign posting initiated some spouses to investigate all facets of the new location. Completing a reconnaissance visit or a 'recce' was of uppermost importance to them and was described as "invaluable" [Gemma, line 37] and "the most useful thing" [Leona, line 108]. This provided crucial knowledge about the area, possible accommodation options and the ability to start networking:

> "[...] we came out on a recce first, that was really useful...just to find our way round, see where our house was going to be ye know and meet few people first" [Hayley, lines 24 - 26].

> "[...] I found out more about [name of area] and once we'd come for a recce and that was really, really important to me, once we came for a recce was really up for it and absolutely loved what I saw" [Zoe, lines 31 - 33].

> "[...] [the recce] was useful because we saw some houses, so we knew where we were going to live, met the neighbours, we saw schools and yeh, checked them out mmm, and I then went home and ye know when we moved out it wasn't quite a shock when we got here" [Grace, lines 54 - 57].

Anticipating the new surroundings was essential for some respondents in order to minimize any bewilderment on arrival:

> "[...] I was really up for it 'til the recce and then I thought . . . oh my word, but I mean I'm glad I did the recce, I think recces are very important because when I came back the horror had gone and I thought actually I'm used to this, this is fine" [Yvonne, lines 38 - 42].

> "I was really glad that we came out, because I think I would have found it quite a shock actually" [Amy, lines 61 - 62].

> "[...] you see all the horror that's here and then you come out with your eyes wide open and that shock isn't there" [Wendy, lines 64 - 65].

The downside of such prior visits was recognised by one respondent. She believed that 'recces' could potentially cause unwillingness to continue with the posting due to having an initial aversion to the area, whereas if you came without any knowledge of the area or expectations and treated it as an adventure, you would settle in better.

Nonetheless, whether the opportunity for a 'recce' was accepted or not, this building

of local knowledge was said to be accelerated by utilising internet resources. Websites

allowed contacts to be established and also provided access to images of the local area

and of housing, which made it possible for the new environment to be visualised.

Furthermore, it was alleged that without a comprehensive search of internet

resources, information "wasn't readily available" [Leona, lines 69 - 70]. For one

respondent this was ameliorated by having contacts within the Ministry of Defence,

but this was a coincidental circumstance. Overall, proactively seeking information was

regarded as standard practice. Additionally, some spouses believed their relocation to

the foreign posting had been made easier due to the facilitation by the military

services. This will be described further in Section 5.3.4.3.

5.3.4.2 Internal informal support

An opportune parco[12] support network was available for some respondents when they

arrived on the foreign posting. This informal arrangement was portrayed to create a

secure and inviting atmosphere, and produced an inlet to the community; whereas

concern was expressed for those who lived in more isolated locations:

> "[...] as soon as we got here there was a built in, a built in social life, mmm you were, you had information on tap, people were very willing to advise you on every aspect and so that made it a lot easier" [Zoe, lines 107 - 109].

> "[...] luckily I had some really helpful people on my parco and they took me out" [Hayley, lines 125 - 126].

> "[...] I think there are...families that have moved out here that haven't been on parcos, that haven't had the support of friends and they've struggled more than normal I think" [Kylie, lines 368 - 370].

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[12] Walled in private area containing a small number of villas

Having these confidants readily available was not only recognised to add a reassuring

comfort, but it was acknowledged that there was a common understanding and

empathy for each other's predicaments:

> "We've all been there and everybody out here has had that experience, so I think it's so much easier than going back to civilian life when you turn up at school and everyone's known each other for ever and everyone had the neighbours forever, so I think it is very supportive" [Yvonne, lines 137 - 140].

> "[...] I think everybody's in the kind of same situation aren't they so everybody tries to get on" [Jasmine, lines 864 - 865].

> "[...] ye could be friends with the whole world immediately, 'cos everyone's in the same position" [Susan, line 273 - 274].

Children were perceived as a social catalyst for establishing friendship sets through the

introduction of parents to an automatic support network within the school

environment:

> "To me the meeting people knowing what's going on, everything pretty much revolves around the school" [Grace, lines 1517 - 1518].

However, this on occasion was seen to create false relationships, and in general the

foreign posting was believed to force an unrealistic situation where friends were

hastily formed:

> "I think you are friends with people you are not likely to be friends with at home and particularly you won't be friends with when you leave" [Jasmine, lines 420 - 421].

> "[...] you end up being friends with people that you wouldn't even talk to or ye know enter your, your world any other time and that's been quite a revelation really" [Leona, lines 433 - 434].

Nonetheless, strong relationships were established and it was through this congenial

group that support was initially sought. In particular, the choice was made by some

spouses to remain on the foreign posting when the serving spouse was on temporary

operational deployment. These spouses felt they actually received more support on

the posting than they would on their own in the UK. Unfortunately, these

deployments were also known to coincide with the end of a posting, consequently for

some spouses their natural support network had begun to disperse. Therefore, the

combination of postings concluding and contacts relocating was considered an

exhausting experience for some due to the necessity to periodically revive their

friendship networks:

> "I'm finding it hard at the moment with people moving on, 'cos my very good
> friend just moved back and now I'm thinking well I've only got six months left,
> so I need to put in a lot of effort to make new friends" [Hayley, lines 1123 -
> 1125].

> "I've got to go back and restart making friends and that's a bit frustrating"
> [Emily, line 202].

One other instinctive support source was through the serving husband/wife. They

were considered to be the "first line" [Naomi, line 876] of support or perceived as

providing a "security blanket" [Amy, line 1273] whilst on the posting. However, it was

argued that the serving member had to take responsibility for their family on the

posting too, and their duty was not purely a military role:

> "[...] I mean it's also the, the spouse as well they're culpable as well in starting
> making sure that their other half is OK, ye know it's not just about being in the
> military they have a responsibility for their own family" [Wendy, lines 322 -
> 324].

Extended support networks were also established through the international

community and the non-military community. Additionally, e-communication systems

produced a link to family and friends outside of the posting; however annoyance was

expressed at the sporadic internet connections and the alleged prolonged time for the

systems to be initially established:

> "[...] we couldn't get internet connection for six months[...] and then also the
> telephones are pretty dodgy or often ours doesn't work and then you can't
> phone back to the UK" [Zoe, lines 284 - 288].

> "Some parcos aren't even receiving, they can't have phones or internet
> because they're in these signal black spots" [Vivienne, lines 296 - 297].

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> "[...] I think that's integral when you first get here, your phone line if not your internet" [Yvonne, lines 291 - 292].

In general, it was felt the British community could provide the support role when it was essential:

> "[...] but even if it isn't friends, it's that sort of community where you could go into anybody ye could, if you were in absolute dire straits anyone would be happy to help you" [Wendy, lines 743 - 745].

> "[...] I was disappointed at first, Brit community, Brit parco...where do we fit in [name of country] ye know...it's been good ain't it? You've got that security I think" [Jasmine, lines 242 - 244].

5.3.4.3 External formal support

A recognised duty of the military was to provide a sponsor[13] to new arrivals on the posting. The applicability and the success of such pairings fluctuated greatly between the respondents. The perception was that the quality of your experience was dependent on your sponsor and there was a general despondency as to the appropriateness of allocations:

> "It would be quite good if they could match sponsors to families" [Zoe, line 224].

> "[...] the sponsors aren't very well done...the tallying up of sponsors so that they are, they are the same, yeh we had a bloke on his own, so ye know he knew nothing about anything to do with school" [Jasmine, lines 280 - 282].

> "I really feel there should be more correlation" [Adele, line 543].

In some instances respondents did not have access to a sponsor, or the person in question was actually preparing to leave and consequently did not have the opportunity to support the new arrivals. This led some to organise their own unofficial sponsor:

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[13] An individual/married couple currently on the foreign posting selected to provide support to new arrivals

"In my case because I arrived after my husband the initial greet that was given wasn't even offered to me, we didn't have a sponsor, the sponsor gave [my husband] a handover for his job within a day and a half and [left]" [Alma, lines 203 - 205].

"[...] [the sponsor] really wasn't interested [...] but luckily we knew somebody that was out here so he sponsored us and he was very, very good" [Leona, lines 112 - 114].

"[...] [our sponsor] was no use at all because he was here for a couple of weeks and then he left...and his wife had already left so I had no support that way" [Hayley, lines 123 - 125].

The respondents did acknowledge that it was also "down to personalities" [Wendy, line 216]. It was appreciated that not everyone would formulate a bond with their sponsor and not every sponsor no matter how correlated their personal circumstances were, would necessarily be as enthusiastic or as helpful as the next:

"It is down to the goodwill of people ye know, it's eh, ye know somebody will see sponsors actually it's a military operation, bend over backwards for you and others it's the end of a telephone and also it's a personality thing isn't it, some people you click with some you don't" [Vivienne, lines 230 - 233].

"I thought 'How are you supposed to know where all these things are if no one tells you?' not realising that, that is what your sponsor should do" [Yvonne, lines 182 - 184].

As commented in Section 5.3.4.1, facilitation of the relocation by the military was welcomed by some respondents who believed that this reduced the complexity compared to private arrangements. The knowledge that the logistics of the move and subsequent housing provision had been organised was a comfort for some. Nonetheless, this was not experienced by all and during the posting the general support provided by the military was alleged to be quite erratic. Consequently attempts were made to resolve specific matters (in particular with regard to housing maintenance) without any military involvement.

Compassionate support provided in particular times of family turmoil was highly rated.

The ability to return promptly to the UK in combination with continual communication

with formal support was deeply appreciated. However, there was a hesitance to use

professional support whilst actually on the posting due to concerns of distrust and

alleged breaches of confidence.

5.3.5 Acclimatizing to a new culture and social environment

Becoming accustomed to a new environment was seen as a two-fold task for the

military spouses. There were two communities to settle into: the international

community and the military community. With respect to the international community,

the fundamental obstacle of experiencing the culture of a non-English speaking

country was highlighted as the inability to communicate effortlessly with the local

population:

> "[...] it's the vulnerability of not being able to speak [the] language" [Adele, line 1347].

> "[...] I didn't speak a word [of the local language] so it was, that was very difficult" [Gemma, line 93].

> "[...] it's having a workman standing in your house . . . he doesn't speak any English and you, you, you're desperately trying to say this doesn't work, or that doesn't work . . . you can't even say [it], literally you've got nothing 'cos you've just arrived" [Grace, lines 1116 - 1120].

This language barrier was the first hurdle for some to overcome, not just for their own

adjustment but also out of respect for their new local community:

> "[...] I just, I want to be able to communicate and I get really, I get really uptight if I can't speak the language, so that was my biggest thing and I think that was the biggest problem when we arrived" [Amy, lines 1106 - 1108].

> "[...] [in a previous foreign posting] I was allowed to get so many hours one-to-one language training, which made the difference for me, it meant I felt I could get out and communicate with people and I didn't feel, I felt I could be a little more independent" [Naomi, lines 179 - 182].

Opportunity to socialise with the local families was believed to be unfeasible for some

respondents. This was resented due to what was expressed as a lost chance to

advance language skills and understanding of the culture. Location of some

accommodation and the military work environment were deemed to impede this

option. Nonetheless, adapting to specific cultural aspects was achieved by some

respondents through a personal acceptance of differences:

> "[...] you've just to be more accept [*sic*]...I feel accepting and, and ye know do
> your own path, do what you want to do, don't get influenced by other people"
> [Gemma, lines 344 - 345].

> "[...] we have an expectation that...Western Europeans behave in the same
> way...over Europe and that things will be more or less the same because of
> course we're all western Europeans... and I think there are several things,
> several cultural expectations we come with" [Emily, lines 350 - 354].

Some respondents alleged they found the British community's attitude to the local

population to be embarrassing. This was related to the differing cultural norms about

alcohol consumption and not learning the local language. Additionally, this concern

was spread into what was expressed as the "expectation of the herd" [Emily, line 729],

meaning they believed it was not always acceptable to duplicate the practices of the

local community, particularly if that involved a change of personal standards.

The British military community was naturally composed of serving personnel but also

their accompanying spouses, each affiliated to the Army, Royal Navy (including Royal

Marines) or Royal Air Force. Experiencing frequent relocations was believed to vary

between these three British military services. It was felt to be common practice for

Army spouses, who were alleged to move every two to three years, whereas Navy

wives were noted to "stay put" [Wendy, line 263]. This was believed to instil different

approaches to becoming accustomed to a new environment, with Army spouses

representing the experts and the Navy spouses the novices. However, it was argued

that the latter were more attuned to experiencing time on their own:

> "[...] [the Army] quite often move as a unit, so to be here on your own is
> probably quite difficult for them, whereas we're used to being on our own and
> not necessarily living in married quarters" [Jasmine, lines 830 - 832].

> "I do think the Navy wives come out here with a different attitude than the
> Army wives, I think probably we don't get foreign very often ye know [...] most
> people come out with the opinion it's family time and where you are is
> secondary, whereas the Army wives from what I've seen, seem to struggle
> more ye know well they've been to [North West Europe] it's all clean and
> sanitised and nice" [Leona, lines 823 - 828].

The atmosphere within the British community was alleged by some to be influenced by

the circumstances of the serving spouse. This was seen to be a reflection on whether

the serving member did or did not have a commissioned status. There was clash of

opinions between respondents who represented both statuses. In either scenario

complaints were directed towards the other, with conflicting suggestions of the origin

of the problem:

> "[...] in actual fact . . . we are the ones [as in the Officer's spouses] by in large,
> not all of us, but by in large who are really, really friendly and actually quite
> genuine" [Wendy, lines 576 - 578].

> "[...] we're [as in the Officer's spouses] just the same as everybody else and
> why does it need saying, we wouldn't dream of saying it, or even thinking
> it...and I was quite surprised..." [Yvonne, lines 527 - 529].

> "[...] I don't [care] what your husband does, but there are those that will be
> very keen to tell you that their husband's more important than yours" [Leona,
> lines 200 - 202].

> "[...] there are some officer's wives who don't speak to you, because you
> cannot help them or your husband cannot help them in anyway" [Bridget, lines
> 642 - 644].

> "[...] it goes bottom up as well as top down, it's not just officer's wives" [Grace,
> lines 687 - 688].

Nonetheless, the impact of this alleged segregation resulted in some spouses feeling

intimidated and quite upset by the accusations of other community members. An

atmosphere of "us and them" [Wendy, line 591] or the perception of being "not good

enough" [Bridget, line 646] was expressed. Consequently, this situation was felt to

impinge on community associations causing some tensions at functions, which instilled

mixed feelings of belonging due to the rank/rate of their husband:

> "We had one lunch where we all sat down and it was actually mixing and I
> remember thinking 'oh this is good' because we are all mixed up, and then
> somebody at one end said you move down here away from them" [Vivienne,
> line 585 - 588]

> "[...] I quite often go to the [social centre]...most of the time I feel really
> comfortable and occasionally I think...really don't feel welcome" [Amy, lines
> 708 - 710].

Another reflection of the perceived segregation was suggested to be the allocated

housing areas. This was seen as an additional disadvantage to the community due to

the inflicted rank orientated areas of parcos:

> "[...] you live on officers' parcos, you live on senior rates' parcos, you live on
> junior rates' parcos...there are enough things against us out here, to then have
> segregated into rank areas" [Adele, lines 583 - 585].

As previously demonstrated, a contrasting opinion to this proposed community divide

was also given. No concerns about hierarchy were expressed by some and being part

of a small community was seen as advantageous:

> "[...] on the whole out here I think everybody mixes in really well and ye know
> there are big community events and everybody mixes in" [Zoe, lines 543 - 544].

> "[...] everyone's the same and I think that's quite good here because you have
> to mix more because it's such a small community, I think it is a good thing"
> [Hayley, lines 602 - 604].

The parco environment was also seen to prevent acculturation. Resentment was

expressed at being forced to live on parcos surrounded by other members of the

British community and being in an "English bubble" [Adele, line 178]. Therefore, this

was felt to prevent interaction with the wider communities. It was also suggested if

military families/work colleagues were actually isolated from each other this would in

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reality encourage everyone to reunite in a central community point. Yet, contrary to

this, parcos were also depicted as a crucial entity for some spouses:

> "[...] I think very few people would survive if we didn't live on parcos" [Grace, line 212].

Circumstances of housing location, service affiliation, and interpretation of the serving

member's rank were all ultimately seen to contribute to the ability of the spouse to

acclimatise to their new surroundings. Consequently, for some spouses the foreign

posting was not at all the lifestyle they desired. They did not enjoy the area or the

social environment and were resolute that they wished to return to the UK. Therefore,

every opportunity was sought to return home to defuse the dissatisfaction. At the

other extreme, some spouses were determined to fully experience their new

surroundings and minimise any time in the UK:

> "[...] we told people we were not coming out [to the UK] because we were going to go off and explore [name of host country] [...] and we said don't expect us [in the UK] because we're not coming" [Jasmine, lines 535 - 583].

Travel and exploring were identified as key acclimatising components. Any

reservations about the local area were overcome by taking every opportunity to

investigate further afield:

> "[...] I've gone to [name of host country] to travel I want to see the whole of the country and that I'm making most of it and going away as much as we can to see everything, but I think if I stayed in [*name of area*] I don't think I would be particularly happy" [Hayley, lines 320 - 323].

> "[...] it's a base for doing wonderful things and the reason you put up with living in [*name of area*] is because at the weekends whether you can go in the car and go somewhere and I think that's the secret to survival here" [Grace, lines 321 - 323].

For one respondent actually returning to the UK for the first time following relocation

gave her the conclusion she needed in order to feel settled in her new environment:

> "[...] I was really worried about how'd I feel about the first trip back and how I would feel when we came back. But I was really looking forward to coming

back and just like, OK now I realise that this is where we are as a family and mmm I think for me, that was a switch" [Amy, lines 295 - 298].

Overall, this ability to settle varied considerably between respondents. Six months was the suggested time to become adjusted in order to "call it home" [Amy, line 287], but others felt no matter how long you stayed, there was a settling threshold limit:

> "[...] I think you can settle in pretty quickly, but settling in is different from a year on settling in" [Daisy, lines 258 - 259].

> "[...] I'm not sure even at the end of two years I'm going to feel particularly settled because it's still...somewhere where I would *never* want to live, in my wildest dreams would I live in a place like this if I had the choice" [Grace, lines 308 - 310].

Additionally, for some the administrative procedures required on joining their posting were deemed illogical and were the cause of extreme frustration. This bureaucracy was referred to as "general chaos" [Olive, line 304] and caused much nugatory work. Consequently, this produced a very negative impression of their new posting, deflated enthusiasm and willingness to adapt:

> "[name of host country], that was fantastic, completely different obviously, mmm and that was an instant settle in, no problems, everything worked, everything happened mmm not quite like here" [Olive, lines 122 - 124].

Furthermore, the limited duration of being on a foreign posting was also seen as a focus point to influence the ability to settle. The provision of this end point assisted some by recognising their time in the area was not indefinite, but it also made others feel that they could not settle knowing they would ultimately be moving on again.

Overall, the ability to re-establish a familiar routine, not just for the spouses but also for the family was noted as a predominant acclimatisation factor. Therefore pursuing some form of work was desired by some, not from the financial or career perspective,

but from the point of view that it provided some routine to their daily life. This in

conjunction with reinstating children's regular activities encouraged resolution:

> "[...] I think the one thing that I have struggled with is *not* working, not from a
> point of view of I miss work because I don't! [...] but I think with work it gives
> you a certain structure" [Leona, lines 188 - 192].

> "I think one of the hardest things for me was dealing not only with a new
> everything . . . for me probably the hardest thing is ye know you are dealing,
> your kids aren't happy because everything's new...everything's upside down"
> [Amy, lines 1088 - 1091].

> "[...] I had a level of familiarity that enabled me to live my life" [Grace, lines 307
> - 308].

5.3.6   Individual differences and personal meaning-making

The individual characteristics and personal qualities of the respondents combined with

previous experiences were seen to influence reactions to the foreign posting. Some

who had prior association with a military lifestyle whether through personal

employment or their immediate family, described themselves as being more amenable

to military postings. It was believed that frequent relocations and experiencing new

environments was an inherent part of the military life, expressing the military as

"nothing new" [Justine, lines 1001 - 1002]. Conversely, the military lifestyle and in

particular living on a married quarter was a complete revelation for others:

> "[...] I haven't lived on a patch[14] so this is a whole new ballgame for me" [Susan,
> lines 715 - 716].

The level of affiliation with the military in conjunction with life experiences were

believed to be significant factors influencing the outcome of the foreign posting.

Wendy explained that her first foreign posting was a terrible experience, primarily due

to her ignorance about the military and her described immaturity. Ultimately, evolving

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[14] Military married housing area

maturity and personal experiences mutually provided a change of outlook allowing the

next foreign posting to be handled in a completely different manner. Therefore, age

and life experience were alleged by some respondents to play a key role in the

reaction to a foreign posting:

> "I do think age is a big factor" [Vivienne, line 423].

> "[...] life experience has a huge, huge part to play" [Wendy, lines 411 -412].

> "[...] I think as you get older . . . you've got, I've got more time to reflect on things" [Gemma, lines 517 - 519].

Long term experience with military relocations was also believed to add a more

objective attitude towards moves and subsequent adaption:

> "[...] ye know coming out here and having to make new friends and stuff like, is no different to me, that whole moving in, doing all that, that was no different" [Grace, lines 1497 - 1498].

Some respondents had been married for more than 25 years and had moved on 15

occasions each during that period. They had developed the view that it became

natural after the tenth move. Specifically, previous foreign postings added a different

perspective to these moves:

> "[...] I've kind of done it all before . . . but I've kind 'of had this sort of environment and this sort of living before" [Jasmine, lines 443 - 444].

> "[...] I've lived abroad before so I was, I was like going home to another foreign country" [Hayley, lines 18 - 19].

> "I had a previous foreign draft and [...] fell in love with it, everything is in comparison to that, so nothing is coming up to scratch, nothing is the same, nothing is good" [Adele, lines 128 - 130].

This experience of continual relocations and adjustment also made some respondents

quite philosophical about their time:

> "[...] you're so used to moving around and making the best of wherever we are ye know, you often don't realise the full impact until you've moved onto somewhere else" [Naomi, lines 1100 - 1102].

> "[...] you go home and then life goes back to normal basically . . . the minute we get home within a few weeks it'll be like you've never left" [Jasmine, lines 451 - 453].

In addition to previous experiences, individual perspectives and personal beliefs were considered to affect someone's experience on the foreign posting. There was a strong opinion that an individual's personality would drive their reaction:

> "It's again personality, ye know you can look at it as a great adventure [...] you grab it and go for it. But at the same time I do feel that some people ye know want to stay in, behind a parco quite safe" [Vivienne, lines 239 - 242].

> "[...] there are some women who come out here who feel isolated, I think it's personality led, I think it doesn't matter about gender so much, you might feel uncomfortable but you do sometimes, the first time I do something or meet new people I get that feeling in my stomach and I have to force myself to do it and I think we all do" [Wendy, lines 777 - 781].

> "I think it depends on what you want to get out of it I mean or what kind of person you are" [Hayley, lines 318 - 319].

Additionally, the personal circumstances of some individuals meant they had originally relocated from their motherland to the UK prior to marrying into the British military. This was felt to make them quite inclined to further international moves. They were believed to have created a different resilience due to having already developed a new social support network in a country not considered as their homeland.

The attitude of some respondents to the foreign posting was to accept it as a "bit of an adventure" [Vivienne, line 54], "a new lease of life" [Zoe, line 811] or a "lifestyle advantage" [Wendy, line 459]. Nonetheless, an element of stoicism enabled other respondents to become accustomed to their new surroundings.   This ability to "just carr[y] on with life" [Kylie, line 146] was a personal response representing an alternative means of dealing with the foreign posting:

> "[...] we just kind 'of got on with it...you just do don't ye?" [Bridget, line 105].

"[...] I just thought, alright I'd adapt and use this place as a gateway" [Daisy, lines 232 - 233].

"[...] it's an experience, it's a different everything just, it's only two years, it's not, you're not emigrating" [Susan, lines 1377 - 1378].

"I don't particularly like it, but I will make the most of it because I'm here" [Olive, line 118].

Having a very proactive nature was identified by the respondents as being a valuable quality of a military spouse. This attitude was believed to stimulate the spouse to retrieve information and to formulate contacts prior to relocation. The transference of this positive outlook on arrival was felt to consequently hasten the settling in process through personal organisation and socialising:

"[...] the emphasis is then on you to get out there and make it happen for yourself" [Wendy, lines 975 - 976].

"[...] get out there and do things, even if you don't want to and it's not something that you would chose to do at home...just go and do it and meet people" [Yvonne, lines 1071 - 1073].

"[...] I think you've just got to come out and be very proactive. I think you're on a foreign posting . . . [you've] got two choices, [you] can really enjoy it or and get, take all advantages that [the area] has to offer and [the country] has to offer, or [you] can stay at home and hate it" [Gemma, lines 179 - 183].

Complementary to this, an optimistic personality was being receptive to new circumstances. Therefore, having an open-minded approach was felt to enable the acculturation process and prevent any stigmatisation of the location and community. This was felt to be especially pertinent in an influential military environment:

"I think you have to embrace it [...] if you're open-minded enough to accept their way of living and live it yourself you get on a lot better, you expect it to run like clockwork like the UK then it won't work" [Kylie, lines 917 - 919].

"[...] we just arrived and basically all we got was negative information about everything...so again just because what we're like we put it aside and thought right lets go and see for ourselves" [Daisy, lines 560 - 562].

"[...] be open-minded, be accepting of the environment you're in but then ... on the flip side of that if the environment you're in is not conducive you can only be so open minded" [Adele, lines 1386 - 1388].

Experiencing the foreign posting caused not just the adaption of a new lifestyle but it was also alleged to influence a more personal transformation. This was in the form of a binary response which caused the development of some aspects of their individuality but also the suppression of others. In one instance there was an expressed apprehension of the driving conditions linked with the additional fear of breaking down. Nonetheless, it was drolly declared that no longer was there any anxiety about driving anywhere else in the world.

These driving conditions were also believed to influence a fluctuation of independence levels. The personal choice to continue/not continue driving whilst on the foreign posting was felt to have a significant impact on personal freedom and was believed to be a defining moment for some:

> "[not driving] eats away into freedom basically doesn't it, you come from the UK where you're [able to] drive, you come to [*name of area*] where the driving is pretty appalling and will completely put some people off" [Zoe, lines 341 - 343].

A change of personal responsibilities also had the added effect of altering independence levels. One respondent considered herself to be more independent on the posting due to no longer having the default support network of her family. She believed this spurred her to become more self-sufficient. In a converse scenario, an increasing dependence was found to be the result of an alteration of interfamily roles:

> "[...] I feel less independent out here, I rely more on [my husband] for things, for him to do things that I would never dream of expecting him to do at home" [Grace, lines 1244 - 1245].

Such circumstances were then alleged in some cases to reduce confidence and

increase feelings of vulnerability. Amy felt frustrated that her self-belief had been

reduced due to her new circumstances:

> "[...] I'm finding it really hard and I, I used to, I was quite a strong, I thought
> quite a strong person and I am quite strong. At home I can deal with months
> apart but I really struggle even at the moment I feel pathetic even saying, that
> nine days away, I hate it, I feel really horrible" [Amy, lines 1265 - 1268].

This sense of disorientation was specifically highlighted in conjunction with the

encompassed role and identity change.   As previously mentioned in Section 5.3.3, a

personal choice of the spouse was recognised as the decision to leave/postpone

employment. As a consequence, instead of having a defined societal role, many

respondents were vexed at the new identification of "dependent" [Gemma, line 1063]

or "wife of" [Vivienne, line 434; Leona, line 193; Gemma, line 1059]:

> "[...] with work it gives you a certain structure and you know where you fit in,
> whereas out here...there is that element where you're not actually an
> individual, you're the wife of somebody" [Leona, lines 191 - 194].

> "[...] I had my own job but yeh coming out here I am just a wife and mother"
> [Hayley, lines 1087 - 1088].

> "I hate being a housewife, I am not meant to be a housewife, that's why I had
> to get a job" [Bridget, lines 466 - 467].

> "[...] I don't like the word dependent I think that is one thing that you actually
> think, 'oh that's a bit demeaning isn't it, dependent?'" [Gemma, lines 1062 -
> 1064].

Nonetheless, these new titles were reluctantly accepted by some under the proviso

that being on the foreign posting was solely due to their serving spouse. Therefore, in

that instance they would fulfil the predetermined position. Furthermore, progression

of the traditional role and identity of the military spouse were also discussed, leading

some respondents to feel that modern military wives should not complain:

> "[...] it's much more wife friendly the Army than it used to be many years ago
> [...] were regarded a as a 'wife of' w- stroke-o on paper but then women have

been much more militant and said we won't accept that and now ye know when they're speaking to us we're much more an individual in our own right and not just a wife of a certain ranking soldier" [Vivienne, lines 431 - 436].

"[...] my mum was an Army wife all their married life and mmm, if ever I feel hard done by, or sorry for myself, I give my mum a ring and she tells me what it was like in the old days and compared to the old days, boy are we liberated, I mean my goodness it was ye know literally you, you had no identity at all" [Grace, lines 483 - 486].

The foreign posting was also noted to provide the opportunity to experience roles that could be inadvertently sidetracked in their normal lifestyle. In this case actually getting the chance to be a fulltime mother or to pursue pastimes was extremely welcomed. This gave a sense of justification for the new roles and respite.

Having the opportunity to experience a foreign posting introduced new aspects into the respondents' approach to life. This change of outlook provided some with an alternative perspective and believed that they were now "more adventurous" [Zoe, line 825] or were reluctant to return to "normal life" [Rose, line 1159]. It gave a greater appreciation for what they had accomplished and a new appetite for more:

"It does open your eyes I think, to just thinking you don't have to live that rat race at home" [Yvonne, lines 875 -876].

"[...] you also get hard [...] somebody back home would say 'I had to do this'... so? Ye know you've done this, this and this and you have to get on with it because you've got no choice [...] you don't really appreciate their lower needs because you had to deal with higher needs" [Alma, lines 680 - 684].

"[...] I sat there and thought for a minute and just thought OK maybe actually this is brilliant, it has totally and utterly opened my eyes to so many, so many different things" [Amy, lines 1179 - 1182].

"[...] I can't help feeling that life will never be exactly the same again, I think I've learnt things out here that I wouldn't like to think that when I go back that I will forget" [Leona, lines 455 - 457].

Overall, some respondents were quite reflective about their overseas experience and recognised the personal opportunity it provided for their own development:

"[...] it's all one of life's rich pattern things and the more you can expose yourself to I think the more you put yourself into perspective" [Amy, lines 1197 - 1198].

"[...] I just find in general that any experience ...makes you brighter, stronger ye know more, you see more, you meet more people" [Daisy, lines 1220 - 1221].

5.3.7   Conceptual map of findings from the Phase 2 focus groups

Continuing the approach used for the individual interview thematic analysis, a

conceptual map was also produced for the findings of the focus group research (Figure

5.2)
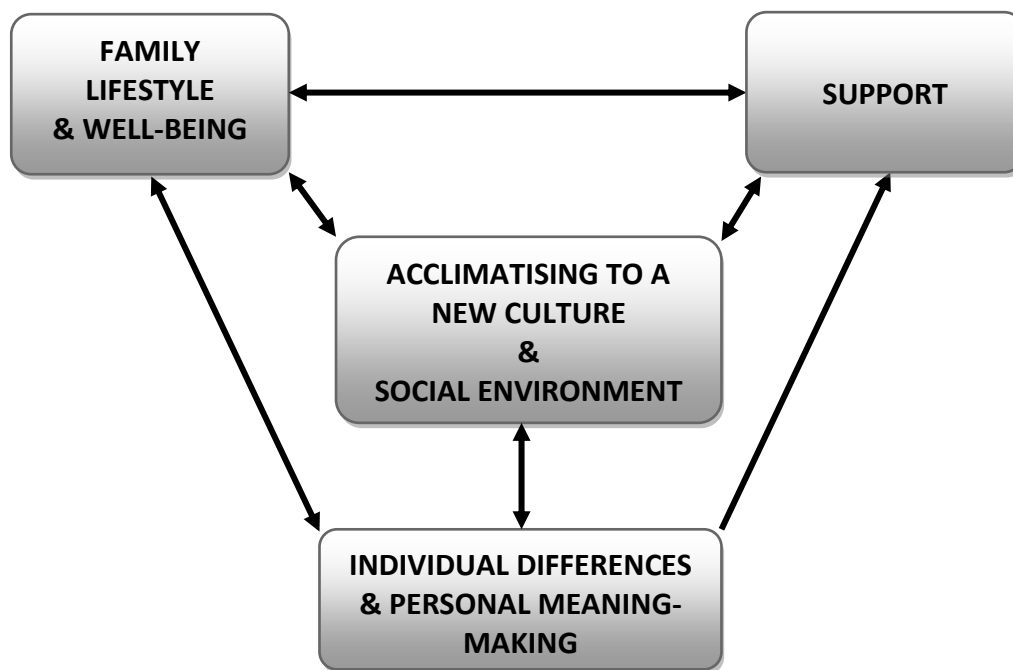
Figure 5.2 Conceptual map of findings from focus groups

Due to the different dynamics of conducting a focus group rather than individual

interviews, it was inevitable that discussions were going to be more generic, as

opposed to the private and intimate nature of the interviews. Therefore,

commonalities of the themes led to an equivalent conceptual presentation. Again, the

centralisation of acclimatising to a new culture and accompanying social environment

demonstrates the change aspect but also incorporates the change of circumstance in

terms of the new surrounding community (in particular the British community and parco environment). Noticeably, the three interlinking variables of the 'triangle' influence this outcome commencing with the individual differences and personal meaning-making of the spouse again driving the support aspect. The subsequent association this time was with the overall family lifestyle and well-being, emphasising the overarching family unit responses.

Once more each of the three components of the triangle has a two-way influential relationship with the central point of the conceptual map - the ability to acclimatise to a new environment.

The comparable findings and conceptual maps demonstrate how the focus group analysis corroborated the individual perceptions, but allowed an extension of these concepts to the more wide-ranging perspective.

5.4   Part 3: Discussion of Phase 2

Initially a reflexive account of my early experiences of living on a foreign posting and a contextual description of my new surroundings are presented. Then in the subsequent sections Phase 2 findings are discussed with respect to the themes specified in Sections 5.2 and 5.3. These themes were amalgamated into four headings as detailed in Sections 5.4.3 to 5.4.5. The recurrence of two themes within the individual interview and the focus group findings provided the first and second of these headings. Furthermore, individual interview analysis presented outcomes of the foreign posting with respect to individual relationships and marriage. The focus groups analysis also reflected the impact on relationships but with a greater emphasis on the complete

family and lifestyle repercussions. Therefore for the purpose of discussion these two themes were combined for the third heading. The final heading encompassed the overarching factor of change derived from the individual interview analysis, with the associated acclimatisation needs identified from the focus group transcripts.

As examined within the systematic review (Chapter 3), research focusing on civilian spouses on international assignments has significant commonalties with that of the military spouse. Therefore, non-military research will be used in conjunction with military spouse studies for the purpose of discussion of the Phase 2 findings.

5.4.1   A reflexive account of my new living environment

'Shell-shocked' was an expression I frequently used in my reflexive journal when referring to my initial experience of living in my new surroundings. I felt that I settled quickly into our villa, helped by having very supportive neighbours, but outside of our parco I did not feel particularly enamoured or feel entirely safe in the new environment. Roads surrounding our parco were filled with pot-holes, and piles of rotting rubbish would regularly collect leading to the need of rat traps. Additionally, a few prostitutes would line the main road in our local town and although I did not have a problem with their profession *per se*, I found that walking along this road to the local British community centre could sometimes be quite disturbing due to cars pulling up alongside believing that, as you are a women on your own, you must then also be a prostitute.

Unfortunately, this paints a very bleak picture of the environment I lived in, however, like many others when I learnt to look beyond the immediate displeasures there was a

very beautiful country hidden away. Nonetheless, I ultimately chose not to drive on our foreign posting, purely due to the manic and dangerous driving of the local nationals. This did restrict my independence but I was very fortunate to have a supportive friendship network to offer me transportation. These friendships were pivotal to my adjustment on the foreign posting and it highlighted the significance of such support networks that potentially could be taken for granted in other circumstances.

Overall, through my informal observations of other military spouses prior to conducting the Phase 2 data collection, some did not appear to be deterred by their new environment and gave the impression of continuing their normal daily routines, whereas others appeared to chose a more reclusive lifestyle. For me, my initial 'shell-shocked' experience diminished through the establishment of supportive friendships and exploring beyond my local surroundings. How I would have coped without achieving this I cannot answer, but through my personal experiences in combination with observations of other military spouses, it made me realise that living in this new environment was not necessarily going to be the simplistic phenomenon as perceived by some.

5.4.2   Individual differences and personal meaning-making

The concept of meaning-making is founded on the premise that individuals want to understand the world around them (Kurzman, 2008). Kurzman continued by stating that 'meaning' included:

> "...perceptual understandings of like and unlike, social understandings of identity and difference, aesthetic understandings of attractive and repulsive,

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and any other understandings that we may choose to identify through our own academic processes of meaning-making" (p. 5).

Consequently, such understandings are grounded in very personal and unique approaches. In particular, when trailing spouses embark upon international relocations numerous influential factors are noted to affect their subsequent adaption. Four fundamental moderators were specified by Burrell (2006) as: personality; family composition; individual and family coping skills; and previous experiences with relocations. These intercultural transitions are referred to as complex processes due to their dependence upon the interactions of such moderating factors (De Verthelyi, 1995, Berry et al., 1987). Hence, permutations of idiosyncratic variables could guide a reaction to an overseas posting, which suggests that all trailing spouses will not necessarily uniformly manage when confronted with an international assignment. Agreeing with this, in the present study respondents vocalised the importance of specific personality dimensions to the successful outcome of a foreign posting. Recognition was given to those individuals desiring seclusion on the posting, but in general respondents argued for the outgoing, proactive nature to be ideal. Nonetheless, the varying personal circumstances of these spouses demonstrated that despite their individuality, external factors of the host country or relationships with the British community could be sufficiently challenging to inhibit normal behaviour.

Burrell (2006) also regarded the personality traits of self-esteem and sense of coherence to moderate relocation stress and subsequent adjustment. Specifically, an individual's self-esteem was noted to be influenced by their identity and sense of worth (Mruk, 2006). This dimension was reported to be affected by the impact of an overseas posting due to the loss of key aspects that contribute to an individual's self-

esteem (De Cieri et al., 1991), this is discussed further in Section 5.4.5. The second highlighted personality trait, sense of coherence, was described by Collingwood (2006) as a combination of optimism and control. Potentially then, a spouse's sense of coherence could be affected by the extent of their involvement with the overseas assignment decision-making process, and be seen as a significant precursor of their relocation satisfaction. Respondents of the present study generally accepted their role as a military spouse to entail accompanying the serving spouse on relocations. No particular anger was expressed at not being directly involved in this specific decision to relocate, but their subsequent lack of involvement with respect to the logistical arrangements throughout the relocating process was frustrating. In particular Berry et al. (1987) and Mohr and Klein (2004) noted that a trailing spouse's autonomy was seen to predict the level of acculturation stress experienced, with the belief that their participation would increase their willingness and motivation for the relocation. This was confirmed by Black et al. (1992) who reported that spouses with the greatest adjustment level were those who had been interviewed by the company prior to the relocation.

The aptitude to manage life events was further researched by Makowsky et al. (1988). These authors analysed the relationship between voluntary and involuntary relocation with women's perceptions of stress and amount of control, as well as their satisfaction with personal well-being. Ultimately, their results indicated that involuntary movers felt significantly less control and had lower levels of satisfaction. Hence, the definitive circumstance surrounding a trailing spouse's participation indicates another variable with the capacity to impact their ability to settle.

The importance of specific personality traits for successful adjustment of an overseas

posting was reported by the interviewees in Mohr and Klein's (2004) study.

Specifically, *openness* was a characteristic deemed to facilitate the cultural transition.

This *openness to experience* was defined as having the tendency to actively hunt for

new experiences and to embrace challenges of a new environment (Swagler and Jome,

2005). Accordingly, a positive relationship was suggested between the degree of

openness and a spouse's level of adjustment (Caligiuri, 2000b) and was seen to be

related to resilience in sojourners (Arthur and Bennet, 1995). Consequently, being

able to tolerate such ambiguity associated with unfamiliar experiences was noted as a

requirement for cross-cultural adjustment (Church, 1982) and there was an

expectation of open-minded spouses to adjust more expediently to new situations

(Mohr and Klein, 2004, Puskar, 1990). This concept of openness and willingness to

embrace the experience as positive was seen by respondents in the present study to

be a key feature in the success of the posting.

Those spouses who had experienced large numbers of postings appeared to adapt

more easily, and it was noted that there were differences between Army wives and

Navy wives, potentially due to the less frequent foreign postings experienced by

spouses of serving Naval personnel. Expatriate spouses also regarded previous

international experiences to be an extremely beneficial attribute for acculturation

(Mohr and Klein, 2004). In McNulty's (2003) research examining health care use of

military families posted overseas, the self-reliance of these families was seen to

increase with the number of overseas assignments previously experienced. Such past

encounters were considered as a *learning tool* amongst the participants in Bikos et al.'s

(2009) study. In particular the interviewees were noted to make country comparisons

of places previously assigned or visited. Therefore, greater exposure to unfamiliar environments could provide more opportunities to develop successful adaption strategies for utilisation in future foreign postings.

Within the present study a respondent's nationality was not identified as a precursor of adjustment abilities, but instead was affiliated to past experiences of living in different cultures. The great diversity of responses in De Verthelyi's (1995) study (which investigated international student spouses' cross-cultural adjustment) was also seen to indicate that personality traits, and individual history had a greater impact on psychological well-being than cultural/racial background. Nonetheless, Fernandez-Pol (1988b) examined ethic differences in psycho-physiological distress among American and Asian born military wives posted to Japan. Results highlighted that wives of Asian origin (excluding Japanese) had higher distress levels than American and Japanese wives. It was considered that personal values and cultural factors were possible explanations for the differences. Similarly, Norell and Copeland (2002) also reported that life values of their participants were culturally specific in their benefits. In particular British women were reported to be more satisfied and integrated into their host community in America, than American women living in Britain. The disparity of these studies again indicates the unpredictability of any spouse's reaction to an international relocation.

To summarise, research has shown that a diverse selection of personality factors and individual circumstances greatly influence a trailing spouse's ability to become accustomed to a new international environment. In particular their perception of control over life events, or participation in the actual decision processes incorporated

in an international assignment, can greatly impinge on a trailing spouse's willingness to become established in their new lifestyle. Consequently, past experiences and personal circumstances such as nationality, international travel and previous foreign postings, have all been identified as moderators in acculturation. With specific personality traits judged as more advantageous for a successful assignment, it can be argued that overseas relocations will not necessarily be appropriate for every individual.

5.4.3   Support

Social support is depicted as the heterogeneous resources provided by interpersonal ties (Vaux, 1988), and as an exchange of resources intended to enhance well-being (Shumaker and Brownell, 1984). For military families these links are frequently disrupted due to relocations. Thus the removal of support systems, generally consisting of extended families and local communities, was reported to force an individual to cope alone and to interrupt their sense of belonging (Darcy, 2000, Hoshmand and Hoshmand, 2007). Furthermore, during relocations, it was felt by Sluzki (1992) that there would be a significant increase in an individual's emotional needs which would occur simultaneously with a severely disrupted social support network. Consequently, this ambiguous situation was strongly linked with heightened psychosomatic and interpersonal stress.

The significance of social support on international locations was believed to be intensified due to the disruption of support networks and the challenges of formulating new ones (Copeland and Norell, 2002). Copeland and Norell also declared that inadequate support for trailing spouses from informal and formal networks

threatened the success of the international posting. Corroborating this, Schwartz and Kahne (1993) stated that effective family support was crucial to US service personnel fulfilling military missions. Therefore, it can be argued that lack of social support affects not only the spouse but also the serving military members.

Prior to commencing a foreign posting, the individual resourcefulness of some respondents to this study enabled them to gather information on the new location. However, there was dissatisfaction in the amount of information provided by the military organisation. Research by Mohr and Klein (2004), and Bikos et al. (2009) depicted that the provision of support prior to any international relocation was crucial to limiting uncertainty and encouraging adjustment. Subsequently, the concept of pre-departure cultural training has been stressed to have a positive association with spousal role adjustment (Black and Gregersen, 1991), with further assistance suggested through customised relocation assistance programs (Copeland and Norell, 2002). However in Kupka and Cathro's (2007) research investigating German corporations, they discovered a distinct lack of effort to facilitate the creation of a social support network for the spouses. Concurring with this result, Jervis (2009) researched the emotional responses of British servicemen's wives to repeated relocations, and concluded that despite the military enquiring about wives' dissatisfaction, she considered this was actually immaterial as the support offered was felt to represent only what the military deemed necessary.

When available, the formal, external support from the military/company was not necessarily welcomed by all respondents. Some military spouses were concerned with reprisal if they were to seek support from the military services (Orthner et al., 1990).

This move was felt to potentially reflect negatively on the serving spouse's professional competence (Drummet et al., 2003). Additionally, support for spouses within universities was seen to be discovered ad hoc or covertly discovered in order to circumvent the official system (Schwartz and Kahne, 1993). Nonetheless, resources available through company facilities were demonstrated to initiate a supportive environment. In particular the American military was noted to provide substantial recognizable resources for families to aid transition insecurities (Lakhani et al., 1985).

Trailing spouses on international assignments were described by Schwartz and Kahne (1993, p.453) as being "both transients in the community and in transition in their own lives". Notably, Kupka and Cathro (2007) remarked that the greater the cultural difference of the host country, the greater reliance there was between the spouse and expatriate community for support. In the present study there was some disparity between how involved the respondents wished to be with the British military community, some desiring greater involvement with the host nationals, whereas others preferred the companionship of fellow military spouses for their support.

The development of social support networks was a key issue for the expatriate spouses of international religious workers in Bikos et al.'s (2009) study. They examined the experiences of these spouses at regular intervals over 12 months and determined that the formulation and subsequent progression of new relationships produced a friendship system to counteract feelings of isolation. In Copeland and Norell's (2002) study investigating the role of social support on international assignments, their results highlighted the importance of friends in providing support. The authors noted that despite the acknowledged influence of family relationships in this role, women with

the best adjustment were demonstrated to have an established support network to respond to all their varying emotional and recreational requirements. In the present study reference was made to spouses who chose self-imposed isolation and were content remaining in their parco, minimizing their association with the local and British communities. This was seen as quite stifling by others who preferred to maximise opportunities to mix with the surrounding communities. This implies that feeling comfortable in a new environment is not necessarily directly proportional with the number of relationships formed. The individual may feel most supported when secure in their own house. However, problems may arise when individual circumstances are potentially overlooked, therefore enforcing a sense of isolation and negatively impacting on their well-being.

The internal informal support network was also occasionally seen to emanate from the serving spouse. Due to the loss of support structure, expatriate employees and their spouses were noted to be more dependent on each other for mutual support (Takeuchi et al., 2002). Therefore, having a strong marital relationship was recognised as a significant predictor of overseas adjustment (Norell and Copeland, 2002). This solid foundation was deemed to provide more opportunities for the trailing spouse to disclose concerns with respect to the posting, to their husband/wife. This was recognised by some current study respondents who depicted the serving member to represent their initial support contact. This consensus was replicated in Bikos et al's (2009) research which identified support from the spouse to be a prime factor in assisting transition into the new lifestyle. However, Wiggins-Frame and Shehan (1994) argued that clergy husbands were relatively consumed in their professional responsibilities, which may have resulted in a lack of emotional and instrumental

support for their wives and children. Consequently, these spouses were believed to

re-establish their community life independently, with the added disadvantage of a

disrupted social support network.

Overall informal support networks were perceived by the participants in the present

study to serve a number of functions. Copeland and Norell (2002, p.260) referred to

the "multiplexity" of social support, explaining that the diversity of needs are met by a

variety of people. Host nationals were seen to provide practical assistance, whereas

the accompanying expatriates were believed to potentially fulfil a closer personal role.

Darcy (2000) also believed social support to be an omnibus term and further described

the military as a "microcosm of society" (p. 40), with the spouses experiencing unique

stressors requiring distinctive coping strategies. Integrating Vaux (1988) and Barrera's

(1986) conceptualisations of social support, Darcy drew on three distinct elements:

perception of support; connections with significant others within their social

environment; and actions of others to elicit assistance. These highlight the dynamic

nature of social support and the potential influence of individual personal

requirements.

Social support mechanisms are seen to cushion the stress of relocation and

subsequent readjustment. Thus, the protective effect of social support due to

psychosocial stress has been referred to as a 'buffer' (Cohen and Mckay, 1984). Their

buffering hypothesis states that:

> "psychosocial stress will have deleterious effects on the health and well-being
> of those with little or no support, while these effects will be lessened or
> eliminated for those with stronger support systems." (Cohen and Mckay, 1984,
> p.253)

Examining a range of personal resources, Rosen and Moghadam (1990) investigated the stress-buffering effects of social support on the general well-being of military wives. They concluded that perceived support from other unit wives was the only significant buffer against stress. This study was specific to deployment separation anxiety; nonetheless it does indicate the importance of close relationships with other military spouses during periods of turmoil, which also could arguably be international relocations. Viewing this from an alternative perspective, Gail, one of the present study respondents, expressed extreme loneliness during her posting as a social support network was not available. This lack of buffering support was particularly distressing for Gail, which could have been significantly detrimental for her well-being. Furthermore, as Gail volunteered to participate in the study to highlight her circumstance, it raises the question as to whether other military spouses were in a similar predicament but chose either to remain silent or were unaware of the study.

Lavee et al. (1985) asserted that involvement with the community, community support and friendship networks alleviated perceived stress due to a crisis (specified as a military family relocating overseas). This again was felt to demonstrate the buffering role fulfilled by social support. Furthermore, Pilisuk et al. (1987) acknowledged the emotional bonding provided by such social support networks buffered stress and was beneficial to an individual's welfare. Therefore, it can be asserted that having access to or having the aptitude to re-establish a support network is pivotal for a trailing spouse to become accustomed to their new environment whilst preserving their well-being.

In summary, military spouses were prone to experience the disadvantage of not having a stable support network due to frequent relocations, especially those that incorporated an international move. Re-establishing these networks, whether initiated through the serving spouse or via the expatriate community, was seen as a key facet to facilitate readjustment to a new environment. The construction and utilisation of these networks then was deemed to buffer the impact of potentially stressful life events, however when these networks were not available this was seen to be potentially detrimental to the well-being of spouses, who would possibly suffer in silence.

5.4.4   Marriage and relationships; Family lifestyle and well-being

The study respondents identified the foreign posting as an opportunity for quality family time. Therefore, it was generally felt that this unity compensated for the associated relocation disruption. Nonetheless, the multifaceted circumstances for each family demonstrated there was no guarantee of a positive experience for all. When overlooked, these personal circumstances led to discontentment for some military spouses, and on occasion heightened tension with the serving member.

Overseas assignments are acknowledged to potentially impact the daily life and welfare of the accompanying family (Caligiuri et al., 1998, Puskar, 1990, Makowsky et al., 1988). In particular the necessity of these families to continually cope with the reorganisation of daily routines in combination with cultural adaption, was recognised by Drummet et al. (2003). In 1974, Minuchin proposed that families were a cultural system, which operated within a specific social context and would continually develop to maintain equilibrium and enhance each member. This theory was expanded by

Caligiuri et al. (1998) who stated that a family must transform or adapt to the added

familial demands of a foreign environment in order to re-establish family functioning

overseas. Therefore, according to Minuchin's (1974) Family Systems Theory, any

individual family member on an international posting could affect the psychological

state of another member and thus disrupt their relationship. Consequently, the

expatriate's family was noted by Guzzo et al. (1994) to hold a distinctive influence on

the overall outcome of an international posting.

The strength of the marital relationship was also recognised by the respondents in the

present study to be a barometer for a successful overseas assignment, with some

respondents claiming that, if the relationship was weak, then a foreign posting should

be avoided. Takeuchi et al. (2002) researched this phenomenon with Japanese

expatriates and their spouses. They concluded that a reciprocal relationship existed

between the spouses with respect to their cross-cultural adjustment process, and it

was recognised to potentially produce both negative and positive synergy. The marital

relationship of expatriate managers was also seen to be placed under strain during the

relocation process in De Cieri et al.'s (1991) study. Nonetheless, in this research the

wives were resolute in maintaining a happy household for the husband, suggesting

they were intent on formulating a more satisfactory lifestyle. Furthermore, the

participants in Bikos et al.'s (2009) research reported both conflict and satisfaction

with regards to their marriage status and relationship with their children. For some,

there was limited family time due to their husband's workload, whereas others

experienced greater unity on the posting due to the lifestyle change, which was

deemed to have increased their marital satisfaction (Bikos et al., 2009). Such a

scenario was also reported by Copeland and Norell (2002) to reconfirm the couple

bond.

The functional status of a marriage on an overseas posting was also noted to be

influenced by the trailing spouse's employment status. In Manning and DeRouin's

(1981) research, employed wives displayed significantly better adjustment than those

who were unemployed, which reflected positively on the contentment level of the

husband. The findings of Bowen's (1987) study also reported the significance of the

trailing spouse's employment status. However, in this instance it was a combined

result of their base location (whether domestic or overseas) and their husband's

military rank. Again, these studies indicate another variable attributable to a trailing

spouse's adaption. For the military spouses in the current study, employment was

selected by some to fill a void, but was also seen as an opportunity to have a defined

role. Nonetheless, others did not feel this as a prerequisite for adaptation to their new

environment.

Literature has referred to the influence of a trailing spouse's attitude and behaviour on

their expatriate partner as a process called *crossover* (Westman and Etzion, 1995,

Westman and Vinokur, 1998). These authors identified this process as a stressor or

psychological strain experienced by one person affecting the level of strain

experienced by another in the same social environment. Furthermore, expatriate

outcomes on an international posting were also believed to be influenced by *spillover*

effects, defined as the cross-cultural adjustment in one domain impacting the

adjustments in another (Takeuchi et al., 2002, Caligiuri et al., 1998). Together, these

suggest the pivotal impact the relationship between a trailing spouse and the

employed spouse could have on an international assignment, due to the altered family lifestyle. The reciprocal link may not just influence cross-cultural adjustment, but could also add strain to a marriage and the extended family. This was postulated by Immundo (1974), who believed such discomfort and dissatisfaction could increase the likelihood of divorce for the expatriate couple. More contemporary work by Copeland and Norell (2002), and Kupka and Cathro (2007) also made reference to Immundo's research, suggesting the longevity of the problem. The result of such maladjustment was reported as early repatriation, with significant economic implications to the company (Black and Stephens, 1989). Therefore, as failure of international postings is strongly influenced by the trailing spouse's reaction and subsequent adaption level, it must be acknowledged as a potential difficulty by the employers. None of the respondents in the current study were seeking early repatriation, for those who were dissatisfied with the posting having a definitive deadline sufficed. However, discontent was implied with respect to future domestic postings and the constraint of returning to separate lives. Time together as a family on the foreign posting could be argued to have reprioritised lifestyle choices and potentially ignite questions for remaining within the services on return to the UK.

The impact of lifestyle demands on the well-being of military families was investigated by Burrell et al. (2006). Specifically, foreign residence was found to have a significant negative relationship with a spouse's psychological and physical well-being. Furthermore, McNulty (2003) was astonished by the number of spouses who exhibited sadness, anger and indications of depression while posted overseas, compared to spouses who were domestically relocated. Matching this military research, the coping methods of non-military spouses on international relocation was investigated by

Puskar (1990) who also suggested that specific women were at risk of developing emotional distress whilst on international assignments. Additionally, the likelihood of military spouses under-reporting psycho-physiological symptoms due to social desirability was a concern raised by Fernandez-Pol (1988a). This form of stoicism could severely effect a spouse's well-being, as highlighted in Jervis's (2009) research, who examined the emotional responses of British servicemen's wives to repeated domestic and international relocations. Consequently, the transition between a native and host community could significantly influence a trailing spouse's sense of well-being (Makowsky et al., 1988). In particular, if concerns are hidden the necessary support may not be provided. Therefore, the experience of relocating overseas could have significant detrimental impact on the health and well-being of the trailing spouse (Burrell, 2006). In the current study there was a sense of 'just getting on with it' which some spouses were able to do, whereas others, who were experiencing significant difficulties, focused on the deadline to leave. Nonetheless, there was an innate determination by the respondents to remain on the posting and to support the serving member, which was an extremely admirable feature.

There is a definitive association between the functional status of a marriage and the interaction of family members with the outcome of a foreign posting. How successful the transition to the new family lifestyle is, can be seen as not only impinging on the internal family relationships, but also to externally influence the employed spouse's contentment level and work satisfaction. The repercussions of these factors can be the failure of the posting, early repatriation, and a significant negative effect on the health and well-being of the family and noticeably of the trailing spouse.

5.4.5   Change; Acclimatizing to a new culture and social environment

A new assignment for a serviceperson was seen to dictate an impending change for the

entire family (Burrell, 2006). As these postings would potentially incorporate

relocations to a foreign country, the families were also acknowledged by Burrell to

have the additional re-adjustment constraint due to culture shock[15]. In particular,

Gullotta and Donohue (1983) believed the change inflicted on a trailing spouse due to

an international assignment produced a significant rippling effect which influenced

each family member and then the family as a whole. Notably, the intensity of such

changes for the trailing spouse resulted in greater readjustment to the new culture in

comparison to other family members (Wiggins-Frame and Shehan, 1994, Briody and

Chrisman, 1991). The respondents of the present study stressed the importance of

having a pre-visit to the host country. They felt this reduced the culture shock,

therefore preparing the military spouse in advance for the new environment. Not all

respondents had the opportunity to complete a 'recce' and for some it did add to

apprehensions, nonetheless it could be argued that the option of a pre-visit should be

facilitated. Not only would this allow a greater knowledge of the new location, it

would also present an opportunity for the military spouse to make an informed choice

with respect to the posting.

The process of relocation was proposed by Sluzki (1979) as a multi-stage continuum.

Although Sluzki's work was specific to migration, both on a voluntary and involuntary

basis, the pattern established is comparable to the current study and to literature

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[15] This was defined as the stress produced due to being displaced from one culture and transplanted into another with no familiar ties or surroundings OLSEN, M. G. 1990. *Family satisfaction in Air Force families as a function of family strengths, resources and coping following relocation.* PhD, Utah State U, US.

examining temporary international assignments for trailing spouses. Therefore, it can

be argued that the first four stages of Sluzki's hypothesis: preparation, migration,

overcompensation and de-compensation, reflect the transitions of a trailing spouse

and family. Obviously this scenario has the added variable of a pre-determined time

frame, which potentially negates Sluzki's fifth stage 'trans-generational phenomena'

which referred to raising a second generation in the adopted country.

Each of Sluzki's (1979) phases were reported to possess distinctive characteristics. The

initial stage encompassed euphoria, anxiety and fear for the families, who then

experienced disorientation due to the actual relocation at the second phase. Sluzki

(1979) then asserted these individuals were generally unaware of the stressful nature

of the move and its cumulative effect. Instead the priority at the third stage,

overcompensation, was the fulfilment of basic needs indicated by a family functioning

more effectively than normal. Finally, *de-compensation*, also referred as the 'crisis'

stage, was noted as a stormy period in which the family reshaped their new reality.

This had specific relevance to their identity, roles and compatibility with the new

environment, and was dependent not only on their coping mechanisms but also their

coherence of the situation and the provision of support (Sluzki, 1979, Olsen, 1990).

The minimization of this stage was reported by Gullotta and Donohue (1983) to be

pivotal on the role of the trailing spouse (generally the wife). The wife's interpretation

of the move and subsequent acculturation not only was vital to the success of the

assignment (Section 5.4.4) but was recognised to be conveyed to the children, an

essential feature also identified by Puskar (1990). Additionally, for respondents in the

present study, the added variable of the temporary nature of their posting could also

influence this de-compensation stage. Potentially, the anticipation of the impending

deadline could focus the spouse on their relocation home (for the respondents this would generally be the UK) potentially detracting them from any difficulties experienced during the posting. Alternatively, the inevitable end of an overseas posting, which was quite upsetting for some respondents, could arguably add tension in this period due to the expected relocation and subsequent lifestyle change.

As previously cited, the intensity of change experienced by the trailing spouse can greatly influence their overall readjustment to their new lifestyle (Wiggins-Frame and Shehan, 1994, Briody and Chrisman, 1991). The respondents in the present study highlighted these changes particularly through the loss of employment and subsequent impact on their identity and self-worth. It was clear this was an accepted choice by the military spouse in compensation for family time overseas. Nonetheless, it did leave an air of discontent for some with an added sense of disorientation. In particular this sense of loss was felt to be amplified on foreign relocations (De Verthelyi, 1995). Jervis (2009) remarked that individual experiences contributed to a sense of self, therefore when these connections were lost an individual was left feeling incomplete. Specifically, personal losses of a familiar environment, discontinuity of treasured relationships, career interruptions and the associated impact on self-esteem (Jervis, 2009, Kupka and Cathro, 2007), were all noted to contribute to the significant distress of identity loss experienced by a trailing spouse and their subsequent heightened re-adjustment requirements.

Such identity (re)formation was discussed by Shaffer and Harrison (2001). In their study (which examined spousal adjustment to international assignments), loss of identity was associated with being unemployed and living in a culture unable to

recognise the spouse's social role. There was also the added shock for some

participants of gender identity loss due to the wife not being considered as an equal.

Together these were instrumental to the overall loss of status and self-identity (Shaffer

and Harrison, 2001, De Cieri et al., 1991).

This change of a trailing spouse's social and professional role was also felt by De Cieri

at al. (1991) and Kupka and Cathro (2007) to intensify the change to personal identity.

Notably, previous financial dependence due to employment was acknowledged to give

the spouse the role of co-provider, which significantly contributed to the construction

of their personal identity and self-esteem (Kupka and Cathro, 2007). Accordingly, the

obligatory dependency status in which a trailing spouse was solely identified as

wife/partner of the employed/serving spouse was seen to revoke their right to

individualism (Kupka and Cathro, 2007). The disgruntlement amongst service wives

due their dependent identity and imposed social isolation was also expressed by Levy

et al. (1991). They argued that service spouses also faced ambivalent role definitions

due to the traditional status of the military wife no longer fitting with military lifestyle,

causing further role conflict. The present respondents appreciated that from the

perspective of the Armed Forces, their role as a military spouse had progressed from

the traditional status of obligatory host and housewife, to that of career person.

However, conventional labelling still ensued, which arguably could nullify this

progression.

Role change was also experienced within the family, as remarked upon by participants

in Bikos et al.'s (2009) study. Discord was expressed due to the newly imposed single

parent role as a consequence of the husband's work commitments, and the absence of

transportation meant a significant change to the trailing spouse's independence. This was also identified by the present study respondents who remarked on the importance of having their own vehicle on the posting. Perhaps, prior to this, driving was a concept generally taken for granted, but being on an overseas posting demonstrated the significant contribution of this skill to someone's independence. Other participants in Bikos et al.'s research recognised the opposite extreme of role change in which no longer fulfilling the work role allowed them sufficient time to re-evaluate their life. This was also felt to give role stability for women as they remained the wife and the mother wherever they resided. Some of the present study respondents also felt this cathartic nature of the posting, embracing the opportunity to refocus their priorities. Therefore, this diverse reaction to an imposed internal role change further demonstrates the unpredictability of responses to an overseas assignment. In particular Biddle's (1979) role theory recognised that most of everyday activities was living up to roles and expectations of others. Furthermore, Coser (1966) extended Goffman's (1961) concept of role distance,[16] to identify two types of behaviour, one of which was regarded as taking a step back from one role to prepare for taking on another. Therefore, for some of the present study respondents, loss or temporary loss of a role spurred them to redefine their identity through the development of a new role.

 Undoubtedly, change of roles and personal identity contribute significantly to the plethora of factors influencing the adaption of a trailing spouse. According to Burke's (1991) Identity Disruption Theory, disruptions occur in the identity process when

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[16] The gap between role obligation and performance, COSER, R. L. 1966. Role Distance, Sociological Ambivalence, and Transitional Status Systems. *American Journal of Sociology,* 72**,** 173 - 187.

individuals enter new cultures or assume new roles. In this case a trailing spouse's

perception of the situation would be incongruent to their own identity standard,

where the set of meanings/roles define who one is (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001), for

example, not possessing a social role or not being considered as an equal.

Consequently their efforts would be futile because of an inability to understand the

meanings displayed by others. Burke determined that this scenario created the

distress associated with a new environment and roles. He also believed a further

consequence of identity disruption was a reduction of a person's feeling of efficacy,

which caused a loss of self-esteem. Thus, Burke argued that individuals felt greatest

contentment when they were able to control their life events and maintain a balance

between inputs and their own standards.

In summary new assignments equate to multiple changes for the accompanying

spouse and family. Their ability to acclimatise to this new environment can be

depicted through Sluzki's (1979) multi-stage hypothesis. Nonetheless, the significant

loss of familiar surroundings, cherished relationships and employment all are

instrumental to the loss of personal identity and role for the trailing spouse. This

disruption of personal identity was recognised by Burke (1991) to occur when

individuals entered new cultures or assumed new roles, which could consequently

cause a loss of self-esteem and efficacy. When considered alongside the imposed

'dependency' status attached to each trailing spouse, this adds to the further loss of

identity and the greater challenge for some to readjust to their new environment.

5.5   Conclusion of findings from Phase 2

The thematic analysis of 13 individual interviews and five focus groups produced six

specific themes, two of which were replicated in each analysis. These themes

identified a myriad of factors influencing a military spouse's ability to adapt to the

changes imposed when on a foreign posting. Foremost, the obvious commonalty for

these spouses was being married to a member of the British Armed Forces. The

significance of this relationship was seen to command a response of unmitigated

loyalty from the military spouse to accompany their partner on the posting, believing it

to be their duty. Whilst this was an anticipated part of military life, not all

accompanying spouses felt they were fully incorporated in the decision-making

process and subsequent post-arrival matters. This perceived lack of appreciation was

also recognised in non-military research and was seen to erode the trailing spouse's

identity, specifically adopting the 'dependent' or 'wife of' title was extremely

demoralising for some. Nonetheless, how the trailing spouse then became

accustomed to such disruptions was seen to be a reflection of their own personal

meaning-making and the availability of suitable support resources.

The infliction of such imposed changes both internally through interfamilial role

changes and externally due to a new culture and environment, was consistent with

Burke's (1991) personal Identity Disruption Theory. Thus, for some the inability to

adapt to such potentially overwhelming changes could instigate significant distress and

have a detrimental impact on well-being. Evidently, such implications could impinge

on the serviceman/women and ultimately the service they represent, due to the

financial implications of repatriation and potentially of service retention.

The findings of this Phase demonstrate the comparable reactions of accompanying military spouses to that of their civilian counterparts. Whilst there appears to be a greater recognition of the influence of frequent international assignments for the non-military spouse due to the plethora of available research, the findings of this Phase of the study clearly indicated that military spouses will also be prone to significant distress on a foreign posting particularly if it is not handled appropriately by the military.

The next chapter reviews the findings of the Phase 3 online forum held with 13 other military spouses who had experienced foreign postings to different location(s) than the single location focused on in this chapter.

6.1   Introduction

In this chapter the findings from the thematic analysis (Section 4.4.7) of the Phase 3 online forum transcript will be presented. This will be followed by a general discussion in Section 6.3.

6.2   The findings of the online forum

6.2.1   Themes

Following the analysis of responses from online forum participants to 13 questions, four main themes emerged: the influence of location variables and individual situations on the ability to adjust to a new environment; personal coping mechanisms engaged by individuals to overcome the complexities associated with residing overseas; the influence of personality and personal meaning-making on an individual's reaction to a foreign posting; and the availability of support and chosen support methods. Each theme will be described separately in Sections 6.2.2 - 6.2.5. Illustrative quotations are copied directly from the forum transcripts without adjustment for spelling or grammatical errors.

6.2.2   The influence of location variables and individual situations on the ability to adjust to a new environment

The ability to adjust to a new environment will be considered in two sections – the location variables (due to the specific geographic position and political circumstance of

the host country), and the individual situation of the military spouse (due to personal

circumstances).

6.2.2.1 Location variables

The specific location of the foreign posting was highlighted as a key factor that could

affect a military spouse's ability to settle. One problematic aspect was moving to a

non-English speaking country. This was obviously seen by some respondents as a

hindrance to communication, but it was also recognised to create further challenges

due to the encompassing cultural differences:

> "Some postings are much easier than others. If you move to a country that
> speaks the same language and has similar values, it's always easier. If you move
> to a foreign speaking one with a completely different culture, then it's much
> harder" [Kathy, lines 365 - 368].

> "I found Portugal the hardest and least enjoyable posting because hirings are so
> spread out, the language was difficult to learn, driving was frightening and food
> shopping was such a chore" [Leah, lines 700 -702].

These cultural differences were also felt to discourage some respondents from fully

experiencing their new environment:

> "[...] hated driving in Belgium with all there funny rules car was nearly writen
> off, when it was parked off the road" [Debbie, lines 674 - 675].

> "Didn't enjoy Belgium because the driving I found very stressful, which meant I
> didn't really go out as much as I normally would" [Sharon, lines 792 - 793].

The establishment of relationships with the surrounding local and military community

was a location attribute recognised by the respondents as influencing their re-

adjustment:

> "I think overall what makes an overseas successful are the people (Brits or
> local) that you meet. I know of many people who return to an overseas posting
> and enjoy it a lot more with a different crowd, or visa versa" [Pauline, lines 772
> - 774].

> "Without these contacts I would never have discovered the hidden gems of the country. It isn't till find these that I feel settled in a new place" [Ruth, lines 1008 - 1010].

Nonetheless, the political stability of Kathy's host country was noted as a factor impeding her readjustment process. Taking additional security measures was encouraged due to alleged hostility of the local nationals and Kathy believed this prohibited her from embracing the local culture:

> "We are not allowed to 'advertise' that we are military for safety reasons, so we have to be careful [...] I don't have a clue how I / we would be treated by the local population if they knew we were military. I think most would be OK, but we have to be constantly mindful of the different culture and perceived animosity towards the west by the minority" [Kathy, lines 908 - 914].

In a previous posting this had not been an issue:

> "In the USA, you are treated with the utmost respect, no matter what rank etc you are [....] My husband was often stopped and thanked by complete strangers who recognised he was with a foreign military, for helping the US forces" [Kathy, lines 903 - 907].

The impact of forming relationships will be considered further in Section 6.2.5 from the perspective of the support networks that can subsequently be established within the host country.

6.2.2.2   Individual situations

The previous experience of a military spouse with regard to foreign postings was seen as an advantage. In particular it was felt that those familiar with relocations and military life had already established a resilience to change:

> "I think having been overseas a few times it does change you - often it makes you a little tougher - it did me because you just have to get on with it" [Lillian, lines 1413 - 1414].

Nevertheless this was not the case for all:

> "I am now on my 4th overseas posting in 10 years and am barely treading water here" [Sharon, lines 632].

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"I think there was a total surprise on my part that I wasn't settling in given I'd spent my whole life on military bases and being well used to such a life" [Lucy, lines 558 – 560].

Furthermore, Lucy also attributed her naivety and limited life experience to effectively being compelled to accompany her spouse on their foreign posting:

"It felt like a leap too far but being young and inexperienced I felt I had no choice" [lines 118 – 119].

Ultimately, the changes expected to be made by a military spouse accompanying the serving member on a foreign posting were noted to have a significant impact on adjustment:

"[...] this foreign posting is the first time we have ever lived together. so a lot of evolving has happened at lightning speed. I gave up my job, my old friends, support network, house and moved out of the UK" [Diane, lines 1450 – 1452].

For some respondents, such changes were encompassed by role and family structure alterations. In particular, reference to being a stay-at-home mother rather than being in fulltime employment was a significant role change:

"I had come from the Uk where I worked part time and the children went to Nursery. Now the children became the focus of my world [...] I was dependent on two small children for my interllectual and emotional support!! Not healthy. This was probably the hardest part of the move overseas" [Ruth, lines 1338 - 1342].

As a result, the financial repercussion of losing a salary in combination with a curtailed career pathway was a particular difficulty:

"[...] first time in my fairly long life not to be able to work and see my career go down hill a few years on, now and it still effects us" [Debbie, lines 673 - 674].

"But being without a job/income for the first time was a mighty shock" [Ruth, lines 1539].

Nonetheless, Leah's personal circumstance allowed her to continue her employment whilst on the posting, but unfortunately she felt this was also a barrier to her integration with the British community:

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"[...] I chose to continue working (alternating 1 week in the UK and 1 week working from home) and that meant I wasn't always able to join in with the meet and greets or casual gatherings. Because of that I never felt like I truly belongs - but that was preferable to not working for 2 years and then having to do the job hunting all over again" [Leah, lines 704 - 707].

6.2.3 Personal coping mechanisms engaged by individuals to overcome the complexities associated with residing overseas

Stoicism was a common coping style for some respondents when faced with an international posting. This was demonstrated through a resigned acceptance of their situation with a resounding 'get on with it' approach:

"After the first 6 months everything seemed to fall into place and I just had to get on with it. It is one of those things that you either accept it or go home, if you can" [Jenny, lines 234 – 236].

"I think you manage wherever you are because you don't really have a choice. Once you are there you just have to get on with it" [Sharon, lines 798 – 799].

"[...] everybody seemed to be 'getting on with it' or maybe that was just the facade spouses have to become adept at presenting" [Lucy, lines 560 – 562].

Lucy found her posting particularly difficult and described it as a "very lonely and unhappy time" [line 324]. She developed what she felt to be an unconscious defence mechanism in an attempt to deal with her situation:

"I busied myself with setting up home, making a new location a home was something I'd experienced throughout my childhood and I was well adapted to transforming family quarters into something more personal and homely. All of this was displacement activity because I could think of nothing else other than getting back home somehow" [Lucy, lines 550 – 553].

The respondents also believed that regardless of a military spouse's circumstance, there was an expectation for them to cope. Consequently, some argued there was an obligation for them to fulfil a particular role:

"On the whole the military man chooses a strong and resourceful 'gal'. We have to get used to setting up a 'home' where ever and quickly" [Ruth, lines 502 – 502].

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"Spouses have to cope if they do not they go home, or are very unhappy" [Debbie, lines 213].

"There was also the pressure of course to be seen to be a 'good' forces spouse - settling in and embracing the posting and making everything as smooth as possible for the family as a whole. I can remember feeling like an absolute failure that I just could not embrace it" [Lucy, lines 553 – 556].

As in Section 6.2.2.2, developing certain resilience due to previous experiences of living overseas was attributed to the ability to settle. This resilience was also a specific coping mechanism for some respondents:

"Being in a country where you don't speak the language, have to drive in terrifying traffic and start from scratch with support groups but hardest of all cope with is boredom as jobs are few and far between. It all makes it harder to cope, forces you to be strong" [Ruth, lines 1440 – 1442].

"I think it [the foreign posting] teaches you to survive - you learn that you can cope with most things" [Sharon, lines 1484].

Establishing some form of normality was a key constructive coping method recommended by Diane, in effect she attempted to re-establish the familiar to her life:

"[...] I once heard a great saying " we are the experts of normal" that what I think we are. Our "normal" is an every changing situation. I am very good at keeping things as normal as possible, it may be by getting favourite treats, relaxation, enjoying the good bits of being abroad making plans together" [lines 1555 - 1558].

For some this was also achieved through employment, academic studies or participating in British community activities to produce an active schedule:

"I worked which was brilliant as it gave structure to the days" [Sharon, lines 794 – 795].

"On-line study (of ANYTHING) helps" [Ruth, lines 1631].

"In our community, coffee mornings, cinema groups, lunches, Stitch & Bitch and other activities were organised, go to all to find out which one you enjoy and to meet like minded people" [Angela, lines 298 – 300].

An alternative outlet was recommended by Diane, who produced her own circular for

friends and family in her home country. This allowed her the opportunity to vent any

frustrations and to maintain a record of her posting:

> "I found writing a newletter to folks at home really useful, it tracks your progress the highs and the lows not just for others but reading back over them is hilarious. It also doesn't matter if you loose your connectivity or phone lines either you can still make notes throughout the week" [Lines 1646 – 1649].

Overall, the respondents felt that coping was a reflection of the individual and their

personal circumstances; no one method was applicable for all:

> "I think different spouses probably cope in different ways as is the case in all of life. It seemed to me that there were those who seemed 'born to it' and coped extremely well" [Lucy, lines 316 – 317].

> "Everybody copes differently. I know lots of people who it seems have just arrived and already seem to know lots of people and are very settled and others who have been in places for a couple of years and are still struggling" [Sharon, lines 628 - 630].

> "How spouses cope depends entirely on their outlook and their reason for being abroad in the first place. If you wanted to come and experience life abroad I think you will be more resilient to begin with and better able to deal with the "settling-in" phase which is the worst time in any posting. If however, you are abroad reluctantly you will find it much more difficult to settle in and small problems will be magnified" [Marian, lines 380 – 384].

Nonetheless, the general advice given by the respondents for military spouses going

on an overseas posting was to get involved from the start and to avoid becoming a

recluse:

> "[...] you have to put yourself out there. Not only to meet as many people as possible but also to ensure you don't get a reputation as aloof. Deadly in a small communitee" [Ruth, lines 285 – 287].

> "Get out and about ASAP before the fear sets in. Its soo easy to close the font door and stay behind it" [Diane, lines 1642 - 1644].

6.2.4   The influence of personality and personal meaning-making on an individual's

reaction to a foreign posting

In order for a military spouse to fully appreciate the experiences available through a

foreign posting and to become acclimatised to a new environment, Kathy felt that they

must have a specific type of personality:

> "The wife has to have a true pioneering spirit and have the strength to adapt to
> a new place, culture, time zone, and everything that brings" [Lines 1469 –
> 1472].

Marian agreed, believing the military spouse's experience was a reflection on their

own "outlook" [line 744]. For herself, she always viewed an overseas lifestyle in a

constructive perspective but noted that this could be location specific:

> "For me the experience of living abroad is always positive but where you are
> can make some aspects more challenging" [Marian, lines 744 – 745].

As reported in Section 6.2.3, an individual's initial response to relocating overseas was

felt to potentially dictate their subsequent level of readjustment. When questioned

about their initial reaction, the forum respondents generally gave a positive answer.

They believed a foreign posting provided an opportunity to have valuable time with

their spouse, to have a "new adventure" [Angela, lines 108] and to also explore new

environments:

> "[...] about time too! when you marry an RN submariner you marry the
> lifestyle, the job, the crew, the captain and the flippin boat. Its your choice and
> I took it. Great opportunity to get out of UK. waited 12 years for this
> opportunity" [Diane, lines 163 – 165].

> "It is a great opportunity to live life overseas whilst having a few safety nets to
> fall back on" [Pauline, lines 176 - 177].

However, this was not the attitude of every respondent. Such news was also greeted

with extreme anxiety and despondency by some:

"Not very happy about the destination, thoughts, here we go again another move, have to lose job again less money, ha ho" [Debbie, lines 40 – 41].

"Panic - I was very young, 22 with a 6 month old baby and not feeling too happy in my marriage" [Lucy, lines 116 – 117].

Consequently, a spouse's perception of their relationship with their husband seemed to be indicative of their subsequent adaption to the posting:

"[...] its better to be together on any posting rather than be separated - we didn't get married to live apart for unnecessarily long periods of time. So if I can go then I do" [Lillian, lines 1509 – 1511].

"I got married to be a partner not the housekeeper at home. Would never put my family/kids/partnership through a separation that was not totally necessary" [Ruth, lines 1535 – 1537].

Personal drive and the proactive nature of some of the respondents were evident in their attitude to being on a foreign posting. They described the particular incentives that encouraged them to readjust to their new lifestyle:

"[...] a month after we arrived he was deployed so i had to get used to everything by myself. But i'm glad in away as it pushed me to learn the language and i got involved with a lot of stuff on camp and met some really good friends" [Claire, lines 60 – 62].

"The first year is the most challenging but perhaps that is why I like it most! For me, life in the UK was too soft. Everything is too easy and when you are faced with something more challenging, it can completely throw you" [Marian, lines 594 – 597].

Change was an inevitable phenomenon recognised by the respondents due to their altered autonomy, role and independence. Specifically, the 'dependency' status they were labelled with caused considerable anguish:

"I have found the attitude of the military towards spouses in this posting especially difficult. The very fact we are referred to as "dependents" is patronising and the fact that the serving spouse is the only one who can do anything official is very frustrating" [Marian, lines 1250 – 1252].

"[...] you only exist as a dependant - everything is related back to my husband" [Sharon, lines 1310].

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Therefore, the dependency classification was associated with loss of autonomy, as

Lillian remarked "[...] overseas I cease to have any authority at all" [line 1268].

Additionally, this loss of autonomy was often encompassed by a role change due to the

respondent leaving their employment and becoming financially reliant on their

husband:

> "Its also very hard when you have been a busy working Mum to suddenly find that you have no job, your child is back in the UK, you are in a foreign country & you have to ask your husband for money! He always said to take what I wanted without asking, but I always felt guilty as I was used to having my own money" [Angela, lines 537 – 541].

> "I have never before asked my husband for money as I have always worked, but now I have to. He is a very generous person, its me that this effects. i cant even go and buy a card or personal item without asking for money first. ALL WRONG" [Diane, lines 1298 – 1300].

Nonetheless despite these unwelcomed changes, the experience of a foreign posting

also created changes that were embraced by some respondents. In particular,

improved confidence and a greater appreciation for life's opportunities were

expressed:

> "It definitely changed me. For the better I hope. It made me more independent and a much stronger person, more confident. It opened my eyes to a world outside of the UK that was not just a holiday."[Jenny, lines 1424 - 1426].

> "We may have another three years to go, but I hope even as that times approches this posting can only be seen as a horizon broadening experience. I can only live for the short term and cant imagine me living back in my old house (owned) and doing normal (9-5) things, I would like to use this experience." [Diane, lines 1721 -1724].

6.2.5   The availability of support and chosen support methods

The theme of 'Support' will be divided into two areas – the informal support (the

individual, personal support provided by family and friends, and relationship with the

British community) and the formal support (provided by the military in the form of

welfare and medical services).

6.2.5.1 Informal support

The relationship with the British community was seen as the heart of potential

support. Nonetheless this was alleged by the respondents to be influenced by the rank

or rate of the serving spouse:

> "The first thing that used to be asked of me was "What rank is your husband?" when meeting another spouse. It should have been "Hello, how are you? My name is ... what is your name." Then ask who my husband was, not necessarily his rank. Unfortunately, snobbery still exists across the Forces" [Jenny, lines 830 – 833].

> "[...] it has a huge dividing influence and I hate it, we are all here together working for the same women (queen) the only way to make our situation work is by being allies. Or maybe drinking buddies. we all have so many different experiences, skills and talents lets share them. we all have soo much to learn from each other [...] I dont mention my husbands rank as it influences some peoples view of you." [Diane, lines 951 – 957].

> "[...] its noticeable that once a lot (but not all) people know who your other half is they pigeon hole you - often where you live gives it away."[Lillian, lines 944 – 945].

 Consequently, this impact of apparent segregation was reflected in the perceived level

of support provided by this community:

> "[...] on my first base I was told I could not join a volunteer group as officers wifes had their own, it cut off over half the potential contacts I could have made." [Ruth, lines 843 – 844].

In particular, forming a social support network was identified as a prerequisite for a

successful posting. Establishing these new relationships did not happen

spontaneously, but required a large effort by the military spouse:

> "Whether you end up enjoying the experience or not will then depend on the people you meet and the support you are given" [Marian, lines 384 – 385].

"[...] I had to get involved with the various groups & clubs, I think without them I would have had a very lonely & miserable experience. I met some wonderful friends from my time overseas" [Angela, lines 337 – 339].

"[...] the friend thing can be very difficult its a real up hill slog to just meet similar folks and just relax. Its easy to forget you spent along time seeking out and building the relationships you used to have and you wont even come close to replacing those people. I have resorted to begging, ask people, join groups, arrange events (maybe even coffee and cake) try every authorised avenue available to find new friends" [Diane, lines 1292 – 1296].

As such, having a central community point was fundamental to the respondents. This

was believed to provide a hub of support for the military spouses:

"A central point is essencial, not only do you know where to turn to, but its a good place to start when looking for the people who are going to become your support network" [Ruth, lines 283 – 284].

But available support networks were also reported to be influenced by the specific

location of the posting. Some environments were less conducive for military spouses,

consequently they were more inclined to support one another. Alternatively, due to

language difficulties or the limited numbers of accompanying spouses, in some

postings no established support system was available at all. Therefore, reliance was

instead placed on support provided by the serving spouse:

"[...] the school was located 40 min drive from the city centre on a normal day but could regularly take 1.5 hours. You would never know until you were on the road. This was a difficult aspect of life in the city especially in winter where the temperatures were regularly a balmy -15C. As I had a baby and smaller children too, bringing them on such a trip several times a week was not really an option. This is where a good support network is important. I found everyone pulled together and put differences to one side in order to help each other out in such a harsh environment" [Marian, lines 749 -755].

"In our current posting - the only support I have is my spouse. There is nothing set up here for support of UK military wives, as we are so new out here and there are not the facilities" [Kathy, lines 1036 – 1037].

The presence of young children on a foreign posting was felt to provide a social

medium in forming relationships with other parents, but they were also believed to

inhibit socialising due to limited childcare support:

> "Having children makes it easier to make friends as you have the school connection, but the older they get the harder it becomes" [Sharon, lines 1387 – 1391].

> "[...] the kids became my entire focus and babysitters were non existant so the social time that we had had before (and was still going on) was so easy for us to join in - had to make the most of family visiting from UK which wasn't that often" [Lillian, lines 1362 – 1365].

Informal support was also sought from long term friends and family in the respondents' home country. In particular e-communications were a salvation for Kathy:

> "I haven't been able to find a job so am finding it very hard. Luckily I can Skype family back in the UK and friends. Without that and the dreaded facebook, I think I would be feeling very isolated and maybe depressed"[Lines 1205 -1207].

This pre-existing support network in conjunction with that provided by the serving spouse provided the key support structure. Therefore, the respondents reported that the strength of the marriage was reflected in the level of support:

> "There is very little support around so both partners are discovering new things together and getting over obstacles together as well. Time away from friends and family can seem daunting for some, but it can also give them a break form all of that as well, and allow a couple and family get back to re-discovering each other." [Kathy, lines 1569 – 1573].

> "I think it probably strengthens the relationship as you rely more on each other when coping with unknown situations. I know my husband vents his frustrations with work at home , something he would be unable to do if I wasn't there - everybody needs to be able to this somewhere , to keep it all bottled up isn't good" [Sharon, lines 1583 – 1587].

> "I think overall though the experience wouldn't have been anywhere near as unsettling if my marriage had been strong, that's where I could have drawn my support" [Lucy, lines 562 – 563].

6.2.5.2 Formal support

With respect to the support provided by the military whilst on a foreign posting, Kathy found the provision of medical facilities through the affiliated American military

services to be on a par with "having private medical insurance in the UK" [line 906].

Additionally, Diane found the support provided by their sponsor to be invaluable:

"Your sponsor is really important, get in touch, stay in touch its not a bother to them they've been threw it" [Lines 1641 – 1642]

Nonetheless, she also reported the lack of direct support from the military at the onset of the posting. The provision was haphazard and ultimately irrelevant:

"I had my "welcome" meeting last week, I've been here 10 weeks !!! Bit late and such a missed opportunity. A room full of people all new, no introductions to each other still have no idea were or who they are I may be able to help them, or each other"[Lines 1069 – 1071].

Ultimately, as discussed in Section 6.2.4 being labelled as dependents made some spouses feel inadequate. Whether it was through this alleged apathy from the military or through concern for a husband's career, Sharon believed that generally spouses were hesitant at approaching the military for formal support:

"I think wives are reluctant to seek official help as it does progress up thru chain of command" [Sharon, lines 1094 – 1095].

6.2.6   Conceptual map of findings from the Phase 3 online forum

In accordance with the approach used in Phases 1 and 2, with respect to a diagrammatic representation of findings, a conceptual map was constructed to present the findings of the online forum (Figure 6.1).
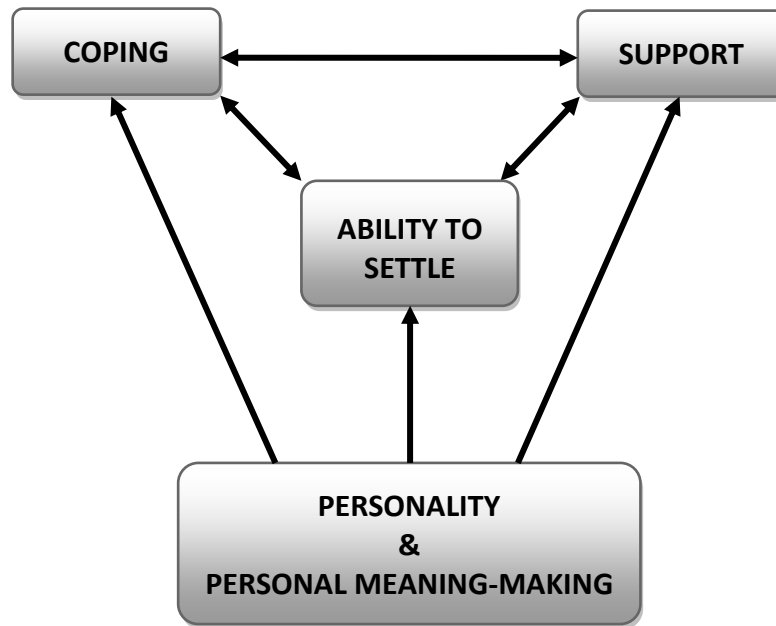
Figure 6.1 Conceptual map of findings from online forum

Once again the 'adapting to change'/'acclimatizing to a new environment' concept

continues as a central theme in the findings of the online forum, in this case it is

represented as the ability to settle. This encapsulates the internal dimension of

settling into a new family structure and lifestyle, and the external dimension of settling

into the new surroundings. Support and personality and personal meaning-making

replicate the findings from the previous phase; however, on this occasion coping

completes the triangle of influential factors. The personality dimension is seen to

directly influence the need or perception of support and is also presented as being

reflected in a military spouse's chosen coping mechanisms. Coping is then inter-

related with support, demonstrating the influence support resources can have on an

individual's coping, and alternatively that the level of coping can then also dictate the

desired or perceived level of support.

Personality and personal meaning-making is presented as having a one-way relationship with the ability to settle, suggesting the driving influence of these facets on adjustment. As also presented in Phase 2, support is considered as having a two-way relationship with the ability to settle, implying both the direct contribution of support resources and subsequent potential need of support dependent on adaption level. The final facet of coping is shown to be inter-related with the ability to settle. One's ability to cope may be directly demonstrated in a military spouse's subsequent adaption level, however, the ability to settle, also driven by personality and support, may then determine a chosen coping mechanism.

The triangular representation of influential factors on the reaction to change is extended from the models presented for Phase 2 findings. The addition of coping as an individual theme in its own right highlights the significant contribution of this variable.

6.3 Discussion of Phase 3

Phase 3 findings are discussed with respect to the themes specified in Section 6.2 and are represented in Sections 6.3.1- 6.3.4.

As explained within Chapters 3 and 5, research focusing on civilian spouses on international assignments has significant commonalties with that of the military spouse. Therefore, non-military research will again be used in conjunction with military spouse studies for the purpose of discussion of the Phase 3 findings.

6.3.1 The influence of location variables and individual situations on the ability to adjust to a new environment

As trailing spouses the forum respondents can be considered as sojourners, which are defined by Church (1982) as short-term visitors to new cultures when permanent residence is not the ultimate intention of the sojourn. Consequently, sojourners are depicted in research to experience acculturation, the culture change resulting from continuous first-hand contact between two distinct groups (Redfield et al., 1936).

The concept of acculturation has been used in cross-cultural psychology in which cross-cultural transitions have broadly been divided into two categories: psychological and socio-cultural adjustment (Black and Gregersen, 1991, Ward and Kennedy, 1993a, Ward and Searle, 1991). The former refers to well-being and satisfaction in a new cultural context (emotional/affective adaption), and the latter the ability to 'fit in' or acquire appropriate knowledge and skills to promote interaction with the host culture, described as behavioural adaption (Ward and Kennedy, 1993a, Ataca and Berry, 2002). As a result, the interrelation of these two dimensions was felt to represent a reciprocal relationship (Ataca and Berry, 2002). Positive interactions with the dominant culture were seen to encompass a sense of satisfaction and well-being, then feeling content and accepted were regarded as productive for developing positive interpersonal relations.

The forum respondents' well-being and satisfaction (their psychological adjustment) during their foreign posting(s) was not directly addressed. However, personality, life changes and social support variables were noted by Searle and Ward (1990) to be the

predictors of psychological adaption. These dimensions were identified in the

thematic analysis of the forum transcripts and were seen as mediators in the

respondents' adaption.

Cognitive factors such as cultural knowledge and distance, identity, language ability,

time in host country, and interaction (Ward and Kennedy, 1992, Ward and Kennedy,

1993b, Ward and Kennedy, 1993a) have been linked to the second category of cross-

cultural transitions, socio-cultural adaption. Evidently, some of the forum respondents

struggled with language differences, and the particular way of life of some host

countries was perceived to be too dissimilar from their original country for others to

willingly adjust. Additionally, previous experiences of the trailing spouses were

acknowledged to provide a greater understanding of alternative cultures, and perhaps

prompt a particular flexibility to change.

Ward and Kennedy (1993a) explored the distinction between psychological and socio-

cultural adjustment during cross-cultural transitions by comparing secondary students

who were participating in a culture exchange program overseas, with their sedentary

peers. They determined a significantly greater correlation between the two

adjustment dimensions (psychological and socio-cultural) for home based-students,

and the overseas students experienced greater socio-cultural difficulties (the ability to

integrate or manage related aspects of the host culture). Arguably, these 'overseas'

students had similar traits to that of trailing spouses, both being sojourners, but the

students were younger (average age of 17.35 years) and were not married.

Nonetheless, the results of Ward and Kennedy's (1993a) research were found to be

dependent on variables including cultural distance, quality of host-sojourner relations and language ability, similar to that of the forum respondents.

James et al. (2004) expanded the notion of the two domains of adjustment to include marital factors (e.g. spousal adjustment and communication level within the relationship). These marital variables were found to significantly contribute to the adjustment and satisfaction with life of the trailing spouse even after accounting for psychological and socio-cultural factors. Further longitudinal research was recommended by James et al. following their initial evaluation, but marital, psychological and socio-cultural adjustments were determined to be an interrelated dynamic process. Findings by Ataca and Berry (2002) also supported this contention of multifaceted adaption but this time with respect to immigrant couples in Canada. This acculturating group had similar traits to trailing spouses as well by having voluntary mobility but they obviously had a more permanent goal (Berry et al., 1987). However, Ataca and Berry's research again highlighted the significant role of the trailing spouse adapting to a new culture in order to accomplish a successful posting. This was further noted in research by Caligiuri et al. (1998) who identified a high correlation between the adjustment of the spouse on overseas assignment to that of their trailing spouse. Additionally, Black and Stephen (1989) reported that the combined adjustment of the spouse and the expatriate manager were also positively related to the expatriate's intention to stay on the overseas assignment.

Overall, the forum respondents recognised the advantages and disadvantages of accompanying their spouse on an overseas posting. The associated changes were not welcomed by all, but no respondent specified whether any discontentment ultimately

caused early repatriation. As such, the desire to be on the posting and the wish for a

challenge appeared to reinforce a positive outcome, however the long term impact on

those who perhaps were not as content with their new circumstances cannot be

overlooked.

6.3.2 Personal coping mechanisms engaged by individuals to overcome the complexities associated with residing overseas

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) determined specific coping strategies to be a set of

cognitive and behavioural responses intended to tolerate/lessen stressful demands,

with active and purposeful efforts mediating adaptive outcomes. Culture contact and

change were identified as examples of stressful demands, and deemed to be

moderated by individual characteristics and particulars of the cross-cultural transition

(Ataca and Berry, 2002). In particular, the concept of acculturative stress was

recognised to have stressors originating in the acculturation process, in conjunction

with stress behaviours associated with this, for example, anxiety, depression,

alienation and identity confusion (Berry et al., 1987).

In Berry et al.'s (1987) overview of a series of studies on the experiences of

acculturative stress by sojourners, or specific acculturating groups, the authors

recognised that some individual's coping strategies allowed successful acculturation

with low acculturative stress, whereas those unable to cope had significant stress. The

preliminary results of Bayes' (1989) pilot study, which investigated the effect of

relocation on the trailing spouse, suggested that the accompanying partner also had to

often deal with feelings of grief, anger, resentment, dependency and shame. In

particular the sense of shame was seen as a consequence of perceiving the expression

of loss and anxiety to be socially unacceptable. This sense of personal failure was then felt to diminish self-esteem and further restrict the ability to cope. Forum respondents from the present study also referred to this pressure to conform, or to develop a stoic response. Arguably, this could be concealing hidden stress, or maybe on an individual basis, it could actually be considered as a successful coping method by which the respondents could deal with their new circumstances, due to establishing resilience to them because of past experiences. As such, resilience has previously been equated with coping (Rutter, 1987), as some individuals have higher levels of adaption with effective coping and problem-solving behaviour due to prior exposures (Weber and Weber, 2005). In Section 6.2.4 resilience and positive outlook were also considered as specific personality traits that could have a significant influence on adjusting to a foreign posting. Examining these qualities, Major et al. (1998) determined that the participants of their research who possessed a greater number of resilient personality traits, such as optimism, were more likely to cope with upcoming stressful events. Therefore, resilience and a positive outlook can be considered not only as positive coping mechanisms themselves, but also as essential personality traits that can subsequently lead individuals to cope effectively.

Coping and adaption formed the conceptual framework for Puskar's (1990) study, investigating women's coping methods on international relocation. Her findings determined that those who successfully coped embraced active coping behaviours and were noted to participate in military, social and religious clubs. Women who coped poorly engaged in diversional activities and less problem-solving behaviour, instead sleeping and eating more, crying and being irritable. Varied forms of coping were also demonstrated by the forum respondents. Active participation in British and/or host

community activities clearly was an area embraced to bring some form of normality to their new lifestyle. However, the retrospective account provided by Lucy demonstrated what she now recognised to be displacement activities due to her troubling time on the foreign posting.

An alternative coping mechanism to facilitate the cross-cultural adjustment for international students' spouses was implemented in De Verthelyi's (1996) study. In this instance a very successful newsletter 'Spouse Talk' was written and edited by spouses for spouses. It was felt this creativity restored a sense of personal identity and self-esteem, alongside the cathartic aspect of allowing different sojourner's experiences to be exchanged. One forum respondent in the present study also completed a similar activity during her foreign posting. The simplistic idea of establishing a newsletter appeared to provide a sense of purpose for trailing spouses and an opportunity, not just to vent concerns, but to actively participate in something constructive.

Evidently, as revealed by the forum respondents and other research (Puskar, 1990, De Verthelyi, 1996, Berry et al., 1987), circumstances which might have been considered as stressful, for example, voluntary/involuntary relocations, prompted respondents to use a variety of coping responses which were a reflection of the individual and their personal predicament (Carver et al., 1989). As such, the emphasis of coping as a dynamic process that alters with respect to a stressful transaction was argued by Folkman and Lazarus (1980, 1985), whereas the influence of antecedent factors such as personality dimensions has also been proposed (McCrae and Costa, 1986, McCrae, 1982, McCrae and John, 1992). The various circumstances of the forum respondents

due to past experiences, marital stability, resilience and proactive nature

demonstrated the permutations of circumstance and of individuality that potentially

influenced their corresponding coping mechanisms, and associated difficulties of living

overseas.

6.3.3 The influence of personality and personal meaning-making on an individual's reaction to a foreign posting

Krauss (2005) highlights that the most significant aspect of a human social setting is

that of 'meanings' and accordingly, he remarks that it is a natural phenomenon for an

individual to comprehend and "make meaning out of their lives and experiences" (p.

762). Therefore, Krauss determined that these meanings generate an individual's view

of reality and subsequent behaviour. With respect to cultural adaption Dirkx et al.

(2007) suggest that some emotions experienced during cross-cultural situations may

represent meaning-making not necessarily grounded in an individual's understanding

of the 'outer world', but instead representing the array of realities beyond levels of

conscious awareness. To exemplify this Dirkx et al. (2007) discussed the experiences of

students within a collectivist culture, explaining that some may crave to be alone and

resent time expected to participate with the host culture, whereas others may just be

too overwhelmed by the experience. The military spouses in the current study had

diverse views with regards to their experiences on a foreign posting, and these

appeared to be driven by personal circumstances and outlook. Subsequently, the

meaning they placed on their cross-cultural transition influenced their reaction to the

posting.

Cross-cultural literature contains much research investigating the potential relationship between personality variables and sojourner adjustment (e.g. Searle and Ward, 1990, Caligiuri, 2000b, De Verthelyi, 1995, Ward et al., 2004). Obviously, within the present study phase no specific personality assessment tools were used within the discussion topics. Consequently at this stage it is only possible to suggest that potentially there may be a relationship between the personalities of the forum respondents and their level of adjustment on their foreign posting(s). Authors of previous research hypothesize that narrow-mindedness and ethnocentric tendencies would jeopardise effective coping and adjustment (Rokeach, 1960, Thomas, 1996), whereas social psychologist Gardner (1962), introduced the concept of a 'universal communicator' as a sojourner possessing a well-integrated personality, as being extroverted and having a high degree of sensitivity. Such research implies the potential permutations of characteristics that could contribute to an individual's reaction to an international relocation.

Swagler and Jome (2005) believed the emergence of the 'The Big Five' theory of personality provided the opportunity to explore the relationship between personality and cross-cultural adjustment. This theory alleged that five independent personality dimensions (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness) could be grouped to describe an individual's personality (Costa and McCrae, 1992, McCrae and Costa, 2004). Huang et al. (2005) also grounded their research with this contemporary personality theory in order to explore the specific role of personality traits that might impact on expatriate adjustment.

The present study forum respondents were aware of what they considered to be a pertinent personality attribute associated with successful adjustment. From the specified 'Big Five' traits, the only possible direct reference with respect to the forum respondents was having an open-mind. *Openness* reflected the tendency to seek out new ideas and experiences, and to appreciate new environmental stimuli (Goldberg, 1993, Swagler and Jome, 2005). This openness was also depicted by Arthur and Bennet (1995) in terms of having interest in foreign cultures, or having a variety of outside interests in order to have a successful overseas assignment. Similarly, Church (1982) also theorised low ethnocentrism and having an open-mind for expatriate success. This willingness to experience new circumstances suggests the flexibility required of trailing spouses to be accepting of unfamiliar environments.

Clearly, it is not possible to interpret the remaining four of the big five traits with reference to the responses provided by the forum participants due to the absence of personality assessment scales. Nonetheless, in previous research by Swagler and Jome (2005) they argued that individuals high in neuroticism, which is defined as having less emotional control and stability (Mount and Barrick, 1995) but also as a person's ability to handle stress (Caligiuri, 2000a), would find adjusting to new circumstances, in particular living in a different culture, as more challenging due to their pre-determined vulnerability. Additionally, with respect to the remaining three dimensions *extraversion*, *agreeableness* and *conscientiousness*, Ward et al. (2004) determined a significant and positive association of these with the psychological adaption of their sojourners, alongside the variable of less neuroticism. Again these studies indicate the diversity of personality traits influential to sojourner adjustment, therefore one person's reaction to a new environment will not necessarily be representative of all.

In the present study, forum respondents expressed their opinions on what they felt would represent the ideal trailing spouse, as someone who possessed a willingness to explore and experience change. This willingness suggests an outgoing and determined individual content to interact with different cultures and who would have the personal aptitude and care to welcome changes. Furthermore, the respondents' selflessness could arguably be expressed not just through their willingness of establishing interpersonal relationships, but through their sensitivity and understanding of their spouses' predicament of being appointed on a foreign assignment. Their loyalty and respect for their husband and his role was suggestive of their motivation to relocate, and potentially then their capacity to adjust. Again this variety of personal characteristics is indicative of the diversity of responses that could potentially be associated with encountering an international relocation.

6.3.4   The availability of support and chosen support methods

Social support networks, as indicative of their name, were seen to provide assistance through many different channels for many purposes (Darcy, 2000). These types of readily available support resources were regarded by Darcy as essential for initiating feelings of well-being and adjustment. It could be argued then that such networks would be crucial for the readjustment of trailing spouses on international locations. Specifically, Bayes (1989) examined the effects of relocation on the trailing spouse and identified that it could represent significant losses for some, in particular the loss of close relationships. Drawing on the concept of grief, Bayes highlighted that the death of a friend would be appeased by the individual's support network fulfilling their role of support and guidance in such a difficult time. The 'loss' of a friend or all of a trailing

spouse's close contacts due to an international relocation in conjunction with the

disruption of a familiar support network, was then believed to potentially instigate

feelings of profound loss and isolation (Bayes, 1989). Supporting this theory, empirical

evidence determined that the availability of social support diminished psychological

distress during cross-cultural transitions (Fontaine, 1986, Adelman, 1988).

The forum respondents believed that establishing a support network was a

requirement for a successful posting. How this was achieved appeared to be a

reflection of the individual's determination, their family structure and their specific

location. Consequently, the interaction of these variables seemed to influence their

overall adjustment. Examining this role of social support as a dynamic and complex

process, Darcy (2000) researched the impact of social support on the well-being of

Army wives following relocation. She drew on the theoretical viewpoint of Sarason et

al.'s (1990) triadic hypothesis which suggested that the impact of social support on

coping and well-being was based on the interaction of three variables: personality

aspects, interpersonal characteristics and situational factors.

Darcy's (2000) study provided partial support for Sarason et al.'s (1990) hypothesis.

Notably, personality and interpersonal factors independently contributed significantly

to Army wives' well-being. The situational factors were measured as demographic

information, with the primary focus on length of time on the current assignment,

although this was not found to contribute to the variance in well-being. Nonetheless,

Darcy reported that other situational factors were significant. Specifically, 'distance

from home' explained the greatest amount of total variance in well-being amongst

situational elements. Clearly, the closer the trailing spouse was to her usual residence

then the more familiar would be the environment and support services, whereas, the trailing spouse stationed far from home, potentially overseas, must rely solely on the services available. As the present study forum respondents all experienced international postings, potentially they could have been more susceptible to changes imposed due to the differences of host and home cultures. For some this would have been especially challenging due to the reported insufficient support services, and for them reliance instead was on their spouse and UK based family and friends.

The first variable of Sarason et al.'s (1990) hypothesis, focusing on personality aspects, was defined as the motivation and expectations of the recipients and providers of social support. This was further identified by Sarason et al. as the personality factors that directed a person's reaction to a situation. Some of the present study forum respondents actively developed a support network and the predominant force that appeared to enable them to achieve this was their own personal drive. Nonetheless, despite desires to establish a support network, other spouses were left feeling isolated due to the absence of support or of the opportunity to create a support network. Therefore, regardless of a trailing spouse's ambition, it can be assumed if the foundations of support are not readily available for them to utilise or to develop this may add a needless obstruction to a trailing spouse's ability to adjust to their new location.

Interpersonal characteristics were denoted by the nature of the relationships in which supportive exchanges occurred (Sarason et al., 1990) and was represented by two distinctive dimensions: the quantitative perspective of the network size and the qualitative aspect of interpersonal conflict. In particular, Ward and Rana-Deuba (2000)

investigated the dimensions of home and host culture influences on sojourner

adjustment and their research emphasized that it was the quality rather than quantity

of social interactions that was crucial for the sojourners' well-being. Additionally,

Rosen and Moghadam (1988) explored the qualities of relationships with military

wives experiencing separation from the serving spouse. Predominantly in this instance

informal support was sought from other military wives in the same Army unit.

Although focusing on the stressor of separation, comparison can be drawn with trailing

spouses who also seek empathetic support from other trailing spouses posted with

them. As remarked by Copeland and Norell (2002), new friendships on the

international location generally become key support sources and this network was

often comprised of expatriates themselves.

Consistent with the research findings of Rosan and Moghadam (1988) and Ward and

Rana-Deuba (2000), the present study forum respondents clearly demonstrated the

value they attributed to creating their support network, or forming a few close

friendships. Unfortunately, overcoming the obstruction due to hierarchy of their

husbands' position was quite problematic for some. It is interesting to note that,

despite being in the same predicament, some spouses felt it necessary to assume a

particular role courtesy of their husband's position, while others felt they were

prejudged because of their husband's role. Obviously it is a natural phenomenon that

not all individuals will bond, but potentially ostracizing an individual due to their

association with a particular rank may conceivably be detrimental to their perceived

level of support.   As research has shown that the adjustment of the trailing spouse is

related to the success of the assignment (Black and Stephens, 1989, De Cieri et al.,

1991), inadequate support could significantly jeopardize postings. Although none of

the forum respondents reported that they repatriated early, the comments regarding inter-rank segregation highlights the vulnerable position in which some spouses may find themselves.

The third variable hypothesized by Sarason et al. (1990) to impact social support was the specific situation in which the supportive behaviours were directed. These situational factors were identified by Darcy (2000) as demographic variables, gathered to formulate a complete picture of the Army wives' recent life events. Chamberlain and Zika (1992) examined the stability of well-being and daily stressors over short periods from two different samples of participants, and found a significant influence of situation on well-being. 'Situation' was represented by current life hassles such as everyday concerns including health, work, family and social activities. Therefore, a global statement of a certain situation initiating a certain reaction was noted by Darcy (2000) to be impossible. Furthermore, Darcy concluded that the construct of 'situation' was a necessity in measuring the impact of social support on well-being.

The current study forum respondents referred to family and social activities within the concept of informal support. Children were seen as both a hindrance and a catalyst to social support networking. Likewise, strength of relationship with their husbands was also indicative of the need for varying levels of alternative support. Therefore, for the forum respondents, the 'family' factor alongside personality and interpersonal characteristics affected their social support. Likewise, Caligiuri et al. (1998) concluded that high levels of family support, family communication and family adaptability were significantly related to family cross-cultural adjustment.   A strong marriage was also noted as a key coping factor for trailing spouses whilst living overseas (Thompson,

1986) and to be consistently related to relocation adjustment (Sweatman, 1999). Hence, different types of supportive efforts will ultimately be required for different types of stressful situations (Darcy, 2000).

6.4   Conclusion of findings from Phase 3

There was a range of responses by military spouses to the experience of acculturation. For some of the forum respondents the challenge of a new culture was completely embraced as novel and exciting, whereas others recognised it as a source of apprehension. In particular changes of family roles and employment were reluctantly seen as a necessity if they were to accompany their serving spouse. How they then accepted their new lifestyle was dependent on their comfort at formulating new connections with the British and local community, whilst maintaining contact with friends and family in the UK. Undoubtedly a large proportion of this was achieved through the forum respondents' own initiative and it would be remiss to generalise this as an effortless process. In particular, social support systems may be a common occurrence in everyday life and perhaps one that could be taken for granted but accessibility of support was fundamental for trailing spouses.

The forum respondents demonstrated that experiencing a foreign posting was dependent on the combination of many personal and situational variables. It was seen to be challenging but rewarding, and with the correct support network and availability of resources, ultimately a positive experience. Nonetheless, the respondents also demonstrated that not all military spouses will necessarily be able to cope with the changes imposed on a posting, particularly due to their motivation for being there and their personal circumstances.

This phase highlighted the potential influence of personality traits and psychological adaption to a foreign posting. Therefore, further exploration of this dimension utilising psychometric tools would potentially allow a more in depth analysis of this relationship.

The next chapter discusses Phase 4, the final data collection phase and the quantitative component of this study.

Chapter 7   Phase 4 – Methods and Findings of Online Survey

7.1   Introduction

The methods and findings of the qualitative phases of the study have been discussed in Chapters 3 to 6. In Chapter 7 the quantitative component of the study will be discussed in two parts. Part 1 will provide a description of the methods, data collection and analysis employed in Phase 4. In Part 2 the findings of the analysis and a brief discussion of this phase will be presented.

7.2   Gaining ethical approval

Ethical approval to undertake the survey was obtained through the Faculty of Health Research Ethics Committee at Plymouth University (Appendix iv). An amended application was submitted to the Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee (MoDREC) for this final phase of the study and was subsequently approved (Appendix xii).

7.3   Part 1: Phase 4 methods – online survey

7.3.1   Design

Phase 4 represents the quantitative component of this mixed methods study in the form of a cross-sectional online survey. As described in Section 2.5.1 triangulation is the use of multiple methods or perspectives for the collection and interpretation of data on a phenomenon, with the intention of producing an accurate representation of reality (Polit and Hungler, 1999). Triangulation 'between-methods' normally incorporates a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve

convergent validity (Begley, 1996). The combination of such methods is believed by

Foss and Ellefsen (2002) to be complex due to the methods originating from different

paradigms. Ultimately, they argued that different kinds of knowledge are gained

through different methods, producing a richer and potentially a more authentic

description of the phenomenon investigated. Consequently, they believed the

"epistemology of triangulation should not be seen as a mix of two different

epistemological positions but rather as an epistemological position in its own right" (p.

246).

Based on this principle of triangulation, the decision was made to conduct a

quantitative online survey as the final phase of the study to further examine the

findings of the previous qualitative phases. As described by Morse and Richards (2002)

a qualitatively driven project sequentially conducted with a quantitative project allows

a phenomenon to be initially explored and then re-examined by quantifying some part

of the same phenomenon, thereby increasing the description. From the qualitative

data analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 the potential influence of personality traits and

psychological adaption to a foreign posting was highlighted, and it was concluded that

further exploration of this dimension utilising psychometric tools could potentially

allow a more in depth analysis of this relationship. As such an online survey was felt to

be able to provide the medium for this quantitative perspective.

As highlighted by Jones et al. (2008) web questionnaires have similar strengths to their

hard copy equivalents, such as the low cost of implementation and the ability to reach

a larger number of the target population than would be possible via interviews. Postal

questionnaires are also noted by Oppenheim (1992) for their drawbacks due to issues

of control (the order by which the questions are answered) and transcription (primarily

due to incomplete responses). Furthermore, hard copy or email responses

subsequently have to be manually entered into the analysis software, which is

considered to be quite an arduous and time-consuming task, with a potential for

transcription error (Jones et al., 2008). Web questionnaires have features that

minimise such disadvantages; specifically, web-based surveys can streamline the data

process by the responses being directly submitted into a database for analysis.

Additionally, programmability of these forms makes it possible for the order of data

entry to be controlled (Solomon, 2001). Nonetheless, web-based questionnaires are

noted for the initial expertise required to configure the survey (Jones et al., 2008), for

historically lower response rates (Solomon, 2001) and the alienation of some

respondents who are reluctant to use the internet (Denscombe, 2010).

One particular threat to the external validity of online surveys has been recognised as

the potential limited coverage due to accessibility of the internet (Fricker Jr., 2008).

Consequently, it has been suggested that certain populations are being excluded from

technological advancements of online resources (Birnbaum, 2004), and the

generalizability of results are then being restricted due to the limited access to some

demographic groups (Tourangeau, 2004, Skitka and Sargis, 2006). As such, Duffy

(2002) believed research signified that individuals in lower socio-economic or in

marginalised groups were not web users. As my study sample was directed towards

spouses of military personnel it was highly unlikely that they would have been included

in such a demographic. The most junior rank serving overseas would have a basic

salary equating to approximately £18 000 (R&F Defence Publications, 2012), this is

without any additional allowances pertaining to married personnel. It was more likely

that a reluctance to use the internet may have been more problematic to my data

collection or perhaps sporadic internet connections overseas (as highlighted by my

Phase 2 participants, Section 5.3.4.2).

A further threat to the reliability and validity of online surveys is non-response or low

response rates (Duffy, 2002, Weber and Bradley, 2006). Obviously non-response

refers to the individual's choice to not participate in the study (Skitka and Sargis,

2006), and actual response rates are felt to be almost impossible to compute, due to,

in particular, the commercial nature of advertisements and junk emails (Birnbaum,

2004). As my recruitment for the online survey would have a heavy reliance on

advertisements both online and in hard copy (via posters and newsletters),

ascertainment of a response rate was unachievable. In anticipation of this, I aimed to

advertise as widely as possible (Section 7.3.7) with the inclusion of email reminders to

participants when feasible, and to construct a web survey that would facilitate full

responses (Section 7.3.3).

At this stage of the study the intention was to reach military spouses who were on or

had previously experienced a foreign posting. Therefore, the internet was felt to be

the most appropriate method to contact those both outside and within the UK. In

addition to allowing instant advertising to international locations, the time efficiency of

the method was paramount. Although this process would potentially exclude those

individuals unfamiliar with the internet, it was not logistically possible to create a hard

copy version of the survey, due to the financial implications and the administration

necessary. Instead advertisements were placed within online and hard copy resources

to reach as many military spouses as possible and to encourage response submission

(Section 7.3.7).

7.3.2   Content

The main themes identified using the systematic review and analysis of data from

Phases 2 and 3 are listed in Table 7.1. Specifically, the individuality of the military

spouse (incorporating their specific circumstances and personality), and support (both

formal and informal resources) were significant dimensions in each phase. The former,

relating to the individualism of each military spouse, was conceivably a driving force

behind the overall outcome of the posting i.e. the ability to adjust and settle to the

new environment. Plus, due to the changes that were endemic on a foreign posting, it

appeared to be inevitable that the military spouse would experience some level of

loss, for example of identity and role. How these changes were then managed could

feasibly be a reflection on someone's personality and their ability to adjust.

Adjustment also related to the support resources that were available to them, support

networks they had access to, and their level of desired support. Therefore, it was

decided that the online survey would incorporate a combination of personality scales

alongside support scales, in order to examine the potential relationship of these key

aspects. It was anticipated that this would offer an indication of how specific traits of a

military spouse's personality may influence their desired level of support and, in

combination with the qualitative findings, indicate how this might influence the

outcome of their posting. Sections 7.3.2.1 and 7.3.3 provide further information

regarding the content and construction of the online survey.

Identified themes	Phase 1 Systematic Review	Phase 2 Part One – Individual Interviews	Phase 2 Part Two – Focus Groups	Phase 3 Online Forum
Functioning of a military family on an international posting	✓			
Loss	✓			
General wellbeing	✓			
Support	✓	✓	✓	✓
Personality/ personal meaning-making/ individual circumstance		✓	✓	✓
Marriage & relationships		✓		
Change		✓		
Family & lifestyle			✓	
Environment			✓	
Coping				✓
Ability to settle				✓

Table 7.1 Summary of Phase 1, 2 and 3 themes

7.3.2.1 Developing the content

The themes of personality and support had been identified as a commonality of the

qualitative stages of the study. In particular phrases including 'open-minded',

'resourceful', 'outgoing', 'independent', 'a certain vitality', 'initiative', 'proactive' and

'pioneering spirit' were identified as components of the personality theme from the

analysis of the individual interviews, focus groups and online forum respondents

(Sections 5.2.5, 5.3.5 and 6.3.3). This led to the initial consideration of incorporating

the NEO Five Factor Inventory (McCrae and Costa, 2004) within the survey. This scale

was developed by McCrae and Costa to provide a succinct measure of the five basic

personality factors: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and

Neuroticism, and thereby could then be integrated in further analysis to allow

indication of any potential relationship between specific personality traits and support.

However, a psychology qualification (which unfortunately I did not possess) was a pre-

requisite for the purchase of this survey from Psychological Assessment Resources

Incorporated (PAR Inc.). Additionally, on contacting PAR Inc., if the NEO Inventory was

used in an online format they requested that strict copyright standards would have to

be enforced; these were explicitly related to the prevention of printing the survey

including the screen view. Furthermore, PAR Inc. specified that each respondent had

to receive a username and password before being permitted to complete the survey. I

was not able to facilitate the requested printing restrictions or the provision of

usernames; nonetheless I was not content about the necessity of providing usernames.

Although this would provide an extra respondent check, I felt that this could also

potentially discourage some respondents due to anonymity concerns and reduce their

motivation to complete the survey if there was an access delay. In particular, in

Crawford et al.s (2001) study, password access was found to have a small but

significant effect on the response rate of 4500 students who were invited to complete

an Internet-based survey. The authors believed that a more complicated access to the

survey might have discouraged less motivated respondents and thus decreased the

response rate.

The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (Eysenck et al., 1985) was identified as a

credible alternative to the NEO Inventory for the use in Phase 4. Eysenck's

dimensional model of personality (Eysenck and Eysenck, Manual of the Eysenck

Personality Questionnaire, 1975, cited in Dazzi, 2011) is based on the premise that

individual differences can be most adequately summarized with reference to three fundamental dimensions: Neuroticism, Extraversion and Psychoticism, and are reviewed by the EPQ. Neuroticism comprises facets such as anxiousness, low self-esteem and guilt; and extraversion tackles traits such as sociability, liveliness and dominance (Eysenck et al., 1985). Psychoticism was the final variable to be added by Eysenck and colleagues to the model of personality and refers to temperament, in particular to tough-mindedness, lack of empathy and non-conformism (Eysenck et al., 1985).

According to Eysenck and Eysenck (Manual of Eysenck Personality Scale, 1991, cited in Robbins et al., 2001) individuals who score low on the extraversion scale are classified as introverts, are reserved, may only have a few friends and tend to distance themselves from others. At the other extreme extroverts are social individuals, they are impulsive and have many friends. With reference to the neuroticism scale, higher scores indicate an individual who tends to be anxious and a worrier, inclined to experience strong emotional reactions and to over react. Finally, individuals who have a low psychotic score are reported to be friendly and not distant, as opposed to the apathetic, antisocial, tough-minded and reckless nature depicted of someone scoring highly for this trait (John et al., 2008). As evidenced by the findings of Phases 2 and 3, specific personality traits were suggested to have an influence on the military spouse's reaction to a foreign posting. The EPQ was therefore believed to present a valuable indication of the personalities of the military spouses who experienced overseas postings, and to then be used in the subsequent inferential analysis.

The willingness of a military spouse to adapt to change or their ability to adjust to a new environment has, so far in this thesis, been considered as a reflection of personality and support. Nonetheless, this enthusiasm and competence to become accustomed to altered circumstances could also be an indication of an individual's self-efficacy. According to Schwarzer et al. (1999) a 'can-do' cognition emulates a sense of control, and a "self-confident view of one's capability to deal with certain life stressors" (p.146). They believed this reflected the ability of an individual to manage challenges through adaptive action. As such, a low sense of self-efficacy was defined by Bandura (1997) to be associated with anxiety, helplessness and low self-esteem. High self-efficacy instead was coupled with the desire to face more challenging tasks and establishing higher goals. Therefore, a military spouse's self-efficacy could also have influenced their reaction to a foreign posting and as a result an appropriate self-efficacy scale was incorporated into the survey.

Self-efficacy has been found to have a significant role in cross-cultural adaption with respect to an expatriate's belief in their ability to perform successfully in the new culture and environment (Jones, 1986). The global confidence of an individual's coping ability across a diverse range of challenging or unique situations is assessed with the General Self-Efficacy (GSE) scale (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995). Therefore, an individual with high self-efficacy is more inclined to view difficult circumstances as something to be overcome rather than be avoided. Hence, the GSE used on its own and in conjunction with an EPQ, was felt to present another constructive dimension of a military spouse's personality.

To extend the traits examined, it was decided that a locus of control tool would also be included to supplement the EPQ alongside the self-efficacy scale. Rotter (1990) stated that:

> "internal versus external control refers to the degree to which persons expect that a reinforcement or an outcome of their behavior [*sic*] is contingent on their own behavior [*sic*] or personal characteristics versus the degree to which persons expect that the reinforcement or outcome is a function of chance, luck, or fate, is under the control of powerful others, or is simply unpredictable" (p.489).

This concept of locus of control refers to an individual's perceived responsibility for their behaviour and control over their life (Kohli et al., 2011), and has been associated with subsequent coping strategies and adjustment to stressful events (Crisson and Keefe, 1988). In particular, the concept of locus of control and a social support network have been conceptually linked (Ong and Ward, 2005) and identified in literature as two predictors of psychological adaption of immigrants (Martínez García et al., 2002). Although trailing spouses, such as military spouses, are not immigrants they do temporarily relocate overseas as sojourners and this has not necessarily been in a voluntary capacity (Makowsky et al., 1988). Therefore, the extent to which military spouses believe they can control events affecting them could have then potentially influenced their adaption on the foreign posting.

In the quotation above, Rotter (1990) referred to the internal versus external control. Notably, individuals with an internal locus of control believe life events are on the whole a result of their own behaviours or actions, whereas those who have an external locus believe such events are determined by fate or others (Tucker et al., 2004). Research by Ward and Kennedy (1992, 1993a) identified that an internal locus of control was associated with psychological adaption and well-being, and was reported

to aid an individual to cope more effectively with stressors. At the other extreme an external locus was associated with homesickness, and psychological and emotional disturbances. For this reasoning, a military spouse's locus of control was felt to potentially be associated with their adaption level when they accompany their serving spouse overseas. Therefore, in order to collect data on this concept Rotter's (1966) locus of control scale was incorporated into the survey.

The theme of support generally consisted of what was referred to in the analysis as the internal informal support and the external more formal support structure. Hence, I felt it was necessary to incorporate two separate support scales within the online survey to investigate both of these dimensions. One scale would recognise the social support provided by friends and family (the informal facet), and the other would indicate the perceived level of support provided by the military organisation (the formal facet).

On initial investigation, research led to social support tools such as the Social Support Index (SSI) (McCubbin et al., 1982), the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet et al., 1988) and the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL) (Cohen and Hoberman, 1983). These were all highly credible instruments and although they could be used to infer the areas of support normally sought by an individual, I felt they did not necessarily reflect the unique circumstances of a military spouse who is temporarily separated from their normal support network due to being relocated overseas. McCubbin et al.'s (1982) SSI did consider a community support perspective but potentially was geared towards a more pre-established network and again, I felt it did not consider the uniqueness of a trailing spouse's circumstances. Ultimately, through further research specifying 'trailing spouse' and 'social support',

Ong and Wards' (2005) Index of Sojourner Social Support was identified. Their scale was specifically directed towards individuals who were temporarily moving overseas, and was clearly applicable to the military spouses within my study. Consequently this scale was included in the online survey.

The final dimension identified from the thematic analysis to be included within the survey was a scale that would investigate the perceived level of support received by the accompanying spouses from the military organisation. This would represent the 'formal' or 'external' support network aspect. However, despite an extensive search of military, expatriate and trailing spouse research and their representative organisations, any previously utilised organisation support questionnaire was, for example, from a Human Resource perspective or directed towards the 'employee' rather than their accompanying spouse. Additionally, there were specific questions that I wanted to address based on the discussions I had with the military spouses from Phases 2 and 3 and the subsequent data analysis. Therefore, a Perceived Military Support Questionnaire was developed for exploratory purposes and presented within the survey (please see Section 7.3.3.6 for further information).

Ultimately the survey was structured into six parts:

1. Demographics

2. Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (revised short form) (Eysenck et al., 1985)

3. Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966)

4. General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995)

5. Index of Sojourner Social Support Scale (Ong and Ward, 2005)

6. Perceived Military Support Questionnaire.

These are explained in greater detail in Sections 7.3.3.1 - 7.3.3.6 and Appendix xiii

provides the final draft of the online survey[17].

7.3.3   Construction

The survey was constructed using Lime Survey version 1.90 software, a free and open

source survey software tool (Schmitz, 2011). I was familiar with this software and it

was accessible through my webhost provider (Bluehost Inc, 2010). Additionally, I could

access online help as required.

Crawford et al. (2001) highlighted in their research that in order to maximise a

questionnaire response rate it was advisable to limit the length of the survey and to

provide a realistic completion time. Consequently, in the current study the online

survey was structured for answers to be purely a 'tick box' response in order to

minimise the completion time, thus hopefully encouraging a greater participation rate.

Each scale was also constructed in an array format with a list of radio buttons set

horizontally for the choice of answers. This allowed sub questions/statements to be

created as the vertical axis of the table and to enable participants to respond with a

series of possible answer options (Figure 7.1).

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[17] All scales used in the final survey were not commercialized and were fully accessible via the
Internet/journal articles.
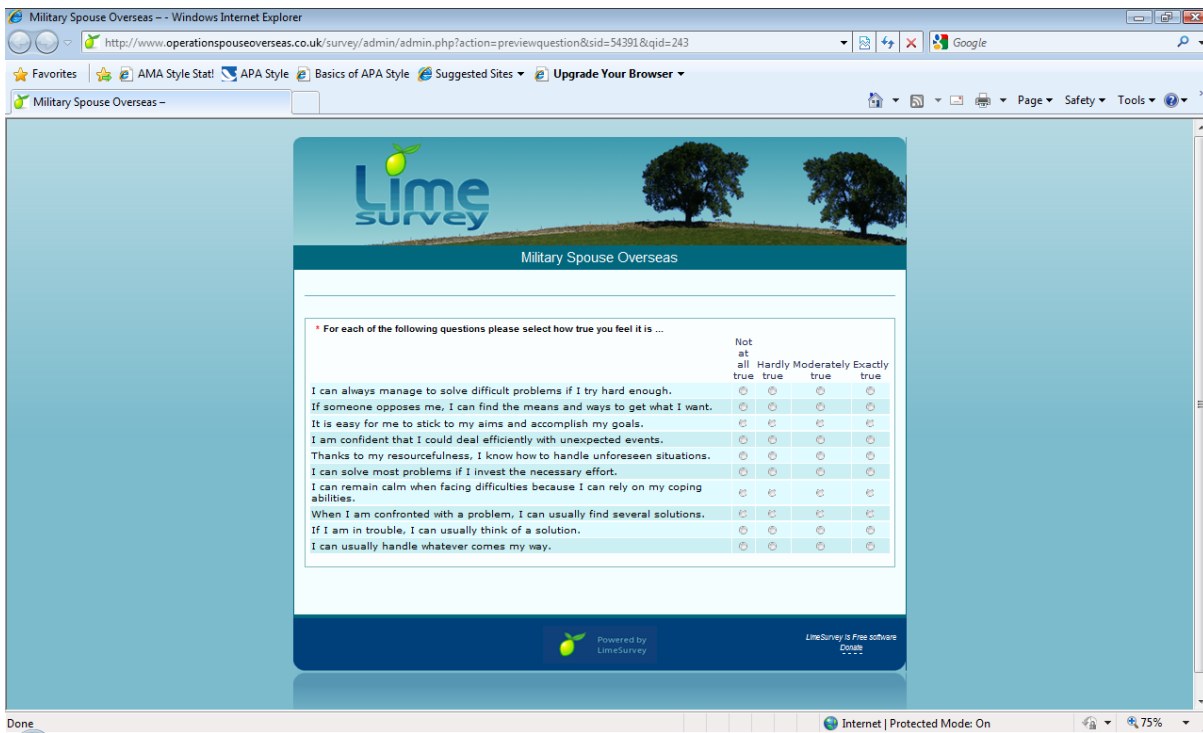
Figure 7.1 Example question format

Each scale was deliberately constructed to enable it to be presented on a single page

of the survey and when necessary the respondent was required to scroll down the

page.   A gauge across the top of the screen displayed the percentage of the survey

that the respondent had completed, again to encourage a full submission. Initially all

questions were stipulated to be mandatory and only after completing the questions on

a page could the respondent progress to the next page. At any stage the respondent

was able to save their responses and return to the questionnaire at a later date.

Finally, navigation buttons under each group of questions/statements enabled the

respondent to return to the previous page.

The link to the survey was only accessible via my website

www.operationspouseoverseas.co.uk and the survey was piloted with five colleagues

prior to activation. They were asked to complete the survey and to indicate any areas

of improvement or suggested changes. As a result, formatting was altered for some

questions and typographical errors were corrected. This pilot also established a

timeframe of ten to 15 minutes for completing the survey, and was felt to be a realistic

time commitment for respondents.

7.3.3.1   Demographics

The first page of the online survey presented basic demographic questions as

previously incorporated in Phases 2 and 3. The only changes were the added option of

'has been both' when asked to select the rank/rate of the serving member, and being

asked to provide the country(ies) of previous foreign posting(s), with approximate

number of years in each posting.

7.3.3.2   Eysenck Personality Questionnaire – revised short form (EPQR-S) (Eysenck et al., 1985)

Eysenck et al. (1985) improved the psychometric properties of the original EPQ to

produce a revised and modified version (the EPQ-R), and subsequently proposed an

abbreviated form, the EPQR-S, for use when time was seen to be a limiting factor. This

produced a 48 item self-report questionnaire which comprised of four subscales:

Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Psychoticism (P) and Lie (L), each consisting of 12

items. The Lie scale operates as a control in an attempt to measure how socially

desirable an individual is being with their answers (Eysenck et al., 1985) and each

question has a binary response of either a 'yes' or 'no'.

In order to minimize the length of the overall online survey, the short form of the

revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQR-S) was chosen. Each scale of this

questionnaire has similar alpha coefficients to the EPQ-R except for the Psychoticism

scale, as reported in Eysenck et al.s' (1985) research. With respect to males and

females the internal reliability of each scale for the EPQR-S were given as N: .84 and

.80; E: .88 and .84; P: .62 and .61; L: .77 and .73 (Eysenck et al., 1985). Although the

brevity of the scale may have contributed to participants' willingness to complete it,

the reliability coefficient of the Psychoticism scale has been regarded by some

researchers as unsatisfactory (Shevlin et al., 2002, Forrest et al., 2000). However,

Eysenck and colleagues argued that the Psychoticism or 'P' scale considers several

different aspects (hostility, lack of empathy and non-conformism) and may have lower

reliabilities than the other scales, which the authors felt were comprised of more

sociable and dynamic items.

As the original version of the EPQR-S scale was developed in the UK, Sato (2005)

believed some of the incorporated items were more applicable to an English speaking

audience. Certainly, in a study of students based in England, the USA, Canada and

Australia, Francis et al. (1991) reported that the EPQR-S measures of neuroticism and

extraversion correlated highly with the full EPQ, and was less correlated with the

psychoticism scale, consistent with the assertion of an enhanced EPQR (Eysenck et al.,

1985). Ortet at al. (1999) also recognised that the literal translation of the scale to a

specific language may lead to bias in cross-cultural research, consequently they

recommended that improvement of the psychoticism dimension in particular, required

adaption of this scale to reflect the specific cultural group.

As only the English version of this scale was to be incorporated within the online

survey, no such adaption techniques as suggested by Ortet et al. (1999) were

necessary for the specifications of this study. Ultimately, the rationale for choosing

the short form of the revised EPQ for incorporation in the online survey, alongside its

concise configuration, was that the instrument had been shown to function reliably

and validly worldwide and had been extensively used, including editions in Hindi,

German, Croatian, Spanish and Greek with published results (Francis et al., 1991,

Tiwari et al., 2009, Francis et al., 2006, Alexopoulos and Kalaitzidis, 2004, Aluja et al.,

2003). Following submission of responses, they were scored in accordance with the

authors' instructions, utilising their scoring key (Appendix xiv). Each section could

attain a maximum score of 12, with higher levels indicating higher levels of, for

example, extraversion, neuroticism etc.

7.3.3.3 Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966)

This is a 23-item forced choice and six filler item self-evaluation tool developed by

Rotter (1966) which measures the extent to which individuals believe they can control

events affecting them. Social Learning Theory provided the theoretical background for

the scale in which general expectancy was determined as being either internally or

externally controlled (Lefcourt, 1991). As such, all items in the scale have a pair of

answers, where each consists of one statement reflecting an internal locus of control

and the other an external (Hock, 2008), and the respondent is obliged to select either

option 'a' or 'b'.

Rotter (1966) reported that the Internal-External (I-E) scale demonstrated relatively

stable and reasonably high internal consistency estimates (ranging from .65 to .79),

with evidence also provided for discriminant and construct validity. Additionally,

Engler (2009) remarked that Rotter's scale remains one of the most widely used locus

of control assessment tools, with Lefcourt (1991) reporting that more than 50% of

research examining locus of control (LOC) employed the I-E scale. In research by

Yilmaz and Kaya (2010) the tool was assessed to have a Cronbach alpha internal

consistency coefficient of .70, and in Zerega et al.s' (1976) research examining the

stability and concurrent validity of the Rotter scale determined that it did yield stable

measures. This analysis was based on the test and re-test measures of 541 High School

students over an eight month period. These studies demonstrate that Rotter's Locus

of Control Scale is a prominent, credible and a well established tool. However, one

regular criticism of the instrumentation of early LOC research was that it was treated

as a unidimensional construct (Lefcourt, 1991, Rotter, 1975), encouraging the

perception of LOC as a trait. Lefcourt emphasises that one 23-item questionnaire

cannot situate an individual into a particular type (where internals are seen as

assertive and efficient, and externals as helpless and inept), and warns that error and

confusion will result from such a scalar interpretation. As a result, multidimensional

instruments, for example the Multidimensional Health Locus of Control Scale (Miller et

al., 1983) or instruments targeted towards a specific aspect of LOC, such as the Marital

Locus of Control Scale (Wallston and Wallston, 1981), have been created.

Rotter (1975) also highlights that the LOC scale was developed as a 'broad-gauge'

instrument, one that could not predict specific situations but would allow for a lower

degree of predication across a wider range of potential situations. Subsequently, he

stated the scale would not be expected to have a high internal consistency.

Consequently, Lefcourt (1991) recommends the I-E scale as a proven general measure

to establish the probability of perceived control influencing the prediction of specific

behaviours.

Ultimately, the LOC scale was incorporated into the online survey based on its credibility and validity, to provide a general LOC assessment. It was scored in accordance with the author's instructions (Appendix xiv). Specifically the six-filler items were not scored and the remaining 23 items were graded one point or zero, dependent on the chosen response. Possible scores could have a range of zero to 23 points. A score approaching zero would indicate that the individual's internal control was high, and a score tending in the opposite direction would imply that a respondent could have a high external control.

7.3.3.4 General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995)

The GSE is a 10-item self-administered scale assessing the strength of an individual's belief in their ability to respond to challenging situations and setbacks (Leganger et al., 2000). The responses are reported on a four point scale:

1. Not at all true

2. Hardly true

3. Moderately true

4. Exactly true.

Schwarzer and Jerusalem (2009) state that the purpose of the scale is to assess a general sense of perceived self-efficacy in order to anticipate the ability to cope with daily hassles and the adaption after experiencing life stressors. It can be argued that military spouses may experience significant stressors due to relocating overseas and as such their subsequent ability to cope may influence their overall adaption. A measure of their perceived self-efficacy using the GSE was therefore felt to provide an adequate indication of this variable.

The GSE instrument was originally developed in 1979 (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 2009) and for over three decades has been used internationally. It is currently available in 33 languages and, Schwarzer and Jerusalem (2009) report that in samples from 23 nations, Cronbach's alphas have ranged from .76 to .90, with the average reaching the upper .80s. Specifically, Leganger et al. (2000) reported an internal consistency of $\alpha = .88$ in a sample of 1576 participants, with a satisfactory test-retest reliability of .82. Additionally, Schwarzer et al. (1999) state that the GSE has proven convergent and discriminant validity reporting that it correlates positively with self-esteem and optimism, and negatively with anxiety and depression.

The multicultural validation of the GSE was demonstrated by Luszczynska et al. (2005). These authors examined the relations between general self-efficacy with other constructs (e.g. social cognitive variables, health behaviours, well-being and coping strategies) among 1933 respondents from three countries (Germany, Poland and South Korea), and determined that, regardless of the county, associations between GSE and the other variables were of comparable size. A further feature was added to this verified multicultural usage of the GSE through the assessment of perceived general self-efficacy utilising the internet as the data collection method (Schwarzer et al., 1999). Ultimately, 1437 internet responses were compared to data collated from traditional 'paper-and-pencil' methods. As a result all psychometric characteristics were deemed as satisfactory, and Schwarzer et al. believed the properties of the GSE were not only established for different cultures and languages, but also for interactive data collection.

Based on the credibility and applicability of Schwarzer and Jerusalem's (1995) GSE instrument, it was chosen to represent the self-efficacy dimension within the online survey. It was scored in accordance with the authors' instructions and the ten items were each graded on a scale of one to four producing a potential total score range of ten to 40. Higher scores are reported to indicate an individual's stronger belief in self-efficacy.

7.3.3.5   Index of Sojourner Social Support Scale (ISSS) (Ong and Ward, 2005)

The ISSS was created specifically for the measure of social support for sojourners. It consists of 18 questions and the responses are reported on a five point scale:

1. No one would do this

2. Someone would do this

3. A few would do this

4. Several would do this

5. Many would do this.

The development of the ISSS was described as 'exemplary' (Gottlieb and Bergen, 2010). Its construction and validation was based on three sequential studies incorporating participants from Asia, Europe, North America, Oceania, New Zealand and England (Ong and Ward, 2005). A cross-validation approach was employed to authenticate the selected items of the ISSS and to then demonstrate the internal and external (construct) validations in two student and adult sojourner samples in Singapore. Ultimately, ISSS was shown to have a stable two-factor internal structure represented by socio-emotional support, such as, affection, sympathy or companionship; and instrumental support, for example, advice, practical help or

financial aid (Suurmeijer et al., 1995). Additionally, the ISSS reliability in a cross-

cultural extension demonstrated α –values of .95, .92 and .92 for the total ISSS scale,

and the socio-emotional support and instrumental support subscales respectively (Ong

and Ward, 2005). In a further study, McGinley (2008) examined the adjustment of

expatriates residing in Russia (N = 110) and incorporated the ISSS instrument in their

study. McGinley reported that the two subscales both demonstrated a suitable

internal reliability of α = .96. In a recent study by Podsiadlowski et al. (2012), the

authors hypothesized that social support on international assignments for expatriate

workers (N = 131) living temporarily in New Zealand, would increase sojourner

satisfaction. This hypothesis was examined and subsequently accepted using the ISSS

scale, within the context of instrumental and socio-emotional support and also

demonstrated high values of Cronbach's alpha for the two subscales of .89 and .90

respectively. Additionally, in an attempt to further understand the health promotion

behaviours of 140 Korean 'goose mothers'[18] living within the North American area, the

ISSS scale was utilised to assess the social support factors and had an internal reliability

of .97. These studies demonstrate the consistent levels of reliability for the ISSS and

significance within social support research, providing a further rationale for

incorporation of the scale in the online survey.

Scoring of the ISSS was in accordance with the authors' instructions. The objective

nature of the instrument dictated that no special training was necessary (Portela-

Myers, 2006). It was possible for the scale to be scored as a single factor of social

support by summing all items (each with a value of one to five), producing a scoring

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[18] Korean women who migrate for a prolonged time for their children's education while their spouses remain in Korea. LEE, H. 2010. "I am a Kirogi mother": Education exodus and life transformation among Korean transnational women. *Journal of Language, Identity, & Education,* 9**,** 250-264.

range of 18 to 90, with higher scores relating to a strong social support system.

Alternatively the scores could also be calculated for the subscales of socio-emotional

support and instrumental support each with a scoring range of nine to 45.

7.3.3.6   Perceived Military Support Questionnaire (PMSQ)

A short questionnaire consisting of 13 items was constructed to measure a military

spouse's perceived level of support provided by the British Military, with responses

reported in a five point scale:

1. Very poor		1. Strongly disagree
2. Poor		2. Disagree
3. Good	or	3. Neutral
4. Very good		4. Agree
5. Excellent.		5. Strongly agree.
(Applicable for questions 1 – 10)		(Applicable for questions 11 – 13)

This was an exploratory questionnaire but was founded on research from military and

non-military studies (McNulty, 2005, Copeland and Norell, 2002, McNulty, 2011, Ali et

al., 2003) relating to the experiences of accompanying spouses on foreign postings.

The findings of the present study's systematic review and analysis of Phases 2 and 3

also contributed to the PMSQ's development. In particular, the level of support

received by the military spouse prior to relocation and then on arrival including the

role of the sponsor was reviewed. Specific questions with reference to medical and

housing support were also incorporated to determine the availability of the wider level

of support. The hierarchical nature of support and relationships amongst the spouses

due to the role/rank of the serving spouse was a disputed topic amongst the

respondents in Phases 2 and 3. Therefore, a direct question specifying how much the

survey respondent agreed or disagreed with the influence of their serving spouse was

also included. In addition the military spouse was requested to state overall how

appropriate the provision of support was from the military on their foreign posting

and, finally, if they were offered the opportunity of another overseas posting whether

they would consider accepting it.

Scoring of this exploratory questionnaire could produce a scoring range of 13 to 65,

with each item scoring a possible one to five, and higher scores relating to a stronger

perceived social support system provided by the military.

7.3.4 Ethical considerations

It is suggested that there is a growing prevalence of Web surveys being utilised for

academic research (Buchanan and Hvizdak, 2009). These authors conducted a survey

of 750 University Human Research Ethics Boards and the respondents highlighted that

the electronic nature of Web surveys was challenging in terms of adherence to the

basic principle of ethics, for example, of consent, privacy, anonymity and

confidentiality. Additionally, it was reported that new ethical complexities

accompanied this method pertaining to data storage, security and survey design.

As with the online forum, an introduction to the study and a participant information

sheet were provided online in the website www.operationspouseoverseas.co.uk

before the commencement of the survey (Figure 7.2). The only means for an individual

to proceed with the survey was by selecting the link detailing that they gave their

consent to proceed (Figure 7.3).

The online survey was completely anonymous and at no point was the individual asked to provide their name or contact details. The respondents also had the choice to opt out at any stage of the survey, by simply not submitting their responses. However, once these responses were submitted it would not be possible to retract them without revealing the individual's identity (the respondent was made aware of this consequence at the consent stage). All data received were stored in a secure database.

Within the security configuration of the survey settings, public access and control was limited by cookies being activated to prevent repeated participation. Notification and data management were set to ensure that answers to the survey were anonymous, responses were not date stamped, would not have an Internet Protocol (IP) address logged and would not have their referring Universal Resource Locator (URL) logged. Specifications for the survey and navigation settings depicted that the survey would not be listed publically, participants could not print their answers and it was not possible to share public statistics.
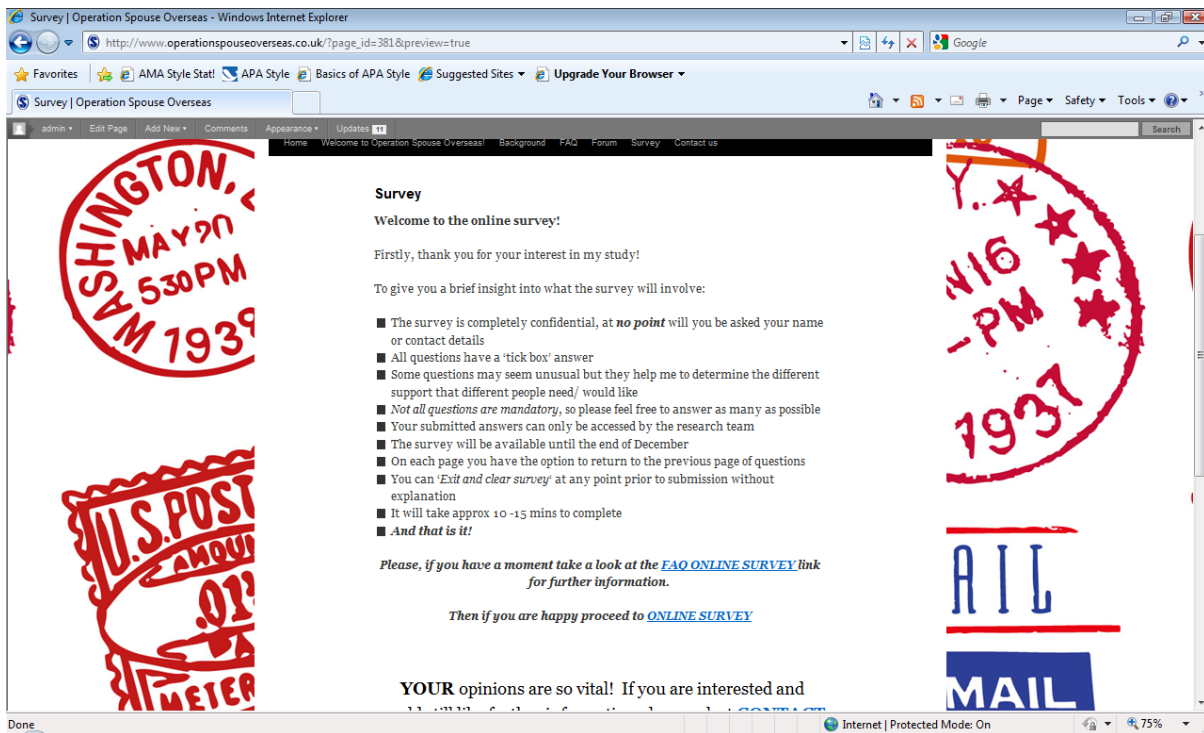
Figure 7.2 Online survey homepage
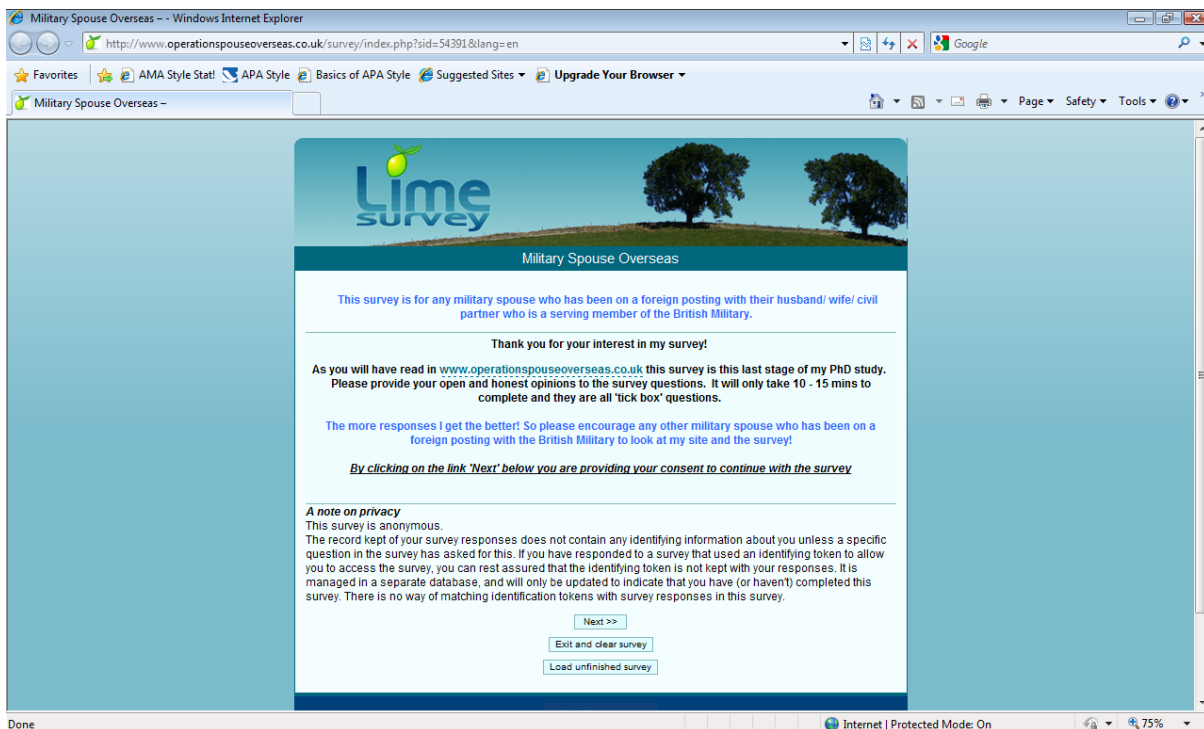
Figure 7.3 Survey consent web page

7.3.5   Aim of survey

The qualitative Phases 1, 2 and 3 were directed at the experiences and feelings of military spouses on a foreign posting. The experience was reported as positive by some, whereas others emphasised the negative aspects; regardless of experience there were individual differences in perceived levels of support. To further explore this concept, the aim of the online survey was to quantify among military spouses who had experienced an overseas posting, the relationship between specific personality dimensions and the perceived level of support provided by the military organisation and informal networks. Therefore, the goal was to identify how much that perception of military support was a reflection of personality, socio-emotional or instrumental support and how much was due to the ability to control one's own destiny and to adapt.

The research question was:

> What contributes to someone's perception of military support on foreign postings, and does it relate to inherent personality factors in each individual and/or social support networks?

7.3.6   Sample

Calculation of an effect size (the impact of the predictor variables on the outcome variable) is an invaluable method used to determine the importance of research findings by quantifying the difference between two groups (Field, 2009, Coe, 2002). Such an effect size is intrinsically linked to three facets: the sample size; the probability level which is considered to provide statistically significant results (the α – level); and the statistical power of the test (the β – level) (Field, 2009). The power analysis

computer program G*Power Version 3.1.3 (Faul et al., 2009) is utilised for many

statistical tests common to social, behavioural and biomedical sciences (accessed via

http://www.psycho.uni-duesseldorf.de/abteilungen/aap/gpower3/download-and-

register, 16 September 2011). Therefore, this program was used to determine the

sample size necessary to achieve a power of .8 (β = .2). This power value is a

convention proposed for general use, a smaller value would incur a significant risk of a

Type II error (failure to reject a null hypothesis when it is false), and a larger value

would demand a sample size potentially exceeding available resources (Cohen, 1992).

To determine an *a priori* sample size for a linear multiple regression, the following data

were inputted to G*Power: α = .05, power = .8, eight predictors and effect size (f^2) =

.15. The effect size of .15 is considered to be of medium effect, as stipulated by Cohen

(1992), and calculates a medium likelihood that there is a significant linear relationship

between at least one of the predictor variables (eight represented by inherent

personality factors and social support) with the perceived level of military support.

The resulting sample size computed was 109. Therefore, achieving 109 responses to

the survey would demonstrate a power of .8, which is an 80% chance of detecting an

effect if one actually exists.

7.3.7   Recruitment

Recruitment was directed towards military spouses, from any ethnic background, who

were married to or in a civil partnership with a member of the British Armed Forces

and who had completed or were currently on a foreign posting. No limit to the

number of foreign postings experienced or to the particular locations of the foreign

assignments was stipulated.

The respondents were contacted through advertisements in the autumn edition (August to November) of the Army Family Federation Journal (which also contained an article about my study) and within the August edition of the Sixth Sense British Forces Newspaper (available to all families of military personnel on a foreign posting to Germany). An advertisement was also placed within the Navy Families federation newsletter, the Help, Information and Volunteer Exchange (HIVE), and Communications weekly orders all within the Portsmouth area. Anyone who had previously participated or registered interest in the study from Phases 2 and 3 were also invited to complete the survey, which led to further advertisements within the British Forces communities in Belgium, Cyprus (on a military wives' run Facebook page), Italy, Portugal and the Falkland Islands. Advertisements were also made indirectly through serving personnel acquaintances and civilian contacts who had been associated with British Military foreign postings.

As in Phase 3 (the online forum) I also placed posts within established public military forums that were independent of the Ministry of Defence (MoD): ARmy Rumour SErvice (ARRSE – affiliated to the Army), Rum Ration (Royal Navy affiliation), Rear Party (forum for friends and family of serving personnel), and the now available E-Goat (RAF affiliation).

Advertising and recruitment was continual throughout the duration of the online survey including a reminder email that was sent to participants from Phases 2 and 3, and posts within the online forums stating when the survey would end, which was also advertised on the study website.

7.3.8   Data collection

The data collection commenced with the activation of the online survey on the 1st July 2011 and it was accessible until the 5th January 2012. Continual advertising was established throughout this period (Section 7.3.7). The survey link was only accessible via my website (www.operationspouseoverseas.co.uk). Respondents were requested to answer the questions as openly and honestly as possible, and to follow their initial intuition.

On activation of the survey all questions were stipulated as mandatory. However, I later received two emails questioning what the correspondents felt to be the restrictive choices of answers with reference to the Locus of Control (LOC) Scale (Rotter, 1966). As it transpired their concerns were directed towards a couple of the 'filler' questions within this scale in which they felt they were unable to consciously accept either answer option, believing they would have to provide false responses. On review, I had by this point received 80 responses to the survey however a further 20 were incomplete, the majority of which had ended their submission at the LOC scale. Consequently, at the beginning of August 2011 I altered the mandatory choice setting of this scale to allow a 'no answer' option, and amended the instructions for the survey, encouraging the respondents to answer the questions if possible and to then move onto the next page. Unfortunately, because the survey was active at this stage I was unable to reorder the structure of the survey to place the LOC scale at the end, which in retrospect would have been the preferred option in order to encourage full and complete responses.

7.3.9   Data analysis

When the survey was deactivated in January 2012, 136 responses had been submitted

(a further 37 responses had been initiated but not submitted). Lime Survey collated all

of the responses and allowed the direct transfer of the data into the chosen analysis

software, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0 (IBM Corporation,

2010). SPSS is one of the mostly widely used computer programs for statistical analysis

in social sciences (Anthony, 2004) and having had previous experience of using this

particular software program I was comfortable with the data input and management.

Additionally, I was able to attend SPSS tutorial sessions and had ready access to

internet resources for assistance.

As discussed in Section 7.3.7, respondents from Phases 2 and 3 were invited to

complete the survey. Therefore, potentially they could have contributed a maximum

of 47 submissions to the survey data. However, as well as conceivably only

representing a small subset of the total responses, the use of validated questionnaires

that were not derived from the qualitative data collection phases but that instead

explicitly examined specific personality traits and support structures, ensured that the

quantitative data collected from the survey was significantly different to that of Phases

2 and 3, and reduced the potential bias that could have arisen from including previous

study participants.

After the transfer of the data from Lime Survey it was necessary to formulate columns

of variables within the SPSS data view to represent the actual responses and

subsequent scoring for all scales. Using the SPSS software in combination with an

Excel (Microsoft Office, 2007) spreadsheet allowed the scoring calculations to be

accomplished. Sections 7.3.3.2 - 7.3.3.6 describe the scoring systems used for each

scale, whilst Appendix xiv provides further information of the respective authors'

scoring keys (when applicable). The following section presents the process required to

ensure the reliability and normality of the data prior to analysis, followed by a

discussion of the main inferential statistical analysis tests conducted.

7.3.9.1   Statistical analysis

Due to the restructuring of the available responses to the LOC scale (Rotter, 1966), the

removal of the mandatory setting resulted with 36 (26.5% of total) incomplete

submissions.   Missing data is a renowned complication of survey and self-report

measures (Fox-Wasylyshyn and El-Masri, 2005, Patrician, 2002) resulting with the

ineffectual use of standard analysis techniques, which normally rely upon complete-

data methods of analysis (Rubin, 1987). As a default, statistical software programs

automatically omit any case with a missing data on any variable (listwise deletion),

which could potentially lead to compromised analytical power due to a decreased

sample size (Patrician, 2002, Schafer, 1997). Therefore, one option was to remove all

data from those respondents who submitted incomplete responses; however, this

would have resulted in a smaller sample and less power, consequently this method

was not selected.

A simplistic option to overcome the quandary of missing values is to replace the

missing data with the mean score for this variable (Field, 2009). Nonetheless, Field

highlights such a method may be acceptable when the missing values represent a very

small percentage of the sample. For larger proportions Field states that the standard

deviation and standard error would be suppressed, significant results would then be a

product of data replacement rather than the actual effect. Instead an approach that provides a more significant estimate is conducted through Missing Value Analysis (MVA) utilising regression imputation. This method computes multiple linear regression estimates of the incomplete variables by regressing them on the other complete variables (Allison, 2001).

Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) comment that regression imputation endeavours to methodologically estimate missing data, resulting in relatively objective data. Furthermore, research conducted by Raymond and Roberts (1987) indicated that regression imputation was more accurate than deletion or substitution of mean values. However, analytic methods do not adjust for the imputation process involving uncertainty about missing values, leading to an absence of sufficient variability causing an underestimation of standard errors (Patrician, 2002, Allison, 2001, Little and Rubin, 1989).

In order to retain the 36 full responses for the other five sections of the survey, listwise deletion of these cases was not an option. Mean substitution was considered to be too inaccurate for such a large section of missing data. Therefore, regression imputation was considered to be the most appropriate method to achieve a complete data set of survey responses and was used to estimate the 36 missing cases within the LOC responses. A residual estimation adjustment was selected and added to the predicted score; subsequent results were then incorporated in the complete-data set.

It is a pre-requisite for any research based on measurement to centre on accuracy or dependability (Cronbach, 1951). Thus the reliability of, for example a survey, needs to

"consistently reflect the construct it is measuring" (Field, 2009, p. 673). One method

of assessing this reproducibility is by measuring the internal consistency, which is the

extent to which the different item results correlate (Polgar and Thomas, 2008).

Accordingly, Cronbach's alpha (α) (1951) is determined as the mean of all possible

split-half coefficients and is regarded as the most common reliability measurement

scale (Field, 2009). This measurement was utilised to assess the reliability of the

survey, and an α was applied separately to the subscales as suggested by Cronbach

(1951). In accordance with literature, findings greater than or equal to .7 were

considered to be of an acceptable level; those in the range .65 to .7 were to be

regarded as minimally acceptable, and results lower than this to be deemed as

undesirable (DeVellis, 2012, Kline, 2000, Nunnally, 1978, Cohen et al., 2007).

One assumption of data is that they are normally distributed in order for parametric

tests to be conducted accurately (Field, 2009). Quantifying normality is assessed by

measuring the ratio of the Skewness (a measure of the symmetry of a frequency

distribution) to the Standard Error (SE) of the Skewness for all subscale data:

$$\left| \frac{Skewness}{SEskewness} \right| > 1.96 \qquad (p < .05)$$

If the magnitude of the result is larger than 1.96, then this is significant at p < .05. The

data are not normally distributed and will need to be corrected by a transformation

(Field, 2009).

Following MVA, and assessment of reliability and normality, two main inferential

statistical methods were conducted in the analysis: multiple linear regression and

mediation analysis. The former, multiple regression analysis is a method of predicting

an outcome variable from several predictor variables (Field, 2009). This examination

of the relationship between a dependent variable and several independent variables is

one of the most extensively used statistical analyses in behavioural sciences (Aiken et

al., 2003). It was chosen to predict the perceived level of military support (the

outcome criterion) based on an individual's inherent personality traits, their level of

self-efficacy, their locus of control and the level of informal support provision: socio-

emotional and instrument support (all representing the predictors).

The second main inferential statistical test incorporated was indirect mediation

analysis (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). The concept of mediation succinctly denotes that

a third variable conveys the effect of one variable on another (MacKinnon, 2008). This

test was chosen to identity any underlying mediating relationship between the

predictor variables emerging from the multiple regression analysis and the outcome

variable, perceived military support. Specifically MacKinnon states that "a mediating

variable is intermediate in the causal sequence relating an independent variable to a

dependent variable" (p. 1). Consequently, a mediation hypothesis aids in explaining a

process and causality theorising that the effect of some causal variable X, on a

proposed outcome Y, is mediated by a variable M (Preacher and Hayes, 2008).

Extending this, the indirect effects in multiple mediator models can be conducted, as

illustrated in Figure 7.4.
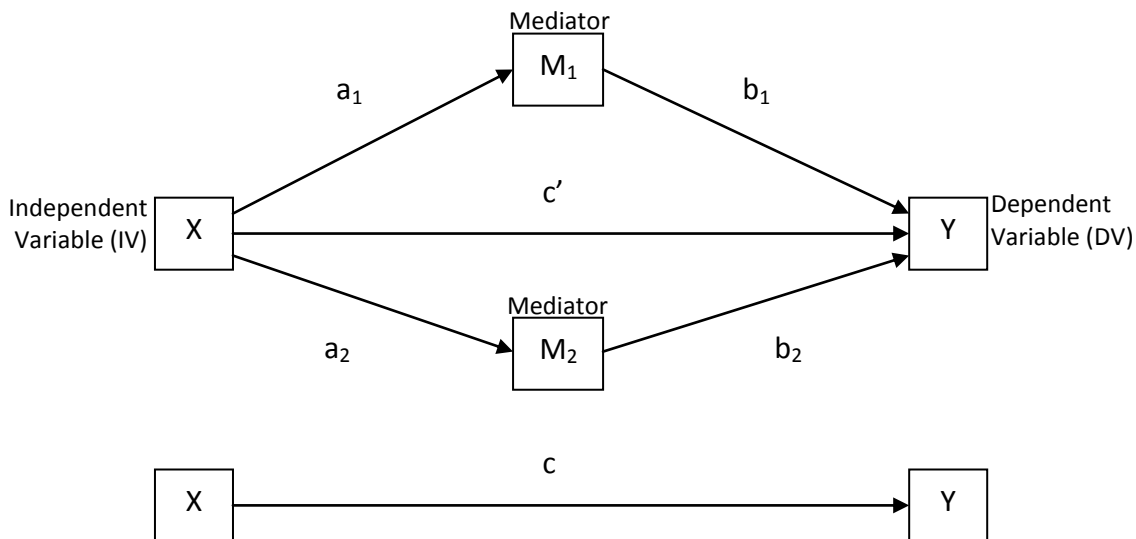
Figure 7.4 Multiple mediation design based on Preacher and Hayes (2008, p. 881)

The *total direct effect* of X on Y is denoted by path *c'*; the *specific indirect effect* of X on Y via mediator M_1 is the product of the two paths linking X to Y via M_1 quantified as a_1b_1; likewise for mediator M_2 the result is a_2b_2; the *total indirect effect* of X on Y is $\sum_{i=1}^{2} a_i b_i$; finally the *total effect* of X on Y is c = c' + $\sum_{i=1}^{2} a_i b_i$.

Preacher and Hayes' (2008) indirect method of mediation analysis was selected as an alternative to Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation tests. Although Baron and Kenny's framework was the most prolifically used analysis, contemporary research has also identified flaws in their work (Zhao et al., 2010, Preacher and Hayes, 2004, Rucker et al., 2011, MacKinnon et al., 2007). The subsequent misapplication of the Baron-Kenny procedure has been argued as the reason for the premature ending of some promising research projects (Zhao et al., 2010). Instead, alternative procedures have been suggested. Specifically, Zhao and colleagues presented a framework that considered a two-dimension conception of mediation assessing the indirect and direct effect; in doing so they identified three patterns consistent with mediation and two with nonmediation. This was regarded as an enhanced alternative to the 'full', 'partial' and

'no' mediation classification instilled by Baron and Kenny (1986), which was hinged on their prerequisite condition of no direct effect of independent variable X on Y. Furthermore, the Sobel z-test recommended by Baron and Kenny was disputed to lack statistical power, instead the more rigorous and powerful bootstrap test[19] was noted to be a more credible option (Zhao et al., 2010, Preacher and Hayes, 2004). Such a test is incorporated within the indirect mediation analysis of Preacher and Hayes (2008) and their script is recommended by Zhao and colleagues.

7.3.10 Ensuring rigour

In summary, to establish rigour throughout the production of the online survey and subsequent statistical analysis, all of the previously published scales were assessed in accordance with their reliability and validity (Sections 7.3.3.2 - 7.3.3.5). A pilot of the survey was conducted with five colleagues allowing an opportunity to test the online software and transference of data. An *a priori* power analysis was conducted to determine the required sample to achieve a medium effect size with a power of .8. At deactivation of the survey all data were directly transferred from the Lime Survey software to SPSS v19 to avoid any error of data input. Finally, reliability and normality of the data were assessed, with the transformation of variables conducted if required. Furthermore, Missing Variable Analysis and regression imputation were utilised to provide a more accurate estimate of missing responses rather than substituting with mean scores.

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[19] A technique which allows estimation of the sampling distribution properties by taking repeated samples, with replacement, from the data sample. FIELD, A. 2009. *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS Third Edition,* London, Sage.

7.4   Part 2: Findings of online survey

7.4.1   Description of statistical analysis results

As discussed in Section 7.3.9.1 a Missing Value Analysis was conducted utilising regression imputation to determine estimates of missing data from 36 respondents for the Locus of Control (Rotter, 1966) scale. This produced a complete data set and descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were then conducted.

Originally, a sample size of 109 was required to produce a medium effect (f^2 = .15) with a power of .8. The actual sample size of 136 produced a power of 0.9 to demonstrate a medium effect. Therefore, there was a 90% chance of detecting an effect if one actually existed.

7.4.1.1   Reliability and normality tests

As discussed in Section 7.3.9.1 using Cronbach α allowed the reliability to be assessed for all scales incorporated in the survey. The results are shown in Table 7.2 with comparable Cronbach α levels from previous research.

EPQR-S Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E) and Lie (L) had internal consistency readings of greater than .7, with E exceeding .8, therefore they all demonstrated acceptable levels. However, the EPQR-S Psychoticism (P) scale showed a Cronbach α coefficient of just .535 and was at an unsatisfactory level (Cohen et al., 2007, DeVellis, 2012). The reliability could have been increased to .542 by deleting the question 'would you take drugs which may have strange or dangerous effects'. However, it was felt that elimination of this question would not have resulted with a significantly greater Cronbach α level, therefore, all questions remained.

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The results for the EPQR-S subscales were all similar to those produced by Eysenck and colleagues' (1985) research for a sample of 494 females (average age 31.80 years). Despite the unsatisfactory reading for the P-scale, this reliability level was consistent with the recognised weaknesses of the scale. In Eysenck et al.s' (1985) research they proposed a development of the P-scale, and the subsequent reported reliabilities still did not match those achieved for the N,E and L scales. In support of their findings, the authors argued that the P-scale incorporated a range of facets with reliabilities lower than would be associated with a scale containing only sociability and activity items (Cattell and Tsujioka, 1964).

The Locus of Control scale produced a slighter low reading of .664. Such a level of α has been determined as minimally acceptable (DeVellis, 2012, Cohen et al., 2007). Nonetheless, it was consistent with the reliability levels of previous research by Yilmaz and Kaya (2010) and by Rotter (1966).

The results for the four remaining previously published scales were all similar to, or greater than the Cronbach α-levels of previous research findings (as demonstrated in Table 7.2). Two results were greater than .9 and the remaining two greater than .8, all demonstrating high internal consistency levels. The Perceived Military Support (PMS) exploratory scale produced an internal consistency of .857. Obviously it was not possible to compare this to other studies but in general an $\alpha > .8$ is depicted to be highly reliable (DeVellis, 2012, Cohen et al., 2007).

Scale	Reliability Statistics: Cronbach α	N items	Cronbach α from Previous studies	Resource(s) of previous research
EPQR-S: Neuroticism Scale	.772	12	.80	(Eysenck et al., 1985) – a sample of 494 females
EPQR-S: Extraversion Scale	.859	12	.84	
EPQR-S: Psychoticism Scale	.535	12	.61	
EPQR-S: Lie Scale	.745	12	.73	
Locus of Control	.664	23	.7[a];.7	(Rotter, 1966) – sample of 200 females; (Yilmaz and Kaya, 2010) – 350 undergraduate students (349 female, 1 male)
ISSS: Socio-emotional Support	.961	6	.92	(Ong and Ward, 2005) – based on a sample of 237 under- and postgraduates at university in New Zealand (142 female, 85 men, ten non-answer)
ISSS : Instrumental Support	.977	9	.92	
Generalised Self Efficacy	.849	10	.88; .75 - .91	(Leganger et al., 2000) – based on a sample of 1576 18 year old adolescents (52.2% females, 47.8% males); (Schwarzer et al., 1999) – range of α-levels reported from previous research studies
Perceived Military Support	.857	13	N/A	N/A

[a] based on Kuder-Richardson test

Table 7.2 Reliability of all scales

The normality assessment of the data demonstrated that EPQR-S Psychoticism was not normally distributed (Table 7.3). As a result these data were transformed on SPSS using square root transformation (due to the presence of zero values in the data). The

subsequent normality assessment produced an acceptable magnitude of 1.54 and

these new values were incorporated in the data set for all further analysis.

Scale	Skewness	Std. Error of Skewness	$\frac{Skewness}{|SEskewness|}$	N valid
EPQR-S: Neuroticism Scale	-.010	.208	.048	136
EPQR-S: Extraversion Scale	-.395	.208	1.899	136
EPQR-S: Psychoticism Scale	1.091	.208	5.245*	136
EPQR-S: Lie Scale	-.206	.208	.990	136
Locus of Control	-.371	.208	1.78	136
ISSS: Socio-emotional Support	.232	.208	1.115	136
ISSS: Instrumental Support	.361	.208	1.736	136
Perceived Military Support	-.074	.208	.356	136
General Self Efficacy	-.192	.208	.923	136

* > 1.96 and needs to be transformed
Table 7.3 Normality of Data

7.4.1.2 Descriptive statistics

As can be viewed in Table 7.4, of the 136 respondents 135 were female and only one

was male, and together they had an average age of 39.93 years. All respondents were

in a heterosexual relationship, 121 of the respondents were born inside the UK and 15

were of other nationalities. The greatest percentage of respondents were affiliated

with the British Army (56.6%, N = 77), next greatest were the Royal Navy military

spouses who represented 28.7% (N = 39) and the remainder were affiliated to the RAF

(14%, N = 19), with one respondent whose spouse(s) had been in the Royal Navy and

the RAF.

		N	%
Respondent gender/Gender of serving spouse	Female/Male	135	99.3
	Male/Female	1	.7
Birth origin	Outside UK	15	11.0
	UK	121	89.0
Service affiliation of spouse	Royal Navy (including Royal Marines)	39	28.7
	British Army	77	56.6
	Royal Air Force	19	14.0
	Royal Navy and RAF	1	.7
Ex-member of Armed Services?	Yes	25	18.4
	No	111	81.6
	Mean age	39.93	
	Age range	25 - 58	

Table 7.4 Descriptive Statistics

Table 7.5 presents a cross tabulation of the service affiliation of the serving spouse and his/her rank or rate. From this it can be determined that the largest proportion of respondents were the spouse of an officer (56.6%, N=77), with 39% (N = 53) representing military spouses of other ranks and 4% (N=6) whose serving spouse had previously been a rating prior to their officer commission.

		Rank or rate of serving spouse				
		Officer	Other rank	Has been both	Total	Percent
Service affiliation of serving spouse	**Royal Navy (including Royal Marines)**	24	15	0	39	28.7
	British Army	38	34	5	77	56.6
	Royal Air Force	15	3	1	19	14.0
	Royal Navy and RAF	0	1	0	1	.7
	Total	77	53	6	136	
	Percent	56.6	39.0	4.4		

Table 7.5 Cross tabulation of service and rank/rate

Table 7.6 and Table 7.7 demonstrate that altogether the respondents represent

separate experiences from 269 foreign postings and 27 locations (although the

ambiguous response of 'Middle East' may come under a previous recorded posting).

The maximum number of postings experienced by an individual was eight, with an

average of two experienced by most. In descending order: Germany, Italy, Cyprus and

Belgium represent the most frequented foreign locations by the survey respondents.

The number actually on a foreign posting at the time of completing the survey was

determined to be approximately 24. This was based on those respondents who

provided the posting end date of 'to present', 2012 or 2013. Those stating an end date

of 2011 were not included in this statistic as there was no way of determining if they

were due to leave or had already left prior to completing the online survey.

How many foreign postings have you been on as an accompanying spouse?			How many foreign postings have you been on as an accompanying spouse?	
Response	Frequency	Percent		
1	66	49.3	Mean	1.96
2	38	27.9	Minimum	1
3	17	11.8	Maximum	8
4	7	5.1	Sum	269
5	4	2.9		
6	1	.7		
7	2	1.5		
8	1	.7		
Total	136	100.0		

Table 7.6 Frequency of postings

Location	No. of postings	Location	No. of postings
Abu Dhabi	1	Italy	40
Antigua	1	Kazakhstan	1
Australia	7	Middle East	1
Bahrain	2	Nepal	5
Belgium	20	Norway	1
Brunei	5	Oman	2
Canada	6	Portugal	2
Cyprus	38	Russia	1
Denmark	1	Saudi Arabia	1
Falklands	5	Singapore	2
France	1	Spain	2
Germany	94	The Netherlands	5
Gibraltar	6	USA	14
Hong Kong	5		
	Total no. of locations	27	
	Total no. of postings	269	

Table 7.7 Locations of postings

7.4.1.3 Multiple linear regression analysis

In order to identify critical factors that were associated with an individual's perceived level of military support, a forced entry multiple regression analysis was performed. The dependent variable was the level of Perceived Military Support (PMS), and the eight independent variables were entered in four blocks of similar concepts:

> Block 1:   EPQR-S: Neuroticism
> EPQR-S: Extraversion
> EPQR-S: Psychoticism
> EPQR-S: Lie
>
> Block 2:   Locus of Control
>
> Block 3:   General Self-Efficacy
>
> Block 4:   ISSS: Socio-emotional Support
> ISSS: Instrumental Support.

For each regression analysis the probability level for inclusion of the variables was set at .05.

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The hypothesis tested was:

H$_1$:   At least one of the variables has a significant linear relationship with the perceived level of military support.

Table 7.8 presents the means (with the possible scoring range and its median value) and standard deviations for the criterion and predictor variables scores. In accordance with the information provided in Sections 7.3.3.2 to 7.3.3.6, the scoring continuums demonstrated higher/lower scores to correlate with higher/lower levels of, for example, a particular personality trait, a stronger belief in self-efficacy or stronger support systems. With reference to the Locus of Control scale the continuum ranged from a high *internal* control to a high *external* control. The median values of these scoring keys provide an indication of the location of the given respondents' average score on this scoring continuum.

As can be noted from Table 7.8, the average perceived military support score was 35.27, which is slightly lower than the median value of 39 for this scoring range. The average scores for all other scales except EPQRS-Psychoticsm (P) and General Self-Efficacy are noted to be close to their corresponding median score, with Locus of Control tending towards being external. The average scores for the EPQR-S 'P' and Self-Efficacy scales were approaching the lower and upper end of their scoring ranges respectively.

	Mean (possible scoring range; median of possible scoring range)	Std. Deviation	N
EPQR-S: Neuroticism (N)	5.38 (0 – 12; 6)	2.979	136
EPQR-S: Extraversion (E)	7.93 (0 – 12; 6)	3.389	136
EPQR-S: Psychoticism (P)	1.1571 (0 – 12; 6)	.67729	136
EPQR-S: Lie (L)	6.09 (0 – 12; 6)	2.763	136
Locus of Control (LOC)	12.45 (0 – 23; 11.5)	3.773	136
Generalised Self-Efficacy (GSE)	32.12 (10 – 40; 25)	3.553	136
ISSS: Socio-Emotional Support (SES)	27.65 (9 – 45; 27)	9.291	136
ISSS: Instrumental Support (IS)	26.15 (9 – 45; 27)	9.589	136
Perceived Military Support (PMS)	35.27 (13 – 65; 39)	8.194	136

Table 7.8 Descriptive statistics of scores

In addition to the descriptive statistics, Table 7.9 presents the bivariate correlation matrix between the criterion and predictor variables, demonstrating the Pearson's correlation coefficient between every pair of variables and the one-tailed significance of pairings. This table provided an indication of the relationship between the predictors and the outcome. Of note were the significant negative correlations of neuroticism (r = -.204, $p < .01$) and psychoticism (r = -.163, $p < .05$) with the perceived level of military support. Additionally, there were significant and positive correlations between extraversion (r = .167, $p < .05$), socio-emotional support (r = .378, $p < .001$) and instrumental support (r = .465, $p < .001$) and perceived level of military support. Therefore at this initial stage, of all the predictors, the level of instrumental support appeared to best predict the outcome. Furthermore, there was

no preliminary evidence of multicollinearity between the predictors (all r < .9), a

required assumption to allow generalisability of a regression model (Berry, 1993).

Pearson Correlation	PMS	EPQR-S: N	EPQR-S: E	EPQR-S: P	EPQR-S: L	LOC	GSE	ISSS: SES	ISSS: IS
PMS	1.000								
EPQR-S: N	-.204**	1.000							
EPQR-S: E	.167*	-.283***	1.000						
EPQR-S: P	-.163*	-.178*	.195*	1.000					
EPQR-S: L	.112	-.010	-.144*	-.225**	1.000				
LOC	-.028	-.072	-.105	.036	-.049	1.000			
GSE	-.140	-.092	.098	-.131	.007	-.226**	1.000		
ISSS: SES	.378***	-.241**	.307***	-.107	-.026	.001	.082	1.000	
ISSS: IS	.465***	-.313***	.289***	-.102	.046	-.050	.009	.740***	1.000

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
Table 7.9 Correlations

Table 7.10 presents the initial SPSS output for the multiple linear regression analysis,

depicting the four models representing the entered 'blocks' of predictors. For the first

model R^2 = .111, indicating an individual's personality accounted for 11.1% (p < .01) of

the variation in the perceived level of military support. The addition of an individual's

Locus of Control (Model 2) did not contribute any further variation. However, when

the remaining predictors were added, self-efficacy contributed a further 4.7% (15.8% –

11.1%; p < .01) and support an additional 12.5% (28.3% - 15.8%; p < .001).

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R^2 Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.334[a]	.111	.084	7.842	.111	4.099	4	131	.004*
2	.334[b]	.111	.077	7.872	.000	.027	1	130	.870
3	.397[c]	.158	.118	7.694	.046	7.075	1	129	.009*
4	.532[d]	.283	.238	7.155	.125	11.073	2	127	.000**

a. Predictors:(Constant), EPQR-S: L, EPQR-S: N, EPQR-S: P, EPQR-S: E
b. Predictors:(Constant), EPQR-S: L, EPQR-S: N, EPQR-S: P, EPQR-S: E, LOC
c. Predictors:(Constant), EPQR-S: L, EPQR-S: N, EPQR-S: P, EPQR-S: E, LOC, GSE
d. Predictors:(Constant), EPQR-S: L, EPQR-S: N, EPQR-S: P, EPQR-S: E, LOC, GSE, ISSS:SES, ISSS:IS
e. Dependent Variable: PMS
df, degrees of freedom; F, F-ratio; R, correlation coefficient
*p < .01, ** p < .001

Table 7.10 Multiple linear regression model summary[e]

The results presented in Table 7.11 were from the analysis of variance (ANOVA), which tested whether the model was significantly better at predicting the outcome (perceived level of military support) rather than only estimating it using the mean value (Field, 2009). As such, Field states that the F-ratio represents "the ratio of improvement in prediction that results from fitting the model, relative to the inaccuracy that still exists in the model" (p. 236). Consequently, if the improvement due to the model fit is greater than the inaccuracy within, then F > 1. Based on this analysis Model 1 significantly improved the ability to predict the outcome of perceived level of military support (F = 4.099, p < .01), however, with the addition of extra parameters in Models 2 and 3 this trend continued. Ultimately, Model 4 was the most significant at predicting the outcome variable due to the greatest F-ratio and significance level of p < .001.

Model	Mean Square Model (MS$_M$)	Mean Square Residual (MS$_R$)	F =MS$_M$/MS$_R$	Sig.
1	252.080	61.501	4.099	.004[a] *
2	201.995	61.961	3.260	.008[b] *
3	238.134	59.195	4.023	.001[c] *
4	320.327	51.199	6.256	.000[d] **

a. Predictors:(Constant), EPQR-S: L, EPQR-S: N, EPQR-S: P, EPQR-S: E
b. Predictors:(Constant), EPQR-S: L, EPQR-S: N, EPQR-S: P, EPQR-S: E, LOC
c. Predictors:(Constant), EPQR-S: L, EPQR-S: N, EPQR-S: P, EPQR-S: E, LOC, GSE
d. Predictors:(Constant), EPQR-S: L, EPQR-S: N, EPQR-S: P, EPQR-S: E, LOC, GSE, ISSS:SES, ISSS:IS
e. Dependent Variable: PMS
*p < .01, ** p < .001
Table 7.11 ANOVA results[e]

Overall, the model summary (Table 7.10) and the ANOVA results (Table 7.11) from

SPSS demonstrated that the regression model improved the ability to predict the

outcome of perceived level of military support.

Table 7.12 presents the parameters of the multiple linear regression models. In the

initial model neuroticism had a significant negative relationship with the level of

perceived military support. Therefore, as the level of neuroticism increased/decreased

the perceived level of military support was seen to decrease/increase (ß = -.534, p <

.05) respectively. A similar significant negative relationship was produced for

psychoticism (ß = -2.548, p < .05). With the addition of the locus of control predictor

in Model 2, neuroticism and psychoticism remained the only significant predictors (ß =

-.538, p < .05; ß = -2.543, p < .05). Model 3 introduced the self-efficacy predictor, in

this scenario the significant negative relationship of neuroticism and psychoticism with

the outcome remained, however psychoticism was now significant with the perceived

level of military support at p < .01. A positive significant relationship (ß = .432, p < .05)

was also noted between extraversion and the outcome, which suggested the more

extraverted an individual was then the greater the level of perceived military support.

The self-efficacy predictor also had a significant negative relationship with this support

level (β = -.520, p < .01). The final model included the parameters of support: socio-

emotional and instrumental. As a result three significant predictors were produced:

psychoticism (β = -1.970, p < .05) and self-efficacy (β = -.462, p < .05) each still had a

negative relationship with the perceived level of military support, but this was now

along with the new parameter of instrumental support (β = .274, p < .01), which had a

positive relationship with the outcome. Therefore, as an individual's level of tough-

mindedness and self-efficacy increased, their perceived level of military support

decreased; and an increase of practical community support coincided with a greater

perceived level of military support. As instrumental support has the greatest

significance it appeared that community support was more important at influencing

the views of the level of perceived military support than the impact of personality

traits. Ultimately, H_1 was accepted.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t (t-test statistic)	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 (Constant)	36.367	3.408	10.672	.000	29.625	43.108
EPQR-S: N	**-.534**	.239	-2.234	**.027***	-1.007	-.061
EPQR-S: E	.399	.212	1.886	.061	-.019	.818
EPQR-S: P	**-2.548**	1.049	-2.431	**.016***	-4.623	-.474
EPQR-S: L	.256	.253	1.013	.313	-.244	.756
2 (Constant)	36.809	4.363	8.438	.000	28.178	45.440
EPQR-S: N	**-.538**	.241	-2.230	**.027***	-1.015	-.061
EPQR-S: E	.394	.215	1.837	.069	-.030	.819
EPQR-S: P	**-2.543**	1.053	-2.415	**.017***	-4.626	-.460
EPQR-S: L	.254	.254	.997	.321	-.250	.757
LOC	-.030	.182	-.163	.870	-.390	.331
3 (Constant)	55.598	8.251	6.739	.000	39.274	71.922
EPQR-S: N	**-.611**	.237	-2.575	**.011***	-1.081	-.142
EPQR-S: E	**.432**	.210	2.053	**.042***	.016	.848
EPQR-S: P	**-2.991**	1.043	-2.868	**.005****	-5.054	-.928
EPQR-S: L	.232	.249	.934	.352	-.260	.724
LOC	-.139	.183	-.760	.448	-.500	.223
GSE	**-.520**	.195	-2.660	**.009****	-.906	-.133
4 (Constant)	43.318	8.114	5.339	.000	27.262	59.374
EPQR-S: N	-.308	.231	-1.334	.185	-.764	.149
EPQR-S: E	.170	.204	.833	.407	-.234	.575
EPQR-S: P	**-1.970**	.995	-1.980	**.049***	-3.938	-.001
EPQR-S: L	.211	.232	.908	.366	-.249	.670
LOC	-.107	.171	-.626	.533	-.445	.231
GSE	**-.462**	.183	-2.520	**.013***	-.825	-.099
ISSS: SES	.082	.101	.814	.417	-.118	.282
ISSS: IS	**.274**	.100	2.743	**.007****	.076	.471

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

Table 7.12 Multiple linear regression coefficients

7.4.1.4 Mediation analysis

As discussed in Section 7.4.1.3 three significant predictors of the perceived level of military support were determined to be: psychoticism, self-efficacy and instrumental support. Instrumental support was noted to have the strongest predication above the other two variables, but it was not possible to determine from the regression analysis

whether these variables mediated each other. Therefore, in order to investigate the influence of personality and coping through the mediation of self-efficacy and instrumental support, a mediation analysis was conducted to examine their influence on the outcome. To assess how different degrees of tough-mindedness and self-efficacy or instrumental support combine to influence how an individual perceives military support, a further (*post hoc*) research question was formulated:

How does the degree of tough-mindedness influence the perception of military support via coping through self-efficacy or instrumental support?

The hypothesis tested was:

H_2: Self-efficacy and instrumental support mediate the influence of an individual's level of tough-mindedness on their perceived level of military support.

In the mediation analysis, the dependent variable (DV) was the perceived level of military support (PMS), the independent variable (IV) was psychoticism (P) and the number of bootstrap re-samples was set at 5000 as recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008). The mediator variable M_1 was self-efficacy (GSE) and M_2 was instrumental support (IS). The results presented in Table 7.13 relate to the paths demonstrated in Figure 7.4.

	Path	Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t	p
IV to Mediator M$_1$	a$_1$	GSE	-.6857	.4493	-1.5262	.1293
M$_2$	a$_2$	IS	-1.4422	1.2167	-1.1853	.2380
Direct Effect of M$_1$ on DV	b$_1$	GSE	-.3781	.1747	-2.1356	.0346*
M$_2$ on DV	b$_2$	IS	.3866	.0654	5.9937	.0000**
Total Effect of IV on DV	c	P	-1.9770	1.0311	-1.9173	.0573
Direct Effect of IV on DV	c'	P	-1.6752	.9211	-1.8186	.0712

Bootstrap results for indirect effects of IV on DV through proposed mediators						
					Confidence intervals (95%)	
	ab path	Boot	Bias	SE	Lower	Upper
GSE	.2558	.2561	.0002	.2181	-.0463	.8429
IS	-.5576	-.5504	.0071	.4222	-1.4813	.1809
Total	-.3018	-.2944	.0074	.4650	-1.2962	.5507

* p < .05, **p < .0001

Table 7.13 Self-efficacy and instrumental support as mediators

In Table 7.13 the confidence interval from the bootstrap test for the total *ab* path included the value zero (-1.2962 to .5507), therefore the indirect path *ab* was not significant and H_2 was rejected. Furthermore, the *c'* path (*c'* = -1.6752) was also not significant, therefore, in total no indirect or direct effect were detected for psychoticism on perceived level of military support. This scenario was referred to as no-effect nonmediation by Zhao et al. (2010). Of note though, the b_1 and b_2 paths were both significant (p <.05 and p < .0001 respectively). For that reason, although no indirect effect existed, a direct effect of self-efficacy and of instrumental support on the perceived level of military support was determined.

7.4.2   Discussion of Phase 4

The advantages and disadvantages of using an online survey as a data collection method were discussed in Section 7.3.1. Further to this, the strength and limitations of this phase are discussed in the next Chapter (Section 8.4).

In this section the discussion will focus on the three principle variables (psychoticism, self-efficacy and instrumental support) that emerged from the statistical analysis in Sections 7.4.1.3 and 7.4.1.4. Reference to the potential influence of these dimensions to the accompanying military spouse experience on a foreign posting, in particular to their perceived level of military support, will be considered alongside research depicting the interrelationship of personality traits, support and coping.

The survey findings suggest that the military spouses who participated were less tough-minded, but perceived themselves to be very capable. The level of instrumental

support was felt to be average, as was the level of perceived military support. This implies the standard respondent had a compliant nature but had the self-belief of their ability to succeed in certain circumstances, or as Bandura (1997) determines, they could act in a particular manner to cope effectively with a stressful situation. The relatively impartial perception of support both from the community and the overall support available from the military indicated that perhaps it either did not reach expectations of the respondents, or potentially the submissive nature of the respondents influenced them to just accept what was available.

Research based on different permutations of self-efficacy, personality and social support have been consistently related to health and functioning, together with an individual's ability to cope (Karademas, 2006, DeLongis and Holtzman, 2005, Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010). Notably, social support was conceptualized by Suurmeijer et al. (1995, p.1221) as an "actual transition or exchange of resources between at least one recipient and one provider of these resources, intended to enhance the well-being of the recipients". This has been deemed as a mechanism by which interpersonal relationships buffer an individual against psychosocial stress (Cohen and Mckay, 1984). As such, a conceptual framework was presented by Pierce et al. (1990) which, investigated the impact of social support on coping and well-being. This framework emphasized the interactional roles of three perspectives: the situational, intrapersonal and interpersonal contexts (the triadic hypothesis). These highlighted the influential nature of the circumstances in which the support took place, the expectations of the providers and recipients, and the characteristics of their relationship (Sarason et al., 1990) (as mentioned in Section 6.3.4).

From the multiple regression analysis (Section 7.4.1.3), the positive correlation between instrumental and the perceived level of military support suggested that the more the military spouse felt supported by the community, then the more they believed the level of military support was acceptable. This concept of instrumental support was noted to have greater importance at influencing views of the level of military support than the impact of personality traits and self-efficacy. Evidently then, practical support from the community network was a crucial influence in the contentment of the military spouse with the overall provision of support, and arguably as Copeland and Norell (2002) state, such a support network could subsequently influence an accompanying spouse's ability to become settled in their new environment.

The influential role of support networks for accompanying spouses on international assignments was specifically highlighted by Copeland and Norell (2002) to be related to the multiple support mechanisms necessary to meet the needs of such spouses. These would range from practical and impersonal discussions to private emotional support. Additionally, the findings of Bowen's (1990) research strongly indicated the positive and significant relationship between satisfaction with the perceived level of organisational support (e.g. that provided by the military) and overall contentment. This facilitating role of social support has also been evaluated in terms of the buffering hypothesis (Copeland and Norell, 2002, Cohen and Mckay, 1984, Rosen and Moghadam, 1990), which posits that social support will only be beneficial during stressful situations (Sarason et al., 1990). An alternative model (the main-effect model) proposes that social support is effective, irrespective of stress (Cohen and Wills, 1985). A review of studies to investigate to which of these models the

relationship between social support and well-being was more attributed was

completed by Cohen and Wills (1985). Ultimately, they concluded that there was

evidence for both conceptualizations. Therefore, whichever manner social support is

theorised to influence adaption and coping, its significance in literature is clearly

paramount (Fontaine, 1986, Orthner and Bowen, 1990, Copeland and Norell, 2002,

Bowen and Neenan, 1990, McCubbin and Lavee, 1986)

The triadic hypothesis for social support (Sarason et al., 1990) viewed support as a

process encompassing not just situational factors and quality of interrelationships, but

also personality dynamics. From the study findings the multiple regression analysis

identified the negative relationships of self-efficacy and psychoticism with the

perceived level of military support. Arguably, this correlation suggests if a military

spouse possessed a high level of self-efficacy and had a resolute nature, then their high

expectations of the military support were not met. Alternatively, a less tough-minded

individual who did not necessarily feel in charge of his or her own life would have to

rely on others and would then possibly feel that the available support was satisfactory.

In research conducted by Major et al. (1998) investigating the effects of personality

and coping with a stressful life experience, the authors highlighted the significant

variation in peoples' reactions to comparable events. In particular, in Social Cognitive

Theory, self-efficacy level has been linked to the regulation of such a stress process

(Bandura, 1997). Following the examination of perceived self-efficacy operating as a

cognitive regulator of anxiety arousal, Bandura et al. (1982) demonstrated that people

displayed little anxiety while coping with potential threats which they appraised with

high efficacy. However, at the other extreme, as individuals confronted threats for

which they distrusted their coping efficacy their subjective anxiety mounted. This

potential predictive value of self-efficacy as a personal resource factor in the stress and

coping process was also examined by Schwarzer et al. (2005). Their findings identified

a substantial correlation of self-efficacy with four specified coping variables (planning,

humour, acceptance and accommodation) and they also suggested the antecedent

role of self-efficacy but did highlight the need for further detailed research to

corroborate this finding.

From an alternative perspective, Bowlby (1998) determined that positive experiences

built trust in the world and self. Bowlby's attachment theory described the dynamics

of long-term relationships between humans, originating with the infant's relationship

with a caregiver, which allowed normal social and emotional development.

Expectations that stressful experiences could then be manageable were established

from security in attachment, which could then evolve into sense of control and self-

efficacy (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). As a result Mikulincer and Florian (1998)

believed such components of a secure attachment could be demonstrated as resilience

and construct a positive attitude to buffer distress. Therefore, based on this

attachment system, personal and contextual factors may then further influence the

ability to cope with stressful experiences.

Within the context of stressful life transitions, the influence of self-efficacy has also

been identified by Bandura (1997) who recognised the stressors associated with

migrants due to changes of socio-cultural patterns, and the potential labelling as a

foreign intruder. Investigating these issues, a longitudinal study examining the

adaption process of migrants was conducted by Jerusalem and Mittag (1995). These

authors determined that migrants with a significant efficacious attitude had a more successful adaption primarily due to appraising the lifestyle changes as challenges rather than threats. As a result they experienced lower stress levels and better health than those with a low self-efficacy. Furthermore, research on expatriates by Harrison et al. (1996), reviewing the relationship between their cross-cultural adjustment and the personality variable of self-efficacy, also identified this association to be significant and positive. Hence Harrison et al.'s results provided empirical evidence for the contribution of self-efficacy to adaption in an international location. Although the military spouses in the present study were not migrants or expatriates, but rather sojourners, they too potentially had to adapt to significant lifestyle changes and clearly their self-efficacy could also mediate a coping response.

Examining the broader context in which stress and coping occurred, DeLongis and Holtzman's (2005) research framework encompassed three contextual dimensions: "the nature of the stressful event, the social context in which coping occurs, and the personality of those involved" (p. 1634). DeLongis and associates determined that to improve the predictive facility of coping models, these models needed to acknowledge the tandem effect of personality and situational factors when examining coping behaviours (O'Brien and DeLongis, 1996, Lee-Baggley et al., 2005). The particular influence of personality dimensions on coping have been assessed with reference to the Big Five framework: Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Conscientiousness (C), Openness (O), and Agreeableness (A) (Costa and McCrae, 1992), and such dimensions have frequently been cited in literature as indicative to an individual's ability to cope and adapt to a stressful scenario (DeLongis and Holtzman, 2005, Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010, Penley and Tomaka, 2002, Vollrath, 2001). Nonetheless, Penley and

Tomaka (2002) do warn that research limitations including retrospective and selection bias, and the predominant focus on the N, E, and O dimensions, prohibit definite conclusions from some studies about the role of the Big Five personality dimensions in coping.

High levels of neuroticism have been noted to predict exposure to interpersonal stress and to illicit poor coping responses (DeLongis and Holtzman, 2005). Specifically, Huang et al. (2005) speculated that expatriates with high neuroticism would have problems successfully communicating and establishing a social support network. This emotional stability level was also positively correlated with an expatriate's desire to remain on an international assignment (Caligiuri, 2000a). An extraverted individual has been recognised to be more effective at coping (Lee-Baggley et al., 2005). Furthermore, individuals with a high level of conscientiousness and openness are shown to identify stressful events as challenges, and consequently generate positive coping resources. American expatriates in Huang et al.'s (2005) study who were extraverted and open to experience were identified to have greater adjustment, and individual's high in conscientiousness perceived themselves to overcome situational demands with active coping measures (Penley and Tomaka, 2002). Finally, agreeableness, which is linked to low interpersonal conflict (Asendorpf and Wilpers, 1998), has been most strongly correlated with support seeking as a coping mechanism (O'Brien and DeLongis, 1996). In addition Black (1990b) suggested that expatriates who were more agreeable had greater cross-cultural adjustment. Clearly, permutations of personality traits will significantly contribute to an individual's ability to cope, and more specifically, for military spouses how they would manage relocation overseas.

Within the current study, three personality traits were assessed in relation to the perceived level of military support. Neuroticism and extraversion were not significant predictors of perceived level of military support; only Esyenck et al.'s (1985) third personality trait of psychoticism was identified as influential. The Cronbach alpha value was found to be slightly lower for this particular scale, but as discussed in Section 7.4.1.1 this was a common occurrence in other studies. Consequently, the negative significance of this personality trait indicated that if a military spouse was tough-minded then there would be a perception that the military support would not reach their expectations and they would seek their own social support.

Ultimately, the potential mediating affects of self-efficacy and instrumental support between an individual's level of tough-mindedness and the perceived level of military support were reviewed for the purposes of the present study. These variables were determined to individually affect the perceived military support level but their additive relationship was not mediational. As a result psychoticism, self-efficacy and instrumental support independently affected the perceived military support. For military spouses who were tough-minded and at same time had a high self-efficacy level, this suggested that they would be resourceful and capable of resolving issues themselves. Subsequently they would perceive a lower level of support from the military. However, when they socialised with other military spouses this instrumental support was then a positive influence and would result with a greater sense of military support. Therefore, as determined in the mediation analysis, psychoticism, self-efficacy and instrumental support were all independent from the perceived level of military support, and instead were factors that individually contributed to coping, adjustment and anticipated support.

7.5   Conclusion of findings from Phase 4

This chapter presented the method design and findings of the final stage of data collection for the present study. This incorporated the construction of a quantitative online survey to examine the predominant findings (personality and individual circumstances, and support) from the previous qualitative phases. As a result, the survey consisted of six sections to encompass a combination of personality and of support scales. Military spouses who were currently on a foreign posting or had previously experienced one were recruited to complete the survey. Ultimately, the results demonstrated that the level of tough-mindedness, instrumental support and self-efficacy were significant predictors of perceived level of military support.

The next and final chapter of this thesis, Chapter 8, presents an in-depth discussion (including a conceptual model) of the findings from Phases 1 – 4, and relates these findings to existing theoretical concepts. Strengths and limitations of the study will be provided along with a reflective account. Ultimately, an overarching conclusion of the study will be presented.

Chapter 8   Discussion and Conclusion

8.1   Introduction

Following an introduction to the study content in Chapter 1, I provided my rationale for the chosen methodology along with the overall research design (Chapter 2). The first phase of my study was a systematic review of previous research investigating the experiences of accompanying military spouses on an overseas posting, and was presented in Chapter 3. The design and methods of Phases 2 and 3, representing the qualitative data collection components were then provided in Chapter 4. Part 1 of this chapter focused on Phase 2, which comprised of individual interviews and focus groups with military spouses based in one overseas location. The following phase (the online forum) discussed in Part 2 of Chapter 4, extended the sample from the previous phase to integrate the experiences of military spouses from other worldwide locations. The findings of these phases were then discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively. The prevailing themes (individual differences and personal meaning-making, and support) from the data collected were then explored quantitatively in the final study phase via an online survey. Chapter 7 provided a review of the design, methods, data analysis and findings of this phase, the study's only quantitative component.

Throughout the four study phases a discussion of the findings from each has been provided to link the themes with previous research. The context of this literature was not restricted to military spouses, but also incorporated investigations of non-military spouses who accompanied their spouse overseas due to his/her employment, and also to individuals who were forced to relocate due to environmental catastrophes or war.

Accordingly, in this chapter I will provide a synthesis of the themes from these four phases. Initially, the relevance of these findings to the original study aim, objectives and research questions will be reviewed. Furthermore, to analyse these findings in the context of key theories, those theories presented in Chapter 1 and featuring in the end of phase discussions will be re-visited. This will be followed by a critique of the study and my reflexive account detailing how I addressed operating in a dual role as a military spouse on an overseas posting and as a researcher. I will then outline the conclusions of the study and their contribution to the body of knowledge in the fields of healthcare for military spouses. Finally, I will highlight the implications and recommendations for practice and suggest further areas of research.

8.2   Research questions reviewed

As stated in Chapter 1, the aim of this study was to investigate the experiences of the accompanying spouses of British military personnel who had been relocated to a foreign country. To achieve this, the objectives were as detailed in Table 8.1. By conducting an ethnographic study comprising four phases of data collection, I intended to answer the research questions as detailed in Table 8.2.

Objectives
To investigate how British military spouses perceive the impact of being relocated to a foreign country.
To assess the social influences that may impact on the military spouse experience such as the development of interpersonal relationships, the spouse's role in the community or their altered family role.
To investigate how military spouses adjust to an unfamiliar environment and whether this was dependent on a particular location.
To examine the issue of leaving a foreign posting and returning to a normal place of residence.
To identify principles of best practice from each of the three British Armed services and the potential areas of improvements in supporting families posted to a foreign country.

Table 8.1 Reminder of study objectives

Research questions
What is the emotional, social and psychological impact on spouses of British military personnel when relocated to a foreign country?
What methods are employed by the spouses to adjust to a new environment and are these a reflection of individual coping strategies and location-specific factors?
What types of emotional and social support are desired or used by spouses when living in a foreign community?
How do the families approach the task of moving back to their usual place of residence following a foreign posting?

Table 8.2 Reminder of research questions

The next section provides a conceptual model to demonstrate a synthesis of the themes that emerged from the analysis of data collected from all phases. Sections 8.2.2 to 8.2.5 then situate the findings for each research question with respect to these themes and with literature.

8.2.1 Conceptual model of findings

In Phase 1 a conceptual map of themes was established to explore the relationship between the findings of the systematic review studies (Section 3.10.2). This method was also employed for the findings of Phases 2 and 3 (Sections 5.2.6, 5.3.7 and 6.2.6 respectively). Using this approach, a synthesis of the themes generated from all study phases is presented in Figure 8.1. However, prior to examining this final model of findings I will re-visit the previous conceptual maps (Figures 3.6, 5.1, 5.2 and 6.1) to discuss their connections and the subsequent development of the final model.
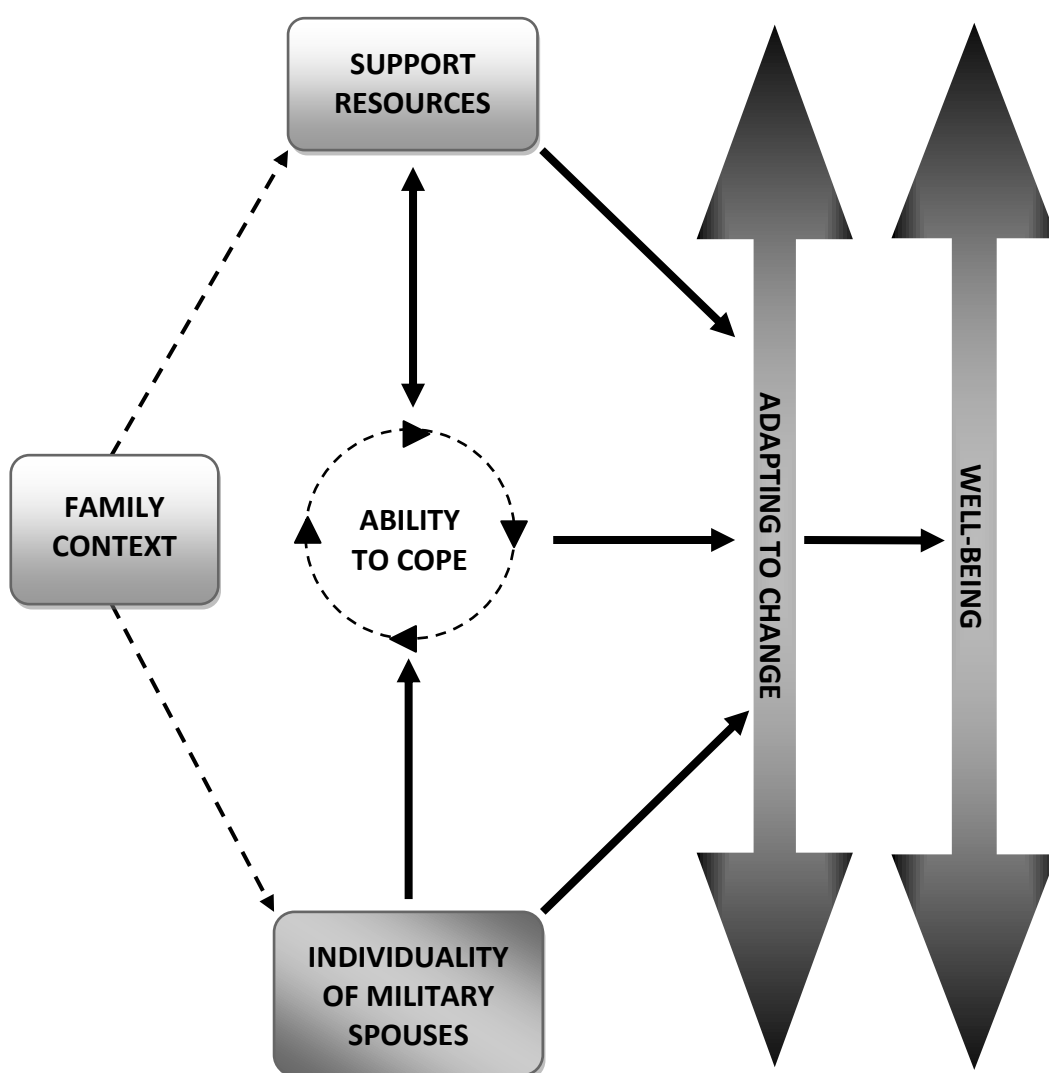
Figure 8.1 Conceptual model of findings

Figure 3.6 presented the conceptual map of findings from the first data collection phase, the systematic review. Relocation was determined as the accepted phenomenon of military life and was seen as the governing factor in a military spouse's existence. Their satisfaction with this mobile lifestyle and ability to adjust to international relocations was ultimately noted to have a direct impact on their well-being. Hence, impact on general well-being was determined as the outcome of the international relocation experience and was presented in the centre of the model with all other variables demonstrated as having a direct or indirect influence on this outcome. These associated variables will be discussed later.

The conceptual models representing the findings from the next three data collections (individual interviews, focus groups and online forum) over Phases 2 and 3, were each demonstrated to have an interlinking triangular formation, with three 'outer' variables presented as having a direct or indirect impact on a central outcome variable, which in these phases represented the change aspect endemic within international relocations. In Phase 2 for the individual interviews, this outcome encapsulated not just the military spouse's ability to adapt to change, but also the situational and personal changes encountered. As these were private interviews the focus was a very personal discussion, allowing the military spouses to discuss their individual reactions. Hence this central variable represented the personal changes encountered. The conceptual map for the second part of Phase 2, the focus groups, presented a central outcome of the associated acclimatisation to a new culture and social environment. This time the findings extended to incorporate the change in circumstance with respect to the new surrounding community, not just with the host nationals, but also with the British community and the focal parco communities. Due to the dynamic nature of the focus

groups more generic experiences were discussed, which inevitably incorporated the wider social relationships, hence the change aspect specifically involved the social environment dimension. In the final qualitative data collection phase, (the online forum) the outcome focused on the ability to settle and encompassed the internal dimension of settling into a new family structure and lifestyle, alongside the external factor of settling into the new surroundings. This continued the wider social aspect considered in the previous conceptual model but this time incorporated the family impact within this dimension.

In Figure 3.6 for Phase 1, 'individual abilities' was identified as directing a response to a crisis event, such as an international relocation, and was forged on the development of adapting and coping skills. This presented the diversity of individual circumstances that contributed to a military spouse's well-being. Extending this principle through the subsequent phases of study findings, individual differences and personal meaning-making, alongside the influence of personality traits on an individual's reaction to a foreign posting, further encapsulated the micro-perspective of the military spouse experience. As such, this highlighted the uniqueness of each military spouse and their exclusive circumstances (both family and personal history). Consequently, the congruency of these findings over the three study phases highlighted the importance of the military spouse's individuality and confirmed this concept as an overarching theme influencing the outcome of the posting.

Support was also a definitive theme throughout findings of all phases and as such was presented in each conceptual map as having a direct and indirect influence on the outcomes of 'well-being' or 'adapting to change'. Throughout, support was comprised

of the external formal element of the military and welfare, and the internal informal

component of friends, family and community support, and was modified in Phase 2

focus groups findings to include a facet of prior support, recognising the provision or

acquisition of information prior to relocation. Again the congruency of these findings

emphasized the significance of support and its individual role.

Finally, the components of 'military life', 'marriage and relationships' and 'family

lifestyle and well-being' from Figures 3.6, 5.1, 5.2 respectively, drew on the family and

relationship context and presented a key component having a bidirectional link with

support and the individual circumstances of the military spouse. From Phase 1

'military life' represented the broader concept of being a military family, and the

overarching influence of the military on all members of the family. In Phase 2 Part 1,

this aspect was considered from a more intimate angle of marriage and relationships,

focusing on the personal factors influencing the military spouse's experience on a

foreign posting. This became a more generic concept within the focus group

discussions in Part 2 of Phase 2, and was considered from the viewpoint of overall

impact on the family but also the subsequent influence of this on the military spouse.

As discussed earlier, the family aspect was incorporated within the outcome variable

of the online forum (Phase 3) conceptual map. This was not intended to lessen any

significance of this dimension, but instead to demonstrate the importance of the

family context in influencing a military spouse's ability to settle in a new environment.

 Turning now to the final conceptual model of findings (Figure 8.1), starting on the left

hand side, the first element of the model is 'family context' and depicts the military

family and relationship dimension. It is demonstrated as having an association with

'support' and with 'individuality of military spouse's through the presence of a dashed

connecting line. Family context therefore incorporates the themes of marriage,

relationships and family lifestyle and represents the macro-perspective of the military

spouse experience. These variables provide the contextual setting for the military

spouse (e.g. strength of marriage, presence or absence of children, family satisfaction

with military life) and feeds into their unique background circumstances, shown by its

association with 'individuality of military spouses'. Furthermore, family context may

also influence the need or the availability of support resources, for example, the study

findings depicted children as a catalyst for establishing a new social support network

or that the serving spouse was seen as the initial support contact, consequently 'family

context' is also presented as linked to 'support resources'. A dashed line provides the

direct link to each of these concepts because the composition of family context could

have been considered entirely within 'support' or within 'individuality of military

spouses' as external influential factors. However, family and relationships was a

substantial theme within the study findings and as such warrants its place in the

conceptual model.

Focusing next on the central line of the conceptual model, as previously discussed the

predominant themes of 'support' and 'individual differences and personal meaning-

making' were present across the study phases. Therefore, these themes are centrally

placed in Figure 8.1 as the key factors directly and indirectly influencing the outcome,

adapting to change. Support is represented in the form of 'support resources' in the

model, allowing the facets of informal, formal (including perceived military support)

and prior support to be represented. The theme of a military spouse's individual

uniqueness encompasses the premise of 'individual differences and personal meaning-making' and is presented as 'individuality of military spouses' in Figure 8.1. This also incorporates the influence of personality traits, and individual circumstances (e.g. previous experiences, employment status etc.) exclusive to each military spouse, and provides the micro-perspective influencing the impact of relocation.

Interlinking the 'support resources' and 'individuality of military spouses' is the ability to cope. The ability to cope was seen to influence a military spouse's general well-being in Phase 1, and was also subsumed under the ability to adjust to change or to acclimatise to a new culture or social environment in Phase 2 for individual interviews and focus groups respectively. However, in Figure 6.1 for Phase 3 'coping' completed the triangle of influential factors as it emerged as a significant theme in the online forum discussions, with specific personal coping mechanisms highlighted to overcome complexities of residing on a foreign posting. Consequently, this interlinking 'support-coping-individuality' phenomenon is represented as the central line in Figure 8.1. This relationship recognises the permutations of personalities, personal circumstances and support, with coping, and the subsequent direct or indirect influence on adaption level.

Finally, the right hand side of the model illustrates two parallel double ended arrows. When we consider the generic 'change' outcome of the findings from Phases 2 and 3 with that of the centralised outcome of 'general well-being' from the systematic review, the findings demonstrate a significant association between a military spouse's ability to adapt to imposed changes and their subsequent well-being. As the impact of a foreign posting on an accompanying military spouse will ultimately be evident

through their ability to settle in the new environment, this outcome is represented as the first two-way arrow. This presents adaption on a mal- to bon- adaption continuum to distinguish the diverse responses of the military spouse to relocation overseas. The themes from the study findings of change and the ability to adjust or to acclimatise to a new culture and social environment are reflected in this model outcome of adaption. Furthermore, as highlighted, the significant association between a military spouse's ability to adapt to imposed changes and their subsequent well-being, warrants an inclusion of well-being as a significant outcome. In particular the concept of 'loss,' in the systematic review conceptual map, was noted to have a direct impact on 'general well-being'. Loss was identified as a commonality in my thematic analysis of data from military spouses, but was subsumed under the concept of change, proposing it to be something that was replaced or altered rather than lost altogether. Therefore, amalgamating these findings indicates the impact of a military spouse's well-being is potentially dependent on their ability to adapt (Section 8.2.2) and is represented as a directly linked continuum parallel to the adaption continuum.

In summary, the four conceptual maps representing the emerging themes of the study findings have been synthesized into a single conceptual model of findings in Figure 8.1. This not only highlighted the influential nature of the macro-perspective of a military spouse's family context, but also the micro element of their own personal meaning-making, personality traits and individual circumstances. Ultimately, these factors in conjunction with support resources and coping level is demonstrated to influence the military spouse's subsequent adaption to change and impact on their well-being.

8.2.2   The impact of being relocated overseas

This section refers to the first research question which asks:

What is the emotional, social and psychological impact on spouses of British

military personnel when relocated to a foreign country?

As a military spouse I understand the rollercoaster of feelings that can be experienced

throughout the process of a foreign posting assignment, including the initial period of

patiently waiting for the posting to be confirmed or declined, during which time you

can torment yourself by analysing every possible scenario. This was an experience

corroborated by my study participants. Then, finally, the foreign posting is confirmed

by the military and you are then confronted with the logistics of the actual move.

Whether this involves selling or renting your house, resigning from work, removing

children from school, arranging pet passports, there are a multitude of facets to

consider. Hausman and Reed (1991) determine that "loss, helplessness, anxiety and

anger" (p. 250) are normally experienced during such disruptive events as relocation.

From personal experience in my military spouse role, this period of transition from one

lifestyle to another was indeed quite intense, but from my researcher role perspective

it introduced an intriguing dimension to investigate.

Relocation can be experienced by some individuals as a smooth transition, whereas

others do find such a significant change to be a stressful event (Hausman and Reed,

1991). In their conceptual outline of such a stress process Pearlin and colleagues

(1981) suggested that humans are "fundamentally intolerant of change" (p.339). This

change they felt created a state of disequilibrium, which imposed a period of

readjustment making some individuals susceptible to stress and its psychological

consequences on their well-being. As such, military spouses are renowned for

experiencing frequent relocations and as a consequence are often exposed to the potentially stressful events associated with change (Jervis, 2009, Castro et al., 2006). This synonymous change/relocation relationship can have additional stressors when it is associated with an international move, due to, for example, the potential language barriers, living in a new culture, social isolation, distance from family or climate change (Haour-Knipe, 2001).

The thematic analysis of qualitative data from Phases 2 and 3 in my research identified reactions to imposed changes to be driven by personality, individual differences and personal meaning-making. In particular the level of tough-mindedness and self-efficacy were quantitatively determined in Phase 3 as significant predictors of perceived military support and subsequent approach to relocation. These dimensions considered the uniqueness of each military spouse, in particular their personal circumstances (e.g. family, employment status etc.), previous relocation experiences, their rationale for being on the posting, and ultimately, their distinctive response to their foreign relocation. Hausman and Reed (1991) emphasize that an individual's interpretation of an event affects the intensity of their feelings and subsequently how they then choose to resolve any concerns. According to the Rational Emotional Behavioural Therapy (REBT) model, Ellis and Dryden (1997) believe that individuals have many beliefs or cognitions about activating events (occurrences that help or hinder the accomplishment of goals), which exert strong influences on emotional and behavioural consequences. Representing the psychological issues of relocation with the REBT model, Hausman and Reed (1991) argued that some individuals would interpret the relocation as distressing and negative, whereas others would view it as a challenge.

The continuum of adapting to change was identified as the outcome in the conceptual model for the study findings (Figure 8.1). In Chapter 3 (Section 3.11.2) I discussed McCubbin and Patterson's (1983) Double ABCX Theory of Stress and Family Adaption which recognised the stressors associated with a crisis event and the subsequent bon- or mal-adaption. This imbalance of demands and an individual's capabilities with meeting such changes has been documented to provoke a stress response at detriment to the individual's well-being (Caligiuri et al., 1998, Wiggins-Frame and Shehan, 1994, Lavee et al., 1985). This highlights the question as to why some individuals respond more proactively to a stressful event than others. Endeavouring to explain the reasons behind alterations to an individual's behavioural patterns, Bandura (1986) proposes through a behavioural change theory, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), that behaviour change is affected by environmental influences, personal factors (in the form of cognitive, affective and biological events), and attributes of the behaviour itself. Bandura explains psychosocial functioning in terms of a triadic reciprocal causation, in which the interacting determinants bi-directionally influence each other (Figure 8.2).
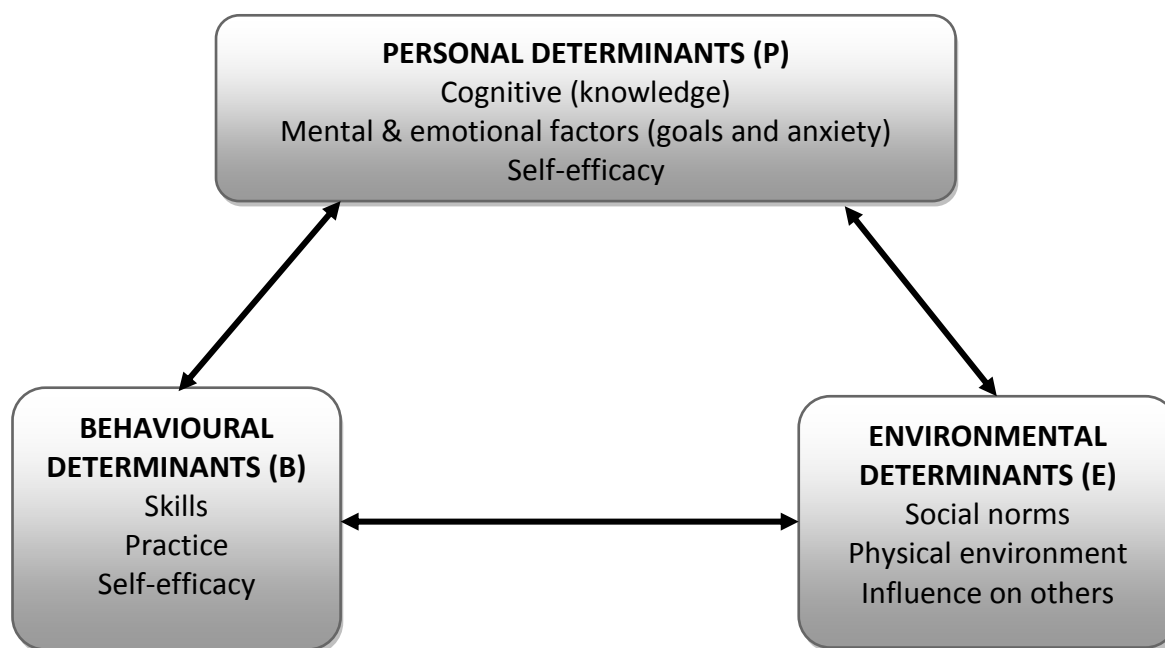
Figure 8.2 Schematization of triadic reciprocal causation based on Bandura (2001, p.266) and Snowman et al. (2012)

Bandura (1997) stresses that this reciprocal relationship does not dictate that the three sets of determinants will be of equal strength. Instead the relative influence will be dependent on the activity and circumstance. For the military spouses in this study the activity was relocation overseas and the unique situation of each respondent was seen to direct their reaction. With this in mind I will consider each of the interactional links displayed in Figure 8.1.

In the P↔B causation Bandura (1989) remarks that expectations, beliefs, goals and intentions direct an individual's behaviour, and as such the effects of their actions influence thought patterns and emotional responses. A trailing spouse's motivation for being on a foreign posting, their personality traits or their involvement in the relocation process has been shown to affect their subsequent approach and

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acceptance of the relocation (Briody and Chrisman, 1991, Mohr and Klein, 2004, Black and Gregersen, 1991, Berry et al., 1987). In particular, the enthusiasm for the posting of some of the study respondents was reflected in their subsequent proactive behaviour and a willingness to maximise their experience. For others, sacrifices made to accompany their spouse were not felt to be compensated by the experience; instead they appeared to tolerate the posting and focused instead on its temporary nature.

The P⬌E segment reflects the interaction between personal characteristics and the environmental influences (Bandura, 1989). This recognises that expectations, beliefs and competencies are developed and modified by social influences, and in reciprocation, individuals are also noted by Bandura to initiate different social reactions depending on their perceived social status and role. One of the points I raised during data collection focused on the perceived influence the respondent felt their husband/wife's role and rank in the military had on their posting experience. From a social perspective some spouses felt they were branded in accordance with their serving spouse's position and this did lead to a sense of seclusion and segregation for some respondents (Section 5.2.2). From an alternative viewpoint, as discussed in Section (5.4.4), social desirability was highlighted as a hindrance to well-being, in that a military spouse withheld concerns so as not to be a detriment to their husband (Fernandez-Pol, 1988a). In this sense the potential social reaction negatively affected the recipient's conception of themselves. Nonetheless, other study respondents believed that relationships within the community were fostered by unprejudiced friendships and such associations then provided the social and emotional support needed (Sections 5.2 and 5.3).

The final interactional link B ↔ E recognises the two-way influence between an individual's behaviour and the environment, in that through an individual's actions they generate and also select their own environments (Bandura, 1989). This flexibility to interpret and respond determines "which part of the potential environment becomes the actual experienced environment [and] thus depends on how people behave" (Bandura, 1999, p. 23). The selected environment is manifested through the choice of relationships, activities and the actual location. Therefore, the same environment can be determined in different ways.

Returning to the military spouse scenario, the study participants demonstrated a range of behaviours in reaction to their new environment. These ranged from fully embracing their new surroundings and culture, to choosing to predominantly remain within the confines of their own house for the duration of the posting. It must be noted however, that in each of these scenarios the spouses in question were content with their choice. Nonetheless, when one of the respondents, Gail, felt excluded from the military community despite attempts to participate, she then despondently remained largely in her house, and as a consequence felt "massively lonely" [line, 78]. Therefore, these behaviours highlight that the impact of the posting can be construed in very different manners, but the military spouses' acceptance of their change of location did not only appear to be dependent on their interpretation of this new environment and social influences, but also how in control they felt they were of their circumstance.

Due to the variety of reactions to relocation, it is clear that an individual's sense of well-being can be disrupted (Makowsky et al., 1988, De Cieri et al., 1991), and as such Hausman and Reed (1991) argue that this feeling of well-being is associated with the ability to develop a sense of security and a sense of purpose. Therefore, individuals are believed to feel secure when they can predict and control the course of events in which they are involved (Kelly, 1963). In Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) this concept of control is significantly correlated with self-efficacy, in which a person must have self-belief in their capability to perform a particular behaviour at a specified level (Bandura, 1986). This level of perceived self-efficacy plays a central role in SCT as it affects action directly and indirectly through other determinants (Bandura, 1999).

As concluded in Phase 4, self-efficacy was a significant predictor of perceived military support and indicated the military spouse's subsequent approach to adjusting to their foreign posting. Figure 8.3 presents the spiralling effect of the impact of an individual's perceived level of self-efficacy with a significant life event. For the study's military spouses this life event would be relocating overseas, and as depicted by the outer circle in the figure, higher self-efficacy is associated with the desire to face the challenge of living overseas, which then improves motivation to maximise such an experience and to confront the changes imposed, and as a result produces a more positive and potentially settled individual. Obviously, the opposite occurs for those with a lower self-efficacy level (presented by the inner circle) in which they would aspire to lower goals, would be less stimulated to participate and as a result be less optimistic about the whole experience.

Figure 8.3 Self-efficacy cycles based on Weinstein, Woodruff and Alwalt (2001)

The influence of self-efficacy and the expatriate adjustment dynamic will be

considered further in Section 8.2.3, but of note is that psychological flexibility and a

willingness to engage in unfamiliar routines have been identified as contributors to this

adjustment (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985). This concept of open-mindedness was

highlighted by von Kirchenheim and Richardson (2005) in moderating the stress

associated with culture shock and was reflected by the current study respondents as a

key personality trait. Furthermore, examining the influence of self-efficacy levels on

academic challenges, Solberg et al. (1998) identified stronger self-efficacy expectations

to be associated with lower stress and to promote psychological and emotional health.

Indeed, within psychological research, health, health-related behaviours and social

integration have been significantly and positively related to self-efficacy (Torres and

Solberg, 2001, Sohng et al., 2002, Bandura, 1997, Schwarzer, 1992). Extrapolating this

to the accompanying military spouse perspective, the self-efficacious nature of an

individual could signify their ability to manage the emotional and psychological impact of relocation overseas.

As depicted in Figure 8.1, the change evoked by a foreign posting was understood to be represented by the military spouses' ability to settle in their new environment. As such, the influence of change on an individual's well-being has been discussed with reference to Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory and to self-efficacy. However, literature has also highlighted that a trailing spouse's sense of identity and of role can have a dramatic impact on their well-being and on the overall outcome of the posting (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001, Harvey, 1985, De Cieri et al., 1991). These themes were distinguished in the systematic review and thematic analysis of Phases 2 and 3, and were noted to construct a sense of disorientation and frustration for some respondents, but a sense of freedom for others. Furthermore, Wiles (2012) highlights that relocating overseas generates new experiences and interactions, and these contribute to an individual's perception of themselves, roles that they accept, and also how they are perceived by others. Consequently, an individual's sense of self is altered, and Wiles poses the introspective question "Who am I?" to expatriate spouses, to decipher what levels of change they are willing to accept or what they feel to be non-negotiable (Wiles, 2012).

Referring to the impact on the social identities of expatriates, Marx (2001) stated "Our self-identity is shaken up and we may have to renegotiate or redefine that identity by integrating our new experiences and reactions into our 'old self'" (p. 17). Marx succinctly depicted the (re)identity predicament that some trailing spouses encountered. In Section 5.4.5 I discussed this experience with reference to Burke's

(1991) Identity Disruption Theory, when an individual's perceptions are incongruent with their own identity standard. As evidenced by my study findings, change of identity and of role are highly likely to occur on a foreign posting. Such changes have been noted to be distressing for some partners of expatriate employees (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001, Harvey, 1985) and in order to understand why these changes have such a significant impact on the well-being of trailing spouses, I will consider why identity is intrinsic to an individual's sense of self.

Social Identity Theory proposes that individuals define their sense of self in the context of belonging to a group (Haslam et al., 2009, Hogg, 2006). This concept of social identity primarily focuses on intergroup relations (Turner et al., 1987), and Haslam et al. argue that if such groups provide an individual with "stability, meaning, purpose, and direction" (p. 5) then this will have a positive impact on their psychological health. Consequently, if this social identity is compromised, for example due to leaving a group (a particular hazard for trailing spouses), then this may be at detriment to the individual's well-being (Haslam et al., 2009, Phinney et al., 2001, Harvey, 1985).

As social identification is believed to provide the foundations for personal identity (Tajfel, 1982), Erikson (1968) explains that such a core identity gives an individual a sense of continuity and a perception of their role in the world. These personality variables are subsequently defined by Shaffer and Harrison (2001) to be the fundamental psychological, experiential and behavioural attributes that accompanying spouses bring to a foreign posting. Challenges to these personal qualities are shown to dislodge the essence of a person's identity, indeed Harvey (1985) emphasizes that trailing spouses often discover that the part of their identity, which previously was

dependent upon the recognition of others, may not be transferred in an overseas relocation. Therefore, he determined that the spouse's 'erased' identity had to be re-established in the foreign environment, without this he felt the basic human need for identity and group-belongingness would not be reached.

The concept of identity is further defined by Burke and Stets (2009) as "the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society" (p.3). Similarly, Ashforth (2001) adds that an individual's social identity is definitively attached to their distinct roles played in society. As such, Role Theory focuses on an imperative characteristic of social behaviour – that individuals behave in different yet predictable ways depending on their social identities and the situation (Biddle, 1986). As already highlighted (Sections 3.11.1 and 5.4.5) role change is often a significant impact for trailing spouses, and such a role transition can considerably influence the behavior and social identity of the individual in question (Allen and van de Vliert, 1984). In particular the study respondents highlighted the difficulties associated with ending employment and their new 'dependent' status (Sections 5.2.4 and 5.3.6). Although this was not interpreted negatively by all respondents, expatriate spouses in Shaffer and Harrison's (2001) research also discussed the difficulties associated with such a role change, and was noted to cause a decrease in their self-concept, requiring a greater need to re-establish a new identity. Furthermore, Schlenker and Gutek (1987) specifically examined the effects of role loss on professionals who had been reassigned to non-professional roles. They presented with "feelings of lost identity, loss of status, reduced feelings of self-worth and increased incidence of illness and psychological complaints" (p. 291). Therefore, the

complexities associated with the integration of identity and role changes can potentially have a profound effect on the well-being of military spouses.

Certainly, there is no succinct explanation to this first research question. It is not possible to make simple predictions due to the plethora of influences. However, as evidenced by my research findings and indicated in Figure 8.1, a multitude of individual traits and circumstantial dimensions influence the overall impact of a foreign posting on a military spouse.

8.2.3   Adjusting to a new environment

This section reviews the second research question which asks:

> What methods are employed by the spouses to adjust to a new environment and are these a reflection of individual coping strategies and location-specific factors?

In answer to this question I am going to refer to the lower triangle in Figure 8.1 depicting the 'individuality, ability to cope and adapting to change' relationship. This recognises the unique context of each military spouse and their associated coping mechanisms used to adjust to their new surroundings.

In order to highlight the potential overarching difficulties of relocating to an unfamiliar environment, in Phases 1 to 3 the concepts of acculturation[20] and culture shock[21] were discussed in relation with personality, a sense of loss and location attributes.

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[20] The cultural changes resulting from individuals who have developed in one cultural context and who subsequently manage to adapt to a new context following from, for example, migration. BERRY, J. W. 1997. Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation. *Applied Psychology,* 46**,** 5-34.
[21] The experience of anxiety due to the loss of familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. OBERG, K. 1960. Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments. *Practical Athropology,* 7**,** 177 - 182.

Consequently, my study findings demonstrated that, being a relatively short-term visitor to a new culture, the accompanying military spouse could experience sudden changes and would have a limited timeframe in which to adjust. Nonetheless, I suggested that the coping strategies employed appeared to be a reflection of the individual and the location. But, evidently it is not possible to typecast a military spouse into a particular category as adjustment to an international relocation is a complex concept. Therefore, before discussing the aforementioned contributory factors, I will briefly review two main adjustment theories: the U-curve model of cross-cultural adjustment (Lysgaand, 1955), and Black et al.'s (1991) framework of international adjustment, each with respect to the transition of a military spouse.

Cross-cultural adjustment research has been noted to centre on the influential factors rather than a specific theoretical approach explaining the process and the role of these factors (Church, 1982, Black and Mendenhall, 1990). However, one of the first theoretical perspectives was presented by Lysgaand (1955) in his study of Norwegian scholars in the United States, in which he described the sojourner adjustment as a function of time in the new culture. The graphical representation of this was a 'U-curve': the initial high point equating to elation and fascination of the new culture, then followed by the 'trough', the dip in the level of adjustment due to disillusionment and frustration (the six to 12 month period), and finally a gradual adaption recovery is noted and represented by the top end of the U-curve (Church, 1982, Black and Mendenhall, 1991, Ward et al., 1998). Despite the popularity of this model, the accuracy and descriptive nature of it have been criticised, resulting with inconclusive findings and ultimately limited support (Black and Mendenhall, 1991, Church, 1982, Ward et al., 1998, Forman and Zachar, 2001).

When considering this model with respect to my study respondents, the timeframe for being on the foreign posting varied across my study sample, indeed some of the forum respondents provided retrospective accounts. Therefore, I believe as I did not complete a longitudinal study it is not possible to determine any overall 'U-curve' adjustment. Nonetheless, reviewing the three Lysgaand (1955) adjustment stages, I can tentatively relate my respondents' expressed reactions to each stage. Overall, the initial reaction to a foreign posting was on a continuum of elation to trepidation, with the added combination of culture shock for some. Therefore, certainly not all of the respondents could be represented at the initial high point of the Lysgaand curve. For those individuals who felt that they had settled, six months was suggested to be the required period of adjustment, so in this instance it could be argued that adjustment would have gradually increased from the start of the posting and plateau at this point, or would continue to increase, rather that dip as construed by Lysgaand. Potentially, the end high point of the curve would correlate with the adjustment level of the study respondents, however, this evidently would ignore those individuals who resolutely did not settle.

The correlation between Lysgaand's (1955) U-curve proposition with the cross-cultural transition and adjustment of sojourners was investigated in a longitudinal study of Japanese students in New Zealand (Ward et al., 1998). Previously, as discussed in Section 6.3.1, Ward and colleagues had disputed Lysgaand's definition of 'adjustment' by proposing that two fundamental areas of sojourner adjustment should be considered instead: psychological (depression) and socio-cultural (social difficulty) (Ward and Kennedy, 1993a, Ward and Searle, 1991, Ward and Kennedy, 1992).

Ultimately, in Ward et al.'s 1998 study, no evidence was found to support Lysgaand's model, both psychological and socio-cultural adjustment were greatest at the initial transition to the new culture (Ward et al., 1998). Indeed, Ward et al. were adamant that together with other research there was sufficient evidence to reject the U-curve model of sojourner adjustment.

Due to the inadequacy of the U-curve model and in an effort to generate a theoretical framework for guiding international adjustment research, Black et al. (1991) integrated international and domestic adjustment literature to produce a comprehensive model. Although this model represents the scenario of expatriate job relocation, I believe the components can be extrapolated to that of the military spouse.

Black and colleagues (1991) suggest that adjustment encompasses two main realms: anticipatory and in-country. The former focuses on factors already in-situ prior to departing and refers to the individual's previous overseas experiences and any pre-departure cross-cultural preparation. Furthermore, a second component, organisation factors, depicts the selection criteria for employees for international assignments. The influential nature of a trailing spouse's prior international relocation experiences has been identified in my study and in other research (Mohr and Klein, 2004, Kim, 1988, Briody and Chrisman, 1991), however, this can be misleading, as expectations were not always met. Additionally no specific cross-cultural training was offered to the study respondents and interestingly this appears to be an area predominantly recognised in non-military research i.e. employee relocations (Forster, 2000, Black and Mendenhall, 1990, Harvey, 1997). The incorporation of selection criteria for candidates in Black et al.'s (1991) model only focused on technical competence. Such 'screening' of military

spouses does not occur, and the inappropriateness of placements for some military spouses was highlighted by a few study respondents. The subsequent inability of a spouse to adjust has been recognised as the main reason for early repatriation in non-military studies (Caligiuri et al., 1998, Shaffer et al., 1999, Harvey, 1985, Tung, 1981, Black, 1988) and although some of my study respondents were not content during their posting, they seemed to have an innate ability to remain and support their spouse. Whether this was a stoic reaction or that their unhappiness was simply overlooked I cannot answer, but it does raise concern for other military spouses who may be in similar predicaments.

The 'in-country' adjustment category in Black et al.'s (1991) model refers to the influential variables following the transition to a new culture. Individual factors of self-efficacy, and relation and perception skills are highlighted as key dimensions. Again as in Section 8.2.2, the ability to "believe in oneself and one's ability to deal effectively with the foreign surroundings, even in the face of great uncertainty" (Black et al., 1991, p.307) was identified as an individual's self-efficacy. High levels again were associated with displaying learned behaviours for extended periods, provoking feedback and allowing an individual to comprehend what is expected of them, resulting with a reduction of uncertainty of the unfamiliar environment (Black et al., 1991). Furthermore, the mediating effect of self-efficacy between cross-cultural training and adjustment was identified by Osman-Gani and Rockstuhl (2009). Overall then, high self-efficacy alongside a greater understanding of the host culture and the ability to interact with the host nationals (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985) appears to facilitate the degree of adjustment, and as discussed in Section 8.2.2, such personality traits of the military spouse does seem to support their ability to adapt.

Three further factors of Black et al.'s (1991) adjustment model are more integrated with the 'work' dimension, referring to the expatriate's job, and associated organization culture and socialization. In this the authors define role novelty, role clarity and the associated work related social support network as key facets of the expatriate's adjustment. From the military spouse perspective such role identities are lost/changed (Section 8.2.2), expedient support networks are not necessarily available and may need to be re-established (Section 8.2.4). If these facets have been identified as essential criteria to assist an expatriate employee's adjustment, demonstrably then a deficit of these must be detrimental to the military spouses' adjustment.

The final category of Black et al.'s (1991) model recognises the 'non-work' dimension, that is, the family-spouse adjustment and the surrounding cultural novelty. The family-spouse influence has already been discussed in relation to the *crossover* and *spillover* effects (Section 5.4.4), and the resulting reciprocal expatriate/accompanying spouse adjustment levels. Considering the 'cultural novelty' aspect, the concept of cultural distance depicts that the greater the difference between the cultural norms of the expatriate's home and of the host culture, the more challenging the international adjustment (Black et al., 1991, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985, Church, 1982). Therefore, this suggests the location of the posting in combination with the individual's perceptions and own cultural awareness may contribute to the success of the assignment. Clearly, this can be extrapolated to the military spouse, as demonstrated in Section 6.2.2 when I discussed the influence of location variables and individual situations on the ability to adjust to a new environment.   Similarly, Ward and Kennedy (1993b, p.289) reiterated that sojourner adaption should not be presumed as

universal, "cultural origins and destinations of sojourners should be taken into account".

Acculturation, in particular the facets of cultural distance and psychological adjustment, have been implicitly positioned within a stress and coping framework (Searle and Ward, 1990, Ward et al., 1998), or as Berry (1997) suggested stress and coping belonged within a cross-cultural conceptual framework. In reaction to Berry's research, Lazarus (1997) argued that if the process of relocation was to incorporate the stress and coping framework, then in order to fully comprehend what occurred it was crucial to review the individual differences in "coping skills, goals, beliefs, expectations, and how [they related] to the environmental conditions being faced in daily adaptational transactions" (p. 40).   He believed the affiliation of stress and coping was dependent on the influence of an individual's characteristics and the daily varying environmental factors encountered.

A transition is defined by Schlossberg et al. (1995) as "any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles" (p. 27). Therefore, effective coping of a transition is judged by Treusch (2007) to be a reflection of the individual identifying their concerns, prioritising them and devising a plan to approach the changes. Within Figure 8.1 the variable 'ability to cope' was centrally placed to demonstrate its pivotal role connecting the individuality of spouses and their ability to adjust. As such, I have previously discussed the role of a military spouse's individual circumstance and their personality as influential factors of their coping strategies employed (within Chapters 5 and 6). Correspondingly, DeLongis and Holtzman (2005) recognised that personality played a substantial role in the stress and coping process,

while further research has highlighted this link to the subsequent choice of coping

strategies and their effectiveness (David and Suls, 1999, Gunthert et al., 1999, McCrae

and Costa, 1986, O'Brien and DeLongis, 1996, Watson and Hubbard, 1996).

Coping is a very broad concept with a complex history (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004,

Suls et al., 1996). Consequently, for the purpose of this discussion, coping as a

mediator of emotion will be briefly reviewed. In their stress and coping theory

Folkman and Lazarus (1988) regard the relationship between coping and stressful

encounters as bidirectional. Their model begins with the appraisal of a person-

environment encounter as threatening or challenging to an individual's well-being,

which generates an emotion, and consequently various coping options are evaluated.

This assessed coping process then alters the person-environment relationship, which is

reappraised leading to a change in emotion (Folkman and Lazarus, 1988, Folkman et

al., 1986). This theory posits a framework of problem- versus emotion-coping

strategies (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The former directed towards the stressor

seeking to remove or diminish its impact, and the latter concentrating on minimising

distress caused by the stressor (Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010).

For the purpose of this study, the specific coping abilities/styles of the study

respondents were not directly assessed. Instead 'coping' was discussed using a broad-

spectrum approach and personal coping mechanisms identified, ranging from self-

imposed social isolation to becoming immersed in the local culture. Therefore, specific

methods appeared to work for particular people and as Carver and Conner-Smith

(2010, p.684) comment "People respond to perceptions of threat, harm and loss in

diverse ways". In a survey of Western expatriates in China, Selmer (1999) found that

problem-focused coping strategies were positively related to adjustment, while emotion-focused coping was negatively related. Similarly, Ward and Kennedy (2001) paralleled these findings with respect to approach (problem-focused) and avoidance (emotion-focused) coping strategies being negatively and positively related to depression amongst British expatriates in Singapore. This implies that individuals will utilise variable coping strategies when they encounter a particular stressful event, as demonstrated by my study respondents. Indeed, research by Folkman and Lazarus provided distinctive empirical support for the concept that coping does incorporate both problem- and emotion-focused strategies (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980, Folkman and Lazarus, 1985).

The individual circumstances of a military spouse guides their response to a foreign posting. This appears to be influenced by both personality and the location of the posting, specifically how much it varies compared to their normal environment. The integration of the individual and their subsequent adjustment (including the impact on their well-being) is driven by personal factors already possessed prior to the relocation, as well as the use of specific coping methods, both problem and emotion-focused.

8.2.4   The perception of support

This section reviews the third research question:

> What types of emotional and social support are desired or used by spouses
>
> when living in a foreign community?

In answer to this question I am going to refer to the central line in Figure 8.1 depicting the 'individuality, ability to cope and support resources' relationship. This recognises

the relationship between the unique context of each military spouse, their associated coping mechanisms and perception of support.

With reference to the upper half of this conceptual line, I have represented the relationship between coping and support resources as bi-directional. In fact the direction and relationship between coping and social support was felt by McColl et al. (1995) to be ambivalent. They believed a particular method of coping may drive an individual to specific support resources, but conversely, they also felt that the perception of available support resources may determine the individual's appraisal of the situation and influence their coping approach. This led to their concept of an on-going feedback loop, where re-assessments and readjustments of coping efforts and perception of social support helped to achieve stability. However, if we consider this in conjunction with the lower section of the central line, as there also appears to be an influential relationship between personality and individual circumstances with selected coping strategies (Section 8.2.3), it can be assumed that chosen resources of social support and a person's individuality are both integral to the ability to cope.

In the thematic analysis of Phases 2 and 3, perceived support was encapsulated in the premise of informal or formal support resources. These were derived from the military spouse or community support structures and the military support provisions respectively. The desire or the need to access such support appeared to be a reflection of the study respondent's perception of the foreign posting and their own expectations (Sections 5.4.2 and 6.3.4). Phase 4 data analysis further demonstrated this by the identification of the variables instrumental support, level of tough-mindedness and self-efficacy, as independent and significant predictors of the

perceived level of military support. The subsequent association of coping strategies within such a framework have been investigated to establish the potential efficacious relationship with social support and well-being (McColl et al., 1995, Thoits, 1986, Rosen and Moghadam, 1988). In particular Thoits (1986) proposed an analogous relationship between social support and coping. She suggested problem-focused coping and instrumental support were directed at managing or changing a stressful event, and emotion-focused coping and emotional support aimed to reduce the negative feelings accompanying stressful events. McColl et al. (1995) inferred this as a *supplementary* relationship, suggesting individuals who chose problem-orientated action strategies would be more receptive to practical assistance and less receptive to emotional support. Folkman and Lazarus (1985) supported this concept of reinforcement in their study of emotion and coping (including social support) of college students during an academic examination period. In particular, problem-focused coping was strongly correlated with seeking social support. Additionally, the authors highlighted the importance of recognising social support as a coping process that changed over time in accordance with changes in the person-environment event.

An alternative supposition of the association between coping and social support is viewed as a *complementary* relationship (McColl et al., 1995). In this essence McColl et al. perceive that social support accomplishes the stress reduction utility that personal coping may omit. An example of this was provided by Wethington and Kessler (1986) who investigated the mediating and modifying effects of reported support use and of perceived support availability. They inferred that mobilization of support was only required if personal coping efforts failed. Furthermore, the perception of available support has also been recognised to bolster personal coping

resources, hence retaining connections to support networks provided a sense of assurance and allowed risks to be taken (Brown, 1978).

The essence of social support was believed by Thoits (1986) to be the supplementation or the reinforcement of an individual's coping efforts at stress-management by the guiding participation of others. Hence, whether considered as offering a supplementary or complementary relationship, the interconnection of social support and coping is strongly presented in research (McColl et al., 1995, Thoits, 1986, Aycock, 2011, Fontaine, 1986). Although many authors consider social support as part of the coping mechanism, it has been such an important component of the study findings that I chose to keep the two factors separate.

Examining the military spouses in my study, the requirements of social support, whether in an emotional or practical capacity, varied across the study sample and throughout their time on the posting. However, when this perceived level of support, either from the military and/or the community and other military spouses, was missing or was felt to be untrustworthy, the repercussions were substantial for some study respondents and caused distress.

Although, I did not complete any health assessments, other research clearly demonstrates the link between social support and a trailing spouse's well-being (Wiggins-Frame and Shehan, 1994, Darcy, 2000, Rosen and Moghadam, 1990, Lavee et al., 1985). In Section 5.4.2 I referred to Cohen and McKay's (1984) buffering hypothesis with reference to the cushioning effect of social support mechanisms to the stress of relocation and subsequent readjustment. These authors offered potential

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mechanisms responsible for the moderating effect of support reactions on a stressor. Of note, they presented an appraisal support mechanism founded on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping theory. Cohen and McKay believed a support group may influence the extent to which a situation was appraised as threatening and/or the individual's perception of their ability to cope. In accordance with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theory, when a stimulus is appraised as threatening and a subsequent appropriate coping response is unavailable, then a stress reaction occurs. Consequently, Cohen and McKay (1984) argue that, if there was a perception of available social support this could stimulate a less threatening appraisal of the situation, and conclude with the belief that an adequate response to the situation exists.

In extension to the principles of the buffering hypothesis and the stress and coping framework, Thoits (1986) and Cohen and McKay (1984) linked this research to the Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954, Schachter, 1959). The theory suggests "that one will turn only to those who are similar to themselves for comparison information" (Cohen and Mckay, 1984, p. 257). However, for social support to be effective, the stressor must be considered as socially acceptable before discussions are generated, plus those providing the support must present an empathetic understanding of the stressful event (Cohen and Mckay, 1984, Thoits, 1986). In line with this theory, social desirability/acceptability and stoicism were discussed in Chapters 3, 5 and 6, with reference to their influence of a military spouse's well-being and coping reactions. Furthermore, the study respondents commented that the uniqueness of their experiences overseas enhanced their affiliation with other accompanying military spouses. This commonality was felt by some to produce an

instant informal support network, and literature also demonstrated the importance of the supportive trailing spouse connection (Copeland and Norell, 2002, Rosen and Moghadam, 1990).

Social relationships are obviously paramount in the (re)-establishment of support networks, especially for trailing spouses who frequently lose such networks due to relocation (Copeland and Norell, 2002, Darcy, 2000). As these close relationships have been determined as significant buffers against stressful scenarios (Berkman and Syme, 1979), individuals without such significant attachment are considered to be at risk and less able to cope with stressful life transitions (Parkes and Stevenson-Hinde, 1982). This concept of attachment is founded on research by Bowlby (1997, 1998) (as mentioned in Section 7.4.2) who argued that relationship quality in early life shaped social and emotional developments of later life, and accordingly such attachment behaviour was deemed by Bowlby as a defence against predators. This was supported with three observations: that an isolated member is at greater risk from attack; that an individual who is considered to be more vulnerable would eagerly display attachment behaviour; and finally that attachment behaviour is prominently exhibited in stressful situations.

In general, Bowlby (1997, 1998) declared that individuals who formed attachments to others were more secure and self-reliant than those who did not. Conversely, insecure attachment has been linked to low levels of well-being and high levels of anxiety and depression (Priel and Shamai, 1995). Furthermore, as the perceptions of the availability of support are founded in early life experiences (Bowlby, 1997), attachment styles, where the styles are described as secure, insecure-ambivalent/anxious, and

insecure-avoidant (Mauritzen, 2011, Kafetsios and Sideridis, 2006), and their association with perceived social support has been suggested (Wallace and Vaux, 1993, Ognibene and Collins, 1998, Nelson and Quick, 1991). As such, attachment and social support have been empirically linked in Davis et al.'s (1998) research examining the relationship of domain and global support with attachment and well-being. Specifically, insecure attachment was generally associated with diminished social support, and securely attached respondents reported higher levels of global support. Additionally, Mikulincer and Florian (1998) viewed the basic concept of security in attachment theory as an inner resource, which they believed facilitated adjustment and improved an individual's well-being during stressful events. Conceivably then, an individual's attachment style could determine perceived levels of support and as a result contribute to the success or failure of their adaption to stress. Within the present study, a military spouse's attachment style was not analysed, instead personality dimensions and support were the focus in the final phase due to the prominence of these themes in the previous phases. Nonetheless, recent research investigating military families experiencing deployment has incorporated the attachment theory as a framework to consider when developing at-home support for spouses (Mauritzen, 2011), and for the theoretical grounding of a family attachment network model of military families during deployment and subsequent reintegration (Riggs and Riggs, 2011). These studies highlight the value of assessing the attachment styles of military spouses in order to better comprehend their varied coping responses, emotions and resulting support requirements. Therefore, the attachment style of a military spouse could influence their tendency to seek support in response to a stressful transition and this adds another dimension to the individual needs of an accompanying spouse on an overseas posting. Although I did not measure attachment

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because it was a theme that emerged towards the end of the study, it could be an

important area for further research (Section 8.7).

8.2.5 The end of a foreign posting

This section reviews the final research question:

> How do the families approach the task of moving back to their usual place of
>
> residence following a foreign posting?

In Phases 2 and 3 I directly posed this question to the study respondents. In Phase 2

five of the participants were actually in the process of repatriation, and in Phase 3 over

half of the respondents had experienced multiple foreign postings and therefore had

also experienced this process. Consequently, some of the opinions provided were

purely anticipatory thoughts about repatriation. In addition to the responses to this

direct question, responses throughout the discussion indicated factors that would also

be influential during repatriation. These dimensions will be considered with reference

to elements of Black et al.'s (1992) suggested theoretical framework of repatriation

adjustment and to Sussman's (2001) Cultural Identity Change Model of repatriation.

However, initially, the general impact of repatriation will be briefly considered.

In general repatriation was not expected to be problematic; all challenges were

assumed to be experienced during the expatriation and settling in process (Black et al.,

1992), with the assumption that repatriation was purely the conclusion of the

transition (Sussman, 2000). However, repatriation has been considered to be

potentially more challenging than expatriation with high levels of repatriate distress on

returning home (Black et al., 1992, Osland, 2000, Linehan, 2002, Sussman, 2000, De

Cieri et al., 1991). In particular,what some consider being a life changing experience of

living overseas can be hard to share with those in the home country who have not

undergone a similar experience (Osland, 2000, Hurn, 1999). In fact, Hurn determined

for some that "Home does not really feel like home at all" (p. 225) and Sussman (2001)

highlighted the unexpected psychological distress and discomfort that can accompany

some repatriates on their return home. Such a phenomenon is defined as reverse

culture shock: "the process of readjusting, re-acculturating, and re-assimilating into

one's own home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of

time" (Gaw, 2000, p.83). Whether the accompanying spouses have trepidation or are

relieved about returning to 'normal' life, the disorientating feeling of being a stranger

in their homeland is still possible (Foley, 2010a). However, Sussman (2001) suggests

that because sojourners spend moderate periods of time overseas, an unfamiliar

cultural environment model may not sufficiently explain the full repatriation

experience.

The military spouses in my study expressed both apprehension and contentment at

the thought of a posting ending. This appeared to be associated with their overall

adjustment on the actual posting, but primarily, returning to a 'normal life' meant

returning to periods of separation from their serving spouse. In the three data

collection phases, having quality family time with their spouse was the predominant

reason discussed for going on a foreign posting (Sections 3.10.1.1, 5.4.4 and 6.2.4).

Therefore, for some, the potential of experiencing re-entry shock I would argue would

actually accompany the re-assimilation back into life as a 'single' person.

Examining the theoretical explanations of repatriation, Black et al. (1992) proposed a

broad theory in which repatriates would make both anticipatory and in-county

repatriation adjustments. A similar framework was also produced with respect to the adjustment of expatriates as discussed in Section 8.2.3. For this repatriation framework Black et al. argued that antecedents of repatriation adjustment were that of reducing uncertainty via predictive and behavioural control, again within the four categories of: individual, non-work, job, and organizational variables. With reference to the trailing spouse scenario, the first two categories would be most relevant. In these categories Black et al. argue that the greater the difference between the host and home country then the greater the potential change of the individual and the degree of adjustment made. Research supports the hypothesis that individuals who adapt more successfully overseas will have more re-entry adjustment difficulties than those who did not adapt (Brein and David, 1971, Sussman, 2001, Sussman, 2000, De Cieri et al., 1991). Christofi and Thompson (2007) explain this in the terms that sojourners who adapt well, experience changes in their personal beliefs and behaviours, and as a result must re-integrate these changes with their home culture. Such a fundamental shift in perspective is believed by Foley (2010b) to lead to feelings of disconnection within the home community and may negatively impact the re-adjustment process. Generally, the majority of the military spouses in my study identified how they had developed personally during the posting, and had embraced some of the cultural differences. They hoped that they would be able to retain these changes, however, there was an inert fear that these feelings would be stunted on return to their home country, and in accordance with Black et al.'s framework, it could be assumed that subsequent disappointment may then affect their re-adjustment.

Non-work variables in Black et al.'s (1992) repatriation framework focus on the potential change of social status that would accompany relocation back to the home

country. The experience of this downward shift has been linked to increased anxiety, in particular due to financial and housing problems (Kendall, 1981). Finance was a significant concern for the study respondents, this was related not just to the loss of the extra Living Overseas Allowance (LOA) provided by the military, but also with respect to employment of the military spouse on return. Some corporate firms have recognised such potential employment issues for accompanying spouses and have included specific assistance programmes in finding employment, writing CVs etc, in repatriation packages (Hurn, 1999). This is not a universal approach by all companies, however, the dual career ambitions of couples has been noted as a vital factor in the retention of employees and in the acceptance of overseas relocations (Harvey et al., 2009, Hurn, 1999, Harvey, 1997).

The complexity of repatriation was acknowledged in Black et al.'s (1992) framework, however Sussman (2001) argued that none of the domains considered the psychological or socio-cultural factors. Consequently, in order to anticipate the consequences of the repatriation process, Sussman's (2000) Cultural Identity Change model focused on three fundamental dimensions: identity salience, socio-cultural adaption, and self-concept-cultural identity changes. The model suggested that as a result of socio-cultural adjustment and adaption, the subsequent self-concept disturbances and changes in cultural identity became more obvious during and at the end of the repatriation process. Sussman's (2001, 2000) research concluded that sojourners who least prepared for the repatriation process and who experienced greatest changes of their cultural identity (that is they had embraced the new host culture) would have greatest repatriation distress. As such, Christofi and Thompson (2007) conducted a phenomenological investigation of individuals who, following a

sojourn overseas, had subsequently become so disillusioned with their home country

that they ultimately chose to reside in their host country. The authors identified that

these individuals were not prepared for the overwhelming impact of the re-entry

culture shock; in fact the reality of home life was described as disappointing.

Furthermore, Judy Rickatson (2010), an expatriate wife who established her own

website for other trailing spouses, adds a further interesting dimension to the cultural

identity change model. On her website she expressed the changes she experienced on

leaving an international assignment:

> "Suddenly I wasn't an expat anymore. I wasn't even a trailing spouse. I had no
> job. I was invisible. I didn't know who I was anymore. It was intensely
> frustrating, humiliating even that a 14 hour plane ride could erase my identity
> so completely." (http://expatriatelife.wordpress.com/2010/08/22/repatriation-
> one-year-on)

Therefore, Judy had entirely identified herself as both an expatriate wife and as a

trailing spouse, and as a result of repatriation this was lost. In this instance, the

changes in Judy's personal identity that had developed whilst on the posting had a

profound impact on her readjustment to her home country.

Obviously, due to the nature of my study I cannot specifically determine whether

repatriation was particularly distressful for my participants, nor can I comment on the

potential impact of cultural identity change. However, it was extremely apparent that

those individuals who had not adjusted to their new life on a foreign posting were

pacified by the thought of ultimately returning home, and the assumption was that

repatriation adjustment for them would be uncomplicated. Whereas, in accordance

with Black et al.'s (1992) repatriation framework and Sussman's (2000) model, it could

be construed that those in my sample who successfully adapted to their host

environment may then have found the transition back to the UK as quite challenging.

Interestingly, I received some personal communication from three of my original Phase 2 participants, who wished to share their experiences of returning home. All had thoroughly enjoyed their foreign posting, in particular their quality time with their spouses. Now reality had returned and not only did they crave the lifestyle they had overseas, but also to have what one respondent (Leona) termed a 'fulltime' husband again. Furthermore, through this communication I was made aware that six serving spouses had subsequently applied for redundancy following return to the UK, the predominant reason being that following the quality family time they had together overseas, they no longer wanted to endure periods of separation.

8.3   Reflective account

In previous chapters I have highlighted the potential bias in my interpretation of the data collected due to the duality of my roles as a researcher and as a military spouse. In my researcher role, for the first two years of my study, I was an accompanying spouse of a Royal Navy Officer whilst I was completing the data collection for Phases 2 and 3. As I progressed through the study, I became increasingly aware of my own prejudices and attitude towards other military spouses on my posting, and throughout this period I maintained a reflexive journal to document the influence of these experiences. It is to these reflexive notes that I will now turn to discuss the necessity of balancing my dual roles as highlighted in Section 2.4.

From my military spouse perspective I found relocating to a foreign posting quite challenging. My reason for relocating was to be with my husband; however, I did not find our new environment particularly appealing as the quality of the new surroundings was at a lower standard than what I was familiar and comfortable with in

the UK. Obviously I was aware that this was not necessarily a universal opinion about the posting and I did not want my negative judgement to inadvertently bias my research, or to lead my interviewees' responses. I feel I achieved this through the use of a questioning schedule that incorporated unambiguous and impartial questions reviewing the entire relocation, adjustment and leaving process. I could empathise with some individuals, who had experienced a troubling time on the posting, but I did not discuss my experiences unless asked and this only ever happened after the recorded sessions.

Residing within a relatively small military community, it was difficult to avoid hearing the inevitable idle chat and spitefulness towards some members of the community. However, in addition to this, I also had my own perceptions about some individuals. These scenarios caused me to reflect constantly on my role as a researcher, and as I wanted to maintain my professionalism and credibility as a researcher to the other spouses, I remained neutral with reference to any common chatter and did not, and would not have contributed. I wanted to be identified as approachable and trustworthy, and if I was going to achieve this I needed other spouses to be aware of my research and my interest in *anyone's* opinion.

Initially, I naively presumed that as I did not hold any prejudices regarding the rank/rate/role of a military spouse's husband/wife, that these feelings would be reciprocated. However, following the advertisement for Phase 2 participants, one wife of a rating stated that she did not realise that she could participate, presuming that, as I was an officer's wife, I would only be interested in other officer spouses' opinions. I had completely overlooked that my husband's rank may have caused

misinterpretation of my research and despite advertising widely to all, there was still

this preconception. This heightened my awareness that a potential participants' first

perception of me would be as a military spouse, then as a researcher. In retrospect,

being viewed in this manner did recognise my acceptance within the military

community as a military spouse, and as such delineated my other role as a researcher.

In fact I became affectionately known as 'Dr. Gillie' by some military spouses, so I was

welcomed as one of them, but also acknowledged as a researcher. Additionally, as I

did not have any children, or initially a specific job on the posting, like many of my

fellow military spouses I also became increasingly aware of the absence of a role or of

an identity at the start of the posting and I instantly became known as 'wife-of'.

Nonetheless, as my PhD progressed, I was no longer 'wife-of', instead interestingly the

reverse happened, and my husband became 'husband-of Gillian doing the PhD'. So

again there was the distinction of my role as someone's wife, but also as a researcher.

My study became a general topic of discussion amongst other military spouses, and

certainly word-of-mouth was a phenomenal advertising tool. At social functions

individuals whom I had not met before would approach me and register their interest

in contributing to my research. Nonetheless, I was careful not to dominate

conversations with my research, as firstly I did not want to alienate people under the

premise that they would feel I was going to 'analyse' everything we informally

discussed, and secondly, particularly following interviews and focus group sessions, I

did not want participants to question my researcher ethics with respect to

confidentiality and anonymity.

Predictably, some of my study participants were going to be individuals that I would socialise with or would reside in the same parco. Consequently, it was likely that I could have preconceived thoughts regarding their experience on the posting purely due to my prior interaction with them. In an attempt to avoid any prejudgements, I recorded such thoughts prior to our research interview/group being held and openly discussed any apprehensions with my note-taker. This method of documenting feelings was introduced to me when I was a student nurse by one of my ward mentors. It was suggested as a technique to cope with any upsetting experiences, but in this instance I felt it allowed me to approach the meetings with an open-mind, and to focus my analysis purely on the contents of the meeting. Again, discussing the outcomes of the meetings with my note-taker and my supervisory team further helped me to be aware of any potential prejudices.

The use of an interview/focus group schedule helped to maintain questioning continuity but also reduced the opportunity of me deviating from a topic and interspersing it with prior knowledge of the individual, which potentially could have introduced bias to a conversation. Furthermore, I applied experience from my Adult Nurse training in such that I would not allow personal judgement of an individual to interrupt my assessment and subsequent treatment of them. Additionally, highlighting to the participants my previous experience as an Adult Nurse not only instilled confidence in my credibility, but also allowed participants to recognise me as a nurse researcher during interviews or focus groups and not on that occasion as purely a military spouse. I believed this further encouraged open and honest opinions from my participants but as I was also living as they were, as an accompanying military spouse,

there was an instant commonality between us and I feel this helped to establish a rapport.

I am aware that despite using the techniques discussed, there was still a possibility that my interpretations may have inadvertently been biased by my personal experiences. However, I hope that my recognition of this minimised any such subjectivity.

8.4   Critical appraisal of study

When I consider what this study has achieved, I believe the four phases of data collection have allowed a comprehensive investigation of the first three study objectives (Table 8.1) These provided a significantly greater understanding of a military spouse's perceptions as regards accompanying their serving spouse on a foreign posting. Additionally, the study has allowed recognition of the extensive contribution that social influences and altered roles/identities have on a posting experience, and ultimately how a military spouse then adjusts to an unfamiliar environment and culture.

I feel that although the fourth objective (examining the issue of leaving a foreign posting) was explored, due to the cross-sectional nature of the study inevitably the majority of the study participants (particularly in Phase 2) were not at that stage of their posting and as such opinions expressed were prospective. Although I feel this did identify areas of concern, I believe the structure of my study did not serve justice to this concluding aspect of a foreign posting.

The final objective was to identify principles of best practice from each of the three British Armed services. I feel this objective was actually too narrowly focused, I had anticipated being able to specifically associate a particular experience with reference to a service affiliation and as such be able to compile areas of best practice. In retrospect, I should have revised this aim to produce only broad recommendations for the tri-service aspect.

My systematic review identified a dearth of research with respect to British Military spouses and the impact of relocation overseas, consequently I chose to extend this research to incorporate non-British military research. I feel this added significant credence to my study, as only one piece of research out of the 13 identified was based on British military spouses and furthermore it was the only one to apply a qualitative approach. Although I was aware of the extensive research completed with reference to non-military (e.g. corporate, clergy or diplomatic) spouses, I did not believe that line of research was specifically relevant to my systematic review. Military spouses may be subsumed under the expression of 'trailing spouse' with their non-military counterparts, but I believe the uniqueness of the military spouse places them in a specific dimension of this group and as such needed to remain exclusive.

As discussed in Chapter 2, I chose an ethnographic methodology for my study and I consider that this was the most appropriate approach to adopt. In this vein I argued that military spouses could be recognised as a sub-cultural unit due to being a cohesive group of individuals with the common characteristics of being married to a member of the British Armed Forces, and experiencing an overseas posting as an accompanying spouse. Furthermore, the fact that military spouses actually on a foreign posting were

invited to share their experiences and attitudes, I consider to be one of the major strengths of this study.

I believe by utilising an ethnographic framework, the themes that arose from the systematic review and from my own informal observations and discussions with other military spouses were pertinently explored using directed and specific questions in the format of semi-structured interviewing. This allowed a degree of flexibility for the interviews and gave my participants the opportunity to discuss their circumstances and experiences openly and freely. During these interviews I maintained an active listening role to determine how my participants' responses related to the research objectives. Additionally, through maintaining a reflexive journal I was able to record the dynamics of these interviews and to supplement subsequent descriptions. This documenting process was also utilised for the focus groups in conjunction with a written account produced by a credible note-taker. I believe this contextual work added to the richness and breadth of the data, and consequently heightened the trustworthiness of the investigation. Finally, in accordance with an ethnographic framework, the data for this phase were collected and analysed concurrently, and this was performed until there was a repetition of themes and saturation had been reached. This I believe improved the robustness of the findings for this phase and provided a strong foundation for the subsequent qualitative and then final quantitative data collection phase as the study developed.

I believe the duality of my role as both researcher and military spouse was also a strength of the study, as this meant that my role as an ethnographer varied in the participant/observer continuum. As a military spouse on a foreign posting, I was able

to experience, like my counterparts, the process of adapting to a new environment. As such, I was part of the military community and was familiar with and part of their everyday life. This I believe resulted in enthusiasm to be recruited, as I was 'one of them'. From my researcher perspective, as discussed in Section 8.3, I believe that I endeavoured to minimise the potential bias of my data interpretations and relationships with my participants, and therefore, I feel that my role as a researcher was not only accepted by the other military spouses but welcomed.

As also discussed in Chapter 2, one strategy for increasing validity was through the use of methodological triangulation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Adopting a four phase data collection (three qualitative and one quantitative phase), allowed the incorporation of findings from individual interviews, focus groups, an online forum and ultimately an online survey. Plus, the systematic review of literature provided evidence of the existing research in this area. Together, I believe these methods maximised the validity of the data.

Due to the limited timeframe I was working in, I believe the purposive sampling strategy allowed me to maximise the variation in my sample. However, I had hoped to achieve an equal representation of officer and non-officer spouses and of the three services. I did advertise widely to maximise my audience, but I think inevitably as I was accommodated within an officer enclave, it was more likely that my neighbouring military spouses and associates would volunteer. Although I frequently socialised with non-officer spouses and was known for my research, they were more difficult to recruit. I do not know whether this was because of my officer affiliation, that they did not want to be involved, or were potentially less proactive than the officer spouses

appeared to be. Nonetheless, I think in retrospect I could have been more proactive in recruiting non-officer spouses. From a different aspect, I only managed to recruit one male spouse for Phase 2. At that time, male spouses were most definitely in the minority on the posting (four out of approximately 136 married accompanied personnel) and although I did directly approach and email the other male spouses, and they stated they were happy to participate, despite much effort no further contact transpired. Likewise for the remainder of the data collection no further male military spouses chose to participate.

I appreciate that utilising online data collection may have potentially alienated some individuals unfamiliar with operating the Internet, but I believe incorporating online technology was still a significant addition to my research. It allowed an extension of my study sample to include the experiences of military spouses who had been to other foreign locations rather than the single location used in Phase 2. In total this provided experiences from 27 other locations. Although, in some instances retrospective accounts were provided, the diversity of affiliated locations I believe improved the reliability of findings.

As discussed in Chapter 7, during the construction of the online survey my initial preference was to incorporate McCrae and Costa's (2004) NEO Five Factor Inventory. Being open-mined was a key trait identified by the military spouses to coincide with a successful adjustment to a foreign posting. I believe not being able to incorporate an openness scale excluded this dimension from further investigation, and potentially I should have explored other tools that incorporated such a scale. Furthermore, as locus of control (LOC) (Rotter, 1966) was recognised in research to influence

acculturation (Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000) a LOC scale was incorporated within the online survey; however no significant findings were determined. Nonetheless, in acculturation studies associations between externals and psychological distress had been corroborated (Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000). Additionally, Martínez et al. (2002) and Black (1990a) investigated the direct effects as well as moderating effects of LOC and social support on the psychological well-being of expatriates in their respective studies. Therefore, LOC could be influential to the impact of well-being and adjustment. However, within my survey the LOC scale had a Cronbach's alpha level considered to be minimally acceptable (DeVellis, 2012, Cohen et al., 2007). Furthermore, concerns arose due to the mandatory status of answer responses, which resulted with the addition of an optional 'no response' category. This subsequently allowed full and partially completed responses to be submitted, making scoring only possible utilising missing value analysis first. I believe these impediments could have contributed to the non-significant findings.

In summary my study sample consisted of 34 participants for Phase 2 individual interviews and focus groups; 13 active registrants for the online forum in Phase 3, and 136 submissions to the online survey in Phase 4. I believe the number of participants add to the strength of the study. The data analysis for the qualitative phases was independently corroborated by either my Director of Studies or my other supervisors. Additionally, due to the systematic transcribing techniques employed, I believe this enhanced the reliability of my findings. However, I feel I could have completed further statistical analysis of the online survey data; it would have been valuable to correlate data between spouses of officers and non-officers in particular, and between their representative services. However, although my sample size was satisfactory for overall

analysis, the creation of sub-groups would have produced inadequate sizes and result with insignificant findings.

8.5   Contribution to theory, methods and practice

The experience of being an accompanying British Military spouse on an overseas posting has not been given sufficient attention by researchers. As demonstrated by my systematic review, the impact of such international postings has been dominated by quantitative research based on the US military. My thesis extends elements of the only other piece (to date) of British military spouse research regarding mobility, which was completed by Jervis (2009). However, my research was novel in that it focused specifically on the experiences of British Military spouses on an overseas posting incorporating a three phase qualitative perspective and a fourth phase quantitative component. Contributing to the field of research methods, employing innovative methods of Internet based data collection via the online forum and survey recognised the efficacy of contemporary techniques, but also such a technique seemed to be synergistic with the mobile military spouse. Additionally, the collection of data (in Phase 4) using this specific combination of validated questionnaires with this sample (military spouses) was a novel aspect of the study.

The conceptual map (Figure 8.1) summarised the interlinking relationships of the overarching themes that emerged from the thematic analyses. The central aspect of this model was 'the ability to cope', and by drawing on the stress and coping theory by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identifying the association of coping mechanisms and well-being, this correlated theories in the field of personality and individual differences, with those affiliated to social support. Therefore, in order to have an in-

depth understanding of the impact of overseas assignments on the accompanying military spouse, it is initially necessary to examine and combine principles in the domains of sociology and psychology. The outcome of this then feeds into adjustment theories and subsequently contributes to the field of healthcare practice.

As such, this thesis contributes specifically to knowledge regarding the influence of personality and individual circumstances of the military spouse and overseas relocation adjustment. Recognising the changes of an individual's behavioural patterns via Social Cognitive Theory, (Bandura, 1986), defining one's sense of self in the context of belonging in relation to Social Identity Theory, (Haslam et al., 2009, Hogg, 2006), and the subsequent implications of incongruous identity and roles through Identity Disruption Theory, (Burke, 1991) and Role Theory (Biddle, 1986), have all been acknowledged as driving factors of a military spouse's adjustment level. Furthermore, the significant influence of support has been confirmed as a substantial requirement for military spouses during periods of separation (Dandeker et al., 2006, Rosen and Moghadam, 1990, Padden, 2006); this thesis demonstrates the additional need of diverse and continual support for these spouses whilst accompanying the serving member overseas, especially to facilitate well-being. The diverse needs of support were also personality driven, which contributes to the knowledge of the specificity of support requirements in particular through Social Comparison Theory, (Festinger, 1954, Schachter, 1959), and highlights the importance from a military practice perspective, of the need to provide diverse support resources.

This thesis also identified the potential health and well-being implications of a British military spouse not successfully adjusting to an international relocation, as was

highlighted within Jervis's (2009) research. Previously, health implications associated

with overseas assignments have been acknowledged within non-military (Searle and

Ward, 1990, Harvey, 1985, Wiggins-Frame and Shehan, 1994, Puskar, 1990, De Cieri et

al., 1991, Makowsky et al., 1988) and US military research (Lavee et al., 1985, Burrell et

al., 2006, McNulty, 2003, Rosen and Moghadam, 1991). The healthcare needs of the

accompanying British military spouse should also now be included in this domain.

8.6 Implications and recommendations of research

This thesis confirms that a universal positive reaction will not be experienced by all

British military spouses on an overseas posting. Having the opportunity of quality

family time does not immediately signify that any anxiety or distress experienced due

to previous separation will instantly be rectified. My findings highlight the multitude

of variables in relation to personality, individual differences, personal meaning-making,

the ability to cope and support resources that contribute to a military spouse's level of

adjustment to a new environment. Therefore, I believe this research could have

significant implications for the military and for healthcare professionals; consequently I

would like to present some recommendations for the general enhancement of the

accompanying military spouse experience based on the findings and discussion of my

research. These recommendations are provided in chronological order to reflect the

relocation process (relevant sections of the thesis are shown in parentheses after each

recommendation):

1. The application of a selection process to assess the appropriateness of a

   military spouse accompanying the serving personnel on an overseas posting

   (Sections 3.11.2, 5.2.2, 5.2.5, 5.4.4 and 8.2.3).

2. Greater involvement of the military spouse in the administrative and subsequent relocation procedures from the outset of the assignment orders (Sections 3.10.1.2, 3.11.1, 5.2.5, 5.3.5 and 5.4.2).

3. The option of cross-cultural awareness training, to reduce any anticipatory concerns and improve knowledge of new location. As such, the ability to attend the host location for a short reconnaissance trip should be facilitated (Sections 5.2.3.2, 5.2.4, 5.3.4.1, 5.4.3, 5.4.5 and 8.2.3).

4. Greater congruency between sponsors and new arrivals in combination with a structured introduction to the host location and facilities, by a support group or the military, would provide a more seamless relocation transition. This should be offered to all military spouses irrespective of whether they arrive with the serving member or at a later date (Sections 5.2.3.2, 5.3.4.3 and 6.2.5.2).

5. Acknowledgement of the importance of accompanying spouses being able to communicate with friends and family in their home country. This could be facilitated by the expedient access to internet and telephone provision from the point of arrival in the host country (Sections 5.2.2, 5.2.3.1, 5.3.4.2 and 6.2.5.1).

6. Given the significance of family adjustment, regular informal scheduled checks from either a healthcare professional or a designated support worker should be instigated to ensure the well-being of the military spouse. This would help the early identification of any coping problems, and prevent the inadvertent exclusion of those military spouses who may feel socially isolated (Sections 3.10.1.3, 3.10.1.4, 3.11.3, 5.3.3, 5.3.4.2, 6.2.5.1 and 6.3.4).

7. Publicity of support resources should be maximised to ensure all military spouses are aware of the opportunities available to them (Sections 3.10.1.4, 3.11.3, 5.4.3, 6.2.5.1, 6.3.4, 7.4.2 and 8.2.4).

8. Although military spouses may choose to end or postpone their employment/career to support their serving spouse overseas, this is of particular financial concern for some during the posting and subsequently when repatriating. While there is an understanding of this by the military, the option of further educational support, career guidance or employment search assistance on repatriation, could alleviate this substantial worry (Sections 3.10.1.2, 5.2.2, 5.2.4, 5.3.3, 5.4.5, 6.2.2.2 and 8.2.5).

8.7   Areas for further research

Although the sample size was satisfactory for the requirements of this study, future research should endeavour to access a more significant number of military spouses who have experienced overseas posting(s), this would allow statistical comparisons of officer and non-officer spouse experiences. Additionally, locus of control (LOC) was identified as a potential constituent of international adjustment. Unfortunately due to the construction of my online survey and subsequent complications, the results of LOC were found to be insignificant. Future research should incorporate LOC within the variables of study, and if copyright issues can be surmounted, McCrae and Costa's (2004) NEO Five Factor Inventory could be utilised to allow the exploration of the alternative personality dimensions in conjunction with overseas relocations.

Although ethnography was considered to be the most applicable approach for this study, a feminist perspective could be adopted in view of the fact that the majority of

military spouses are female, and in doing so allow an investigation of these spouses

overseas in what Jervis (2009) argues to be within a patriarchal organisation. The role

and identity of the female military spouse and the potentially oppressive situation for

these women could be examined in this specific context.

As highlighted in my research and discussion, repatriation is not necessarily a

straightforward process. This topic offers a substantial area of future research and is a

concept raising interest in expatriate research (Black et al., 1992, De Cieri et al., 1991),

and as such should be corroborated with studies on military spouses. One further

developing area of interest would also be to investigate the experiences of male

military spouses; this would provide a constructive insight into the potential

differences of gender and relocation. Finally, attachment theory emerged as a

potential influence of an individual's need of social support. As such an attachment

scale could be incorporated within research to identify the potential significance of this

variable.

8.8   Study conclusion

My first foreign posting as a military wife gave me the platform to explore the

experiences of other British military spouses who accompanied their serving spouse on

an overseas assignment. Initially, I had been aggravated by the generic assumption

that being posted overseas would be an idyllic experience and this led me to question

whether in fact I was mistaken, or if this was actually a concern of other military

spouses. A systematic review of research investigating British or US military spouses'

experiences on international assignments confirmed that there were indeed diverse

reactions to such postings. Significantly the review highlighted this impact could be to

the detriment to the military spouses' well-being, particularly if support resources

were inadequate. However, only one review article explored the experiences of British

military spouses, consequently the review's findings were predominantly based on the

accompanying spouse of US military personnel.

To contribute to this previous research and to introduce the novel aspect of

investigating the experience of British military spouses, three methods of qualitative

data collection were employed to access this specific group whilst they were on an

overseas posting. Consequently, thematic analysis of data from individual interviews,

focus groups and an online forum corroborated the importance of support networks

on international postings, but also the fundamental influence of personality and

individual circumstances emerged. Specifically, as ultimately determined via a

quantitative online survey, a person's level of tough-mindedness, their self-efficacy

and available instrumental support were all significant predictors of the perceived level

of support provided by the military.

I believe my research emphasises the importance of recognising the uniqueness of

each military spouse. Their ability to cope with diverse circumstances is pivotal to their

adjustment capabilities and, as demonstrated by my findings, this is very much driven

by the specific characteristics of the military spouse and the availability of support

resources. In this vein, overseas relocations must not be presumed to be beneficial for

all accompanying military spouses. The opportunity to have quality family time is the

predominant reason to have a foreign posting, however, if the support network is

missing or the military spouse does not possess the necessary coping and adjustment

skills, the posting will inevitably be distressing and to the detriment of their well-being.

Therefore, I believe the military are in a constructive position in that they can develop and maximise the effectiveness of their support resources, and in conjunction with health or social work professionals provide the holistic support that the military spouses may need.

The unwavering support my study participants demonstrated towards their serving husbands/wives was extremely admirable, especially for those who had a distressing time on a foreign posting but still chose to remain for the duration. I hope that my study has drawn attention to the fact that overseas relocation is not a positive experience for all military spouses. Nonetheless, it can be a magnificent opportunity and one that can be maximised if the correct support environment is available.

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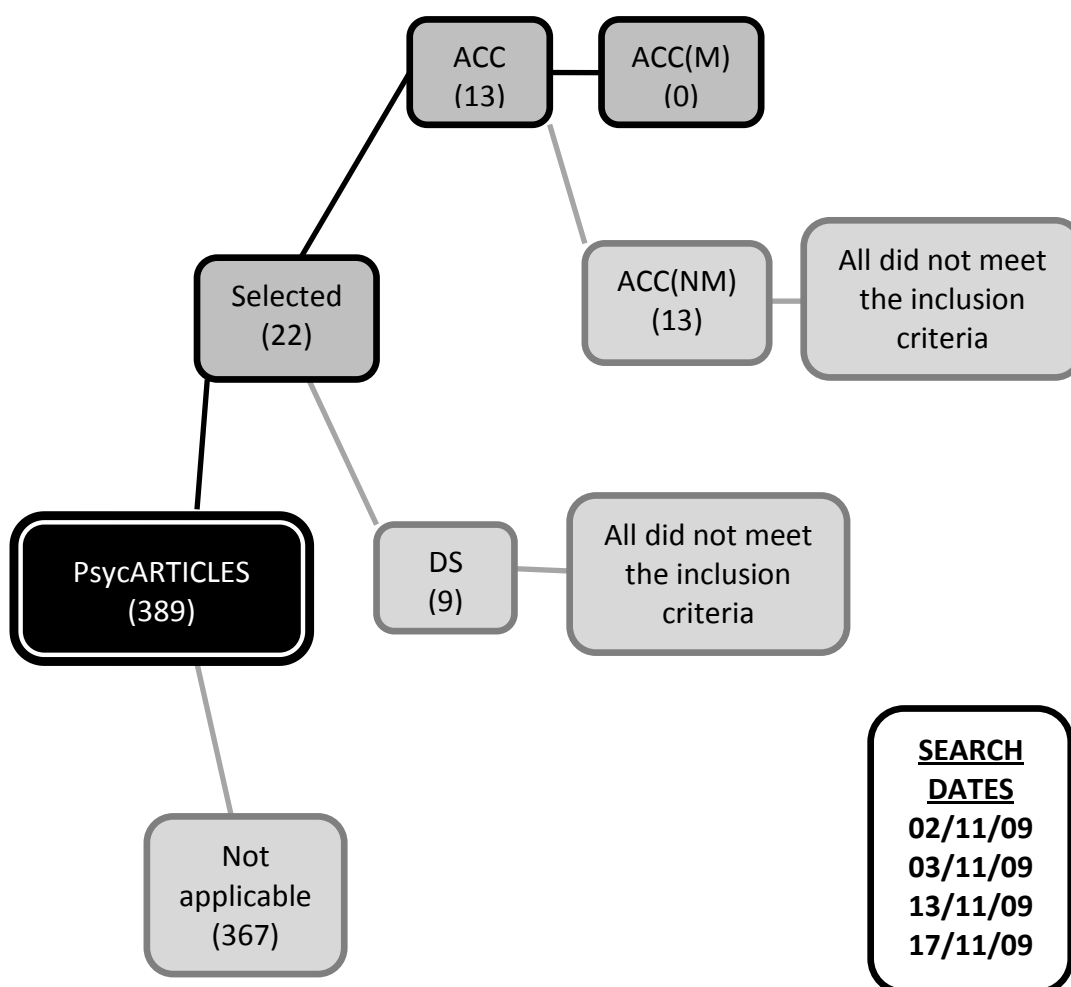
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ZEREGA, W. D., TSENG, M. S. & GREEVER, C. B. 1976. Stability and Concurrent Validity of the Rotter Internal-External Locus of Control Scale. *Educational and Psychological Measurement,* 36**,** 473 - 475.

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8.10 Appendix

Appendix i   Flow diagrams for the selection procedure of each database and search tool used for completion of the systematic review

Databases

PsycARTICLES Search Results


```
                    ACC  ──── ACC(M)
                    (13)       (0)

                                    ACC(NM)  ──── All did not meet
        Selected                     (13)           the inclusion
         (22)                                          criteria

                              DS  ──── All did not meet
   PsycARTICLES               (9)        the inclusion
     (389)                                  criteria


                                              SEARCH
       Not                                     DATES
    applicable                               02/11/09
     (367)                                   03/11/09
                                             13/11/09
                                             17/11/09
```

ABBREVIATION REMINDER FOR ALL FLOW DIAGRAMS IN APPENDIX I

ACC   = ACCOMPANIED
ACC(M)   = ACCOMPANIED MILITARY
ACC(NM)   = ACCOMPANIED NON-MILITARY
ACC&DS   = ACCOMPANIED & DEPLOYMENT SEPARATION
DS   = DEPLOYMENT SEPARATION

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE REFER TO SECTION 3.6.1

Databases continued
PsycINFO Search Results

Selected (100)

PsycINFO (610)

ACC (60)

ACC(M) (40)

ACC(NM) (20)

Original (16)

Duplicate (24)

Journal articles (8)
Books (2)
Theses (6)

All did not meet the inclusion criteria

AFTER DATABASE REVIEW

Resources excluded:
Journal articles (3)
Books (2)
Theses (6)

_____
Total excluded (11)

Resources included:
Journal articles (5)
Theses (0)
Books (0)

_____
Total included (5)

ACC & DS (14)

Original (3)

Journal articles (2)
Books (1)

Did not meet the inclusion criteria or were duplicates (11)

AFTER DATABASE REVIEW:

Resources excluded:
Journal articles (2)
Books (1)
_____
Total excluded (3)

Resources included:
Journal articles (0)
Books (0)
_____
Total included (0)

Not applicable (510)

DS (26)

All did not meet the inclusion criteria

SEARCH DATES
03/11/09
17/11/09
-
19/11/09
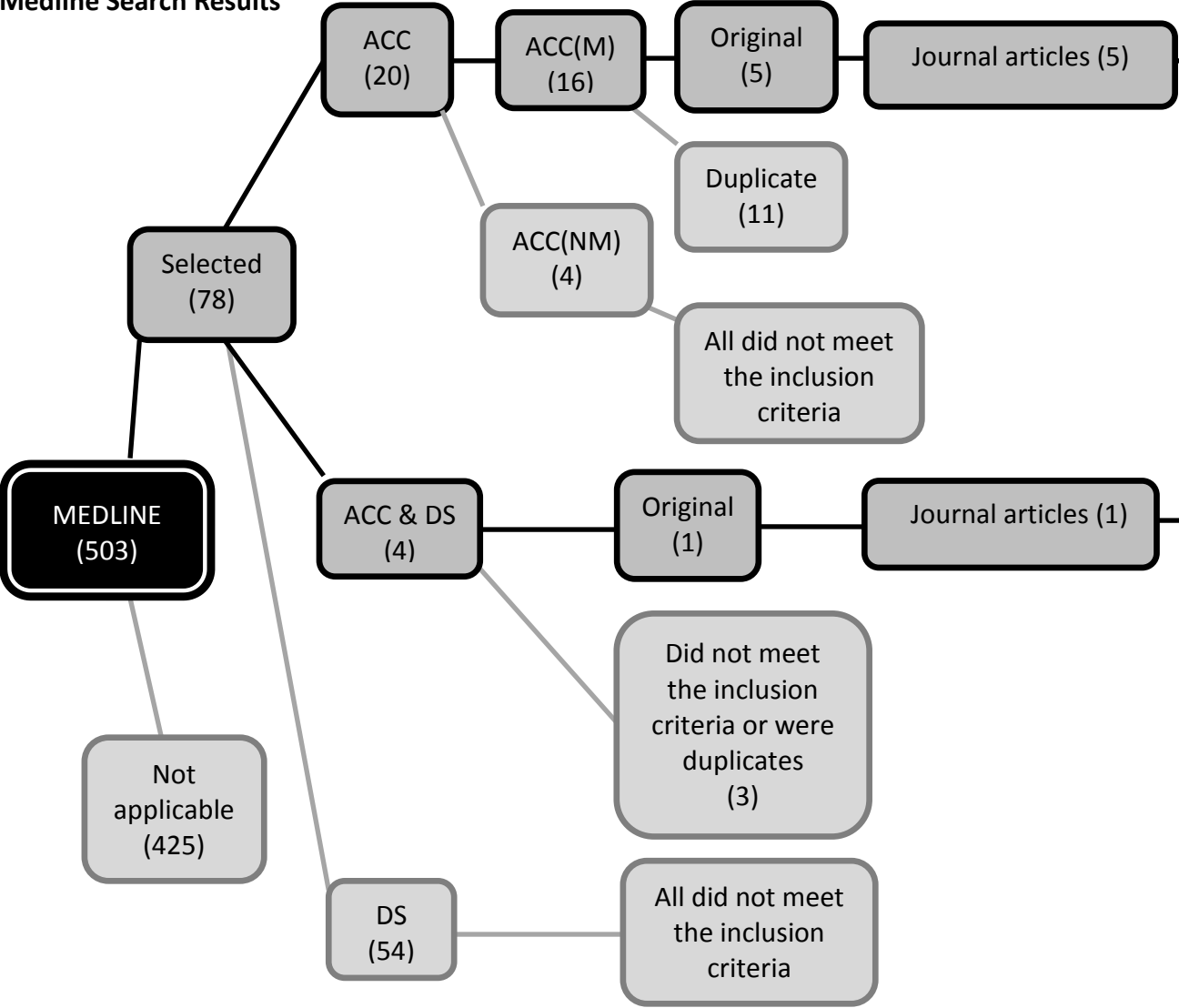
Appendix i: Flow diagrams for Systematic Review

ACC
(20)

ACC(M)
(16)

Original
(5)

Journal articles (5)

AFTER DATABASE REVIEW

<u>**Resources excluded**</u>:   <u>**Resources included:**</u>
Journal articles (3)   Journal articles (2)

_____   _____

Total excluded (3)   **Total included (2)**

Duplicate
(11)

ACC(NM)
(4)

Selected
(78)

All did not meet
the inclusion
criteria

MEDLINE
(503)

ACC & DS
(4)

Original
(1)

Journal articles (1)

AFTER DATABASE REVIEW:

<u>**Resources excluded:**</u>   <u>**Resources included:**</u>
Journal articles (1)   Journal articles (0)

_____   _____

Total excluded (1)   **Total included (0)**

Did not meet
the inclusion
criteria or were
duplicates
(3)

Not
applicable
(425)

DS
(54)

All did not meet
the inclusion
criteria

<u>**SEARCH
DATES**</u>
23/11/09

Appendix i: Flow
diagrams for Systematic
Review

ACC
(29)

ACC(M)
(7)

Original
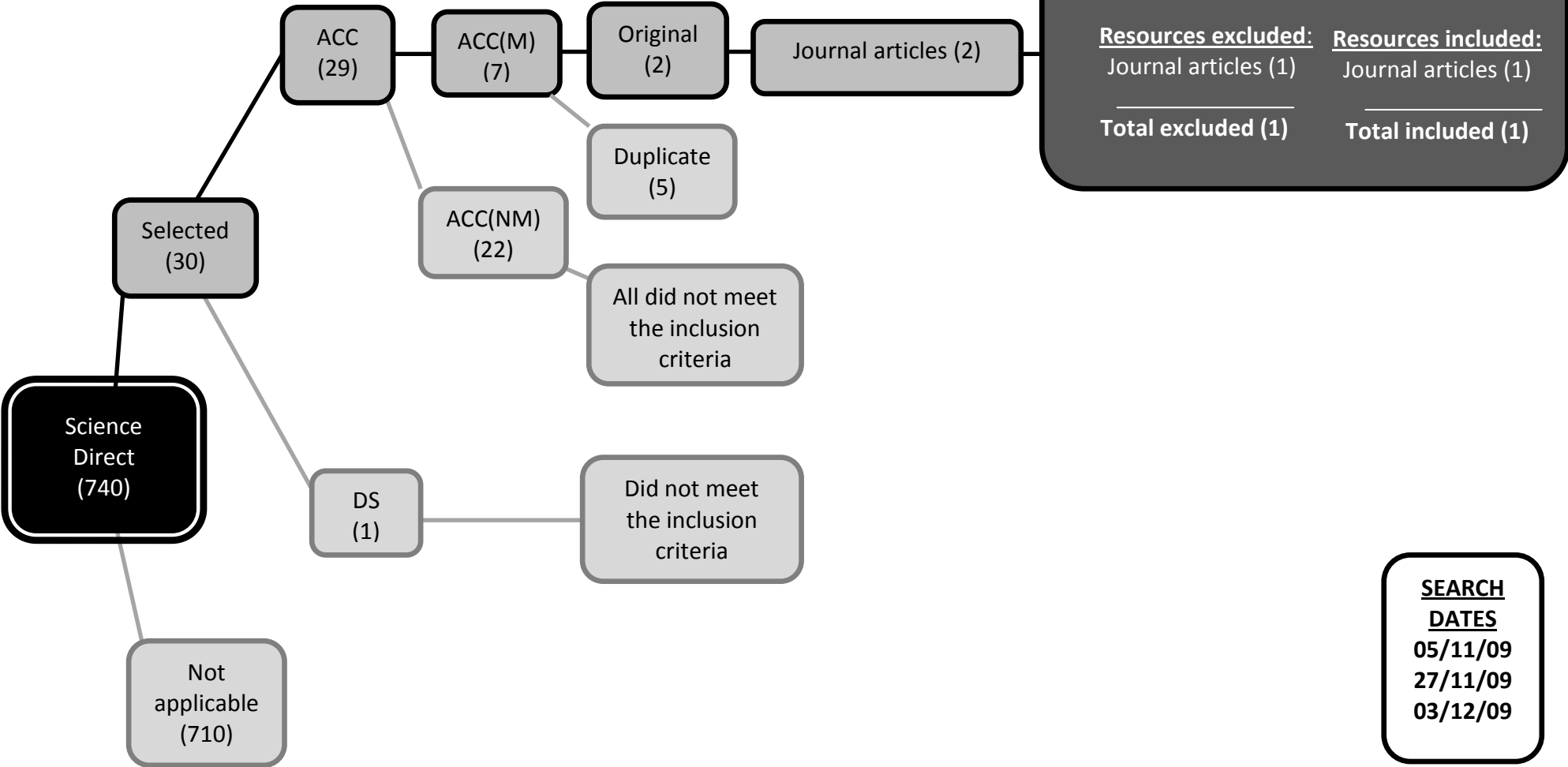(2)

Journal articles (2)

AFTER DATABASE REVIEW

<u>Resources excluded</u>:
Journal articles (1)

<u>Resources included:</u>
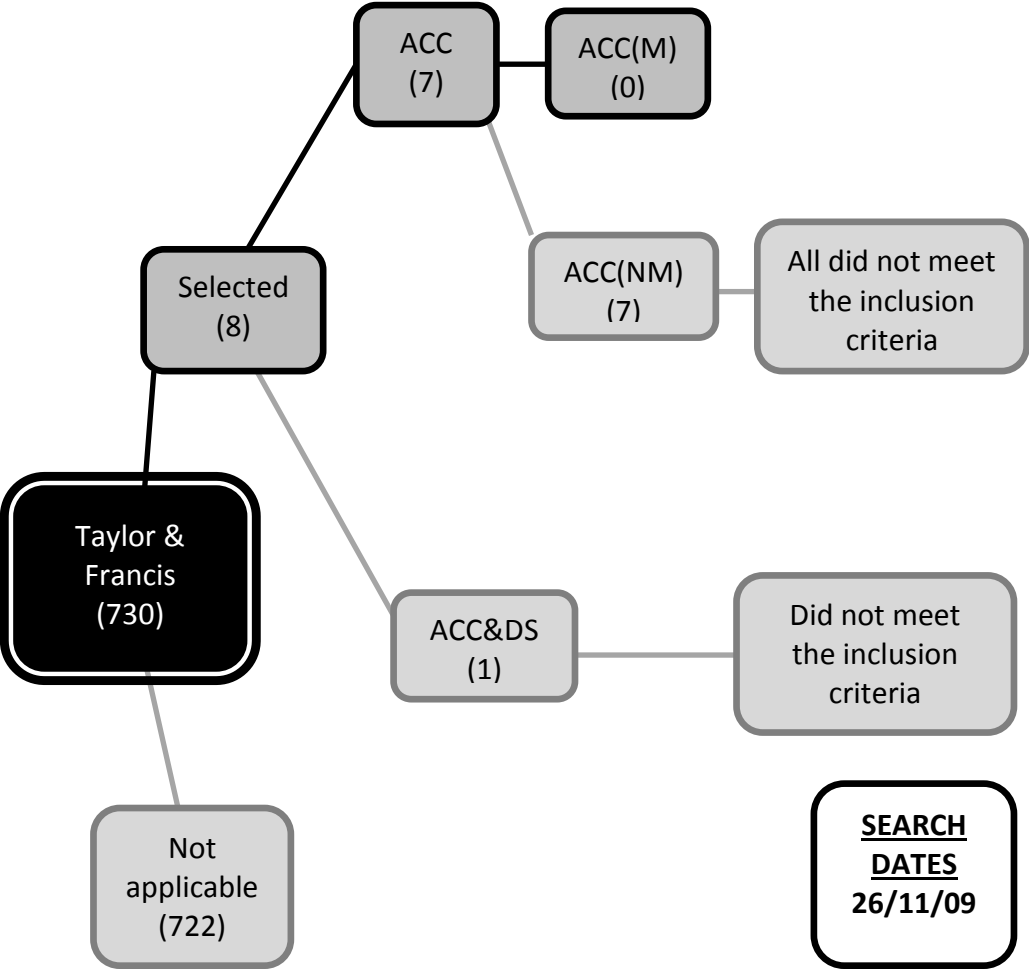Journal articles (1)

Total excluded (1)

Total included (1)

Duplicate
(5)

ACC(NM)
(22)

Selected
(30)

All did not meet
the inclusion
criteria

Science
Direct
(740)

DS
(1)

Did not meet
the inclusion
criteria

Not
applicable
(710)

**SEARCH
DATES
05/11/09
27/11/09
03/12/09**

Appendix i: Flow diagrams for Systematic Review

Appendix i: Flow diagrams for Systematic Review

ACC
(10)

ACC(M)
(10)

Original
(1)

Journal articles (1)

AFTER DATABASE REVIEW

<u>**Resources excluded**</u>:
Journal articles (1)

<u>**Resources included:**</u>
Journal articles (0)

_____
Total excluded (1)

_____
Total included (0)

Duplicate
(9)

Selected
(42)

ACC(NM)
(0)

All did not meet
the inclusion
criteria

CINAHL Plus
(278)

ACC & DS
(1)

Did not meet
the inclusion
criteria or was a
duplicate

Not
applicable
(236)

DS
(31)

All did not meet
the inclusion
criteria

Appendix i: Flow diagrams for Systematic Review

<u>**SEARCH
DATES**</u>
**26/11/09
27/11/09**

Databases continued
ASSIA(CSA) Search Results
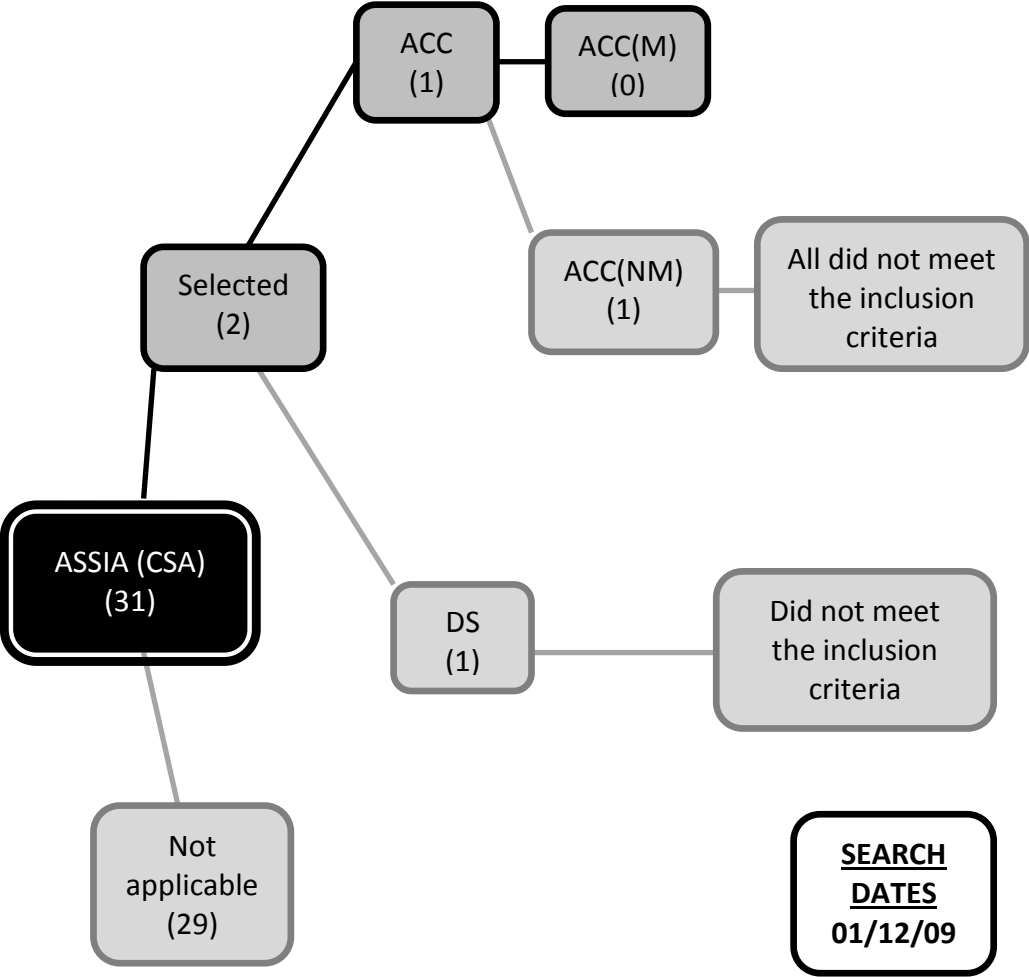
```
                              ACC ─── ACC(M)
                              (1)     (0)

                                      ACC(NM)  ─── All did not meet
          Selected                    (1)          the inclusion
          (2)                                       criteria

   ASSIA (CSA)
   (31)                       DS ─── Did not meet
                              (1)     the inclusion
                                      criteria

          Not
          applicable                  SEARCH
          (29)                        DATES
                                      01/12/09
```

ACC
(12)

ACC(M)
(12)

Original
(5)

Journal articles (2)
Books (3)

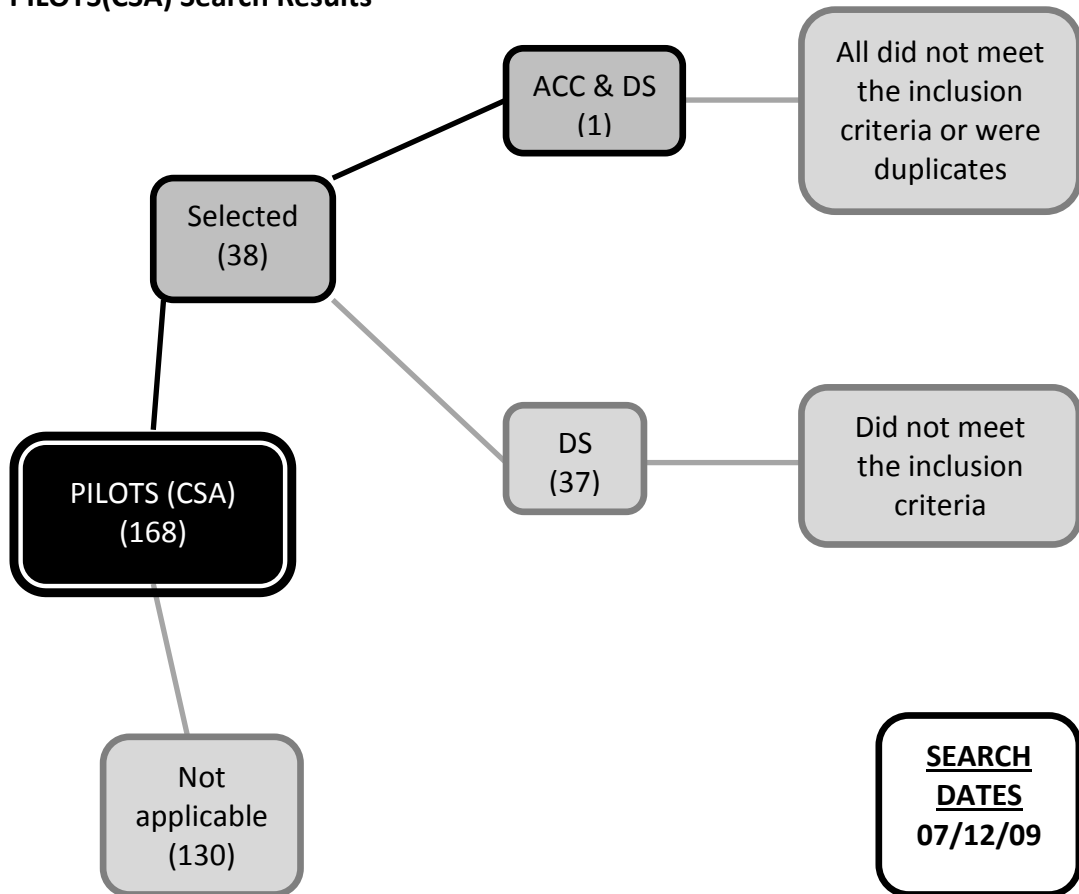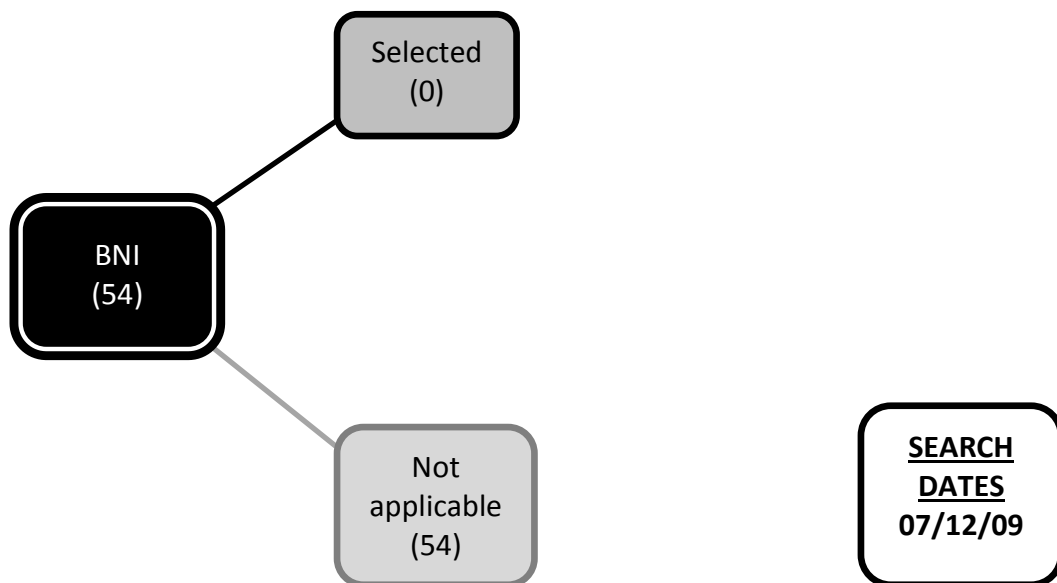**AFTER DATABASE REVIEW**

Resources excluded: **Resources included:**
Journal articles (1)   Journal articles (1)
Books (3)   Books (0)
_____   _____
Total excluded (4)   **Total included (1)**

ACC(NM)
(0)

Duplicate
(7)

Selected
(33)

IBSS
(308)

ACC & DS
(7)

All did not meet
the inclusion
criteria or were
duplicates

Not
applicable
(275)

DS
(14)

All did not meet
the inclusion
criteria

**SEARCH
DATES
02/12/09**

Appendix i: Flow diagrams for Systematic Review

Databases continued
PILOTS(CSA) Search Results

BNI Search Results

Databases continued
UK PubMed Central Search Results
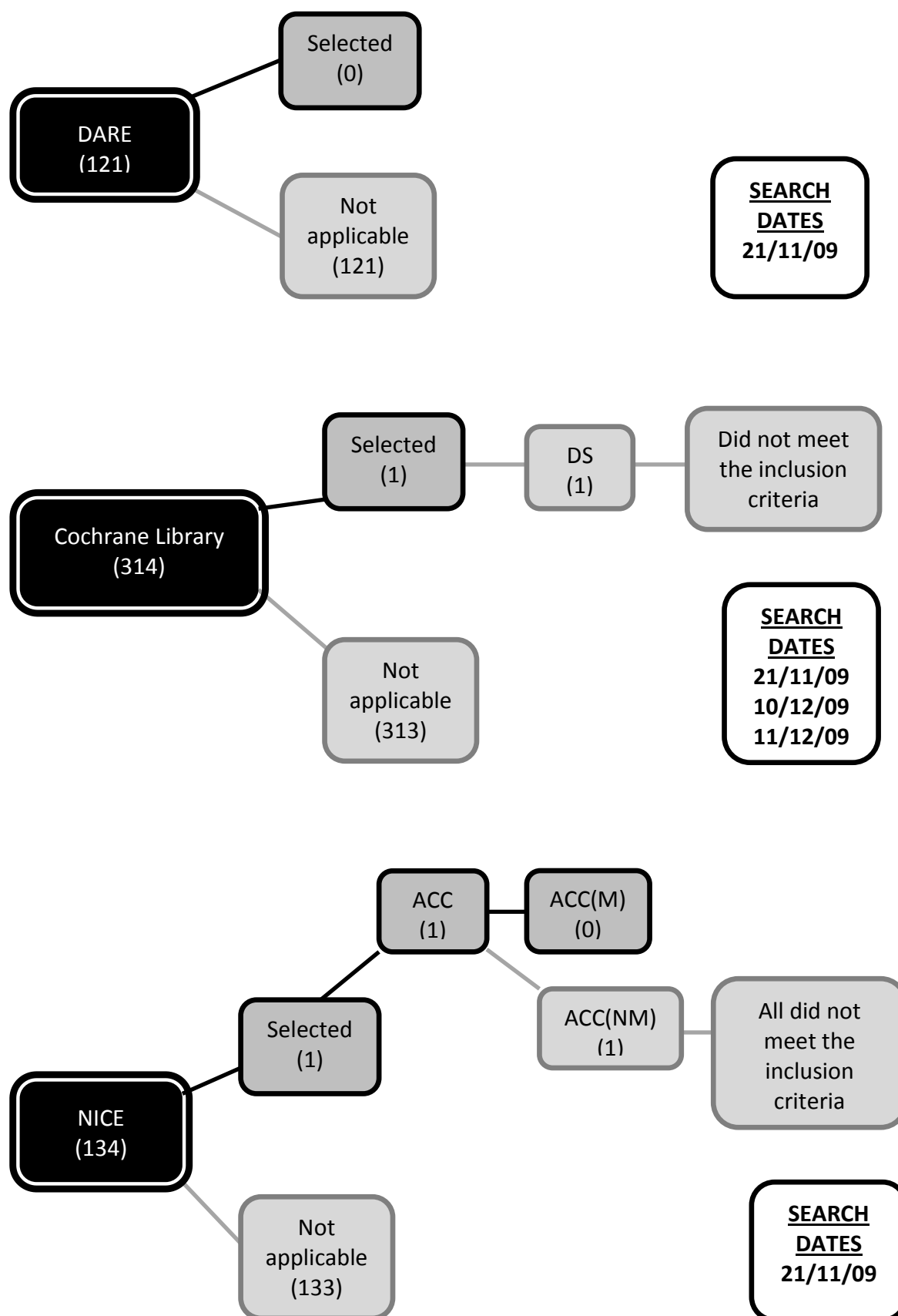
Selected
(0)

UK PubMed
Central
(321)

Not
applicable
(321)

SEARCH
DATES
26/11/09

Databases continued
Wiley Interscience Journals Search Results

11

ACC
(21)

ACC(M)
(5)

Duplicate
(5)

Selected
(32)

ACC(NM)
(16)

All did not meet
the inclusion
criteria

Wiley
Interscience
Journals
(268)

ACC & DS
(2)

Original
(1)

Journal articles (1)

AFTER DATABASE REVIEW:
Resources excluded: **Resources included:**
Journal articles (1)   Journal articles (0)

Total excluded (1)   **Total included (0)**

Not
applicable
(236)

Did not meet
the inclusion
criteria or was a
duplicate
(1)

DS
(9)

All did not meet
the inclusion
criteria

**SEARCH
DATES
10/12/09**

Appendix i: Flow diagrams for
Systematic Review

Databases Reviewed in Accordance with Centre for Reviews And Dissemination's Guidelines (CRD, 2009)

Selected
(0)

DARE
(121)

Not applicable
(121)

SEARCH DATES
21/11/09

Selected
(1)

DS
(1)

Did not meet the inclusion criteria

Cochrane Library
(314)

Not applicable
(313)

SEARCH DATES
21/11/09
10/12/09
11/12/09

ACC
(1)

ACC(M)
(0)

ACC(NM)
(1)

All did not meet the inclusion criteria

Selected
(1)

NICE
(134)

Not applicable
(133)

SEARCH DATES
21/11/09

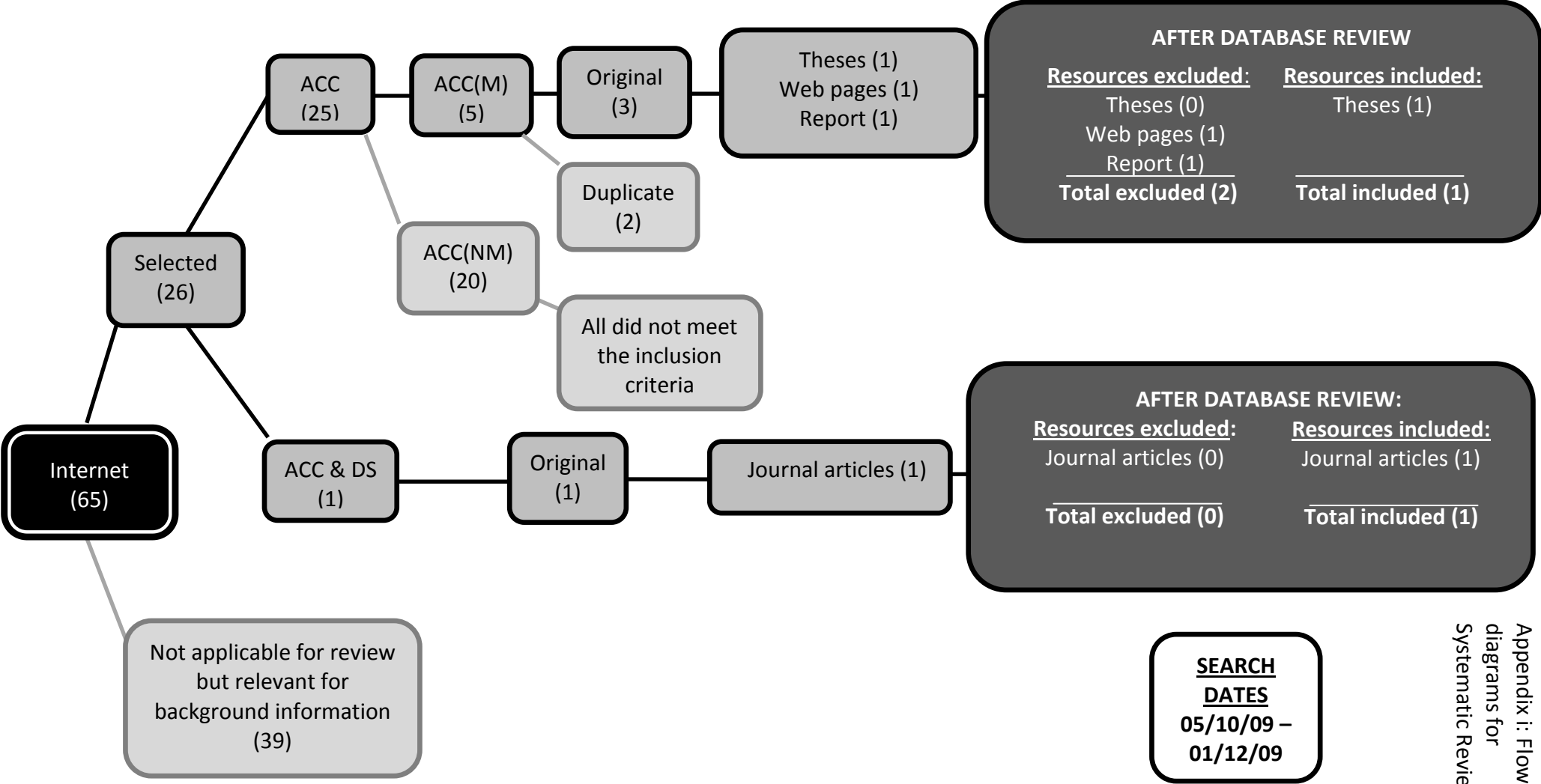**Databases Reviewed in Accordance with Centre for Reviews And Dissemination's Guidelines (CRD, 2009) continued**

Selected
(0)

NIHR HTA
(13)

Not
applicable
(13)

**SEARCH
DATES
21/11/09**

Selected
(0)

CAMPBELL
COLLABORATION
(17)

Not
applicable
(17)

**SEARCH
DATES
22/11/09**

Selected
(0)

DoPHER
(12)

Not
applicable
(12)

**SEARCH
DATES
22/11/09**

13

Databases Reviewed in Accordance with Centre for Reviews And Dissemination's Guidelines (CRD, 2009) continued

Selected
(0)

NGC
(87)

Not applicable
(87)

SEARCH DATES
22/11/09

Selected
(0)

SIGN
(56)

Not applicable
(56)

SEARCH DATES
27/11/09

Selected
(0)

NHS Evidence
(139)

Not applicable
(139)

SEARCH DATES
31/03/10

SwetsWise

Military Medicine[22] & Military Psychology[23] Journals Search results

Military Medicine Journal (74)

Selected (4)

DS (4)

All did not meet the inclusion criteria

Not applicable (70)

Military Psychology Journal (75)

Selected (7)

ACC & DS (3)

Did not meet the inclusion criteria

DS (4)

All did not meet the inclusion criteria

Not applicable (68)

SEARCH DATES
08/12/09
10/12/09

---
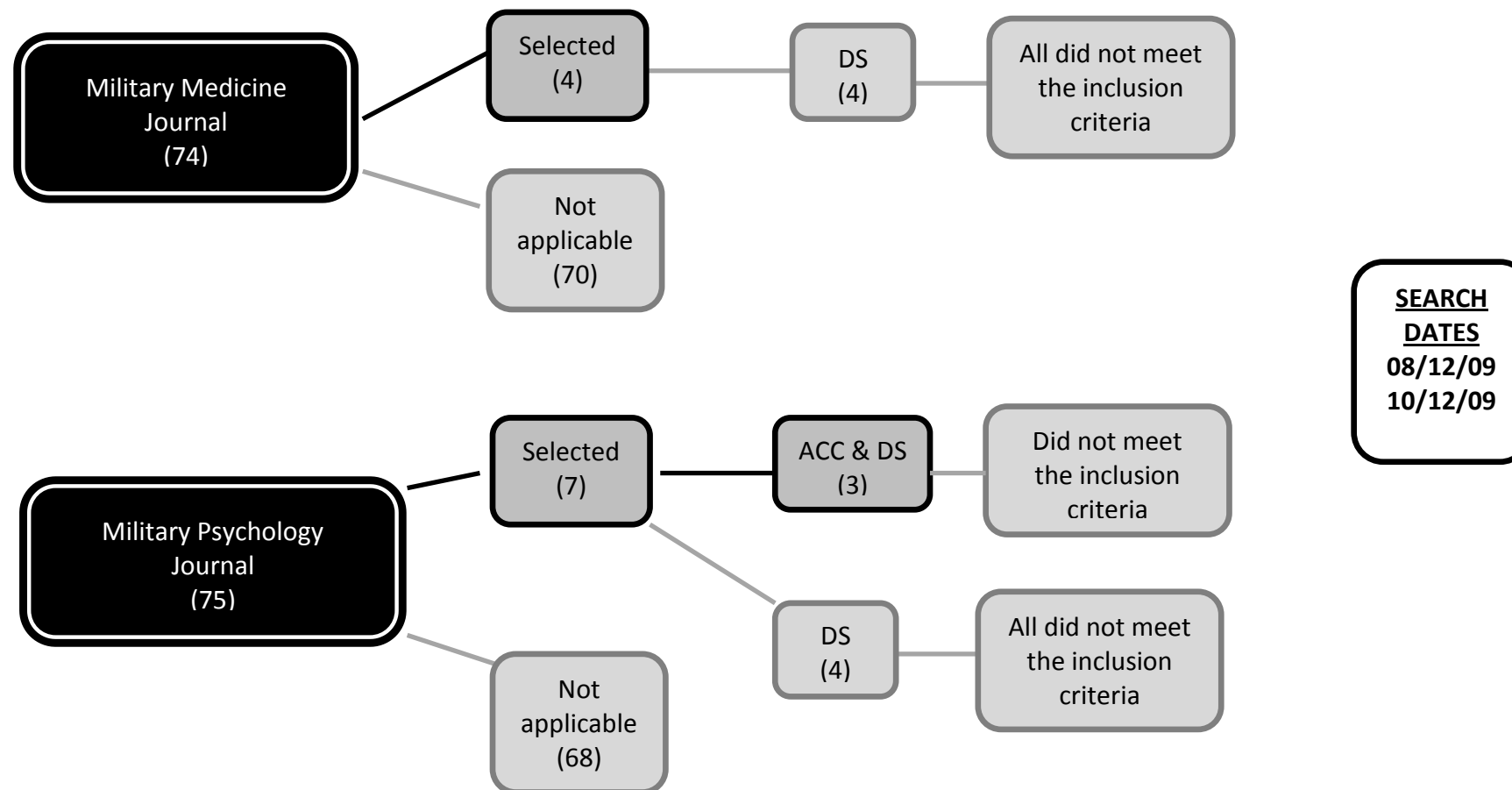
[22] Searched via Ingenta Connect which only included articles from 2004. The ACC(M) articles previously selected by other database were all pre-2004 hence, they did not appear in this search

[23] Searched via Informaworld

Internet Search Results

Internet (65)

Selected (26)

Not applicable for review but relevant for background information (39)

ACC (25)

ACC(M) (5)

ACC(NM) (20)

Original (3)

Duplicate (2)

All did not meet the inclusion criteria

Theses (1)
Web pages (1)
Report (1)

AFTER DATABASE REVIEW

<u>Resources excluded</u>:
Theses (0)
Web pages (1)
Report (1)
Total excluded (2)

<u>Resources included:</u>
Theses (1)

Total included (1)

ACC & DS (1)

Original (1)

Journal articles (1)

AFTER DATABASE REVIEW:

<u>Resources excluded</u>:
Journal articles (0)

Total excluded (0)

<u>Resources included:</u>
Journal articles (1)

Total included (1)

SEARCH DATES
05/10/09 – 01/12/09

Appendix i: Flow diagrams for Systematic Review

Appendix ii   Quality indicators of included studies

Checklist for assessing the quality of _quantitative_ studies (Kmet et al., 2004)

Yes   (2 points)
Partial (1 point)
No   (0 points)
N/a   (0 points)

Author	(Manning and DeRouin, 1981)	(Lakhani et al., 1985)	(Lavee et al., 1985)	(McCubbin and Lavee, 1986)	(Bowen, 1987)	(Fernandez-Pol, 1988a)	(Fernandez-Pol, 1988b)	(Bowen, 1989)
Question/objective sufficiently described?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study design evident and appropriate?	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Method of subject/comparison group selection OR source of information/input variables described and appropriate?	Partial	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Subject (and comparison group if applicable) characteristics sufficiently described?	Yes	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
If interventional and random allocation was possible, was it described?	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
If interventional and blinding of investigators was possible, was it reported?	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
If interventional and blinding of subjects was possible was it reported?	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

Author	(Manning and DeRouin, 1981)	(Lakhani et al., 1985)	(Lavee et al., 1985)	(McCubbin and Lavee, 1986)	(Bowen, 1987)	(Fernandez-Pol, 1988a)	(Fernandez-Pol, 1988b)	(Bowen, 1989)
Outcome and (if applicable) exposure measure(s) well defined and robust to measurement/misclassification bias? Means of assessment reported?	Partial	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sample size appropriate?	Partial	Partial (Actual numbers not given, response rate from 1000 families not given)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial (Author notes the relatively small size of two of the four subgroups may be a limitation)
Analytical methods described/justified and appropriate?	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial (Used Langner scale but specific statistical analysis used on this data not described, χ^2 used in one case within the demographic analysis)	Yes	Yes
Some estimate of variance is reported for main results?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Checklist for assessing the quality of *quantitative* studies (Kmet et al., 2004) continued

Author	(Manning and DeRouin, 1981)	(Lakhani et al., 1985)	(Lavee et al., 1985)	(McCubbin and Lavee, 1986)	(Bowen, 1987)	(Fernandez -Pol, 1988a)	(Fernandez -Pol, 1988b)	(Bowen, 1989)
Controlled for confounding? (observed effects should be attributed to the independent variable rather than the confounder)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Results reported in sufficient detail?	Partial	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes	Yes
Conclusion supported by results?	Partial	Partial	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes	Partial	Yes
Total out of a possible 22 (% 1 d.p.)	**13 (59.1)**	**13 (59.1)**	**22(100.0)**	**22 (100.0)**	**21 (95.5)**	**18 (81.8)**	**21 (95.5)**	**21 (95.5)**

Checklist for assessing the quality of _quantitative_ studies (Kmet et al., 2004) continued

Author	(Rosen and Moghadam, 1991)	(Lakhani, 1994)	(McNulty, 2003)	(Burrell et al., 2006)
Question/objective sufficiently described?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study design evident and appropriate?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Method of subject/comparison group selection OR source of information/input variables described and appropriate?	Yes	Partial	Yes	Yes
Subject (and comparison group if applicable) characteristics sufficiently described?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
If interventional and random allocation was possible, was it described?	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
If interventional and blinding of investigators was possible, was it reported?	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
If interventional and blinding of subjects was possible was it reported?	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Outcome and (if applicable) exposure measure(s) well defined and robust to measurement/misclassification bias? Means of assessment reported?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sample size appropriate?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Analytical methods described/justified and appropriate?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Some estimate of variance is reported for main results?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Controlled for confounding? (observed effects should be attributed to the independent variable rather than the confounder)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Results reported in sufficient detail?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Conclusion supported by results?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Total out of a possible 22 (% 1 d.p.)	**22 (100.0)**	**17 (77.3)**	**22 (100.0)**	**22 (100.0)**

Checklist for assessing the quality of *qualitative* studies (Kmet et al., 2004)

Yes (2 points)
Partial (1 point)
No (0 points)
N/a (0 points)

Author	(Jervis, 2009)
Question/objective sufficiently described?	Yes
Study design evident and appropriate?	Yes
Context for the study clear?	Yes
Connection to a theoretical framework/wider body of knowledge?	Yes
Sampling strategy described, relevant and justified?	Yes
Data collection methods clearly described and systematic?	Yes
Data analysis clearly described and systematic?	Yes
Use of verification procedure(s) to establish credibility?	Yes
Conclusion supported by results?	Yes
Reflexivity of the account?	Yes
Total out of 20 (% 1 d.p.)	20 (100.0)

Blank page

Details of systematic review studies

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
Employed Wives of US Army Members in Germany Fare Better Than Those Unemployed **(Manning and DeRouin, 1981)**	Quantitative Questionnaires used to evaluate previous study results of unstructured interviews with spouses	111 soldiers and 111 wives from a single battalion stationed in West Germany	Questionnaires and pre-addressed return envelopes - sent via the chain of command to the military members - sent via the battalion mail room to wives under one month later when the soldiers were deployed for two weeks – to increase the chance of independent responses Questionnaires –	Two-tailed binomial test	**From questionnaires** Of 18 measures on which the employed wives' score is not identical to those unemployed - 15 pointed at a better adjustment or more satisfaction among employed wives – binomial test revealed this was highly unlikely if the employed and unemployed groups were merely two random samples from the same general population of military wives (p = .008) Husbands of better adjusted working wives were more satisfied then the men whose wives were unemployed (p=.04) The military member had a clear support system - no equivalent support structure	All participation was anonymous and voluntary, with less than 100% return it is not possible to say that the sample consisted of only couples, and it is not possible to directly compare reports of husbands and wives Analysis of questionnaire is not fully explained and the results provided are unclear	13/22 (59.1)

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
			consisted of a demographic section and three other parts used to investigate the experiences within the military community: 1. Daily living 2. Marriage and family lives 3. Problem solving Answers - multiple choice, Likert-scale; one word 'fill-in-the-blanks'; final question solicited comments on a blank page	(Analysis of previous unstructured interviews with spouses not mentioned)	was perceived by the spouses – friend being the third most popular choice by employed wives and sixth by unemployed – suggesting effects of social isolation **From previous interview data** Language barrier – attributed to social isolation Husband's need to 'get away from the job' after work – caused additional isolation from traditional support network for the spouse Employed spouses – exposure to the military community created confidence and friendships	The general design of the study is ambiguous - it is linked to a previous study which incorporated unstructured interviews with spouses based in West Germany No description is given of these interviews or how they were analysed but their results are included within the discussion section of this current study	

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

Details of systematic review studies continued

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
Army European Tour Extension: A Multivariate Approach (**Lakhani et al., 1985**)	Quantitative Analysis of survey data	1000 families stationed in seven communities in Europe	Army Family survey completed by the Army Research Institute (1983) – questionnaires administered to a representative sample of servicemen and their spouses	Factor analysis – including Pearson-product moment correlation matrix; the principle factors method of analysis; rotation by the Varimax procedure Formulation of a Logistic model and subsequent regression	**Officers** Family satisfaction is defined primarily by spousal perceptions Spousal feelings of satisfaction are explained by their sense of coherence Spouses provide support which either conditions or buffers a family members' response to stress and job involvement PX[24] privileges were described as important institutions to families living overseas as USAEUR[25] **Enlisted personnel**	No details are given regarding the response rate to the initial survey or demographics of this group No baseline information is possible Five of seven results tables not provided; equations discussed are also not provided Factor analysis tables are provided but details of the results are not fully discussed just merely	13/22 (59.1)

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[24] Commissary and Post Exchange
[25] U.S. Army in Europe

Details of systematic review studies continued

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
					Family and Army life satisfaction strongly related to spouse's perception of military member's happiness, social opportunities of travel in Europe and eating out, and being part of a community offering recreational programs *N.B. Results selected are those provided relating to spousal experiences of USAEUR - all further findings in the study are specific to the military member and not relevant to the systematic review inclusion criteria*	described	

Details of systematic review studies continued

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
The Double ABCX Model of Family Stress and Adaption: An Empirical Test by Analysis of Structural Equations with Latent Variables (Lavee et al., 1985)	Quantitative	Sample was drawn from 1227 officer and enlisted families selected for the Army Family Survey (data set from the research project 'One Thousand Army Families' produced by McCubbin, Patterson	Both military members and their spouses completed self-administered questionnaires designed to reach a broad range of experiences and attitude related to relocation and adaption to a foreign country – 15 different measures used

Overall return rate was 86% of which 98% were usable

53 surveys excluded when family data were incomplete

Nine families were also eliminated due to the | The theoretical Double ABCX model was converted into an empirically testable model

LISREL - statistical package for linear structural relations was used to estimate the model in two parts:

1. Relations of observed measures to latent variables or constructs through a **Measurement Model** – using **confirmatory factor analysis** | It appears that families struggle not only with relocation but with an accumulation of demands stemming from current and previous unresolved family life changes

Great accumulation of stressors resulted in intensifying strains – causing less family satisfaction with their lifestyle, less family well-being; and greater probability of health, emotional and relational family problems

Family system resources, social support and sense of coherence have a positive effect on family adaption | Authors' suggested changes/future research:

Introducing a new latent variable e.g. pile-up, to replace two separate stressor variables in the model potentially the model may fit better

Not all theoretical constructs of the original Double ABCX model were measured $\therefore$ [28]not all were entered into the | 22/22 (100.0) |

[28]Symbol for therefore

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
		and Lavee (1983, in Lavee et al., 1985, McCubbin and Lavee, 1986) Present study included 288 families of enlisted personnel	military member being female - therefore allowing homogeneity of the sample	2. Examination of casual relationships between constructs through a – **Structural Model** – based on maximum likelihood statistical theory via χ^2**(chi squared), GFI**[26] and **RMR**[27]	It is suggested that more cohesive families, who communicate support better and whose systems are more flexible are better to adapt to the pile-up of stressors and strains Social support has a significant indirect role in family adaption – acting as a buffer The more the community and friendship network supports the family the more positive the situation is seen External environment is more influential than family's internal resources	structural model e.g. personal resources, coping strategies	

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

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[26] Goodness of Fit Index
[27] Root Mean Square Residual

Details of systematic review studies continued

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
Strengthen-ing Army Families: A Family Life Cycle Stage Perspective **(McCubbin and Lavee, 1986)**	Quantitative Evaluative study Using Family Adjustment and Adaption Response (FAAR) model	In final analysis n = 782 enlisted families: **Group i.** - families without children n=138 **Group ii.** – pre-school and school age children n=273 **Group iii.** - adolescents and young adults n = 228	1277 pairs (military member and their spouse) of questionnaires administered - data set from the research project 'One Thousand Army Families' produced by McCubbin, Patterson and Lavee (1983, in McCubbin and Lavee, 1986, Lavee et al., 1985) 1052 returned (86%) of these 1036 were usable (98%)	Stepwise regression analysis with emphasis upon four stages of family life cycle (groups i – iv) – controlling for military rank and type of unit - to identify the critical independent variables – stressors, strengths and supports associated with enlisted family adaption	Initial analysis - time in Germany and number of tours previously experienced were not significant explanatory variables of adaption ∴ excluded from the rest of the analysis **Group i**. - adapt best if pre-travel hassles kept minimal; military member has basic coping skills; they feel a sense of community support **Group ii**. - adapt best if family life events and pre-travel hassles are minimised; if spouse feels valued and military member has sense of coherence and a sense of Army-family fit	The authors remark that since the study is exploratory in nature and as the samples of the subgroup are relatively small, coefficients may not be stable and it is noted results should be interpreted with caution Random selection of a portion of each of the subgroups to improve the solution's stability was not possible due to the sample sizes of groups i. and iv. relative to the number of predictor variables	22/22 (100.0)

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
		Group iv. - empty nest stage n= 143			Religious programs and community services also will help adaption **Group iii. –** adapt best if post-arrival hassles are minimised, if military members feel valued by family, if they have a strong sense of coherence and if family unity is strong **Group iv. –** adapt best if the pile up of family life events is minimised, if the military member has basic coping skills and if the family have a strong bond		
				Comparative analysis of independent variables across family stages - one-way analysis of variance for differences among families at four life stages	Significant differences across the four stages for nine of the independent variables: 1. Post-arrival hassles 2. Military member coping skills 3. Spouse employment 4. Spouse self-reliance 5. Community and neighbourhood support 6. Community services 7. Command sponsorship 8. Military member		

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
					coherence 9. Spouse coherence Mean differences most apparent for younger families **Group i**. - couples without children indicated they were least likely to receive command sponsorship; spouses had lowest sense of coherence **Group ii.** – indicated greatest amount of post-arrival strain, had the largest number of employed spouses and smallest amount of individual and of community resources; military member also had the lowest sense of coherence		

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
Wives' Employment Status and Marital Adjustment in Military Families (Bowen, 1987)	Quantitative	Stratified sample to proportion-ately represent families in different geographical locations **675** couples: **161** – military husband and wife FT[29] employed **127** – military husband and wife	Semi-structure interviews using the **Marital Adjustment Scale**, assessed using four components: 1. **Marital Intimacy** 2. **Marital Communications** 3. **Marital Disagreements** 4. **Marital Satisfaction** Each component was comprised of different scales to be coded from zero – four The overall level of marital adjustment for husbands and	Two-way and three-way interaction effects Factorial analysis of variance model Dependent variable Marital adjustment Independent variable Wives' employment status - FT - PT - At home Control variables - Stage in family life cycle	**Officer** Employment of wives stationed overseas is functional to the marriage of both husbands and wives Employment of wives stationed in the USA is dysfunctional to the marriage of both husbands and wives One exception – there was great marital intimacy reported by wives stationed in the USA and employed PT Potentially there are greater demands from the military on the wives of officers in USA e.g. volunteer activities than those overseas, placing stress on the marriages to	Small samples among the groups compromised the external validity of the findings It is suggested by the authors for future research that the findings be re-examined controlling for marital social desirability of responses and further occupational factors	21/22 (95.5)

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[29] Fulltime

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
		PT[30] employed **387** – military husband and wife unemployed Location **Nine** bases USA **Seven** bases EUROPE **Eight** bases ASIA	wives was determined by a sum of the average of the four components of the marital adjustment scale	- Rank of husband - Base location	achieve a balance between work, family and the military Wives PT employed achieved occupational awards without cost to time and energy **Enlisted** For enlisted husbands marital adjustment while stationed in the USA was greater when the wife was employed Overseas marital adjustment was poor when the wife was employed Wives of enlisted men stationed in the USA and unemployed reported greater marital intimacy than those employed		

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Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

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[30] Part-time

Details of systematic review studies continued

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
					The high cost of living in the USA compared to overseas makes the wife's income a financial necessity Overseas, the higher frequency of separation due to temporary duty assignments for enlisted personnel compared to those in the USA, could make the employment of the wife logistically difficult particularly those with children		

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

Details of systematic review studies continued

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
Does the Military Family Syndrome Exist? (Fernandez-Pol, 1988a)	Quantitative Survey	423 military wives who were born in American and currently based with their spouses in the Far East	Self-administered questionnaire with two sections: 1. Demographic variables 2. Langner Scale to measure the psycho-physiological distress Collected at Air Force general hospital - all participants were attending hospital for a routine physical examination as part of a women's health awareness program	Demographics analysed with χ^2 Langner scale calculated and mean score provided A score of four or more was considered the cut off point by Langner to identify psychological distress	In the total sample 42% reported scores of four or more symptoms – the age ranges showed no significant difference Those married to enlisted personnel had a significantly greater percentage of scoring four or more than the officer wives (49% versus 32%, χ^2 =9.48, p < .005) – it is suggested through other studies reported, that lower socio-economic subjects tended to express distress in somatic terms, additionally the added tighter financial situation may have had an impact It is reported in this study that those with a higher prestige status could have a more positive self-image and $\therefore$ report fewer symptoms	Self-selected sample - responses could be influenced by conscious or unconscious resistance e.g. social desirability influences $\therefore$ military wives may have under-reported symptoms they judged as socially undesirable – potentially officer's wives would have a greater likelihood to under-report their symptoms. Langner scale is not considered a reliable assessment tool for psychopathology e.g. psychoses, alcoholism, drug	18/22 (81.1)

Details of systematic review studies continued

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
					Average number of symptoms expressed by military wives was 3.44, below Langner's cutting score - however, it was similar to Langner's original Midtown study score (3.11) – in which a civilian Manhattan community was surveyed The data did not support the original hypothesis that military wives tended to report higher psycho-physiological symptoms than their civilian counterparts	abuse or maladaptive behaviour	

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
Ethnic Differences in Psychophysiol-ogical Distress Among American- and Asian-born Military Wives (Fernandez-Pol, 1988b)	Quantitative Survey	665 military wives from US Air Force base in Japan: 423 American (325 white, 74 black, 11 Hispanic-American, nine Asian-American, four American-Indian);147 Japanese, 95 non-Japanese Asian (25 Filipino,24 Thai, 21 Korean, 20 Chinese, five Vietnamese)	Self-administered questionnaire with two sections: 1. Demographic variables 2. Langner Scale to measure the psycho-physiological distress Collected at Air Force general hospital. All participants were attending hospital for a routine physical examination as part of a women's health awareness program	ANOVA and significant differences were identified with Tukey's Honestly Significance Test (HSD)	Significant difference among the three groups on **age** (F = 21.53, p < .001) and **years married** (F = 11.65, p <.001) Significant difference amongst ethnic groups (F= 16.78, p < .001) regarding Langner scores – non-Japanese Asians had a higher symptomatology score than Americans (p < .0001) and the Japanese (p < .001) – who did not differ significantly from each other Women married to enlisted personnel reported higher symptom scores than those married to officers Overall, non-Japanese Asian military wives were assessed to be at high risk of developing distress symptoms – particularly with regard to overseas postings	Response bias in the form of social desirability and acquiescence could have led to distortion in responses Cultural factors could also be considered – Asian cultures emphasize suppression of feelings as a mechanism of socialisation - ∴ tend to express emotional distress in somatic terms Non-Japanese Asians also adjusting to two alien cultural environments – Japanese and military	21/22 (95.5)

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
Family Adaption to Relocation: An Empirical Analysis of Family Stressors, Adaptive Resources, and Sense of Coherence (Bowen, 1989)	Quantitative Questionnaire	983 US Army Officer and enlisted families based in West Germany – husband was in the Army and the wife was civilian	Initial sample of 1277 officer and enlisted families – stratified representative sample - data set from the research project 'One Thousand Army Families' produced by McCubbin, Patterson and Lavee (1983, in McCubbin and Lavee, 1986, Lavee et al., 1985) Service members and their spouses independently completed questionnaires designed to assess experiences and attitudes with respect to relocation and adaption to living as a military family overseas	Measures were constructed for four conceptual domains: 1. Family stressors –measured using four subscales 2. Family adaptive resources – measured at the individual, family system and community levels 3. Sense of coherence – was defined by three scales 4. Family adaption – a composite measure of three indices Forward stepwise multiple regression analysis for each of	The importance of congruency of prior expectations and actual experiences on the level of family adaption was supported The sense of coherence measure emerged as the best predictor of family adaption for all subgroups – the more the actual experiences of members and spouses matched or were better than expected, the higher their reported level of family adaption The predictability of Army life was a significant predictor of family adaption for enlisted members and their spouses – the more they could predict the immediate future based on the work and family schedules, the greater the level of family adaption For officers and their spouses the greater their perceived	Due to the exploratory nature of the study the author advises caution in the interpretation of the results It is noted that due to the sample sizes of the officer and spouses of officers subgroups being relatively small, that these regression coefficients may be unstable	21/22 (95.5)

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
			Returned questionnaires had a 84% response rate (N = 1036) 53 couples were subsequently deleted from the data set due to incomplete responses or due to the wife being the military member	four groups i. Enlisted members (N = 790) ii. Spouses of enlisted members (N = 769) iii. Officers (N = 160) iv. Spouses of officers (N = 151) 15 predictor variables for member model 19 predictor variables for spouse model Dependent variable = family adaption	controllability to plan in advance for military assignments and to have an input into the timing and location of these, the greater the level of family adaption Community support emerged as an important predictor of family adaption level for all subgroups, the greater the community support, the higher the level of family adaption Family support was a significant predictor of the level of family adaption for spouses of officers – the greater the level of family support the greater the level of family adaption Stressors in the last 12 months were a significant predictor of family adaption level for spouses of enlisted members, and post-move stressors were a significant predictor for officer spouses		

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
Patterns of Seasonal Change in Mood and Behavior: An Example from a Study of Military Wives **(Rosen and Moghadam, 1991)**	Quantitative Questionnaire	408 Army wives in original total 397 in final sample: 24% based Germany 31% based Texas 39% based California 6% based other USA or Europe All wives of combat	1200 mailed questionnaires to wives participating in the Unit Manning System Family Health Study (examining the impact of military life stress on health and well-being) Subjects had been stationed at one of three locations (Germany, Texas, California) for a period of 18 – 24 months at the time of final evaluation 30% response rate 24 bipolar scales developed to assess	Subjects with: Winter ratings **>** Summer ratings = 'Winter Type of SAD' Summer ratings **>** Winter ratings = 'Summer Type of SAD' χ^2 tests with 2 d.f.[31] to determine significant differences in proportion of wives reporting symptoms across three locations χ^2 tests (1 d.f.) to compare the	47% Army wives based in Germany reported feeling worst in winter compared with 24% in California and 34% Texas Of wives in Germany : 65% reported feeling least energetic in Winter 49% socialised least in winter 62% slept most in the winter Overall, military wives living in Germany retrospectively reported more SAD-like symptoms than those living in California and Texas - consistent with previous research that these symptoms	The study was based on retrospective reporting of symptoms therefore it is recommended by the authors that future epidemiological research would be enhanced by a prospective study of symptom changes across seasons in the same individuals CONUS[32] and OCONUS[33] locations differ in many respects and not just latitude $\therefore$ it is noted that the comparison of the	22/22 (100.0)

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[31] Degrees of Freedom
[32] Continental United States
[33] Outside Continental United States

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
		soldiers of US Army	seasonal variation in mood and behaviour among military wives – Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) Scales assessed six behavioural dimensions: Changes in - 1. Appetite 2. Weight 3. Sleep length 4. Energy level 5. Mood 6. Socialising Subjects rated themselves for each of the four seasons of the year, on a scale of 0 - 10 (midpoint of 5 represented no change on a particular dimension)	Germany group with the other two locations combined, and to compare Texas with California	are more associated with populations located further from the equator It was recommended that Physicians – particularly those treating military wives in Germany, should be made aware that some depressions could be a result of SAD rather than the PCS[34]	three locations in this study can not conclusively prove the latitude hypothesis	

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

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[34] Permanent Change of Station

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
The Socioeconomic Benefits to Military Families of Home-Basing of Armed Forces **(Lakhani, 1994)**	Quantitative Evaluative study Analysis of two databases	n_1 = 12000 and n_2= 11000	Based on two Army survey databases: 1. Survey of Army Families, 1987 (n_1=12000) 2. Army Family Research Program (AFRP) Soldier Data File Code Book, 1989 (n_2=11000)	1. H_o (no significant difference in socioeconomic benefits variables in CONUS and OCONUS locations) t-test analysis	1. Nine types of socioeconomic benefits in CONUS and OCONUS locations analysed - H_o rejected in all cases Quality of spouse employment - Spouses had greater problems finding employment in OCONUS - Fulltime employment of spouses greater in CONUS - Spouse earning greater in CONUS - Homeownership greater in CONUS - Those 'very satisfied' with army life 73% located in CONUS Quality of family life - CONUS more satisfied with housing - Number of nights	Selectivity bias recognised in sample due to unobserved factors e.g. 'taste' for military life The data in the analysis are only cross-sectional and it is noted by the authors that results obtained could be imprecise and possibly biased	17/22 (77.3)

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
					soldier away from home significantly greater in OCONUS (p < .0001) - Family safety more of a concern for soldiers in OCONUS - Soldiers in CONUS more satisfied with overall quality of time spent with children		
				2. Three behavioural equations hypothesized – Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis	2. Regression equations - Soldier retention is likely to be greater for those who have spouses in CONUS due to their greater employment and earning opportunities *N.B. Some findings in the study refer to the more general financial and business implications of relocation - ∴ these are not relevant to the systematic review and have not been included in this summary table*		

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
Does Deployment Impact the Health Care Use of Military Families Stationed in Okinawa, Japan? (McNulty, 2003)	Quantitative Descriptive, correlation study	Power of .80 (α = .05) required 75 families in each group: ND[35] and DEP[36] Initially 299 families (162 DEP, 137 ND) 212 families remained for entire study: 99DEP (37 of which ID[37]) and 113 ND	Families invited to enrol for study when they presented for health care visits and during command pre-deployment briefs ND – completed assessment tools the month after initial meeting and six months later DEP – mailed the tools one month before deployment and six months later Tools: 1. **FAC 18[38]** 2. **Family Index of**	Descriptive statistics Statistical analysis: χ^2, multiple logistic regression, correlation coefficients, paired student t-test, odds-ratio	**Counselling history of family** Prior mental health counselling reported by 18% ND compared with 20% DEP wives **Abuse concerns** 10% of total sample viewed abuse as a problem, no significant difference by age (p= .3) **High risk identified** Significant difference between ND wives starting psychiatric/stress medication at 9% and DEP wives at 3% (p = .05; odds ratio = 3.14) **Results of surveys for DEP & ND families** Amount of change for each tool between time 1 and 2 for	Generalisations for all deployed and non-deployed families in overseas environments cannot be made because the population had limits on gender, location and service as 80% represented the US Marine community	22/22 (100.0)

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Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

[35] Non-deployed
[36] Deployed
[37] Intermittent deployed
[38] The Family Attachment and Changeability Index and Family Typology

Details of systematic review studies continued

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
			Regenerativity and Adaption-Military Series including - **SRI[39], FIC[40], FCS[41], SSI[42], FMWB[43], FAC[44]** 3. **FCI[45]** 4. **STAI[46]** 5. **Demographic survey**		both groups was not related to deployment status (p = .19) or length of deployment time (p = .06) **Years in Okinawa** No. of years in Okinawa was related to changes between times 1 and 2: - FAC18 difference (p = .006) - family cohesiveness increased with time spent in Okinawa - FMWB difference (p =		

[39] Self-reliance Index
[40] Family Index of Coherence
[41] Family Changes and Strains
[42] Social Support Index
[43] Family Member and Well-Being
[44] Family Adaption Checklist
[45] Family Coping Index
[46] State Trait Anxiety Score

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
					.03) - that family well-being increased with time in Okinawa **No. of overseas tours** SRI difference (p = .01) –during deployment self-reliance increased with no. of overseas assignments of the family SSI difference (p = .02) – social support decreased in families who had previous tours overseas FCI difference (p = .05) – family coping increased with families who had previous tours overseas **Past counselling counts** Self-reliance during deployment increased with past counselling (p = .02) Social support diminished during deployment with prior history of		

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

Details of systematic review studies continued

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
					counselling (p = .02) – these families not need as much external support Family member well-being increased if subject had received past counselling **Deployment and health care use** For adults there was no relationship between medical care visits, chronic problems or start of psychiatric medication with deployment **Change over time** ND families: - Increased adaption over time (p = .05) - More strains over time (p = .001) - Well-being decreased over time (p = .06) Families of deployed spouses were hardier over time		

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
					compared with ND families **Family typology change** Moderate declination of family functioning in 16% of total sample between time 1 and 2 **General view** Overall number of spouses exhibiting sadness, anger and signs of depression while stationed overseas among DEP and ND families was considered alarming		

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
The Impact of Military Lifestyle Demands on Well-Being, Army, and Family Outcomes **(Burrell et al., 2006)**	Quantitative Questionnaires	506 question-naires returned – subsample of **346** used	3886 questionnaires mailed to US spouses based in Italy or Germany - Mailed directly to spouse or - Mailed via unit due to privacy concerns 506 returned – 13% response rate Subsample of 346 drawn – all reporting one deployment **Questionnaires**: Used to investigate the relationship between four military lifestyle demands and well-being, army life satisfaction, and marital satisfaction **Four military lifestyle**	Descriptive statistics Correlation matrix for all variables	**Correlation** Fear for soldier safety negatively correlated with psychological and physical well-being, and Army satisfaction Impact of moving was only related with Army satisfaction giving a negative correlation Number of moves was positively associated with well-being and Army satisfaction Impact of separations was negatively related to well-being and Army satisfaction Impact of a foreign residence had negative relationships with psychological and physical well-being, and Army satisfaction, but was not related to marital satisfaction	Response rate of 13% limits the generalizability of the findings Those who did respond generally were older, well educated, married to soldiers who had been in the Army for almost ten years and generally doing well – indicating self selection could have occurred Younger spouses who generally were not doing as well did not seem to respond to the questionnaire	22/22 (100.0)

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
			demands examined 1. Fear for soldier's safety – four items measured 2. Impact of moving – eight items measured 3. Impact of separations – four items measured 4. Impact of foreign residence – 11 items measured **Well-being variables** 1. Brief symptom inventory – 18 items of psychological well-being measured 2. Walter Reed Army Institute of research's physical health symptom	Two-step hierarchical regression: **Step 1.** Control variables (age, rank, no. of moves and no. of separations) entered **Step 2.** Four military lifestyle demand variables entered Individual regression of psychological well-being; physical well-being; Army life satisfaction; and marital satisfaction, on control and lifestyle demand variables	**Regression** Impact of separations was one military lifestyle demand variable that was predictive of all outcomes – suggesting it was the most important of all four demands in determining how spouses were effected Living in a foreign residence was associated with both physical and psychological well-being Impact of moving had a significant and positive association with physical well-being, but negative relationship with Army life satisfaction Fear concerning soldier safety was associated with physical well-being		

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
			checklist – 22 health symptoms of physical well-being **Army life satisfaction** - five items assessed **Marital satisfaction** Norton's Quality of Marriage Index - six items All measures were rated on a Likert-type scale ranging one – five – the meaning of each varied depending on the variable being measured – All items were scored then reverse scored A composite score was given				

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

Details of systematic review studies continued

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
Military Wives and Relocation: A Psycho-Social Perspective **(Jervis, 2009)**	Qualitative Reflexive psychoanalytic research	15 spouses (14 female, one male) all accompanied military personnel to overseas location in north-western Europe Various commissioned and other ranks	**Pilot exercise:** Questionnaires used to identify broad themes to investigate further Ten questionnaires hand delivered (eight to individuals unknown socially to the researcher) – seven returned **Unstructured interviews:** 25 unstructured interviews (initially only one interview each was intended, however ten of the respondents were interviewed a second time) : - All respondents gave permission to be tape recorded - Factual details	Unstructured interviews: - Transcribed in detail by the researcher (450 pages of data) - Researcher reflected upon each interview to consider not only what was said but what may have impartially been imparted Research relationship was reflected upon after the interviews to assess if anything was unconsciously communicated, that might enable the researcher to reach new levels of	1. Personal losses following an overseas assignment: **Unfamiliar environment** – even though considered important to rectify, there was a reluctance to do this initially – losses aroused anxiety and ambivalence making individuals unwilling to initially explore their new environment a phenomenon similar to culture shock **The lack of a supportive relationship** - Relationships between individuals were often superficial substitutes for families and friends left behind - Most respondents had experienced loneliness and yearned for deeper friendships	Small (15) but fairly representative sample of individuals married to British military personnel stationed overseas utilised – approached either directly or via a 'snowball' effect - further research is necessary to confirm the accuracy of the conclusions Researcher acknowledged that occasionally she asked too many questions during the interviews in ways that would have closed down respondents' free associations Her personal defensiveness is also	20/20 (100.0)

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
			- about each respondent noted – Free association narratives obtained - Interventions kept to a minimum - Listened to empathetically - Followed wherever the respondents' ideas led - Refrained from making interpretations Written information from **three** servicemen's wives not interviewed Journal notes made immediately after interviews	understanding Transcriptions were compared to identify recurring themes –noting contradictions, hesitations, omissions and how ideas were linked Consultation with other psychosocial researchers to provide additional peer support Validation of findings with the three narratives written by wives not interviewed Arguments were illustrated using vignettes taken	- Repeated relocations often made wives reluctant to invest themselves in relationships **Children going to boarding school** - Viewed retrospectively the distress of sending children to boarding school was minimised and often seen as advantageous - Unhappiness had arisen at the loss of interpersonal relationships with their children **No employment/self-esteem** - Job loss left many respondents with low self-esteem, loss of identity **Silenced emotions** - The researcher felt respondents colluded with	recognised as a limitation to some of the interviews Additional consultancy with more psycho-social researchers is also felt could have been beneficial Recommendations: - endeavour to determine the extent to which clinical depression exists in recently relocated wives Further research needed to explore post-relocation	

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
			Feedback from peers Personal experience associated with the research process	from the research interviews	military stoicism and their distress was silenced thus impeding the mourning necessary for their recovery - Such unprocessed post-relocation distress could undermine health and even threaten spouses' lives 2. <u>Incorporation into the military institution</u> - Respondents generally complied with traditional military expectations of them, believing it was their choice to do so. However, there was less 'pressure' for male spouses to conform There was increasing resistance from younger wives to support traditional roles	- experiences of male spouses of service personnel	

Details of systematic review studies continued

Title of study (Author)	Methodology	Sample size	Data collection and methods	Method of analysis	Findings	Limitations	Assessment score (% 1 d.p.) (Kmet et al., 2004)
					- Respondents lost aspects of personal autonomy and independence - Loss the freedom to express themselves, adopting military stoicism feeling they just had to 'get on with' military life - Male respondent not as disturbed by the relocation as he experienced fewer losses than his female counterparts, he was not incorporated into the military institution - It was felt that there was a general taboo upon expressing painful emotions within the military community which could hinder a respondent's recovery from losses		

Appendix iii: Details of systematic review studies

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Appendix iv   Plymouth University research ethics approval letter

MS/ab

17th February 2010

Faculty of Health
University of Plymouth
Drake Circus
Plymouth PL4 8AA

CONFIDENTIAL
Gillian Blakely
c/o Heather Skirton
School of Nursing and Midwifery
H102, Faculty of Health
University of Plymouth
Wellington Road
Taunton
TA1 5YD
Dear Gillian

Professor Michael Sheppard
CQSW BSc MA PhD, AcSS
Chair of Research Ethics Committee

Application for Approval by Faculty Research Ethics Committee

*Application Title: **The Impact of British Military Foreign Postings on Accompanying Spouses***

I am pleased to inform you that the Committee has granted approval to you to conduct this research.

Please note that this approval is for three years, after which you will be required to seek extension of existing approval.

Please note that should any MAJOR changes to your research design occur which effect the ethics of procedures involved you must inform the Committee. Please contact Alison Bendall on (01752) 586703 or by email alison.bendall@plymouth.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

Professor Michael Sheppard, PhD, AcSS,
Chair, Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Health
University of Plymouth

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Appendix v   MoDREC approval letter dated 9th July 2010

MOD Research Ethics Committee (General)
Corporate Secretariat
Bldg 5, G01-614
Dstl Porton Down
Salisbury, Wiltshire
SP4 0JQ

Secretary: Marie Jones
telephone: 01980 658155
e-mail: mnjones@dstl.gov.uk
fax: 01980 613004

_____

Mrs Gillian Carter

Ref: 079/Gen/09

9th July 2010

_____

Dear Mrs Carter,

Re: – The Impact of British Military Foreign Postings on Accompanying Spouses –
version 3, 5th July 2010

Thank you for submitting this protocol for ethical review and making minor amendments.

I am happy to give ethical approval for this research and should be grateful if you would send me a copy of your final report on completion of the study. Please would you also send me a brief interim report in one year's time if the study is still ongoing.

This approval is conditional upon adherence to the protocol – please let me know if any amendment becomes necessary.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Robert Linton
Chairman MOD Research Ethics Committee (General)

telephone: 020 8877 9329
e-mail: robert@foxlinton.org
mobile: 07764616756

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Appendix vi   Participant information sheet

THE IMPACT OF BRITISH MILITARY FOREIGN POSTINGS ON ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

INFORMATION SHEET FOR FOCUS GROUPS/INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

What is the research all about?
The relocation to unfamiliar surroundings can have an impact on an individual's health and lifestyle.   The purpose of this study is to focus on the needs of the civilian spouse and the impact a foreign posting has on their family life.

Who is organising and funding the research?
I am a PhD student at the University of Plymouth in Devon, United Kingdom and have received funding from the University to undertake this study. I am a civilian researcher and this work is ***completely free from any involvement of the three military services***.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen because you are married/in a civil partnership to a member of the British Forces and have accompanied them on a foreign posting. I am very interested in getting the views of a wide range of people and your views and experiences will be valuable for the study.

What is the purpose of the study?
To find out about the experiences of spouses on a foreign posting and how it affects their wellbeing. In my report, I will use the information I have obtained to make recommendations about the ways that spouses can be best supported when they accompany servicemen or women on a foreign posting.

Do I have to take part?
No. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part, you are also free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.   If you withdraw, any information you have given me will be destroyed if you wish. However, please be aware this may not be possible if you were involved in a discussion with a focus group.

What kind of information will I have to provide if I take part?
Should you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to take part in either a face-to-face interview with me or in a focus group with approximately six other participants. The choice is completely yours. The aim for each of these meetings is to gain an idea of your experiences during the switch you have made from your usual residence to your foreign posting.   The interview should take between 30-60 minutes and the focus group should last from 1-2 hours. In both cases an audio recording will

be made. The meeting, either face-to-face or focus group will be arranged at a time and place that is the most convenient to those involved. Prior to the meeting taking place you will be asked to read an information sheet and to sign a consent form to record that you have agreed to be involved.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
You may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in the study, but some people find it very helpful to discuss their experiences with others. However, by providing your views you will contribute to the greater understanding of the impact on family life when undertaking a foreign posting and how, improvements can be made to the support given to spouses, if any are needed.

Are there any risks to me if I take part?
Although it is unlikely, it is possible that you may feel emotional when recalling past events. If this does happen, you have the choice to continue in the study. If appropriate, the researcher may advise you to seek support from others, such as your medical practitioner or social worker.

What if I have questions or there is a problem with my involvement in the study?
You can ask questions or receive advice about any aspect of the study from me or my Director of Studies at the University of Plymouth, Professor Heather Skirton. Contact details are provided at the end of this leaflet. If you have any complaints about the study, these should be addressed to Professor Skirton who will deal with the complaint according to the University of Plymouth regulations.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?
It is very important that you understand that any information you give to me will remain completely confidential. All information that I collect from people who take part in the study will be put together to give a general summary and will be presented in a report and ultimately within my thesis. No individual person will ever be identified and no connections will be made between any individuals e.g. a spouse and the serving member. All the information that I collect will be anonymised and will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet, which will only be accessible by myself and my University supervisors, Prof. Heather Skirton, Prof. Catherine Hennessy and Prof. Man Cheung Chung. Your name will not appear on any records of discussions we have in interviews or focus groups; instead, you will be given a fictitious name. After the interview recording has been typed up, the recording will be kept no longer than necessary and will be destroyed after the study is finished, along with the list of people involved in the study. I will use quotations from the interviews and focus groups in my report but these will not be able to be connected with any specific person.

All information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
All the information that I collect will be put together to give a general summary picture which will be presented in a written report and ultimately my thesis. All those who participate can receive an individual summary of the report. On completion of my PhD, I plan to provide a summary report of my findings to the MoD. I hope that the

findings will provide areas of best practice for family support and for the promotion of the health and well-being of the families.

Who has reviewed the study?
The study has been by produced in conjunction with researchers in the Faculty of Health at the University of Plymouth and has been approved by the University of Plymouth Research Ethics Committee and the MoD Research Ethics Committee.

Contact Details
Gillian Carter (née Blakely) PhD Student *details removed*

Prof. Heather Skirton, Director of Studies *details removed*

Please keep this information sheet for reference about the study.

Thank you for taking time to read this sheet and giving consideration to taking part in my study.

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Appendix vii   Advice slip

THE IMPACT OF A BRITISH MILITARY FOREIGN POSTING ON ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

ADVICE SLIP

Thank you for agreeing to help me with my study on the experiences of spouses. As the main researcher of this study, it is not my intention as part of my study to in anyway upset or cause any of my participants any distress due to the topics that may be discussed. You do not have to answer all of the questions if you do not want to. However, if something does raise any sensitive issues please contact your Doctor or Practice Nurse for advice and they will direct you to the appropriate support network.

Don't forget other participants may have experienced similar circumstances as you and if you would like to exchange contacts details with them at the end of the discussion please ask me and I will contact them on your behalf.

Please note if I feel that there is any cause for concern regarding your or your children's health and well-being, it will be my duty to report it to the appropriate Medical Representative.

I _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _have read and understood the above information and have had an opportunity to ask any questions.

By providing my signature below shows that I am happy to proceed with the *interview/focus group.   (* delete as appropriate)

Name of participant: ....

Signature: ....

Date: ....

Name of researcher: ....

Signature: ....

Date: ....

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Appendix viii   Participant consent form – individual interview of spouse

THE IMPACT OF BRITISH MILITARY FOREIGN POSTINGS ON ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW OF SPOUSE

Please initial the boxes below:

1   I confirm that I have read and understood the *'Participant Information Sheet or Individual Interviews/Focus Groups of Spouses – Version 2'*. ☐

2   I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without reason and ask for my data to be destroyed if I wish. ☐

3   I understand that I must not take part if I am not married to/in a civil partnership with a member of the British Armed Forces on this foreign posting. ☐

4   I agree to the audio digital recording of my interview. ☐

5   I understand that my anonymity is guaranteed, unless I expressly state otherwise. ☐

6   I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published (I remain anonymous)**.** ☐

7   I understand all discussion will be kept strictly confidential. ☐

8   I understand that the researchers will have attempted, as far as possible, to avoid any risks. ☐

9   Under these circumstances, I agree to take part in the study. ☐

The information you have agreed to submit will be written as a report and if you provide contact details a copy will be emailed to you. Please note that confidentiality will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify you from any publications.

Name of participant: ....

Email address: --

Appendix viii: Participant consent form – individual interview

....

Signature:
....

Date:
....

Name of researcher:
....

Signature:
....

Date:
....

Appendix ix   Individual interview question schedule

THE IMPACT OF BRITISH MILITARY FOREIGN POSTINGS ON ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

Interviewee: Male ☐ /Female ☐

Interviewee's spouse/civil partner: Male ☐ /Female ☐

1.   **How long have you been on this posting?**

         ………. months /years

         When are you due to leave?

         ……………...

         Where did you move from?
         ……………………………………………………………………………………..……

         Is that your usual place of residence? If not where is?
         ……………………………………………………………………………………...…..

         Have you been on this posting before?
         Yes ☐   / No ☐

         If yes when?
         ………………………………

         Have you been on any other accompanied foreign postings before?
         Yes ☐ / No ☐

         If you answered 'Yes' what place(s) have you been to and when?

         ……………………………… ………………………………… ………………………………

2.   **What instant thoughts went through your mind when you heard you were going on a foreign posting?**
         Prompts: panic, delight
         ………
         …………

3. **Describe how the first few months felt after you arrived on your posting?**
    Prompts: manic, relaxing, easy to settle, homesick
    ………………………………………………………………………………………………
    What one word would you use to describe these first few months?
    …………………………………………………………………………………………………

4. **How long did it take you to settle in, if at all?**
    …………………

    What factors do you think helped you cope the most?
    Prompts: your sponsor, making friends, your house
    ……

    If you feel that you haven't settled in, what factors were/are the main barriers?
    Prompts: home sick, unusual environment, feeling isolated
    ……

    What do you think might help improve things?
    ……
    …………

    Does the availability of different communication and transport networks help the 'settling in process'?
    e.g. email, Skype, phone, local airports

    Yes ☐ / No ☐

    Why do you think that?
    ………………………………………………………………………………………………...........

5. **How involved do you feel you are in the community? What factors have helped or hindered this?**
    ………………………………………………………………………………………………...........

6. **In an ideal world what would you have liked to have happened when you joined?**
    ………………………………………………………………………………………………...........

7. **What do you feel has influenced the way you have adapted to your foreign posting?**
    ……

    How do you think your past experiences may influence this?
    Prompts: previous foreign postings
    ………………………………………………………………………………………………...........

    What do you think are the main reasons for that?

Prompts: personality, confidence, sense of security and safety
………………………………………………………………………………………………....………

Do you think people cope with a changed environment in different ways? Why do you think that is?
………………………………………………………………………………………………....………

How much of an influence do you feel the country/area of a country you have been posted to affects your experience?
………………………………………………………………………………………………....………

8. **Did you find the move here stressful?**

Yes ☐ / No ☐

If you answered 'yes':

What was the most stressful aspect?
………
…………

What was the least stressful aspect?
………
…………

If you answered 'no':

What factors made your move here 'stress free'?
……

9. **How easy did you find it to adapt to the new environment?**

Not at all easy ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺ Extremely easy

What factors helped?
………
…………

What factors hindered?
………………………………………………………………………………………………....………

10. **How do you feel your husband/wife/civil partner's role affects how you are treated or how you 'fit in' the community?**
………………………………………………………………………………………………....………

Do you feel your husband/wife/civil partner's role 'dictates' who you socialise with?

Yes ☐ / No ☐

Why do you think that is the case?

………………………………………………………………………………………........…

11.   **Did you find it difficult leaving one life to transfer into another lifestyle?**

Yes ☐ / No ☐

Why do you think that is?

……………………………………………………………………………………….………..

Did you have a job/specific career that you ended/postponed to go on the foreign posting?

Yes ☐ / No ☐

How did that make you feel?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Do you feel you developed a new role/identity on the posting? e.g. 'wife of..'

Yes ☐ / No ☐

How did that make you feel?

………………………………………………………………………………….......…………

12.   **Do you have any children?**

Yes ☐ / No ☐

If no – continue to question 13

If you answered 'yes' how many do you have and what is/are their age(s)?

…………………………

Are they with you, or did they remain at your usual place of residence or alternative education?

……………………………………………………………………………….......…………

Was it a difficult decision to make to bring your children with you/to let them remain somewhere else? How did that affect you?

……………………………………………………………………………….......…………

How do you feel your children have settled in here/coped with remaining at your usual place of residence?

……………………………………………………………………………….......…………

What have been the main factors that have helped?

………

What are the main factors that have hindered?
………

13.   **How much of an influence do you think having or not having children on a foreign posting affects how you settle?**
……

Do you feel children give you/would give you instant access to other support networks and why do you think that is the case?
………

In general how do you think people that don't have children experience a foreign posting?
e.g. do they find it harder as they don't fall into a particular category or don't have a instant daily structure to their new environment? Do they find it easier as they don't have the potentially added stress of organising their children's lives too?
………

14.   **What has been the most positive part of being on a foreign posting?**
………

What has been the least positive part of being on a foreign posting?
……

How was this, or could this be alleviated?
……

15.   **What support networks, if needed, would you use during your posting?**
e.g. other spouses, family, friends, the military
……

What else do you think could help?
e.g. more information, books, website
……

16.   **How do you feel your overall health and well being has been affected by the move/living in a foreign environment?**
………

17.   **What have you learnt from your experience of a foreign posting?**
………

What advice would you give to future spouses going on a foreign posting?
………

18.   **What has made the greatest impact on you during your posting?**

…………………………………………………………………………………..………..

19. **How do you think the experience of a male spouse on a foreign posting could develop?**

…………………………………………………………………………….………...

20. **What thoughts do you have about the end of your posting and potentially returning to the UK or your usual place of residence?**

…………………………………………………………………………….………...

21. **What changes have you noticed in yourself during your time on a foreign posting – in particular during your first six months/first year?**
Prompts: more resilient, more adaptable/flexible, more or less confident

…………………………………………………………………………….………...

22. **Has living in a foreign environment given you a greater/less appreciation for your usual environment?**

………
…………

23. **What do you miss (if anything) about your usual residence and how have you dealt with this?**

…………………………………………………………………………….…………

24. **How do you feel this foreign posting has influenced the relationship with your husband/wife/civil partner?** E.g. an overall positive or negative influence

………
…………

25. **Would you like to add anything else that we haven't covered?**

………
…………

Appendix x   Questions for discussion in focus group

THE IMPACT OF A BRITISH MILITARY FOREIGN POSTING ON ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

FOCUS GROUP WITH SPOUSES

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

As part of my PhD research I am interested in the experiences of spouses being on a foreign posting. So this focus group is an opportunity for us to share thoughts of how you think spouses settle into an environment different to their usual place of residence and the impact it can have on their life. Whether you have just arrived or have been here a while **your view point is very important** to this discussion.

Initially we will start with general introductions:

>   Which service you are affiliated to

>   Length of time on this posting and when due to leave

>   Where your last base was and where your usual place of residence would be

I would like to have your views on the following questions:

1. **Can you tell me about your reaction when you found out that you were going on a foreign posting?**
    a. Does it depend on previous experiences of foreign postings?

2. **How do you think you or spouses in general, cope in the first few months of their posting?**
    a. How does this affect the time it takes to settle in?

3. **How easy do you think it is to adapt to a new environment?**
    a. What factors do you feel help the most and what would you consider as the main barriers?

4. **Do you feel different people settle in different ways and have different coping methods? Why do you think that is?**

5. **How much do you think your experiences are influenced by which country/area of a country you are sent too?** E.g. transport links to usual residence, immediate environment, number in community

6. **How do you think the serving husband/wife/civil partner's role can affect how someone can be treated within a community?**
    a. How does it affect who their social life?
    b. How does it affect their ability to settle in?

7. **What support networks are you aware of that are available for spouses if needed during their posting?**
    a. How useful do you think they would be?
    b. Do you have any other suggestions? E.g. other spouses, family, military

8. **How much of a difference do you think there is between how a male and how a female spouse copes on a foreign posting?**

9. **What do you think is the hardest thing to deal with while living away from your usual residence?**
    a. What ways do you think people can cope with this?

10. **You may have children with you on this posting. How do you think adjusting to a foreign posting is influenced by having children with you?**
    a. What dilemmas do you think are faced by parents when deciding if their children should accompany them?

11. **How do you think spouses change during a foreign posting?**

12. **Do you feel as a general rule a foreign posting is a positive or negative experience for a husband and wife/civil partners? Why?**

13. **What lessons do you think are learnt from the experience of a foreign posting? What advice would you give to future spouses going on a foreign posting?**

14. **What thoughts do you have about the end of your posting and potentially returning to the UK or your usual place of residence?**
    a. Does living in a different environment give you a different appreciation for your normal place of residence?

15. **Would you like to add anything else that we haven't covered?**

Thank you!

Appendix xi   Online forum topic threads

THE IMPACT OF BRITISH MILITARY FOREIGN POSTINGS ON ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

DISCUSSION THREADS FOR ONLINE FORUM (guideline)

Week One
Monday: Tell me about your reaction when you found out that you were going on a foreign posting?

Prompts: does it depend on previous experiences of foreign postings?

Thursday: How do you think you or spouses in general, cope in the first few months of their posting? What ways do you think they adapt to a new environment?

Prompts: What factors do you feel help the most and what would you consider as the main barriers?
How does this affect the time to settle in?

Week Two
Monday: Do you feel different people settle in different ways and have different coping methods?

Thursday: How much do you think your experiences are influenced by which country/area of a country you are sent too?

Prompts: E.g. transport links to usual residence, immediate environment, number in community

Week 3
Monday: How do you think the serving husband/wife/civil partner's role can affect how someone can be treated within a community?

Prompts: How does it affect their social life?
How does it affect their ability to settle in?

Thursday: What support networks are you aware of that are available for spouses if needed during their posting?

Prompts: How useful do you think they would be?
Do you have any other suggestions? E.g. other spouses, family, military

Week 4
Monday: How much of a difference do you think there is between how a male and how a female spouse copes on a foreign posting?

Thursday: What do you think is the hardest thing to deal with while living away from your usual residence?

Prompts: What ways do you think people can cope with this?

Week 5
Monday: How do you think adjusting to a foreign posting is influenced by having children with you?

Prompts: What dilemmas do you think are faced by parents when deciding if their children should accompany them?

Thursday: How do you think spouses change during a foreign posting?

Week 6
Monday: Do you feel as a general rule a foreign posting is a positive or negative experience for a husband and wife/civil partners? Why?

Thursday: What lessons do you think are learnt from the experience of a foreign posting? What advice would you give to future spouses going on a foreign posting?

Week 7
Monday: What thoughts do you have about the end of your posting and potentially returning to the UK or your usual place of residence?

Prompts: Does living in a different environment give you a different appreciation for your normal place of residence?

Thursday: Would you like to add anything else that we haven't covered?

Appendix xii   MoDREC approval letter dated 10th June 2011

MOD Research Ethics Committee (General)

Corporate Secretariat
Bldg 5, G01-614
Dstl Porton Down
Salisbury, Wiltshire
SP4 0JQ

Secretary: Marie Jones
telephone: 01980 658155
e-mail: mnjones@dstl.gov.uk
fax: 01980 613004

_____

Mrs Gillian Carter
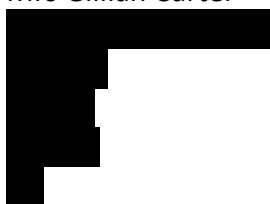
Ref: 079/Gen/09

10th June 2011

_____

Dear Mrs Carter,

Re: – The Impact of British Military Foreign Postings on Accompanying Spouses –
version – 1st amendment

Thank you for submitting details of this amendment describing the research to be done in Phase 3[47] of your study.

On behalf of the MOD Research Ethics Committee I am happy to give ethical approval for this amendment and should be grateful if you would send me a copy of your final report on completion of the study. Please would you also send me a brief interim report in one year's time if the study is still ongoing.

This approval is conditional upon adherence to the protocol – please let me know if any further amendment becomes necessary.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Robert Linton
Chairman MOD Research Ethics Committee (General)

telephone: 020 8877 9329
e-mail: robert@foxlinton.org
mobile: 07764616756

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[47] Phase 3 in the MoDREC application referred to Phase 4 in the thesis

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Appendix xiii   Online survey

**Military Spouse Overseas** This survey is for any military spouse who has been on a foreign posting with their husband/wife/civil partner who is a serving member of the British Military.
**Demographics**
Demo - age	*Your current age		
Demo - gender	*Gender	Please choose.. ▼	
Demo - spouse gender	*What is the gender of your partner?	Please choose.. ▼	
demo - birth origin	*Where were you born?	Please choose.. ▼	
demo - no. FP	*How many foreign postings have you been on as an accompanying spouse?		
demo - locations	*Please select which location(s) you have been to on a foreign posting and enter the approximate years you were there, e.g. 1999 - 2002, in the accompanying box	☐ USA	
		☐ Portugal	
		☐ Italy	
		☐ Germany	
		☐ Belgium	
		☐ Falkland Islands	
		☐ Oman	
		☐ Bahrain	
		☐ Brunei	
		☐ Gibraltar	
		☐ Cyprus	
		☐ Hong Kong	
		☐	

		Russia		
		☐ Other - please specify		
demo - mil ser	*Which Military service are you linked to?	☐ Royal Navy (including Royal Marines) ☐ British Army ☐ Royal Air Force		
Demo - rank/rate	*What is/was the rank/rate of the serving personnel?	☐ Officer ☐ Other rank ☐ Has been both		
Demo - member	*Have you ever been a Fulltime member/reservist of any Military Armed Forces?	Please choose.. ▼		

EPQR - S

EPQR-S part 1	*Please answer 'Yes' or 'No' to the following questions...	Does your mood often go up and down?	Please choose.. ▼
		Do you take much notice of what people think?	Please choose.. ▼
		Are you a talkative person?	Please choose.. ▼
		If you say you will do something, do you always keep your promise no matter how inconvenient it might be?	Please choose.. ▼
		Do you ever feel 'just miserable' for no reason?	Please choose.. ▼
		Would being in debt worry you?	Please choose.. ▼
		Are you rather lively?	Please choose.. ▼
		Were you ever greedy by helping yourself to more than your share of anything?	Please choose.. ▼
		Are you an irritable person?	Please choose.. ▼
		Would you take drugs which may have strange or dangerous effects?	Please choose.. ▼
		Do you enjoy meeting new people?	Please choose.. ▼
		Have you ever blamed someone for doing	Please choose.. ▼

		something you knew was really your fault?	
		Are your feelings easily hurt?	Please choose.. ▼
		Do you prefer to go your own way rather than act by the rules?	Please choose.. ▼
		Can you usually let yourself go and enjoy yourself at a lively party?	Please choose.. ▼
		Are all your habits good and desirable ones?	Please choose.. ▼
EPQR-S part 2	***Please answer 'Yes' or 'No' to the following questions…**	Do you often feel 'fed-up'?	Please choose.. ▼
		Do good manners and cleanliness matter much to you?	Please choose.. ▼
		Do you usually take the initiative in making new friends?	Please choose.. ▼
		Have you ever taken anything (even a pin or button) that belonged to someone else?	Please choose.. ▼
		Would you call yourself a nervous person?	Please choose.. ▼
		Do you think marriage is old-fashioned and should be done away with?	Please choose.. ▼
		Can you easily get some life into a rather dull party?	Please choose.. ▼
		Have you ever broken or lost something belonging to someone else?	Please choose.. ▼
		Are you a worrier?	Please choose.. ▼
		Do you enjoy co-operating with others?	Please choose.. ▼
		Do you tend to keep in the background on social occasions?	Please choose.. ▼
		Does it worry you if you know there are mistakes in your work?	Please choose.. ▼
		Have you ever said anything bad or nasty about anyone?	Please choose.. ▼
		Would you call yourself tense or 'highly-strung'?	Please choose.. ▼
		Do you think people spend too much time safeguarding their future with savings and	Please choose.. ▼

		insurances?		
		Do you like mixing with people?	Please choose.. ▼	
EPQR-S part 3	***Please answer 'Yes' or 'No' to the following questions...**	As a child were you ever cheeky to your parents?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Do you worry too long after an embarrassing experience?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Do you try not to be rude to people?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Do you like plenty of bustle and excitement around you?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Have you ever cheated at a game?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Do you suffer from 'nerves'?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Would you like other people to be afraid of you?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Have you ever taken advantage of someone?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Are you mostly quiet when you are with other people?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Do you often feel lonely?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Is it better to follow society's rules than go your own way?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Do other people think of you as being very lively?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Do you always practice what you preach?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Are you often troubled about feelings of guilt?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Do you sometimes put off until tomorrow what you ought to do today?	Please choose.. ▼	
		Can you get a party going?	Please choose.. ▼	
		LCS		
LOCS part 1	**For each of the following please select option 'a' or 'b' (these questions are not mandatory, but please feel free to answer as many as possible or move onto the next page)**	**a.** Children get into trouble because their parents punish them too much. **b.** The trouble with most children nowadays is that their parents are too easy with them.	Please choose.. ▼	
		a. Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad	Please choose.. ▼	

		luck. **b.** People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.		
		a. One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people don't take enough interest in politics. **b.** There will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them.	Please choose.. ▼	
		a. In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world. **b.** Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognised no matter how hard he tries.	Please choose.. ▼	
		a. The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense. **b.** Most students don't realise the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental happenings.	Please choose.. ▼	
		a. Without the right breaks you cannot be an effective leader. **b.** Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.	Please choose.. ▼	
		a. No matter how hard you try some people just don't like you. **b.** People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.	Please choose.. ▼	
		a. Heredity plays the major role in determining your personality. **b.** It is your experiences in life which determine what you are like.	Please choose.. ▼	
		a. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen. **b.** Trusting to fate has	Please choose.. ▼	

			never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.			
			a. In the case of the well prepared student there is rarely, if ever, such a thing as an unfair test. **b.** Many times exam questions tend to be so unrelated to course work that studying is really useless.	Please choose.. ▼		
LOCS part 2		**For each of the following please select option 'a' or 'b'(these questions are not mandatory, but please feel free to answer as many as possible or move onto the next page)**	**a.** Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it. **b.** Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.	Please choose.. ▼		
			a. The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions. **b.** This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much the little guy can do about it.	Please choose.. ▼		
			a. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work. **b.** It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.	Please choose.. ▼		
			a. There are certain people who are just no good. **b.** There is some good in everybody.	Please choose.. ▼		
			a. In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck. **b.** Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.	Please choose.. ▼		
			a. Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place	Please choose.. ▼		

		first. **b.** Getting people to do the right thing depends upon ability, luck has little or nothing to do with it.			
		a. As far as world affairs are concerned, most of us are the victims of forces we can neither understand, nor control. **b.** By taking an active part in political and social affairs the people can control world events.	Please choose.. ▼	
		a. Most people don't realize the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings. **b.** There really is no such thing as "luck"	Please choose.. ▼	
		a. You should always be willing to admit mistakes. **b.** It is usually best to cover up your mistakes.	Please choose.. ▼	
		a. It is hard to know whether or not a person really likes you. **b.** How many friends you have depends upon how nice a person you are.	Please choose.. ▼	
LOCS part 3	**For each of the following please select option 'a' or 'b'(these questions are not mandatory, but please feel free to answer as many as possible or move onto the next page)**	**a.** In the long run the bad things that happen to us are balanced by the good ones. **b.** Most misfortunes are the result of lack of ability, ignorance, laziness, or all three.	Please choose.. ▼	
		a. With enough effort we can wipe out political corruption. **b.** It is difficult for people to have much control over the things politicians do in office.	Please choose.. ▼	
		a. Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the grades they give. **b.** There is a direct connection between	Please choose.. ▼	

		how hard I study and the grades I get.	
		a. A good leader expects people to decide for themselves what they should do. **b.** A good leader makes it clear to everybody what their jobs are.	Please choose.. ▼
		a. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me. **b.** It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.	Please choose.. ▼
		a. People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly. **b.** There's not much use in trying too hard to please people, if they like you, they like you.	Please choose.. ▼
		a. There is too much emphasis on athletics in high school. **b.** Team sports are an excellent way to build character.	Please choose.. ▼
		a. What happens to me is my own doing. **b.** Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.	Please choose.. ▼
		a. Most of the time I can't understand why politicians behave the way they do. **b.** In the long run the people are responsible for bad government on a national as well as on a local level.	Please choose.. ▼

		GSE-S		
GSE	*__For each of the following questions please select how true you feel it is ...__	I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	Please choose.. ▼	
		If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.	Please choose.. ▼	

		It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	Please choose.. ▼	
		I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	Please choose.. ▼	
		Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	Please choose.. ▼	
		I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	Please choose.. ▼	
		I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	Please choose.. ▼	
		When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	Please choose.. ▼	
		If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.	Please choose.. ▼	
		I can usually handle whatever comes my way.	Please choose.. ▼	

ISSS				
ISSS - part 1	***Do you/did you know people (both overseas and in you usual place of residence) who ...**	... listen and talk with you whenever you feel lonely or depressed?	Please choose.. ▼	
		... spend some quiet time with you whenever you do not feel like going out?	Please choose.. ▼	
		...accompany you somewhere even if he/ she doesn't have to?	Please choose.. ▼	
		... share your good times and your bad times?	Please choose.. ▼	
		... accompany you to do things whenever you need someone for company?	Please choose.. ▼	
		... comfort you when you feel homesick?	Please choose.. ▼	
		... visit you to see how you are doing?	Please choose.. ▼	

		... spend time chatting with you whenever you are bored?	Please choose.. ▼
		... reassure you that you are loved, supported and cared for?	Please choose.. ▼
ISSS - part 2	*Do you/did you know people (both overseas and in your usual place of residence) who ...	... give you assistance in dealing with any communication problems that you might face?	Please choose.. ▼
		... explain things to make your situation clearer and easier to understand?	Please choose.. ▼
		... explain and help you understand the local culture and language?	Please choose.. ▼
		... help you deal with some local institution's official rules and regulations?	Please choose.. ▼
		... provide necessary information to help orient you to your new surroundings?	Please choose.. ▼
		... help you interpret things that you don't really understand?	Please choose.. ▼
		... tell you what can and cannot be done in your usual place of residence?	Please choose.. ▼
		... tell you about available choices and options?	Please choose.. ▼
		... show you how to do something that you didn't know how to do?	Please choose.. ▼
	PMSQ		
PMSQ - part 1	*Please answer the following by selecting the most	The level of information the military provided to us about the host	Please choose.. ▼

		country prior to our move was ...		
appropriate word(s) to end the sentence...		The support the military provided me as the non-serving spouse on arrival was ...	Please choose.. ▼	
		I feel generally the support provided by a military sponsor on joining a foreign posting is ...	Please choose.. ▼	
		The level of financial support the military provided for the relocation was ...	Please choose.. ▼	
		The financial allowances available on a foreign posting are	Please choose.. ▼	
		The supply of a phone and/or internet connection on arrival was ...	Please choose.. ▼	
		The support provided by the military in managing the maintenance of my accommodation is/was generally ...	Please choose.. ▼	
		I feel the medical provision I received/that was available was ...	Please choose.. ▼	
		I feel the level of respect given by the military to the non-serving spouse on a foreign posting is ...	Please choose.. ▼	
		Overall the support provided by the military during my foreign posting(s) was ...	Please choose.. ▼	
PMSQ - part 2	***Please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statements...**	I feel the support you receive from the military on a foreign posting is **NOT** related to the role/rank of the serving spouse	Please choose.. ▼	
		I would feel comfortable approaching the military for support if I felt unhappy on the posting	Please choose.. ▼	
		If we were offered another foreign posting I would consider going on it	Please choose.. ▼	

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Appendix xiv   Scoring keys

Table 8.3 EPQR-S scoring key (Eysenck et al., 1985, p.25)

Scale	1 point for the following responses	Score
Neuroticism (N)	YES: 1,5,9,13,17,21,25,30,34,38,42,46	Max 12
Extraversion (E)	YES: 3,7,11,15,19,23,32,36,44,48 NO: 27,41	Max 12
Psychoticism (P)	YES: 10,14,22,31,39 NO: 2,6,18,26,28,35,43	Max 12
Lie (L)	YES: 4,16,45 NO: 8,12,20,24,29,33,37,40,47	Max 12

Table 8.4 Scoring key for Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966)

Item response and score			Item response and score		
1		NO SCORE (FILLER QUESTION)	**16**	a	1 POINT
2	a	1 POINT	**17**	a	1 POINT
3	b	1 POINT	**18**	a	1 POINT
4	b	1 POINT	**19**		NO SCORE (FILLER QUESTION)
5	b	1 POINT	**20**	a	1 POINT
6	a	1 POINT	**21**	a	1 POINT
7	a	1 POINT	**22**	b	1 POINT
8		NO SCORE (FILLER QUESTION)	**23**	a	1 POINT
9	a	1 POINT	**24**		NO SCORE (FILLER QUESTION)
10	b	1 POINT	**25**	a	1 POINT
11	b	1 POINT	**26**	b	1 POINT
12	b	1 POINT	**27**		NO SCORE (FILLER QUESTION)
13	b	1 POINT	**28**	b	1 POINT
14		NO SCORE (FILLER QUESTION)	**29**	a	1 POINT
15	b	1 POINT			
ALL OTHER VARIATIONS SCORE 0 SCORE RANGE 0 - 23 INTERNAL =LOW SCORE, EXTERNAL = HIGH SCORE					

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Appendix xv   Copy of published article in Nursing & Health Science

Review Article

A systematic review of the impact of foreign postings on accompanying spouses of military personnel

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Abstract

Military spouses frequently cope with separation, but limited research reviewing the impact of an overseas relocation when a spouse accompanies their serving husband/wife has been conducted. A search for studies reviewing the impact of foreign postings on these accompanying spouses was undertaken utilizing 12 databases and other resources. Ultimately, 12 studies were analyzed and four key themes produced: functioning of a military family on an international posting, loss, wellbeing and support. Overall, additional stressors are associated with an overseas posting and experiences are specific to an individual and their circumstances. Further research is required to examine the potential relationship between a spouse's experiences overseas and the impact on their health and wellbeing. This would help to identify possible areas of health care provision and support necessary to maximize a military spouse's experience.

Key words   health and wellbeing, health care, military spouse, overseas postings, relocation, systematic review.

INTRODUCTION

Military spouses are recognized for their enduring ability to cope with extended periods of separation whilst their partners are deployed away from their domestic residences (Fernandez-Pol, 1988a; Burrell *et al.*, 2006). However, there may be less understanding of the impact of collective relocation of military families to overseas postings. Burrell *et al.* (2006) reported that the health and well-being of individuals is affected by many social situations, it is therefore reasonable to suggest that relocation to unfamiliar surroundings could have an impact on an individual's health and lifestyle. Military spouses may be placed under stress while husbands/wives are serving in the armed forces (McNulty, 2003), however overseas postings, in particular, present them with unique challenges (Fisher & Shaw, 1994). These postings can add multiple stressors that would not have existed if the families had not been domestically relocated (McNulty, 2003). Added financial strains, limited spousal employment opportunities, extreme climates and communication difficulties have been recognized as key areas of stress (Manning & DeRouin, 1981; Bowen, 1987; Lakhani, 1994; McNulty, 2003), however, positive attributes such as family unity, travel and new cultural experiences have also been cited (Lakhani *et al.*, 1985; McNulty, 2003; Jervis, 2009).

Authors of previous studies, whom we will refer to as non-military, have investigated the experiences of civilian spouses, including those married to an employee in the diplomatic, corporate or clergy field, or those accompanying international students (Brett, 1982; Wiggins-Frame & Shehan, 1994; De Verthelyi, 1995). These authors suggest that these civilian counterparts are also accustomed to frequent international relocations due to their husband/wife's work and the ability to adjust to cross-cultural differences can have a large impact on the posting. In 2005, the findings of a four-year survey analyzing issues of international corporate assignments for spouses was published (McNulty, 2005). Although this study focused on non-military spouses, it presented significant areas of concern that may be applicable to military foreign relocations. In particular, the need for improved communication between the organization and the spouse was identified as significant. The impact of losing a career or having extended time away from the workforce was also a concern to these spouses. Overall, McNulty's (2005) survey demonstrated that organizations need greater understanding of the gains and losses of the "trailing spouse". Such understanding might be beneficial to the spouse by enabling him or her to accept the missed opportunities in their normal residence, whilst having a greater appreciation for new experiences in their overseas relocation.

In order to provide a complete summary of previous research concerning the experiences of spouses of both British and non-British military personnel on foreign postings, we conducted a systematic review of relevant published

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reports. This allowed the identification of gaps in current research evidence and will also provide a strong theoretical underpinning for future studies.

Aim of the review

This review aimed to investigate the impact of foreign postings on accompanying military spouses.

The objectives were: to determine the potential emotional and psychological impact of overseas relocations on military spouses; to ascertain the coping strategies used by spouses when relocated overseas; and to examine information about the types of emotional and social support used by spouses when living in foreign communities.

METHODS

Design

In order to assess the impact of military foreign postings on accompanying spouses a systematic review of both qualitative and quantitative studies was conducted in accordance with the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination's (CRD) Guidelines for Systematic Reviews (CRD, 2009). Such reviews aim to identify, evaluate and summarize the findings of all relevant studies and can demonstrate where knowledge is lacking, providing a guide for future research (Petticrew, 2003; Brown *et al.*, 2006). Details of eligible studies were extracted using criteria suggested by the CRD (2009).

Search methods

Search strategies

Following advice by a subject librarian for health, appropriate databases were identified. In addition, journals that published many of the papers identified by the electronic search, namely "Military Medicine" and "Military Psychology," were manually searched. Reference lists within relevant papers were inspected to identify supplementary studies.

Databases

The databases searched included sociology, psychology, health and nursing catalogues incorporating PsycAR-TICLES, PScyINFO, Medline, UK PubMED Central, CINAHL, Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), International Bibliography of the Social Science (IBSS), Published International Literature on Traumatic Stress (PILOTS), British Nursing Index (BNI) and Science Direct. Additionally, two full text journal packages, Taylor and Francis, and SwetsWise were explored.

In accordance with the CRD's Guidelines (CRD, 2009) the Campbell Collaboration, Database of Abstracts Reviews and Effects (DARE), Cochrane Dissemination and Systematic Review (CDSR), National Institute for Health and Clinical Evidence (NICE), Database of Promoting Health Effectiveness Reviews (DoPHER), National Guidelines Clearing House (NGC), Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN), National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Programme and NHS Evidence were also reviewed.

Other resources

Internet search engines Google (http://www.google.co.uk/webhp?hl=en&tab=sw) and Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.co.uk/schhp?hl=en&tab=ws) were extensively searched for peer-reviewed publications. Through these search engines and via personal communication further searches were conducted through websites of unrestricted military and government data and other military affiliations.

Keywords

Initially the keywords used were based on permutations of the three main themes of relocation, military and spouse. "Relocation" was ultimately expanded to incorporate variations of "foreign", in particular "overseas", which was found to be a frequent expression in USA Forces research, along with "international", "posting", "stationed," "global assignment" and "European". Similarly, other common wording for "military", namely "military personnel", "Armed Forces", "Army", "Navy", and "Air Force", and for "spouse" i.e. "wives", "partner", "dependent", "family", "trailing spouse", and "accompanied", as dictated by article titles and abstracts, were included. When possible the database's thesaurus was also utilized to provide alternative search terms.

Dates

An initial search provided three studies from the last 10 years; consequently, the search was broadened and found to still provide relevant findings. Therefore, to acquire greater depth of knowledge, no restrictions on publication year were enforced.

Review procedure

Inclusion/ exclusion criteria

Eligible studies were those in which:
- The complete study or an element of it focused on the experiences of spouses accompanying a military member posted overseas
- The military personnel were British or non-British servicemen/women
- Findings were specifically differentiated so that those related solely to overseas spouses could be extracted
- Experiences of children posted overseas were only included if the impact on them affected the non-military parent

Excluded studies were those which:
- Focused on spouses of non-military personnel (e.g. corporate, clergy or diplomatic spouses) on overseas postings
- Focused on separation issues when military members were posted overseas and their spouses remained in their normal residence
- Reported direct experiences of children posted overseas with military families

- Provided general results which did not individually specify spouses' responses.

Study selection

The search of all databases, journals and websites produced 5507 potential resources. After reviewing all titles and abstracts, an initial selection of 424 resources was reviewed in greater detail. Ultimately, 12 resources met the inclusion criteria (see Fig. 1).

Data extraction

Details of the eligible studies were extracted using criteria suggested by CRD (2009). Due to the nature of the chosen studies, some of the suggested categories, for example descriptions of interventions, control groups and costs, were not applicable. Therefore, extracted data were confined to methodology, the number of participants and, if available, their location during the study, the methods of data collection, methods of analysis, reported findings and limitations of the work. Table 1 provides a summary of some of this data from the review articles.

Methodological quality

Checklists by Kmet et al. (2004) for determining the quality of quantitative and qualitative studies were utilized to assess the studies. Two authors completed the checklists independently for three of the studies and demonstrated consensus of results. Ten papers scored between 77.3 and 100.0%, the remaining two scoring 59.1% (Manning & DeRouin, 1981; Lakhani et al., 1985) (see Table 1). Because of the small number of relevant studies, any study scoring more than 50.0% was included. Thus, all studies contributed to the synthesis and development of themes.

Data extraction and synthesis

For the purpose of a preliminary synthesis, the text of each paper was uploaded onto a database using QSR International NVivo8 software (QSR International [UK], Southport, UK). This software was developed to support qualitative analysis that allows management of data and ideas, querying of data and formulation of analytical models, and ultimately construction of reports (Bazeley, 2007). The analysis focused on the findings and discussion section of each study. The text was coded in a line-by-line process according to its meaning and content with respect to the impact of military spouses accompanying their husbands/wives overseas. This coding was in relation to the objectives of the study: identifying the emotional and psychological impact of readjusting to a new lifestyle, identifying coping strategies utilized, and the necessary support required. This process created a bank of "free nodes". Assessing for similarities and differences between
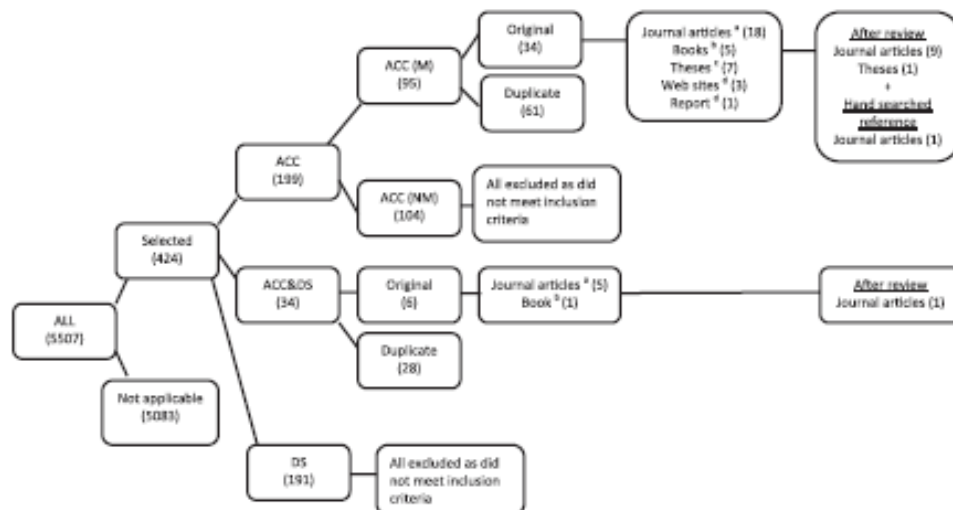

Figure 1. Summary of results for systematic review. ACC, accompanied; ACC(M) accompanied military; ACC(NM) accompanied non-military; ACC&DS, accompanied and deployment separation; DS deployment separation. [a]Of the original total of 23 scientific journal articles 13 did not comply with the inclusion criteria, leaving ten in the review. [b]Of the original total of six books, three that were not available and three that were non-peer reviewed chapters were excluded from the review. [c]Of the original seven theses, three were not selected due to availability problems and ambiguity of their abstracts, and upon review another three theses did not comply with inclusion criteria, the final thesis remained in the review. [d]These resources did not meet the inclusion criteria.

Table 1. Summary of included papers

Reference	Purpose of study	Methodology	Main findings of relevance	MQ (% 1 dp)
(Manning & DeRouin, 1981)	To examine if employed military wives are more satisfied than those unemployed whilst based in Germany	Qualitative – reference also made to unstructured interviews	Employed wives were significantly more satisfied than those who were unemployed. Husbands of employed wives were more content than are those without jobs. The military members had clear support systems. No equivalent support structure was perceived by the spouse, friend being the third most popular choice by employed wives and sixth by unemployed, suggesting effects of social isolation	59.1
(Lakhani et al., 1985)	To analyze the importance of satisfaction with job and family life in the decision to extend a European tour	Quantitative	Officers: family satisfaction is defined primarily by spousal perceptions and feelings; spousal feelings of satisfaction are explained by their sense of coherence; spouses provide support which either conditions or buffers family members' responses to stress and job involvement; PX privileges are described as important institutions to families living overseas USAREUR. Enlisted personnel: family and army life satisfaction strongly related to spouse's perception of military member's happiness, social opportunities of travel in Europe and eating out, being part of a community offering recreational programs; spousal attitudes impact greatly on retention.	59.1
(Lavee et al., 1985)	To examine the relationship among variables of Double ABCX model of family stress and adaption using data on army families' adaption to the crisis of relocation overseas	Quantitative theoretical model is translated into an empirically testable model	Families struggle with relocation and an accumulation of demands stemming from current and previous unresolved family life changes. Accumulation of stressors result in intensifying strains causing less family satisfaction with their lifestyle, wellbeing and more chance of health, emotional and relational family problems. Family system resources, social support and sense of coherence have a positive effect on family adaption. Cohesive families, who communicate support better and whose systems are more flexible, probably adapt better to the pile-up of stressors and strains. Social support has a significant indirect buffering role in family adaption. Greater support from community and friendship networks was positively linked with the family outlook. External environment is more influential than a family's internal resources.	100.0
(McCubbin & Lavee, 1986)	To examine specific strengths and resiliencies entitled families utilize to manage the strain of relocating and adapting to a foreign country at the four stages of the family life cycle using a modified Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response model	Quantitative, exploratory	Group I (families without children) adapt best if pre-travel hassles kept minimal; military members have basic coping skills; they feel a sense of community support. Also indicated they were least likely to receive command sponsorship and spouses had lowest sense of coherence. Group II (families with preschool and school age children) adapt best if family life events and pre-travel hassles are minimized; spouses feel valued and military members have sense of coherence and of army-family fit; religious programs and community services are available. Also indicated they had the greatest amount of post-arrival strain, had the largest number of employed spouses and smallest amount of individual and community resources; military members also had the lowest sense of coherence. Group III (adolescents and young adults) adapt best if post-arrival hassles are minimized; military members feel valued by families, if they have a strong sense of coherence, family unity is strong. Group IV (empty nest stage) adapt best if the pile up of family life events is minimized; military members have basic coping skills, families have strong bonds	100.0

	Aim	Method	Findings	
(Bowen, 1987)	To examine the relationship between wives' employment status and the marital adjustment of military member husbands and their civilian wives on USA Air Force couples from 24 bases worldwide	Quantitative	The effects of wives' employment status on marital adjustment in the military is situationally specific to both base location and rank of the husbands. Officer employment of wives stationed overseas is functional to the marriage of both husbands and wives but dysfunctional to the marriage of those within the USA; however, wives stationed in the USA and employed part-time reported comparatively high marital intimacy. Enlisted: husbands' marital adjustment while stationed in the USA was greater when the wives were employed, however overseas it was poor; unemployed wives stationed in the USA reported greater marital intimacy than did those employed.	95.5
(Fernandez-Pol, 1988a)	To test the hypothesis that military wives tend to report higher psycho-physiological symptoms than their civilian counterparts – completed during peacetime	Quantitative – questionnaire	Of the total sample 42% reported scores of four or more symptoms – the age ranges showed no significant differences. Those married to enlisted personnel had a significantly greater rate of scoring four or more than did the officer wives (49% vs 32%, $\chi^2 = 9.48$, $P < 0.005$) Average number of symptoms expressed by military wives was 3.44. The data did not support the hypothesis that military wives tend to report more psycho-physiological symptoms than their civilian counterparts did.	81.8
(Fernandez-Pol, 1988b)	To examine the levels of psychophysiological distress among Japanese, non-Japanese Asian and American military wives whilst based in Japan with their USA Air Force husbands	Quantitative – questionnaire	Significant difference among the three groups Imag ($F = 21.93$, $P < 0.001$) and years married ($F = 11.65$, $P < 0.001$). Significant difference in Langner scores amongst ethnic groups ($F = 16.78$, $P < 0.001$). Non-Japanese Asians had higher symptom scores than did Americans ($P < 0.001$) and Japanese ($P < 0.001$), who did not differ significantly from each other. American woman married to enlisted personnel reported significantly higher symptom scores than those married to officers. Overall, non-Japanese Asian military wives were assessed to be at high risk of developing distress symptoms, particularly with regard to overseas postings.	95.5
(Rosen & Moghadam, 1991)	To examine the self-reported seasonal changes in mood and behavior (S.A.D.) in army wives located in Germany, California and Texas	Quantitative – questionnaire	47% army wives based in Germany reported feeling worse in winter compared with 24% in California and 34% in Texas. Of wives in Germany 65% reported feeling least energetic in winter, 49% socialized least in winter, 62% slept most in winter. Overall, military wives living in Germany reported more S.A.D.-like symptoms than those living in California and Texas. It was recommended that physicians particularly those treating military wives in Germany, should be made aware that some depressions could be a result of S.A.D. rather than the PCS	100.0
(Lakhani, 1994)	To determine if there is any significant socioeconomic benefits to military families in CONUS and OCCONUS locations	Quantitative – evaluative study, analysis of two survey databases	Spouses had greater problems finding employment in OCONUS full time employment of spouses; their earnings and homeownership greater in CONUS; those "very satisfied" with army life 73% located in CONUS; CONUS more satisfied with housing; number of nights solder away from home significantly greater in OCONUS ($P < 0.001$); family safety more of a concern for soldiers in OCONUS; soldiers in CONUS more satisfied with overall quality of time spent with children.	72.3

Table 1. Continued

Reference	Purpose of study	Methodology	Main findings of relevance	MQ (%, 1 dp)
(McNulty, 2003)	To investigate the health care needs of families in a deployed and non-deployed status in Okinawa, Japan	Quantitative, descriptive, correlation study	For both groups change for each tool between times 1 and 2 was not related to deployment status ($P = 0.19$) or length of deployment time ($P = 0.05$). Family cohesiveness ($P = 0.006$) and family well being increased with time in Okinawa ($P = 0.03$); during deployment self-reliance increased with number of overseas assignments of the family ($P = 0.04$; χ social support decreased in families who had previous tours overseas ($P = 0.02$; family coping increased with families who had previous tours overseas ($P = 0.05$); self-reliance during deployment increased with past counseling ($P = 0.02$); social support diminished during deployment with prior history of counseling ($P = 0.02$); family member well-being increased if subject had received past counseling. No relationship between medical care visits, chronic problems or start of psychiatric medication with deployment. ND families had increased adaption ($P = 0.05$), more strains ($P = 0.001$) and decreased well-being ($P = 0.06$) over time; DEP compared to ND families were hardier over time. Overall number of spouses exhibiting signs of depression whilst overseas among DEP and ND families was considered alarming	100.0
(Burrell *et al.*, 2006)	To examine the relationship between four military lifestyle demands and the reported wellbeing and army and family related attitudes of military spouses living overseas	Quantitative	Correlation: impact of moving was negatively related with army satisfaction; number of moves was positively associated with wellbeing and army satisfaction; impact of separations was negatively related to wellbeing and army satisfaction; impact of a foreign residence had negative relationships with psychological and physical wellbeing, and army satisfaction, but was not related to marital satisfaction. Regression: impact of separations was predictive of all outcomes suggesting it was the most important of all four demands in determining how spouses were effected; living in a foreign residence had significant negative relationships with both physical and psychological wellbeing; impact of moving and physical wellbeing was significantly positive but negative with army life satisfaction.	100.0
(Jervis, 2009)	To explore the emotional responses of British servicemen's wives to repeated relocations	Qualitative – reflexive psychoanalytic research	Personal losses following an overseas assignment: unfamiliar environment; lack of a supportive relationship; children attending boarding school; employment; self-esteem; aspects of personal autonomy and independence; freedom of expression; adopting military stoicism which could undermine spouses' health as there was a general taboo upon expressing painful emotions. Spouses generally complied with traditional military expectations, but there was an increasing resistance from younger wives with less "pressure" for male spouses to conform; male respondents not as disturbed by relocations as they experienced fewer losses than their female counterparts	100.0

DEP, deployed; dp, decimal place; ID, intermittent deployed; MQ, methodology quality; ND, non-deployed; PCS, Permanent Change of Station; PX, Commissary and Post Exchange; USAREUR, USA Army in Europe.

these codes then allowed them to be grouped into a hierarchical "tree structure", providing overarching themes.

As advised by CRD (2009), a formal pooling of results is not appropriate for a diverse selection of non-randomized study types. Therefore, a narrative was written to indicate and evidence the development of descriptive themes and provide a summary for the selected study findings.

The thematic analysis was completed by the primary author only and could be subject to bias because this author was on a foreign posting as a military spouse.

RESULTS

Description of included studies

Altogether 12 studies were included in the review; all were published between 1981 and 2009. Eleven were based on a quantitative design, one was undertaken using qualitative methods (Jervis, 2009). The selection incorporated one thesis by Jervis and 11 peer-reviewed journal articles. One study focused on British military foreign postings (Jervis, 2009) and the remaining 11 related to USA military families on overseas postings.

Studies incorporating the views of spouses had samples ranging from 15–675. Those consulting the family had samples of 212–762. Finally, information gathered from previously completed surveys provided data from more than 1000 families (Lakhani *et al.*, 1985), 11,000 and 12,000 families (Lakhani, 1994).

The geographic locations of the subjects were either given as generic descriptions such as Europe, north-west Europe, the Far East and Asia or specific settings such as Italy, Germany, West Germany, Gibraltar, Texas, California or Okinawa (Japan). Other expressions used were OCONUS (outside continental USA) and CONUS (continental USA).

Within the quantitative papers a variety of statistical analytical methods were used to test the significance of the data. Standard inferential analysis was used in four studies (Manning & DeRouin, 1981; Fernandez-Pol, 1988a, Fernandez-Pol, 1988b, Rosen & Moghadam, 1991). More complex regression analysis was used in four other studies (Lakhani *et al.*, 1985; Lakhani, 1994; McNulty, 2003; Burrell *et al.*, 2006). Theoretical or factorial models were used in the analysis of the final three papers (Lavee *et al.*, 1985; McCubbin & Lavee, 1986; Bowen, 1987).

In the non-quantitative work Jervis (2009) transcribed the unstructured interviews and reflected on each interview to consider not only what was said, but what may have impartially been imparted. The transcriptions were then compared to identify recurring themes.

Narrative analysis

Four themes were derived from the data and the findings are presented under those themes: functioning of military families on international postings, loss, general wellbeing, and support.

Functioning of military families on international postings

Military spouses posted outside the USA experience a reduced quality of life, primarily due to limited opportunities to have quality family time (Lakhani, 1994; McNulty, 2003). However, during peacetime American born military wives are similar to their civilian counterparts in the reporting of distress symptoms (Fernandez-Pol, 1988a). Furthermore, spousal satisfaction with military life was found to be linked to their location and employment status, which impacts on marital adjustment (Bowen, 1987; Lakhani, 1994).

Manning and DeRouin (1981) reported that housewives who are involved in voluntary activities are more likely to be satisfied with life, the USA Army and their time in Germany than those who have been seeking employment for a long time. In addition, they found that spouses' employment status and satisfaction with military life influenced service members' contentment. The husbands of better-adjusted working wives are themselves more satisfied than are those with unemployed spouses. The results of Lakhani *et al.'s* (1985) factor analysis revealed that families' satisfaction with life and employment are crucial in determining whether officers and enlisted servicemen extend their tours in Europe. Overall, family and army life satisfaction depended on spouses' perceptions of military members' happiness and social opportunities.

Loss

Prior loss of a job, or inability to achieve meaningful employment instills feelings of worthlessness and leaves individuals feeling insecure about their identity, whereas having employment has been reported to provide credibility and individuality (Manning & DeRouin, 1981; Jervis, 2009). Further undermining of such established identities, in particular the title of "wife of", is seen as an additional loss of individualism (Jervis, 2009), personal identities being replaced with those of the serving members, which inflicts loss of personal autonomy. Nonetheless, there is a reluctant acceptance of the "dependent" role in order to mix with the expatriate community, even though this ultimately define them as servicemen's wives and denies them recognition as individuals.

Valued relationships are lost on relocation, and the resultant loneliness cannot always be counteracted by forming new relationships because of the emotional investment required and the time constraints of postings (Jervis, 2009). Spouses in this study also felt they lost rich, interpersonal relationships with their children because they sent them to boarding school. Additionally, the general disorientation caused by new surroundings, combined with language barriers, means some spouses report experience a form of culture shock, which also leads to feelings of social isolation (Manning & DeRouin, 1981).

General wellbeing

Disenchantment with the military and the necessity to continually adapt to new locations and circumstances impact on

a spouse's wellbeing (McNulty, 2003; Jervis, 2009), but this is very dependent on the individual. Contrary to expectations, data analysis of Burrell *et al.'s* (2006) research identified a positive and significant relationship ($P < 0.05$) between the impact of moving and the physical wellbeing of USA spouses based in Europe. Additionally, the number of relocations is positively associated with wellbeing and army satisfaction, but the impact of such moves results in a negative relationship with satisfaction. Overall, the impact of relocating is not significantly related to psychological wellbeing or marital satisfaction. Further analysis also showed that living in a foreign residence is negatively associated with both physical and psychological wellbeing (Burrell *et al.*, 2006). It has a negative relationship with army life satisfaction but adjustment to foreign postings has no relationship with marital satisfaction.

Investigating the occurrence of seasonal affective disorder (S. A. D), Rosen & Moghadam (1991) reported that subjects living in Germany retrospectively stated having experienced significantly more symptoms associated with winter S. A. D. than those living in Texas or California ($P < 0.001$). More wives located in Germany report feeling worse in winter (47%), compared with California (24%) and Texas (34%). Additionally, of the sample of wives in Germany, 65% reported feeling less energetic, 49% socialized less and 62% reported sleeping more during the winter months, all significantly higher percentages than those reported by wives in California and Texas ($P < 0.001$).

Fernandez-Pol (1988a) believe that some spouses may have under-reported symptoms that they felt to be socially objectionable. Likewise, the importance of not appearing weak was reported in Jervis's (2009) research, which implies that distress is experienced but born in stoic silence. Jervis felt that such unprocessed post-relocation distress potentially undermines the spouses' wellbeing.

Spouses' ethnicity, accumulation of stress due to current and previously unresolved family life changes, and deployment categories of service personnel have also been seen as factors infringing on spouses' wellbeing (Lavee *et al.*, 1985; McNulty, 2003). Manning and DeRouin (1981) also discovered that employment of spouses whilst in Germany enhanced their coping skills, thus improving their adaptability and conferring greater satisfaction with life, marriage and the army.

The presence or absence of children in a family also predisposes families to varying levels of coping, and post-arrival strains (McCubbin & Lavee, 1986).

Support

Community based facilities combined with social support were seen to have a definite role in assisting families to become accustomed to their new surroundings (Lakhani *et al.*, 1985; Lavee *et al.*, 1985). Likewise, these authors also reported that intra-family support systems and friendship networks play key buffering roles. Not only do these make postings more positive experiences, they confer a greater perception of coherence and control, allowing families to become more flexible and able to adjust. Likewise, Lavee

et al. (1985) determined that the external environment (social support) has a greater impact on families' experiences than their own internal resources.

The Social Support Index was used by McNulty (2003), who recorded a difference in support ($P = 0.02$) over a six month assessment period, which suggests that social support decreases in families who have experienced previous foreign postings. Manning and DeRouin (1981) identified via interviews the importance of employment in the development of social support networks by enhancing self-confidence and building friendships. Amongst working wives, "friend" was the third most popular choice of support, whereas it was sixth among unemployed wives. However, these authors also reported that some spouses found it unwise to develop friendships because they would be temporary and could actually cause conflict. Additionally, these authors reported that wives could sometimes be isolated from their traditional support systems of other spouses if their husbands wanted to distance themselves from their work when off-duty.

DISCUSSION

Discussion of reviewed studies

The discussion of results will be structured around the three objectives addressed in this review. When necessary military and non-military spouses will be referred to together as "trailing spouses", an expression applied to mobile spouses who frequently relocate due to their husbands/wives' employment (Keenan, 2006).

Potential emotional and psychological impact of relocation overseas on military spouses

The stress related with being a military spouse is well documented (Lavee *et al.*, 1985; Fernandez-Pol, 1988a; McNulty, 2003; Jervis, 2009). While there is much acceptance of their role, there is limited research examining the impact of relocation on accompanying military spouses in overseas postings. Only three of the studies included in the review were completed in the last ten years (McNulty, 2003; Burrell *et al.*, 2006; Jervis, 2009). This suggests there is limited contemporary evidence on the effect of international relocations on military spouses.

The findings of this review indicate that military spouses can experience additional stressors on overseas postings with potential detrimental effects on their wellbeing (Lavee *et al.*, 1985; McCubbin & Lavee, 1986; Fernandez-Pol, 1988a; Lakhani, 1994; McNulty, 2003; Jervis, 2009). Ethnic background, previous experiences and individuals' aptitude to change are examples of diversity amongst such military spouses, and these highlight the important relationship between individual circumstances and spouses' perceptions of foreign postings. Thus, the permutations of personal beliefs and situations prevent the amking of any generalized statement about the impact of a specific relocation.

The findings of this review indicate that spousal satisfaction on overseas postings is influenced by the quality of

employment in conjunction with family life (Manning & DeRouin, 1981; Lakhani, 1994). The subsequent repercussions on a spouse's wellbeing (Bowen, 1987) and on military retention (Lakhani *et al.*, 1985) emphasize the relationships between military spouses' fulfillment with military life, satisfaction with their own employment and impact on the serving members' employers. These factors create a symbiotic association between spouses' contentment and an efficient military organization.

The wellbeing of spouses is also a fundamental area of research within the non-military environment, which demonstrates that these experiences can be replicated and supported by military spouses' counterparts (Gullotta & Donohue, 1983; Puskar, 1990; Wiggins-Frame & Shehan, 1994). As already discussed, retention within the armed forces has been seen as a reflection on spouses' satisfaction with the military (Lakhani *et al.*, 1985; Bowen, 1987). Similarly, within a multinational company (MNC) global assignments are seen as the pinnacle for career growth and international success (Caligiuri *et al.*, 1998), but again are dependent on the spouses' adjustment. Therefore, trailing spouses have an influential role in their husbands/wives' affiliated work.

Certain internationally relocated women were identified in Puskar's (1990) study to be at risk of developing emotional distress. Additionally, Brett's (1982) reported in her review of published reports that such wives are also expected to have lower self-concepts and poorer physical and mental health (Weissman & Paykel, 1972; Seidenberg, 1973). Brett's study ultimately refuted this claim as she found no significant association between mobility and wellbeing in her work, except with respect to social relationships. Regardless of their merit, these conflicting studies draw attention to the varying psychological impact on spouses' wellbeing following international relocations. The reported findings suggest that whether research is associated with the military or other organizations, individualism of spouses and specific locations can influence the overall experience.

On completion of the review, the theme of "loss" was identified as having significant associations between military spouses and their satisfaction with life on overseas postings. This conclusion was primarily reported in the findings of Jervis's (2009) thesis, but reference was also made within the background discussion of McNulty's (2003) study. There are two forms of such loss: namely internal loss – loss of identity, role, and autonomy; and external loss – loss of familiar environment, a job, family and friends. Jervis's study differentiates this loss as having a pivotal role in a spouse's health. Therefore, arguably, if such losses are inappropriately rectified, spouses could experience long-term adverse effects on their wellbeing.

Despite being reported in only one military study (Jervis, 2009), the theme of loss is a key concept within the non-military research field (Makowsky *et al.*, 1988; De Verthelyi, 1995). As in Jervis's work, loss is manifested not just via the internal factors of identity or autonomy, but also through unfamiliarity of environment and culture. Specifically, work investigating international students' spouses as sojourners (Schwartz & Kahne, 1993; De Verthelyi, 1995) depicted their loss of professional identity as distressing and endemic to

their lack of purposeful activity. In addition, they may have atypical experiences related to being wholly dependent on others. Furthermore, spouses' (who generally are the wives) perceived lack of control in decision making impacts on their sense of importance, yet despite this exclusion they are still then expected to be accountable for incorporating the resultant changes into their families' lives (Makowsky *et al.*, 1988; Copeland & Norell, 2002). Hence, both military and non-military life can potentially erode another layer of a spouse's autonomy and magnify the psychological losses already felt. Consequently, the non-military research supports the argument that military spouses endure losses Jervis's (2009). Furthermore, role theory is a perspective in social psychology which considers socially defined categories (e.g. mother, wife) of an individual to encapsulate specific norms or behaviors (Biddle, 1979). It considers most of everyday activity to be living up to the roles, or expectations, of others. Thus, military and non-military spouses experience the "loss" of such roles and must redefine their way of life.

Overall, the research indicates that foreign postings can have negative influences on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of military spouses. Nonetheless, these depend on individuals' characteristics and their personal circumstances and are not general reactions for all. However, the potential demands on health professionals both during postings and on return must be noted.

Coping strategies used by spouses when relocated overseas

The ability of spouses to adapt has been shown to depend not only on the presence of children, but also on the deployment status of service members during postings (McCubbin & Lavee, 1986; McNulty, 2003). The findings of our review indicate that the structures of family units have significant impacts on spouses' abilities to cope with certain situations. Potentially, it could be inferred that non-military spouse parents are compelled to adjust unconditionally in order to gain control when there are dependents in a family. However, it can also be argued that the presence of children can contribute additional stressors beyond the capability of parents.

McNulty's work (2003) examined the phenomenon of service members' deployment positions during foreign postings. From her work, we learned that this additional variable infringes on spouses' posting experiences although it is normally only associated with residing in a domestic location. Overall, temporary separations from service members and the presence or absence of children during foreign postings again draws attention to the diversity of circumstances influencing overseas adaption. This diversity appears to orientate around the family status and the individual's ability to either continue as normal or have the ability to become accustomed to the new situation.

Similar to the psychological impact of relocation, coping strategies are a very personal response. Puskar (1990) investigated the coping behaviors of trailing spouses on international relocations. She reported that wives of corporate employees, as with their counterparts in the military, are not only believed to be exposed to additional stressors, but are

also seen to play pivotal roles in influencing families' adaption. This judgment was also extended into clergy families (Mace & Mace, 1980), where spouses too experience the added pressure of playing essential parts in their husbands' careers, but are expected to represent model wives and mothers and maintain the appearance of a problem-free lives. These findings concur with previous military research (McCubbin & Lavee, 1986; McNulty, 2003) and it can be argued that additional roles and expectations of all trailing spouses could escalate the perceived pressure felt by wives to become quickly accustomed to their new surroundings. This pressing need to adapt to the new location could result in the wive feigning happiness to comfort immediate family, again demonstrating the concept of stoicism (Fernandez-Pol, 1988a; Sluzki, 1992; Jervis, 2009).

The use of unsuitable coping strategies is an element incorporated within the Double ABCX theory of stress and family adaption (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983), a framework previously integrated into military and non-military research (Lavee *et al.*, 1985; McCubbin & Lavee, 1986; Wiggins-Frame & Shehan, 1994; Caligiuri *et al.*, 1998). In this review, the crisis event is defined as relocating overseas, and spouses' apathetic adaptations could be seen as maladaptive responses within the model, resulting in continued imbalances between demands and their capability for meeting them. Additionally, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) believe that stress and coping are dependent on each individual, and their chosen response to a situation. This relationship is also a framework for the welfare of military wives during foreign relocations. The manner by which these individuals cope with the demands of relocation will clearly define how they feel emotionally. Again, any suppositions about a trailing spouse's ability to cope in varying circumstances cannot be generally applied.

Finally, within this review military spouses' ability to cope has also been seen to impact on decisions to extend overseas tours and on retention in the services (Lakhani *et al.*, 1985; Bowen, 1987). A similar reciprocal relationship has been identified as existing between expatriates and their spouses in non-military research, thereby positively or negatively influencing coping and cross-cultural adaption (Caligiuri *et al.*, 1998; Takeuchi *et al.*, 2002). The critical role of spouses' adjustment on international relocations has been recognized in non-military research as a principal consideration when married expatriates are chosen for overseas assignments (Makowsky *et al.*, 1988; Takeuchi *et al.*, 2002). Such considerations could determine the appropriateness of foreign postings for some spouses, and potentially prevent detrimental relocations, not only for the wellbeing of spouses but for the efficiency of the company/military service. Consequently, health professionals would have a better awareness of spouses' circumstances and be able to provide appropriate health care support.

Emotional and social support used by spouses when living in foreign communities

Mediation of support, predisposed ability to adjust to changing circumstances and stoicism are factors identified in this review that alter spouses' ability to adapt. Hence, there are a variety of resources that enable families to become accustomed to new environments. Social support plays an important role alongside the families' own sources. However, whether spouses are open to such support remains questionable. Jervis (2009) has argued that such circumstances can enforce false relationships. Not everyone will fully accept traditional support networks provided by other spouses because of their temporary and rather superficial nature. Social exchange theory defines such social behavior as the result of an exchange process in which benefits are maximized and "costs" minimized (Homans, 1958). When considering military spouses, decisions to avoid spousal/friendship support networks are caused by perceptions that the risks outweigh the rewards, hence these relationships are abandoned.

According to Sluzki (1992, p360), the contribution of social support networks is to "define one's social niche and [to] contribute substantially to one's own recognition of personhood". This implies not only that social networks contribute to an individual's sense of identity, but they are a continual resource for comfort. For all trailing spouses such networks are constantly being restructured and this can contribute to an added sense of isolation (Bikos *et al.*, 2009). Military and non-military research highlights the necessity of finding and belonging to a social support network to aid adjustment to a new environment (Lavee *et al.*, 1985; Puskar, 1990; Schwartz & Kahne, 1993; Arnault, 2002; Copeland & Norell, 2002; Jervis, 2009). Bikos *et al.*, (2009) investigated such usage of support mechanisms and comprehensively demonstrated the significance of active support networks for spouses' adjustment.

Spouses are also seen to represent the prevailing pillars in families' support networks, and are habitually expected to become sources of emotional and social support, and to assume responsibility for re-establishing families in the community (Sluzki, 1992; Wiggins-Frame & Shehan, 1994). Previously, other family members and friends fulfilled this role; however, working spouses are seen as the initial main sources of support to their accompanying partners (Copeland & Norell, 2002). This scenario of reliance on domestic support structures can place uncharacteristic stress on a marriage (Bikos *et al.*, 2009), conversely Copeland and Norell (2002) argue that it can actually provide the opportunity for a positive bonding experience. Such experiences were described by corporate spouses in De Cieri *et al.*'s (1991) research as creating more cohesive families in which spouses relied on each other rather than those "outside". The contribution of this added dimension of support clearly would be diverse, reflecting varied satisfaction with marriage and family unity by trailing spouses, but reliance purely on internal family factors could lead to an isolation of experiences and sever chances of forming proactive support networks.

Support, whether desired or used by trailing spouses, again is an individual matter. De Verthelyi (1995) remarks that the assorted range of responses to potential support indicate a predominance of personal variables over situational factors, and according to this review, this quality is very apparent in military and non-military spouses.

The need for further research

Research incorporating the opinions of British military spouses is very limited. To date only one piece of research, by Jervis (2009), investigates spouses' experiences of British military relocations. Additionally, the specific effects of geographic locations of postings on the overall impact on military spouses has not been considered. Rosen & Moghadam's (1991) work focused on the occurrence of S. A. D. symptoms in specific locations but did not investigate the spouses' experiences any further. Therefore, research specifically incorporating qualitative methods, focusing on the experiences of military spouses from all services, would help clarify the impact of foreign postings. In order to establish all aspects of military spouses' experience overseas, one further recommendation for research would be to consider how spouses contemplate the thought of leaving foreign postings to return to their usual residences or a domestic locations.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent that military spouses are subject to many stressors that civilian spouses may not experience. However, while such lifestyles may be acceptable, relocations to overseas postings do incorporate further demands. How these experiences impact emotionally and psychologically appears to be very dependent on individual circumstances. Likewise, mechanisms of adjusting to a new environment reflect individual characteristics of the people involved. Ultimately, the level of support from within families or externally from communities has varied outcomes. Hence, further research to improve awareness of the entire experiences of military spouses on overseas postings is necessary to enable health professionals, such as nurses, general practitioners or psychiatrists, to identify potential areas of anxiety and to instigate appropriate mechanisms for support.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Study Design: GB, HS, CH and MCC
Data Collection and Analysis: GB and HS
Manuscript Writing: GB, HS, CH and MCC

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