

WAR BRIDES: A PRACTICE-BASED EXAMINATION OF TRANSLATING
WOMEN'S VOICES INTO TEXTILE ART

by

WENDY DAVIS BECCUE-BARNES

M.A., Kansas State University, 2004

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Apparel, Textiles, and Interior Design
College of Human Ecology

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

Research about military wives has been limited. In academia, most research centers on the soldier and/or the family as a unit. When literature does address only the wife's perspective it rarely presents a positive portrayal of her life. However, it is not just literature that shows a gap in exposing the voice of the military wife. Art-based works rarely focus on her perspective; and methodologies, such as practice-based research, rarely utilize actual voices as inspiration. The aim of the current study was to discover the voice of the military wife, examine it through a feminist lens, and then translate those voices into artwork that represented the collective, lived experience of the women interviewed. Three methodologies were utilized to analyze and translate the voices of military wives into textile art. These three methodologies: practice-based research, phenomenology, and feminist inquiry provided a suitable structure for shaping the study to fulfill the project aim. Interviews conducted with 22 military wives revealed two overarching themes: militarization and marriage; as well as multiple subthemes. Three subthemes were recognized as being the most prominent: relationships, separation, and collective experience. These themes were used as the inspiration for the creation and installation of three textile art pieces. The current study serves to fill the gaps in both the literature and the artistic process by presenting both the positive and negative aspects of the military wife's lived experience and using that lived experience as inspiration for textile art.

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Abstract

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I love you both with all my heart.

Dedication

To Mom and Grandma

You both taught me to be strong, fierce, independent and unafraid to pursue my dreams.

I love and miss you.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

As a military wife, I have struggled for many years with the standards of the military and the struggles my family has encountered due to the culture of my husband's job. I have met a multitude of other wives and listened to their stories, frustrations, fears, as well as their emotional highs and lows. They have heard mine as well. As insiders in a male-centered culture, I have found many of our experiences to be shared, and not surprisingly, our emotions as well. While wives talk among themselves, their voices are silent in the community as a whole. What I have found throughout my years in both the military and academic communities is that the central focus, on the part of the government and within academic research, is on improving the soldier's overall experience and/or gaining a deeper understanding of how to meet the soldier's individual needs. Not only is the soldier the central focus, he is often the only focus. When he is not the sole subject of research, the family is included, but tangentially. Wives, however, especially in the pages of governmental and academic literature, within the context of their own lives, are simply silent and/or silenced.

The silence of these women is a loss to both the military and the communities which surround military bases because military wives have a wide range of experiences to share with others, especially in regards to the lives they lead as wives of U.S. soldiers. Not only are they being ignored as wives, their own value as women with voices needing to be heard is downplayed and devalued as their lives are placed on the back burner of research. Their input in military, academic, and community matters possesses the potential of improving a soldier and his family's quality of life since they are generally the ones maintaining the household and holding the family together during both peace and war. However, in order for their input to be recognized, their voices must first be honored and heard.

Role of the Military Wife

As far as the military is concerned, wives have always presented them with a bit of a dilemma. On one hand, they have functioned as cheap or free labor for the troops in times of war and peace (Alt, 2006; Baker, 2008; Enloe, 1983, 2000; Harrison &

Laliberté, 1997; Lehr, 1999), but on the other they present special challenges to the military institution, especially in regards to how much control and influence they will allow the military to have in their lives. This has been a primary concern for military officials since the early 1800s, because wives have always had considerable influence upon the soldiers, especially in regards to morale and retention (Alt, 2006; Baker, 2008; Grace & Steiner, 1978; Rosen & Durand, 2000). Given this conflict, the military has worked diligently at socializing wives so as to “further some of the military’s own goals” (Enloe, 1983, p. 48), with one of those goals being their continued silence about the institution’s mission and way of life (Lehr, 1999).

Silence of Women

There is an unspoken understanding among military wives that to speak out in the military community presents an element of risk to not only their husbands, but to themselves as well. Houppert (2003) claimed that many women felt “in this world, silence can equal self-preservation” (p. 14). The reality of it is, even now, that this is still true. Many wives with whom I have been acquainted over the years, myself, and even some with whom I conducted interviews, acknowledge the danger in speaking out. My husband has been scolded in the past for my willingness to object to his command when I feel they were being unreasonable or unfair; in one instance, he was actually told to “control your wife.” When a wife speaks out, she puts her husband at risk. The sanctions he may suffer due to her willingness to be vocal will usually be subtle; later hours than usual, extra duty, early calls for P.T. (see Appendix A), but the message is loud and clear—don’t make waves, be quiet or else.

Many of these women maintain their silence for other reasons, one of which is loyalty to the military institution. They feel that speaking out against their husband’s unit is a betrayal to him and shows a lack of support for his job, and as a soldier’s wife, who is essentially “married to the military” by right of her own marriage this is equivalent to betraying their husband. Others refuse to speak out because, as one wife stated, “there’s nothing you can do about it, you can’t change it...you can complain until you are blue in the face and maybe something will happen, but what are you gonna do?” (Jennifer). This sense of helplessness stems from a lack of control, leaving wives to believe that speaking

out won't get them anywhere. These feelings are reinforced by many of the "how-to" guides and etiquette books published for military wives encouraging them to maintain their silence since "[they] will not win the disagreement, no matter how right [they] may be or how many supporters [they] have" (Crossley & Keller, 1993, p. 368). Given this lack of control over their own lives it is no wonder many wives choose to remain silent about how they feel regarding the military lifestyle.

However, not all women choose to remain silent, but rather find their voice starts to emerge over the course of their husband's career. Lehr (1999), in her study of military wives, found that women are more willing to speak out now that they are becoming more independent. Factors such as outside employment, influence over their husband's career path, and the advent of technology have all provided them with avenues of expression and new ways to gain support or boost their self-esteem. My own interviews supported much of this research, as I found the wives with whom I spoke to be more vocal than others I have encountered in the past, an indicator that we, as military wives, are becoming less entrenched in the foxholes of military imposed silence.

Personal Perspective

Throughout my husband's 21-year career I have been one of those women who went from being afraid to speak to being unafraid, especially when I felt we were being dealt an unfair hand. As a young military wife, it was easy to become intimidated by the pomp and circumstance of the military institution. Intent upon following the rules or even trying to understand them often created a sense of conflict in me as I tried to deal with the new lifestyle I found myself living and many times trying valiantly to change. My initial response was to complain to my husband about the things I saw that were wrong; however, all that did was cause tension in our marriage and create a gulf in our communication pattern; as a result, I stopped complaining.

My silence, as it is with many military wives, was self-imposed. It existed because my marriage was more important to me than were his late nights, weekends spent working, prolonged absences, early morning phone calls into work, as well as our constantly cancelled plans, unexpected moves, and my own understanding that I had no control over my own life. However, over the years, I have chosen to break those silences

and have elected to speak out to both my husband and his command when I feel the need is warranted, usually to no avail as he is helpless to change the military structure and complaints to his command mainly fall on deaf ears. However, what has developed as a result is my desire to throw off the veil of secrecy surrounding my life as a military wife in less conventional means.

Because words are often unable to convey the messages we want to be sent, I have turned to art as a means of expressing both the joys and dissatisfactions of being a part of the military institution. Through textile art and visual journaling I have been able to deal with not only my husband's deployments, but discover areas of my life in the military that have brought me satisfaction. This mode of self-expression served as the inspiration for this study since I thought it might be possible to express the voices of other wives in the same manner.

Positionality

My own status had a profound effect on how I approached this project. When I began this study my intent was to examine how military wives achieved a sense of independence and/or autonomy within the structure of the military framework and then interpret the results into an exhibit of textile art. This concept was borne out of my own frustrations with military life and the struggles I have undergone in order to feel a sense of autonomy from the Army. On some level, I felt that other wives must be going through the same struggles and share my feelings about the military and the desire to be independent of its overarching influence in our lives. In fact, once I began my research I found the women's stories, while different than my own in many respects – especially in regards to autonomy, were also eerily similar. We were all sharing experiences, emotions, and thoughts that we believed civilian wives did not generally encounter. Seeing these similarities amongst myself and the other wives, I changed my project aim. I realized that maybe what I needed to focus on was what we all, as military wives, had in common with each other, instead of focusing on what was wrong with our lives.

Once I recognized, and acknowledged, my bias towards the military and the bias that was built in to the questions I was initially asking the women, I was better able to monitor myself throughout the rest of the process and ask questions that became more

conversational and contained less of an embedded search for the answers I wanted to hear. As a result, I found my study to be much richer than I had originally envisioned. Replete with stories that represented not just the bad parts of life, but the good as well, the research reflected a well-rounded image of a wife's experience. By engaging in reflexive practice about my roles of military wife, feminist, and artist I was better able to understand how these could impact interaction with my participants, as well as the outcome of the study.

Military Wife

Because of the struggles I have encountered as a military wife, I am often blind to the positive side of being married to a soldier. One result of this has been a desire to separate myself from the military institution in as many ways as I possibly felt I could without impacting my husband in a negative manner. This drive has pushed me to pursue an education, forge bonds with civilians rather than members of the military, live and shop off-post, and rarely engage in military-sponsored activities other than the ones my husband is required to attend.

The separation I worked to establish always made me see myself as "distant" from or "different" than other military wives; as a result, I viewed myself as an "outsider" to my own study as it began. However, as I started the search for participants and began engaging directly with the women who agreed to be interviewed, I found they viewed me as one of them. Thinking about this later, I oftentimes found their view of me to be surprising since I entered into the process feeling as if I were not a member of the group.

Despite their acceptance of me as an insider, I was always navigating the researcher/researched relationship with the women, something which set me apart from them and placed me in a position of power. Due to this, I was careful to monitor how I spoke to wives who were less educated than I or whose husbands held a lower rank than my own. When interacting with wives whom I knew, I had to maintain a sense of distance from them in order to conduct my interviews in an academic manner and not allow myself to engage in a friend-like conversation about the military or common acquaintances.

While this often presented itself as challenging, I was able to be a military wife conducting research, rather than just a military wife holding a conversation with another wife. My understanding of the lifestyle provided me with an inroad into the intricacies of these women's lives, which served to ease the interviews into a more conversational mode rather than a stilted back and forth between participant and researcher. However, my dedication to academia provided me with the ability to remain constantly aware of subjectivity, both my own and that of my participants, especially in regards to the impact the military has on our lives.

Feminist

As a feminist I am interested in making women's lives better; as such, I deplore institutions that serve to oppress women and silence their voices. I believe quite strongly that many of the government's policies serve to make women's lives more difficult and keep them in a place of subservience. I am also staunchly opposed to the war our country has been a part of for the last 9 years. However, it is important to also realize that not all women are feminists and many, especially within the military community, are supportive of our government and the war. During the course of my research I found this to be a struggle, since I often disagreed with the political and/or social views many of my participants expressed. While I sometimes felt that many of the thoughts they shared were uneducated and solely supported by FOX news, I was also forced to recognize that my education as a feminist has provided me with a different perspective. I recognized that many of these women may or may not have had a similar education or experience with feminism and forced myself to realize that even if I did not agree with their thoughts on the subject or felt that they were being reductive, it was necessary to step back and accept their opinions as their own.

Artist

While my role as a feminist often felt problematic during the course of my research, my position as artist was one of the most difficult to overcome as it possessed the most potential to make my participants subjects rather than voices. Because I was selecting which data to interpret into visual art, it was solely up to me to determine those words that I found to be "inspirational." As such, the danger existed of bias entering into

the study and warping the presentation. To manage this issue, I carefully coded my data until specific themes began to emerge. From there I sorted those themes even further into sub-themes and looked at the data in a categorical manner, rather than in an individual manner. I was trying to create pieces that were representative of all the women's voices combined, in order to present a collective voice. I felt it was crucial that I not pull only two or three voices I found to be the most intriguing; but rather, consider all the women's voices and their stories as interwoven tales. In approaching the data this way I was able to keep the women's voices central and create a series of textile art pieces from this mosaic of life experiences that was not merely reflective of my own artistic preferences.

Project Aim and Objectives

My project was focused on listening to, and honoring, the voice of the military wife. As an artist I have become intrigued with finding other ways, in addition to scholarly publications, to disseminate women's stories. Since art functions as a way to represent reality, I chose to listen to the stories of military wives, and interpret their voices through an exhibit of mixed-media textile art, all while tracking, monitoring, documenting and recording my personal position and process as a means of understanding why certain themes were selected and how I felt those themes could best be portrayed from conception to completion. The exhibit revealed a bit of these women's lives and gave viewers a glimpse into not just the participants emotions and experiences as military wives, but my own as well. Most importantly, it conveyed the similarities of our lives and the collective voice of the military wife.

Aim

The aim of my project was threefold. I worked to not only discover the voice of the military wife and examine it through a feminist lens, but to also translate that voice into artwork that represented the collective, lived experience of the women with whom I spoke.

Objectives

The aims were accomplished by meeting the following objectives:

1. Conducted oral interviews with military wives.

2. Analyzed data collected during interviews using a feminist approach, which both acknowledged my subjectivity and made their voices central.
3. Analyzed data collected during interviews for relevant themes and inspiration for designs.
4. Translated themes into textile art pieces.
5. Exhibited finished artwork in the Manhattan Arts Center.

Gap in the Field

Research about military wives has been limited. In academia, most research centers on the soldier and/or the family as a unit. While some research does address only the military wife and present information from her perspective, it rarely presents a positive portrayal of her life. Non-academic literature, on the other hand, offers a different perspective. Much of this literature presents either the positive side of military life or functions as a how-to for the military wife.

However, it is not just literature that fails to expose the voice of the military wife. Art-based works rarely focus on her perspective; and methodologies, such as practice-based research, rarely utilize actual voices as inspiration. Typically practice-based research focuses on how to go about creating a product. While some of it does include the use of qualitative methods as groundwork for the design process, the majority of it centers on studio-based projects.

The current study works at filling the gaps in both the literature and the artistic process by presenting both sides of the military wife's experience and using that lived experience as inspiration for textile art.

Military

Academic Literature

Current and past academic literature, both feminist and non-feminist, rarely presents the military wife's voice as a study's central focus. Those that do, generally offer a limited perspective of her life. The majority of studies focusing exclusively on the life

experience of military wives are subject-specific and typically conducted in the fields of Family Studies, Psychology, Economics, or military funded inquiries investigating how to improve a soldier's quality of life. These studies have covered topics such as deployment (Davis, Ward, & Storm, 2011; Kennedy, 2006; Kitfield, 2007; Orthner, 2002; Spera, 2009; Wood, Scarville, & Gravino, 1995), employment (Castenda & Harrell, 2008; Cooke & Speirs, 2005; Grossman, 1981; Hayghe, 1986; Hosek, Fair, Asch, Martin, & Mattock, 2002; Lim & Golinelli, 2006; Payne, Warner, & Little, 1992), spousal roles and duties (Durand, 2000, 2006; Harrell, 2001), support networks (Klein, Tatone, & Lindsay, 1989; Rosen & Moghadam, 1989); ethnicity and its effects on coping (Westhuis, Fafara, & Oullette, 2006), and trauma due to spousal Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Nelson & Wright, 1996). While these types of studies are valuable, especially given they provide useful information for professionals and military officials that can be used to improve the wife's living situation, they are limited in scope and only reveal one area of her experience as a wife.

Feminist research has also only shown a limited perspective on the lived experience of the military wife. Topics covered include militarization and its impact on the wife (Enloe, 1983, 2000; Riennerth, 1978), gender norms and the patriarchal nature of the military (Halfacree, 1995; Harrison & Laliberte, 1997), wives' perceptions of feminism (Dobrofsky & Batterson, 1977), as well as several general overviews of lived experience as a military wife (Lehr, 1999; Stone & Alt, 1990). These studies also perform a valuable function as they provide a feminist perspective of the military wife's life; however, they often solely focus on the darker side of her life and exclude the positive ones.

Non-academic literature

Non-academic literature, or that which is widely published and available for mass consumption, presents a different image of the military wife's life experience. Unlike the typically negative tone of academic literature, most of these publications present either a positive image of military life and stress the importance of the institution within the wife's life (Baker, 2008; Biank, 2006; Shea, 1954; Vandesteeg, 2005) or serve as how-to/etiquette guides (Cline, 2003; Crossley & Keller, 1993; Hightower & Scherer, 2007; Leyva, 2003; McGrath, 2008; Vandevoorde, 2006). While these publications are useful to

wives as reference books, since they do provide valuable information about many logistical aspects of military life, they too present a one-sided perspective of the wife's experience as their general take on military life is quite positive. However, there are also a few publications that present the darker side of military life (Alt, 2006; Harrell, 2000; Houppert, 2005; Mock, 2007) and provide a different perspective. Yet again, we are presented with a one-sided tone that does not shed an accurate light on the full experience of the wife's life.

The current study works at filling these gaps. Presenting a two-sided perspective, by discussing and considering the dark and light aspects of being married to a U. S. soldier helps flesh out the academic literature. I was especially concerned with adding to the body of feminist literature on military wives because, as a feminist and military wife myself, I feel it is important to show how wives are able to develop a positive relationship with the military institution and even make it work to their benefit.

Artistic

Practice-based

Practice-based research, especially in the field of Apparel and Textiles or Art has mainly focused on the technical (Ames, 2008; Berzina, 2004; Pengelly, 1997) or creative aspects of the design process (Pedgley, 1999). Rarely do these studies incorporate lived experience as a means of inspiration or attempt to develop another person's perspective into an actual artifact. A further gap in this area exists in the fact that the majority of practice-based research in academia is practiced outside of the United States. Centered mainly in Australia and the U.K., practice-based research is a fairly young academic methodology and its emergence into American academia has been a slow and gradual process. As such, my study serves as one of the few practice-based dissertations in the United States, and as the first in my department and college.

Introduction to Methodology

Given the nature of my study, I chose to use three methodologies in my approach to analyzing and translating the voices of military wives into textile art. These three methodologies: phenomenology, feminist inquiry, and practice-based research, all

provided me with a suitable structure for shaping my study in the most appropriate way possible in order to fulfill my project aim and objectives.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology, according to Patton (2002), is a way of “exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (p. 104); furthermore, it also centralizes an individual’s perception and sense of their lived experience as it stands outside of themselves (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005). The central theme that can be drawn from both of these descriptions is that phenomenology focuses on an individual’s lived experience and looks at how these experiences are shaped, expanded, and shared by both internal and external factors. In adopting the phenomenological perspective, a researcher, either through participant-observation, in-depth interviews or a combination of both, is able to interpret and analyze the forged connection between her participants and the world-at-large. Because the researcher is central to the course of the study, it is important she not only see the connection between her participants and the outside world, but to also see that forged connection as inextricably intertwined with her own knowledge base and life experience. Harding (1987) believed a researcher needs to be seen throughout the course of her research as a visible person with her own history and lived experience; especially given that the researcher’s status as a living, feeling being has an inevitable impact on the research study (Stanley & Wise, 1991).

Feminist Inquiry

Feminist inquiry seeks to illuminate how women are treated in light of the social construction of gender by examining the ways in which they are stereotyped, oppressed, or otherwise treated by society (Harding, 1987; Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004; McHugh & Cosgrove, 1998). In order to accomplish these goals, researchers keep women as the central focus of the study. Research is conducted for women and works to empower them by bringing issues that impact women’s lived experience to light in both the academic and public arenas. By presenting their research in this manner, they are able to “publicize the voices...”(Hesse-Biber, 2010; p. 145) of women who may not otherwise be heard. The potential to create change for women and other oppressed groups in society

is a central aim in feminist inquiry (Hesse-Biber et al, 2004; Hesse-Biber, 2010). Because it is research for women, it is necessary for the researcher to consider her participants as active members of the research process (Patton, 2002). However, she must also examine her own positionality by remaining reflexive throughout the course of the research process, so as to recognize the power relationships in effect during the course of the research project.

Practice-Based Research.

Practice-based research as defined by Leavy (2009) is:

A set of methodological tools used by qualitative researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation. These emerging tools adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address social research questions in holistic and engaged ways in which theory and practice are intertwined. (p. 2-3).

Furthermore, it requires strict standards that include a well-researched framework, thorough documentation, some sort of written format, and extensive practice of an artist's skill resulting in an artifact for display (Bird, 2000). By adopting and adhering to these standards scholars are able to produce a true practice-based project that results in the production of not just an original artifact, but a written exegesis as well (Biggs, 2000). Because my project consisted of in-depth research, which resulted in the production of artwork and a written dissertation, the use of practice-based research was a necessary methodology.

Overview of Following Chapters

Chapter two discusses the literature about military wives and presents an overview of studies conducted concerning their thoughts and opinions about being married to a U.S. soldier. In chapter 3, the reader is provided with an overview of the methodologies utilized during the course of research, as well as an explanation of the population, sampling strategy, interview process, data analysis, and formation of themes used in the textile pieces. Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the interviews and the themes used as inspiration for the textile art. Chapter 5 describes the technical process of creating each piece of textile art and explains how these pieces connected to the themes

that emerged during the course of data analysis. It goes on to further discuss the decisions made regarding materials and techniques so as to maintain the centrality of the women's voices in the design process. Chapter 6 describes the installation process for the exhibit and the exhibit itself. I provide insight into why the pieces were placed in a certain manner and share how this placement was a response to the data. Finally, chapter 7 concludes the study with a summary, limitations and recommendations, and the ways in which the current study serves to fill the gaps in academic literature, as well as the field of Apparel and Textiles, and finally future work.

Chapter 2 - Contextual Review

Military Wives

The role of the military wife in contemporary society has changed drastically over the years; her requisite silence, however, has not. Emerging from the historical role of cook, laborer, and sexual companion to that of the more contemporary helpmeet, emotional companion, and life partner the life of today's military wife is complex and, at times, overwhelming. Faced with impending deployments, finding employment, acting as a single parent, and dealing with the military institution can be exhausting; however, it has its rewards as well. This group of women have the proud right to say their husbands represent an elite group of men within the United States that are willing to put their lives on the line. However, given the focus on the soldier in academic literature not much has been said about the military wife.

Though there is a plethora of current popular literature, handbooks, and how-to guides on being a military wife that places it in a positive light, academia remains generally negative and/or silent. The majority of literature about the military comes from the areas of Family Studies, Counseling, Psychology, and Sociology, with the bulk of that literature being either about the soldier or the military family as a collective. However, when publications about military wives and their lives do enter the annals of academic literature, especially feminist literature, it often critiques their lives and paints a picture that is more grim than happy.

Because it is rare to find work that focuses solely on the military wife and produces a venue in which her voice might be heard in a complex way, the current study was conducted; it provided wives with a place to make their voices heard in academic literature as women who find both light and darkness in the lives they lead as soldier spouses. Following is a review of literature regarding specific aspects of a military wife's role as the spouse of a U.S. soldier. I begin by discussing the concept of militarization and how that affects the life of a military wife, then go on to give a brief historical overview of the wife's role in the military. The final section of the review provides a more in-depth look at the following areas: model behavior; deployment/separations;

employment; support networks; and socializing. These areas provided the context from which the study emerged and from which the interview questions were drafted (See Appendix G).

Militarization

As an institution, the military works on some level to successfully militarize those with whom it comes in contact, this being especially true of soldiers and their spouses. According to Rienerth (1978) the military presents itself as an “isolated community” (p. 174) that works to keep its soldiers and their families separated from the civilian community. She also states that this mindset changed over time as it became impractical due to the changing nature of society-at-large and its intermingling with the military community because of military growth, civilian employment by the military, background changes in military members and their spouses, lack of true social stratification within society, and the gradual separation of military families from the enclaves of the military base. She believes that all of these changes warrant a less isolated culture. However, other researchers feel that the military’s impact on both society and the lives of its service members and their families has not drastically changed, but has become more pronounced, since it is an institution that requires a certain level of dedication on both the macro and micro level, which ultimately results in a sense of militarization.

Cynthia Enloe (1983) defines militarization as a process with both material and ideological dimensions, both of which must be present in order for the military to “camouflage women’s service...as women’s *liberation*” (p. 6). In a material sense, militarization attempts to position itself in the civilian world, which serves to further entrench it ideologically in the communities which support it. Therefore, once the general populace accepts the military’s role in its overall societal structure and becomes dependent upon its services to eradicate or solve “civil problems,” such as the National Guard’s recent role in 9/11 and the control of potential civil unrest following Hurricane Katrina, the militarization process is complete. Furthermore, its presence is not questioned, but readily accepted as a normal part of life; something which is also evidenced in the role civilian or Department of Defense (DOD) workers play in the day-to-day functioning of the military community.

Enloe (1983) further contends that we might be able to gain a greater understanding of the modern military by examining not only how militarism works in peacetime societies, but how it affects women's lives, both directly and indirectly. Doing so provides us with a way to truly understand how the military works to absorb military wives into its culture and keep them in a holding pattern of "camp-follower" and not as a valuable contributor to the functioning of the military.

Women and the military

The military has always possessed a female contingent; my use of the word "possessed" is an intentional one as the military has traditionally kept women among the ranks as a way to both control its soldiers and achieve its goals (Enloe, 1983; Lehr, 1999). Historically, women have functioned in military camps as wives, nurses, prostitutes, laundresses, cooks, and general "camp followers"¹ (Alt, 2006; Enloe, 1983; Lehr, 1999). Their presence was only seen as marginally necessary and easily eliminated from service if they became a distraction from the unit's mission. Despite their disposable nature, women were viewed as necessary, since they were able to perform duties (cooking, laundry, cleaning) deemed unimportant to the combat mission and would cost the military money if they were to hire a male (Enloe, 1983). As a result, wives became more valuable as they proved capable of adapting to constant change, which served to increase the soldier's morale because of their willingness to adjust and accept life in a time of war.

¹ Camp followers were women, some of whom were wives of lower ranking soldiers, and others who only provided services to the military. Whether those services were in the form of physical labor or physical affection did not matter to the commanders. As long as these women remained marginal players who fulfilled duties and functions the military itself did not want to bother with the women were kept among the ranks (Enloe, 1983); however, once they were seen as a burden or construed as troublesome they were pushed out of the military enclave. Removing them from the ranks was not difficult as these women were already viewed as "rootless, promiscuous, parasitic,...and commonly equated with whore. The very fact that she was a woman who allegedly *chose* [emphasis author's] to make her life among "rough" men was presumed proof enough of her loose character (Enloe, p. 2).

Though they exhibited a willingness to accept the military as part of their lives and support its overall mission; the wives confounded military leaders since they were unsure as to how they might continue to maintain control over a population that was not truly under their direct command. While women in the 17th and 18th centuries were subject to punishment, as the years progressed this early control the military maintained over its marginal forces began to diminish. Many women began to seek employment outside of the home, refused to volunteer their services, and asserted their individual rights, all of which led to the military losing control over a group it had traditionally held onto as unpaid reserve labor and morale boosters for the men in its employ (Enloe, 1983). As a result, military commanders had to approach the problem from a different direction and find a way to make marriage and women serve the military in a manner suitable not just to itself, but to the soldiers and their wives as well (Enloe, 2000). Military officials began making official statements regarding the status of the wife as being “de-institutionalized” (Lehr, 1999, p. 122) on a federal level. Unfortunately, for an institution as structured and inherently patriarchal as the military, this task often proved to be more difficult in practice than in theory, as many individual commanders resisted this change and refused to change their demands.

While the military attempted to make itself more family friendly, new challenges presented themselves. Commanders no longer had to worry about women and children being a drain on mobility and resources in the field (Enloe, 2000), they instead had to worry about women becoming a demand on the soldier’s time, something which, even today, is still a concern for military brass (Kitfield, 2007). However, what remained, and according to Alt (2006) still remains paramount to the military wife’s life is the knowledge that the military is the central figure in her husband’s life and the mission takes precedence over the family’s needs.

Military Wives

Both different from, and similar to civilian wives, military wives comprise a special group of women. Like civilian wives, they are faced with the normal challenges and constraints of married life: expectations regarding children, housekeeping, sexual willingness and fidelity, financial well-being, social class, geographical mobility and

willingness to function as her husband's helpmeet, despite her own successes (Enloe, 2000). However, they also encounter a different set of expectations and social norms not traditionally assigned to civilian wives. A woman who marries a soldier finds herself suddenly attached to a government institution of which she is considered a part whether or not she agrees to actively participate; her consent is assumed once she marries a soldier. Overall, she is expected to support both her husband and the military's mission at all times, even if she does not accept that mission (Houppert, 2003). Her unspoken compliance with military protocol (Cline, 2006; Leyva, 2003), willing acceptance that her "job" is to make her husband's life as comfortable as possible (Cline, 2006) and silent acceptance of her role (Houppert, 2005) all serve to further her implicit incorporation and compliance with the institution (Enloe, 1983, 2000). However, if she should choose to break the silence long held by military wives who have elected to quietly abide by the role established for them (Lehr, 1999) she risks hurting both her husband's career and her own social standing (Houppert, 2003, 2006; Biank, 2006).

Model behavior

Enloe's (1983, 2000) assertion that military wives are socialized according to the military's needs may be found in numerous military publications, brochures, and handbooks written by "senior" wives. These rules of behavior help younger, newer wives enter the realm of the military world with a guide as to what is considered acceptable behavior. Some model behaviors Enloe (2000) and others (Alt, 2006; Biank, 2006; Harrison & Laliberté, 1997; Hightower & Scherer, 2007; Houppert, 2003) present are ones that I have encountered, either directly or indirectly, throughout my husband's career: a sense of pride in my country because my husband is a soldier; the recognition that his job is first and foremost—even to the detriment of our relationship; physical restrictions on our sex life, as well as emotional boundaries we both put up prior to him leaving for an extended period of time; an unduly number of rules and restrictions, especially on-post, and the acceptance that those restrictions are a "normal" part of life; the willing acceptance of single parenthood and household head because the military needs my husband more than I; an ability to relinquish any newfound freedom back to my husband upon his return; a sense of understanding that the moods he may suffer from are directly related to his "high-stress occupation" (Enloe, 2000, p. 163), so therefore, I

must accept those moods as a normal part of our lifecycle; the understanding that friendships with other wives may be affected by rank; a willingness to participate in unit functions; and an acceptance that my political beliefs should be restricted to voting every four years. While this list is by no means all-inclusive, it is an accurate reflection of how a military wife is expected to behave.

These behavioral expectations are also expressed verbally by other wives (Biank, 2006; Houppert 2003, 2005). Oftentimes, when a wife is perceived to be outside of the box and not engaging in model behavior, subtle, and not so subtle, messages are relayed (Houppert, 2005) to the offending wife that she may be compromising her husband's career by behaving in a manner inconsistent with the institution's organizational expectations (Cline, 2003; Enloe, 1983). Behavioral norms, however, are somewhat easy for the military to enforce in spouses since they are subject to the institution's influence through their living situations, especially if they reside on a military base. Many wives find it easier to comply, since it opens up opportunities for them (Cline, 2005; Leyva, 2003) when they move to a new duty station and have difficulty finding a job or find themselves alone due to a lengthy separation from their spouse.

Deployments and separations

One of the main struggles military wives face is how to sustain a marriage in the face of long-term separation. Unlike most civilian marriages in which the husband and wife maintain a sense of routine togetherness, military marriages are not given the same freedom of choice. Their lives are fraught with multiple emotional farewells due to frequent changes in deployment dates, uncertain reunions, and the ever-present knowledge the whole cycle is bound to begin all over again (Durand, 2006), add children into the equation and the couple's stress level increases exponentially.

There are two types of separation involved in a military marriage – first is standard separation related to field exercises, schooling, or other training exercises and deployments (Wiens & Boss, 2006). Standard separations, while stress-inducing are typically easier on a couple due to the fact their date of departure and return are fairly solid. On the other hand, the second type, deployments, are generally the hardest separations for military couples. The sense of uncertainty surrounding the soldier's imminent departure date causes quite a bit of anxiety and stress in a relationship,

especially given that deployments can last anywhere from a few weeks to over a year (Wiens & Boss, 2006). According to Faber, Willerton, Clymer, MacDermid, and Weiss (2008), stress and emotional levels increase if the deployment is war-related because of the added uncertainty as to whether or not the soldier will return unharmed or even alive. True-life accounts of military wives (Alt, 2006; Biank, 2006; Gross, 2010; Houppert, 2006; Mock, 2007) as well as numerous advice books published in the last few years (Cline, 2003; Leyva, 2003; Vandevoorde, 2006) corroborate the research surrounding deployment and separation, emphasizing the stress encountered by these separations in regards to both departure and reunion.

The time leading up to a soldier's departure involves an alteration in the day-to-day running of the household. Wiens and Boss (2006) discuss the sense of emotional and mental separation experienced by both the wife and her spouse. Their research reveals many spouses feel their partners are "mentally and emotionally disconnected months before [leaving]" (p. 31). Kitfield (2007) found spouses were even seeking marriage counseling to deal with the often voluntary nature of their spouse's upcoming deployment. The respondents in Houppert's (2006) study express similar sentiments and also worry about the effect the separation can have on their relationship: "People change over time [...] When they're away from each other for a year, you're talking about major changes in people's thoughts, routines, personalities, friends. And those kinds of changes can cause friction" (p. 76). Besides being concerned about the deployment's potential impact on their relationships, wives were also concerned with their own emotions surrounding the deployment and how they would be able to deal with it emotionally. Davis, West, and Storm (2011) report many wives felt a sense of loss, powerlessness, and silencing, both self-imposed and imposed by others—especially members of the civilian community. However, while these concerns are all quite valid, none of them even begin to approach the fear and uncertainty surrounding whether or not the spouse will actually return unharmed or even alive. Having endured numerous deployments and other separations throughout my husband's career, I have found my own experience to be similar to those of the wives previously studied. All of these concerns are paramount as my husband prepares to leave for an extended period of time, and unfortunately, these

worries begin to enter a wife's mind long before the soldier leaves, adding to an already stressful period in both of their lives.

Pre-separation is not the only time stress enters into the relationship; reunions also create a sense of stress. Though the soldier's return is a happy time, it also possesses its own set of problems. Factors such as the degree of trauma experienced by the soldier (Goff, Crow, Reisbig, & Hamilton, 2007), the impending change in roles and responsibilities in the household (Faber et al., 2008), and uncertainty about life changes experienced by both the spouse and the soldier (Faber et al., 2008; Vandevoorde, 2006) while he is gone can create apprehension. Many emotions begin to surface in the home as redefinition is taking place. Wood, Scarville, and Gravino (1995) place anger and resentment at the top of the list, while Vandevoorde (2006) emphasizes a wife's sense of frustration at feeling unappreciated by her husband. This is a common feeling among spouses of returning soldiers, no matter the length of separation (Alt, 2006; Biank, 2006; Houppert, 2005; Vandesteeg, 2005).

Military separations, whether due to a long-term deployment or a short-term school assignment, create stress on the military wife since she is suddenly thrust into a new role in the household. This newfound independence is not one she has sought, but rather is one placed upon her by the military (Houppert, 2005). Expected to maintain the household (Alt, 2006; Biank, 2006; Burrell, Adams, Durand, & Castro, 2006; Cline, 2003; Houppert, 2005; Leyva, 2003; Vandesteeg, 2005; Vandevoorde, 2006) and develop a sense of resiliency that will help her partner focus and complete his mission without having to worry about what is happening at home (Kennedy, 2006) the military wife finds herself battered by conflicting messages. On one hand she is being encouraged to break out and become independent (Houppert, 2005), but on the other she is constantly told by the institution that her "job" is to remain strong for her husband and not let any of her stress impact his morale (Cline, 2003; Houppert, 2005; Leyva, 2003; Vandevoorde, 2006; Wood et al., 1995). Wives are given a laundry list of dos and don'ts to maintaining themselves during separations: "[make] sure [your] husband hears only happy voices and news during phone calls and in e-mails" (Houppert, 2005, p. 145), "avoid comparing home front life to combat or training missions" (Vandevoorde, 2006, p. 43), and perhaps the most common, "get involved with your command family support unit" (Leyva, 2003,

p. 160). These directives, while seemingly helpful tips, most often serve to widen the gulf between couples since they do not allow for open communication and actually serve to keep the wife under control so as not to negatively influence the military's overall mission (Enloe, 1983).

Leyva (2003), as well as Davis, West, and Storm (2011) report that many military wives look forward to deployments since it gives them time to pursue independent activities. Oftentimes, these independent activities are more civilian-related, especially if the wife has left the enclave of the "military family" during separation (Houppert, 2005), something which is discouraged as it removes them from others who are encountering many of the same emotions and experiences. However, the opportunity to step outside of the highly structured environment in which she spends her days provides women with a vision of how life could be if the military were not the overseer of her husband's career (Houppert, 2005). It is often during this time that the conflict with the military becomes exacerbated, since the wife is struggling to maintain a sense of separateness from an institution built on patriarchal norms, hierarchal schemes, and absolute control. As a result, women often find themselves unsure as to how they might maintain a handle on their newfound independence when their husbands return home because they are not willing to "turn back the clock in their relationship" (Enloe, 2000, p. 172) with either their spouse or the military.

Employment

When soldiers deploy, many wives find themselves with extra hours, especially if the couple has no children. While some throw all of their extra time and attention into the house, the children, or the unit support group, others look outside of the military community and find employment (Biank, 2006). The jobs they take are typically lower-level jobs that pay less than what a civilian wife might expect (Castaneda & Harrell, 2008; Payne, Warner, & Little, 1992) with no real opportunity for advancement. However, due to the transient nature of their husband's career, not taking jobs such as these could cause them to miss out on the opportunity to work. Studies, such as those conducted by Grossman (1981) and Hayghe (1986), indicated that military wives in the workforce had higher rates of unemployment and were less likely than civilian wives to actually participate in the workforce due to their frequent moves, reduced job

opportunities at the new duty station, lengthy separations, and the expectations placed upon them by their husband's unit to participate in volunteer activities.

The pressure to volunteer time is a reality in the military wife's life. She is often expected to help out by donating goods when they are requested; making signs for returning soldiers; helping to plan, organize, and execute unit functions; or even volunteering in other areas on post, such as the thrift store or youth center. This custom of unpaid labor has been a part of the military institution since female camp followers trailed military units and provided services for nothing more than a bite to eat and a place to sleep (Alt, 2006; Enloe, 1983, 2000). Women are acutely aware, either through the wife of their husband's commander or through the husband himself, how potentially important their unpaid hours are to his forward progress through the military hierarchy (Grossman, 1981). While the impact on a soldier's career is not as powerful today as it was when Grossman examined the status of military wives' employment, the unspoken expectation to participate still exists (Houppert, 2005) and the umbrella of disapproval still reaches over both the soldier and the spouse if the wife is not seen as doing her part for unit morale.

Despite the disapproval they face, and the possible repercussions their husbands might face for their lack of participation, many women refuse to "work" for free. Grossman (1981) found military wives with an education less willing to volunteer their time since it was unpaid versus working for pay. However, findings from a study conducted by Castaneda and Harrell (2008) indicated women are not just looking for financial gain, but also seek outside employment as a means of achieving "personal fulfillment and independence" (403); their desire to move outside of the military family is often a response to the pressures placed on their time and resources, as well as an encroachment on their desire to keep their private lives separate from the military (Houppert, 2005).

The military, faced with these rogue wives, developed a solution to the struggles wives faced finding outside employment – The Military Spouse Preference Program. The role of this program is to provide preferential access for military spouses to federal jobs whenever they relocate to a new duty (Cooke & Speirs, 2005). By giving spouses first pick of jobs at their new home, the military is, once again, able to reestablish a sense of

control over the wife who wants to “jump outside the military system and [...free themselves from...] the military requirements that control their lives (Lehr, 1999, p. 129), it is, in essence, a means of bringing the focus back on the importance of the mission and away from the needs of the individual (Enloe, 1983).

Support networks

The military, however, cannot openly state it does not care for the individual; therefore, it is in a double bind. On one hand it wants to maintain a modicum of control over the wives of soldiers, but on the other, it realizes the danger in making that control obvious. Therefore, in order to solve its problem and portray an attitude of “family first” (Houppert, 2005) it had to come up with a way to satisfy spouses. The formation of military sanctioned support groups serves as the solution to this problem. Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) (Appendix A) are perhaps one of the quietest means of spousal maintenance and support in the military’s possession. Formed as a means of information dissemination (Alt, 2006; Cline, 20003; Houppert, 2005; Vandesteeg, 2005; Vandevoorde, 2006), counseling support (Leyva, 2003), and distraction from the realities of deployment and separation (Houppert, 2005; Leyva, 2003; Vandesteeg, 2005; Vandevoorde, 2006), these organizations offer military wives a means of meeting other women who experience life in much the same way as they do. When women accept these support groups as their sole means of information and networking, they assist the military in maintaining her “membership in a powerful institution” (Enloe, 1986, p. 47) that regards itself as a member of the family (Enloe, 2000); thereby allowing it access to all areas of her life. However, many wives feel that FRGs provide them with a way to fill their time when their spouse is away, develop a sense of belonging, and access important information and/or advice about the unit they may not have procured otherwise (Cline, 2003; Crossley & Keller, 1993), as well as provide them with practical help or advice (Vandesteeg, 2005), especially as it relates to the family automobile and/or house.

Socializing

Though socializing with other wives is wholeheartedly encouraged by the military institution, definite lines of demarcation are drawn between the ranks. As an hierarchical institution, the military has distinct rank classifications, while wives are not officially

classified by their husband's status, the unofficial understanding is that the wives married to Officers (O1-O10) and Warrant Officers (W1-W4) are higher than those married to NCOs, or Senior Enlisted, (E5-E9), and they in turn, are higher in status than the wives of Junior Enlisted (E1-E4) soldiers (Appendix A) (Biank, 2006; Harrell, 2000; Houppert, 2005). Harrell (2000) believes the official distinctions between ranks, residence patterns, allotments, and the military's strict rules regarding fraternization between officers and enlisted serve to create class distinctions within the ranks of military wives.

The pressure to conform is continually reinforced among the wives. Though they socialize on a formal level, friendships are not openly encouraged between wives whose husbands hold disparately different ranks. The unique set of challenges and difficulties each group of wives face only serves to exacerbate problems with socializing outside of unit-sponsored activities. Harrell (2000) reports that junior enlisted wives are often saddled with unfair stereotypes which imply they are "young, immature, 'big-haired trailer park babes with too many children' who do not know how to manage their money" (p.12). NCO wives are typically viewed as counselors to these younger women, whether or not they are qualified to handle a crisis situation (Durand, 2000; Houppert, 2005); however, at the same time, they are also advised not to associate with lower ranking wives (Rosen & Moghadam, 1989) on a social level outside of military functions. Officer's wives also face the same challenge. They are expected to not only mentor enlisted wives (Enloe, 2000), host numerous social functions (Durand, 2000; Harrell, 2001), but to also represent their husband by portraying the image of the model military wife at all times (Harrell, 2001).

Given these different pressures and class distinctions many wives elect to form support networks, friendships, and community contacts within the surrounding civilian community (Houppert, 2005). These wives again present a problem for the institution as they are stepping outside of the closely confined "military world" (Enloe, 1983) and entering into the more open civilian world. Their desire to seek support outside of the FRG often creates consternation since it serves to blur the clearly established lines drawn between "us and them" (Enloe, 1983, 2000) that the military depends on for adherence to structure and mission completion. However, it is often these civilian ties that allow a wife

to find a sense of independence separate from the patriarchal structure she encounters within the military enclave.

Current Study

The current study's aim to provide a voice to military wives is well suited to feminist research. My interest in listening to women's stories and using them as inspiration for artwork is a technique few feminist researchers have used to examine the lives of military wives. Furthermore, there is a distinct gap in the academic literature regarding military wives, as well as an absence of their voice in academia. By providing this population with a voice, my research intends to create an opportunity for activists, researchers, and the general populace to catch a glimpse into a world they may have previously viewed as closed, uncomfortable, or just difficult to understand.

Chapter Summary

Though the role of the military wife has experienced numerous changes over the course of the years, they still face many challenges as they attempt to navigate their way through the military lifestyle. There is a dearth of academic literature about the military spouse, as most of it focuses on soldiers or the family unit; however, much of what is written about military wives often presents a negative view of the lifestyle. Popular literature, on the other hand, presents a different perspective, as its goal is generally to provide a self-help for military wives. While both of these perspectives are valid, there is a lack of literature that presents both sides of the military world. Feminist authors, such as Enloe (1983), Lehr (1999), and Reinert (1978), point to militarization as a means of absorbing women into the military culture in order to make them more amenable to the lifestyle change they will encounter due to their marriage.

These life changes are central to the military wife's experience and place her in a unique position due to the different expectations and social norms she encounters in contrast to those of a civilian wife. Expected to serve as a representative for not only her husband, but the military as well, the wife is often saddled with certain model behaviors (Alt, 2006; Biank, 2006; Enloe, 2000; Houppert, 2003) she is expected to embody and uphold. Besides these expectations she also has to endure long separations from her spouse. These separations, whether due to school or deployment, cause a disruption in the

household environment and can create emotional tension between the couple (Wiens & Boss, 2006), either pre- or post-separation. The wife also encounters emotional stress of her own as she is expected to maintain the household, finances, and children, all while trying to enjoy her newfound independence and remain strong so her husband can complete his mission without worry.

Besides separations, a military wife is also faced with employment issues. However, finding jobs outside of the military often proves more difficult than not, with most of the available jobs being unskilled and/or low-paying. As a result, many women turn to volunteering their time, which provides them with an outlet for the empty hours they face during separations. Women who refuse to volunteer or just stay home, but who choose to carve a career or education for themselves are often viewed as not supporting the mission of the military as they are stepping outside of the system (Lehr, 1999).

Though the military attempts to keep the focus on the mission they have to recognize the importance of the family, especially during times of war. As a result, FRGs were established as a means of support for soldier's wives and provided ample opportunity for socializing. Wives are encouraged to socialize through the FRG, and as a result, often feel a bit of pressure to conform to the specific expectations of her husband's rank category. Due to the numerous pressures found within the military, other wives choose to socialize within the local community and form their support networks elsewhere.

The current study provides a venue for military wives' voices to develop and be heard. Filling the gap in the literature, I present both the positive and the negative sides of military life in an attempt to provide illumination to others so they might see there are two sides to every story.

Chapter 3 - Theoretical Framework and Methods

As a feminist artist and researcher, my main research focus was women and how their lived experiences might best be translated into artwork. In order to accomplish this objective, it was necessary for me to approach my research from a phenomenological, feminist, practice-based standpoint. While these three methodologies guided how the research was to be formulated and conducted, my own positionality had to be taken into account, especially given my insider status within the community of women I was studying. The combination of these three theoretical perspectives, intertwined with a recognition and clear understanding of my own positionality within all stages of the research, offered me not just a clear theoretical base, but a foundational approach to creating artwork in a manner consistent with academic scholarship that was particularly suited to the aim of my research.

Phenomenology

Schutz (Wagner, 1970) describes “social phenomenology” as a stock of knowledge each individual possesses. This knowledge is composed from the totality of experience a person has within their lifetime and helps one to determine future choices, as well as make sense of past experiences. Patton’s (2002) definition of phenomenology clarifies Schutz’s assertions that experience is based on self-knowledge. Patton described phenomenology as a way of “exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (p. 104). The central theme that can be drawn from both of these descriptions is that phenomenology focuses on an individual’s lived experience and looks at how these experiences are shaped, expanded, and shared by both internal and external factors.

In adopting the phenomenological perspective, a researcher, either through participant-observation, in-depth interviews or a combination of both, is able to interpret and analyze the forged connection between her participants and the world-at-large. Bergum and Godkin (2008) utilized phenomenology in their artistic study of issues in healthcare ethics. Through photography, videos and personal narratives they were able to

create a picture of individual experiences with healthcare ethics, and in doing so, personalized issues that often feel remote to most individuals (Bergum & Godkin, 2008). Studies such as Bergum and Godkin's (both of whom work in the field of healthcare ethics) are examples of a researcher's ability to not only see the connection between her participants and the outside world, but to also see that forged connection as inextricably intertwined with the researcher's own knowledge base and life experience. Harding (1987) discussed the importance of the researcher being visible throughout the research process and appearing "...not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests" (p. 9). Her position is later supported by Stanley and Wise (1991) who felt that the researcher's status as a living, feeling being had an inevitable impact on the research study. Unable to separate from "personhood" the research is duly influenced by the researcher's perceptions and interpretations of the research phenomenon, sometimes resulting in a shift of outcomes (Stanley & Wise, 1991, p. 267).

During the course of my own research, I found that a shift in outcomes was inevitable because a researcher's experience, especially when she has insider status with the population being studied, is influenced by the experience of interaction with her research population. My own outcomes shifted at the start of my research when I began interviewing the participants. Initially, my research question revolved around the idea of autonomy and whether or not it was possible for a military wife to achieve true autonomy when married to "the military." However, as I began interviewing the wives what I found to be more important, and fascinating, was the stories they told about their lives as military wives. As a result, I shifted the focus of my study and decided to honor their voices and experiences, rather than determine whether or not they sought autonomy from the military. The move from one outcome to the other felt more genuine and provided a bigger window for looking into the lives of the women and drawing their experiences into a collective whole.

The focus on the individual and how one creates meaning within her life due to experience was an applicable approach to my study. My research centered on how women experience life when married to a soldier. I examined the ways in which their experiences shaped their perceptions about life in the military and how that influenced

their perspective of life in general. In addition, I examined how their perceptions fit with those of other wives. Being a military wife myself afforded me a shared knowledge base and range of similar experiences from which I was able to draw during the analysis and creation process. Because many of the experiences these women spoke of were typical examples of life in the military, they became representative of the collective; thereby, allowing me to create connections between these individuals that eventually evolved into a collective voice that enabled me to create the artwork.

Attempting to understand and translate the military wife's experiences and the forged bond between the individual and the collective took place through in-depth conversations with these women and a final exhibition of work, which represented my interpretation of their words. My aim was to listen to their experiences and translate them into works of art that were to be shared with a general public, thereby making their experience a collective experience for all who encountered the exhibit, as will be discussed in a later chapter about the installation process.

Feminist Inquiry

Feminist research, given its propensity to focus on women's words and lived experiences, was particularly suited to the current study. Feminist inquiry seeks to illuminate how women are treated in light of the social construction of gender by examining the ways in which they are stereotyped, oppressed, or otherwise treated by society (Harding, 1987, 2004; Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004; McHugh & Cosgrove, 1998). In order to achieve these goals, feminist researchers make women the central focus of their inquiry—from interview to analysis—the research is conducted for women so as to empower them, not just during the research process but beyond it as well by bringing “these issues into [the] academic and public arena [which] helps publicize the voices...”(Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 145).

The research conducted by feminist researchers is research conducted for women. By publicizing their voices and making their stories heard, feminist research has the potential to create change for women and other oppressed groups in society (Hesse-Biber et al., 2004; Hesse-Biber, 2010). Because it is research for women, it constantly considers them by requiring the researcher to regard her participants as active agents in the research

process (Patton, 2002), while also constantly, herself, remaining in a state of reflexivity so as to recognize the power relationships in effect while the research project is being conducted. From topic selection to method selection to means of dissemination feminist researchers must strive to make their findings relatable, realistic, and reflexive, since they are not just academics, but living beings with similar desires and interests as those being researched (Harding, 1987; Hesse-Biber, 2010). By remaining reflexive and constantly considering the scope of their research as it relates to not just their participants, but how their own subjectivity could impact the study, it provides women a place to voice their concerns, beliefs, experiences, attitudes, and desires for change (Hesse-Biber et al., 2004). In conducting a feminist-driven inquiry, the researcher is also recognizing the specific ways that women interact throughout their daily lives. A feminist study will recognize and address voice, emotion, experience, thought (both analytical and non-analytical), reason, and intuition (Patton, 2002). As such, my research required me to step outside of the bounds of traditional hegemonic research methodologies and employ those methodologies that were more conducive to relaying these experiences in a broader context than is traditionally allowed through strict quantitative inquiry.

Overview of Feminist Research

Naples (2003) claims that feminist scholars “are neither immune to internalized oppression nor to the hegemonic constructions of research practice that insist on a distanced and objectifying angle of vision” (p. 197); rather she posits that they rise to face the challenge of identifying and overcoming the power imbalances within their research. Naples (2003) also believes researchers could overcome these challenges if they pay close attention to “our own social locations and remain sensitive to how our interactions in the field shape what we come to understand about social life in particular sites and among different groups” (p. 198). Her statement implies a need to step outside of traditional scientific or social science methodologies and methods in order to consider the feminist researcher’s positioning at all times during the research process as a way to conduct rigorous, valid research. Thus, Naples emphasizes, again, the importance of the feminist researcher recognizing and considering her subjectivity and need to be reflexive when conducting research.

Naples' (2003) standpoint is in direct contrast to traditional scientific research since feminist research is typically conducted on a micro-level, acknowledges subjectivity, uses multiple methods, and has a gender inclusive focus, as opposed to standard research, which has traditionally exhibited a lack of concern regarding the impact gender might have on the results. Feminist research considers the emotions behind experience (Foster, 2007) and recognizes their importance when trying to understand how events affect individuals on a personal level.

The focus on the micro rather than the macro allows feminist researchers the ability to reach a deeper connection with their participants. Instead of looking at a wide audience, feminist research envisions a smaller consortium of participants, all of whom offer a distinct point of view based on their lived experience. By demanding its audience to stop and consider women's lived experience feminist research brings attention to women and other minorities often silenced through male-dominated research studies (Sprague & Kobryniewicz, 2004). This distinctive positioning within the research world requires the researcher to examine herself in relation to race, class, gender, age, culture, and other characteristics (Harding, 1987); as such, feminist researchers must continually examine and assess their own biases, feelings, and thoughts on the topic being studied. All of these features are what make feminist methodology unique in terms of examining "...feminist consciousness...designed to benefit women" (McHugh & Cosgrove, 1998, p. 39).

Another key feature of feminist research is the benefit women derive from it being conducted. This is partially due to the acknowledgment of subjectivity that is included within feminist research methods. Women's experience differs based upon factors such as race, culture, class, and other power relationships. Therefore, if researchers were to look at women from only one perspective, they would be discounting other important demographics and factors that formulate experience (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). These other elements all insert a broader dynamic of understanding in the course of feminist research and analysis.

Another feature of feminist research is its gender-inclusive focus. Unlike traditional research, which has typically included men as the target population and largely ignored female populations as research subjects/participants, feminist research places

emphasis on issues relevant to women and tests male-centered hypotheses by bringing light to women's experiences (Harding, 1987). In doing so, women not only allow their participants to share their experience, the researchers themselves also embark upon that journey and engage with the experience of being a woman as well. Part of the experience is recognizing and acknowledging her own position as a researcher; thereby requiring her to examine and reflect upon her own biases and status.

Positionality and Reflexivity

The study's aim of providing a voice to military wives was well suited to feminist research. The final exhibit brought awareness of these women's lived experience to the local or regional population, by showing slices of their lives through textile art. However, research, whether qualitative or quantitative, is highly subjective, and depends upon the researcher also being able to examine her own biases and positioning in light of what the data reveal. In the event a researcher is unable to properly distance herself, especially if she holds an insider status such as I did, there is a danger of personal bias coloring the results and important questions being left unasked (Merton, 1972; Weiss, 1994). While these concerns are valid, it is up to the individual researcher to recognize these issues prior to entering into the research setting; therefore, careful self-monitoring is necessary for any researcher conducting qualitative research (Weiss, 1994). Given these parameters, I found the need to constantly monitor myself as I designed the study, conducted the interviews, and created the artwork.

As a 43-year old, educated, white woman who is a mother, military wife, feminist, and artist, I held multiple statuses in relation to my participants. My main similarity—military wife—with these women afforded me an insider status that allowed for a certain amount of ease in the course of the interviews. For example, my familiarity with military terminology kept the interviews going at a steady pace, since there was rarely a point at which clarification was needed when acronyms were used. My insider status also enabled me to create a bridge with these women, despite our differences. However, it was precisely the differences that required careful monitoring and reflexivity on my part.

My husband, an E-7 (Sergeant First Class), has been in the military for 20 years; as a result we have lived in various places due to his job as a Military Policeman. Our son

was raised as a "military brat"(see Appendix A) until we moved to our current duty station where we have been for the past 9 years. We have struggled through three long-term deployments: Bosnia and Iraq (twice), as well as a year-long separation when he was stationed in Korea. Since some of my experiences (mother, multiple duty stations) differed from that of other wives I had to carefully monitor my thinking and not impose my experience on the lives of these women. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) stress the importance of the researcher being able to critically scrutinize her own positioning in relation to the entire process. As such, I had to constantly gauge my reactions as I heard these women's stories and not expect their experience to fully reflect my own.

My education and feminist perspective also required constant monitoring. When I originally designed my study it was with the intention of examining how military wives achieve autonomy in their lives, despite the constant presence of the military. This question derived from my own experience as an educated feminist who has continually worked against being absorbed by the military. However, I found as research began that I was working from a biased perspective and expected my participants to share my beliefs. I was often shocked when the first few participants extolled the virtues of the military and even expressed a lack of desire for autonomy. These responses required me to look at my study from a different perspective, and recognize the fact that I was placing my own biases central and ignoring the importance of these women's words. A result of this reflection was a change in my direction of inquiry. Because of these women's words I began to see the military in a new light and recognize that not everyone struggles to break free of the "bonds" placed on them by living within the structure of the military institution. Once I had this breakthrough the course of my study began to feel more natural as I focused not on critiquing their lifestyle, but rather examining their experiences in that lifestyle.

I mention my biography as it was important in the formulation of my research and my interactions with the participants. My various statuses as well as political, religious, and social views, factored into all areas of the research process, from formulation of my topic to the finished art/written project. As a result, I, as the artist, functioned as a conduit for the women's voices and in the process added my own. Because, ultimately, I was working to create works of art from the women's words, my experience as a researcher

was inextricably connected to theirs, and my dual connection as a woman and a military wife forged an even stronger connection with my participants.

Women's Voices

Women's voices have traditionally been silenced not just in research, but in life as well. By recognizing and giving voice to women, and other marginalized groups, feminist researchers emphasize the idea of lived experience as an integral part of research and analysis. Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002) claim social research, such as that used by feminists, strives to connect people's ideas, experience, and realities (both materially and socially). The connection of these facets provides the researcher with a deeper look into how participants navigate their own reality. Basing research on experience, however, poses its own set of risks since not all women experience events the same (DeVault, 2004). For example, within my research I expected to find that military wives respond differently to deployment and separation. While this often proved to be the case, many women also found these experiences had a similar effect upon their relationships. Initially, I thought that though these women, in essence, are going through the same experience, each of them would probably have a different set of ideas, realities, and experiences related to the separation from her soldier spouse, I found that the circumstances, and often the emotions they encountered, were quite similar to those of the other wives. While these differences in experience may have appeared as detrimental to the research process, they actually provided a broader perspective on the same issues. Past studies using lived experience as the launching point for creative endeavors (Foster, 2007; Fulmer, 2008) have shown it is possible to present an expansive worldview of women's experience using creative means as the point of entry. Both studies, one of which resulted in a series of narrative portraits based upon interviews about homelessness (Fulmer, 2008), created work that reflected a diversity of responses, but came together as a collective whole.

Translating Words and Voices into Art

The very nature of analysis within feminist research calls for creativity. Feminists have responded to women's lives in a creative manner by looking at and creating artwork, developing and analyzing aesthetics, and debunking myths surrounding women

(Freedman, 2002). Works about women have investigated not only the women themselves, but their surrounding environs and influences; by “turning inward to women’s spaces but outward to public audiences, feminist artists paralleled the explorations of the mother tongue in language”(Freedman, 2002, p. 320). These artistic endeavors have led researchers in an exploration of finding lost works, exploring and explaining aesthetics from a feminist perspective, and debunking myths about women and female artists (Freedman, 2002).

One of the difficulties I anticipated in regards to the process of creating artwork from my data analysis centered around the dilemma of how to make the sure the data was able to speak in the collective voices of the women interviewed as filtered and interpreted by my own voice as the artist and researcher. I anticipated that my insider status would allow me to draw strong parallels with these women since many of my experiences would parallel those of the participants, but I also believed the powerful force of language would enable me to see and express the multiple ways in which military wives are able to “... skillfully and creatively” [present their stories and make their voices heard - despite the overreaching arm of the military institution and other]... “processes of social control...”(Devault, 2004, p. 246) they might encounter in their daily lives. Their willingness to open up and reveal their lives to me—as both researcher and fellow military wife—enabled me to reflect their voices in a way that honored not just their words, but our collective experience as women and military wives. As such, I was able to move into the process of practice-based research in a seemingly smooth manner and interpret their words in a way that kept their central concerns as wives at the forefront of the research.

Practice-Based Research

My fascination with practice-based research, the process of “developing and making creative work as an explicit and intentional method for specific research purposes” (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 104), emerged in the Fall of 2007 when I was taking a surface design course with Dr. Sherry Haar. It was during this class I first began to examine the possibilities of connecting research with artwork and creating work that was both meaningful and beautiful. I began by exploring my feelings regarding my husband’s

third deployment to Iraq; this exploration resulted in the production of two pieces, generally titled, ‘War Brides’: a wall hanging (see Figure 3.1) and a wedding gown (see Figure 3.2); as well as a written report discussing the process. The production of these pieces showed me how to integrate design and research as a means of personal expression, as well as serve as the initial inspiration for the current study.



Figure 3.1 “*Je vous aimerai jusqu'à notre mort*” (*I will love you until we die*)



Figure 3.2 “*Je vous promets mon amour*” (*To you I pledge my love*)

During this initial foray into practice-based research I also became acquainted with new techniques such as salt-dyeing, machine lace construction, screen-printing, and appliqué work, some of which are skills I continued to develop during the course of my dissertation. Practice is essential to any artist as it is our means of expression and serves as a way of thinking through a problem and arriving at a solution. I found this to be particularly true during the creation of these two pieces as I scrutinized my life in order to learn more about myself as both a woman and as an artist. As an emerging branch of qualitative inquiry, practice-based research was particularly suited to my study.

Because my initial experience with this method was so positive, I became enamored with the idea of developing my dissertation as a practice-based project.

Research (Barfield & Quinn, 2004; Biggs, 2009; Gothe, 2002; Gray & Malins, 2004; Saorsa, 2004; Scrivener, 2002; Scrivener & Chapman, 2004) indicated that this was not a commonly used method in the United States, but had a bit of an established foothold overseas. Over the last thirty years, practice has begun to move out of the studio and into the world of academia (Leavy, 2009). Considered both emergent and interdisciplinary, practice or arts-based research developed as a way for U.K. and Australian artists in the 1980s to disseminate their creative research and have it recognized for tenure/promotion purposes (Biggs, 2000). Since then, numerous schools throughout the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand have adopted protocols for determining what qualifies as a well-researched, vigorous, practice-based research project. The standards include not just a well-researched contextual framework, but any practice-based research project should also include thorough documentation, be presented in a written format, and involve extensive practice of the artist's skills (Bird, 2000). By adopting and adhering to these standards scholars are able to produce a true practice-based project that fits the definition presented by Biggs (2000): "Practice-based projects are those which include as an integral part the production of an original artifact in addition to...the production of a written thesis" (p.2). Because my project consisted of in-depth research, which resulted in the production of artwork and a written dissertation, the use of practice-based research was a necessary methodology.

Support for my use of this methodology was further grounded in Leavy's discussion regarding arts-based research. Leavy (2009) defined practice (or arts)-based research as:

A set of methodological tools used by qualitative researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation. These emerging tools adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address social research questions in holistic and engaged ways in which theory and practice are intertwined. (p. 2-3)

Leavy's definition became crystallized for me a year after I created the "War Brides" pieces. As a student in Dr. Haar's design research course, I was given the opportunity to further explore the connections between art and written research. It was at this juncture I began to think about feminism and art as areas I wanted to further pursue

in my scholarship. My research for the course project centered on domestic violence; more specifically, it focused on the women who had survived abuse or actually lost their lives as a result of abuse. As my design ideas developed, I moved beyond the literature, and into a conceptual place that guided me to the creation of the final project, a dress titled, “Shattered Armour” (Barnes & Haar, 2010) (Figure 3.3 & Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.3 “Shattered Armour” (Front view)



Figure 3.4 “Shattered Armour” (Back/side view)

Completely immersing myself in the creation of “Shattered Armour” served not only to enhance the skill set I already possessed but it provided me with new ways of looking at feminism and women. I realized during the creation of this dress that women’s voices can be relayed in ways other than writing, and that I wished to continue this mode of creation and dissemination. This experience also further illuminated the connection

between art and women's issues and the ways in which art can work as a mode of social/political expression.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of my project and its feminist focus, a practice-based methodology was particularly appropriate since it aided me in formulating textile art that exemplified both a social standpoint and an artistic context. This methodology also allowed me to examine theory from a new perspective as I approached it from a creative, rather than an empirical, direction. However, unlike the prior two pieces, in which I simply explored practice-based research as a way of gaining new knowledge and enhancing my skill set, the current study forced me to take my past experience with practice-based research a step further by actually analyzing the process of creation in relation to the central theme and the pieces created. The completion of practice resulted in not just an enhanced skill set, but new ways of knowing and doing – both of which are essential to any studio artist possessing a desire to undertake research that is considered academically rigorous.

The artist must always remain aware of their work and continually examine it for ways to enhance or improve the message a particular piece of artwork is meant to send. However, it is also necessary for outside eyes, namely those of the artist's mentor, to assess the art and determine if it has met the objectives or aims of the initial project focus.

Mentor/Artist Critique

In order to determine whether or not the project had a) met its specified aim of representing the voice of the military wife by responding to the themes which emerged during data collection, and b) been completed with proper vigor, a reflective critique by the mentor and the artist was necessary. In order to fulfill this portion of my research, I met with Dr. Haar on a weekly basis as I worked full-time in the studio. During the course of our meetings we would discuss potential design ideas, the pieces I was working on, and how well these ideas were representing the themes found during the initial analysis stages. Later in the design process, Dr. Haar would meet with me at my studio and assess the pieces as they were being created. Her comments helped ensure the work was meeting Cooper's (as cited in Gray & Malins, 2004) four basic requirements for proper academic, practice-based research:

Rigour – looks at how thoroughly the project is completed, its use of methods, whether or not it utilized critical thinking in its construction, and the level of depth displaying in the work,

Revelation – focuses on how the work will be disseminated beyond the confines of the artist studio, what contributions to knowledge it has to offer, and how to make it available for public consumption,

Relevance – examines the ways in which the work provides a contribution to the discipline, society, and educational research, and

Return – asks what type of feedback can be expected from the dissemination of this product.

While the standards established by Cooper were helpful in providing both myself and Dr. Haar with a means of analyzing the artwork during the creation process, Leavy's (2009) suggestion that practice-based research be evaluated in the context of the following questions: "How does the work make one feel? What does the work evoke or provoke? What does the work reveal?" (p. 17) was also used as a guiding principle. These questions, in conjunction with Cooper's requirements, along with the written portion of the study helped determine my study's suitability as doctoral-level work. Furthermore, these critiques afforded me the opportunity to see the pieces from another perspective and take under consideration comments regarding how they might be altered or improved, sometimes incorporating them and other times not. This process of analysis and critique helped me develop my design process and continually maintain the connection between the themes which emerged during research and the textile art as it was being created.

My participation in this portion of analysis was not only important for feedback purposes, but it also helped me engage in the process of reflexivity. Patton (2002) describes reflexivity as an emphasis on "the importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one's perspective" (p. 299). Acknowledging my own place in the study and how my experience related to the women interviewed was important in presenting a true assessment of not only the participant's words, but the collective experience shared among all of the military wives in the study—myself included.

Installation

Once the artwork was completed it went on exhibit at the Manhattan Arts Center for public viewing from April 16-May 26, 2011. A private reception the night before the official opening was held for the wives who were interviewed. Unfortunately, many of them were otherwise committed or had moved, so there were not many of them present. However, placing the artwork in a public location did permit dialogue to occur and increased awareness about the military wife's role in society. Dialogue was recorded by viewers in a journal placed by the entry/exit doors. Comments were written in the book by many viewers, some of which were the military wives I interviewed, as well as others who heard of the exhibit from representatives at the local military installation.

Qualitative Research Methods

Neither phenomenological nor feminist nor practice-based methodologies focus on one specific set of methods; instead, all three utilize the method that will ensure the richest results. Because lived experience is prevalent within these three perspectives, qualitative methods are often a natural choice for many researchers interested in looking at women's lived experience (DeVault, 1999; Kus, 2006; Naples, 2003; Reinharz, 1992; Wylie, 2006). It is the focus on human perspective and experience (Patton, 2002), as well as the ability to work within many fields and disciplines that continue to make qualitative methods particularly conducive to research being conducted in the aforementioned methodologies. Since qualitative researchers are often concerned with social issues and gaining a deeper understanding of how social rules are negotiated within society, they have a tendency to focus on research in context by examining how their target population lives, as well as examining how their own perspective influences the outcomes of the study (Esterberg, 2002). In approaching research from this perspective, they are able to gain a greater understanding of the populations they are studying and focus on lived experience, a technique which many feminist researchers use as a means of gaining a deeper understanding of issues particular to gender norms and women's lives.

Qualitative methods were particularly suited to my study as I was interested in examining women's lives in context and looking at how they view their experience as military wives. My own experience as a military wife was also figured into the research,

as it had an influence upon all aspects of research, especially the methods I chose to employ as I began collecting data, analyzing it, and sorting it for relevant themes. However, my own perspective emerged during the actual creation of the exhibit pieces, since they were the tangible artifacts of how I interpreted the women's words and placed them within the realm of my experience as a wife and artist.

Participants

My sample population was drawn from a midsize, Midwestern Army base whose overall population is 42,264, with 22,389 of those individuals being active duty soldiers and their family members (Pike, 2011). Housing one of the military's largest divisions, this particular location was chosen because of: a) its potential to provide me with a rich sample population, b) the high number of deployments it projects each year (see Appendix A), and c) its close proximity to my home. Initially, I envisioned conducting interviews at three or four military installations in different regions of the United States believing this strategy would provide the richest amount of data; however, I found the single military installation to be more than adequate as it became evident the installation's constant state of flux, in regards to population, would fulfill my initial idea of obtaining a rich population sample. The continuous population change at this particular military post is reflective of the overall military living experience and contributes to the military family's transient lifestyle, which typically involves moving to a new duty station every three to four years. The longer a soldier remains in the military the greater his chances are of being stationed at multiple duty stations, creating, if you will, a constant sense of transience in his home and family life.

The military's transient nature allowed me to interview women who either a) had newly arrived at this particular duty station, b) had never been anywhere other than this particular duty station or c) had lived at numerous other duty stations throughout the course of their husband's careers (see Appendix A). A varying range of experience was important to the study as it provided a broader context from which to work when analyzing the data for creative interpretation. Interviewing women who had never been to another duty station would have placed severe limitations on the creative aspect of the

project, as the data would not reflect a significant range of lived experiences amongst the women interviewed.

Just as important as whether or not the women had been stationed elsewhere was whether or not their husbands had ever been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. A few of the younger wives or those whose husbands were lower in rank had never experienced a deployment, a fact which provided a new perspective, especially given that we, in the military, are living in a constant state of deployment to the Middle East. Women whose husbands had been through one or more deployments enriched the data set by providing a different lived experience than those who had yet to go through the ordeal, thereby, their input resulted in an enriched creative process and final outcome.

Sampling Strategy

A purposive sample strategy, along with a snowball sampling method was used to identify participants for the study. According to Esterberg (2002) and Patton (2002), a purposive strategy enables the researcher to select those participants who will provide the richest, most in-depth data based upon their perspective about the topic being studied. My selection process was affected by several factors inherent to the Army structure.

First it was necessary to consider a soldier's time in service. As a hierarchal institution with specific ranks, and tasks associated with each rank, time is generally a determining factor in when soldiers will move from a lower rank to a higher one. Therefore, wives whose husbands have been in the military longer are going to have different experiences from those that have been in a shorter period of time. Based upon personal experience and casual conversations with other military wives over the last 18 years, the amount of time spent in service affects how these women view their living situation. As such, it was also important to consider their husband's rank when selecting participants for the study.

Because rank also serves to determine one's responsibilities and duties in the military environment, it also factored into the need for a purposive strategy. Though wives do not share their husband's military rank, they are still expected to fulfill certain obligations and responsibilities within the military community (Alt, 2006; Crossley & Keller, 1993; Harrell, 2000; Mock, 2007); therefore, it was important to examine them in

three broad rank categories: Junior enlisted (E-1 -- E-4), Non-Commissioned Officer (hereafter referred to as NCO) (E-5 -- E-9), and Officer (W-O1-- O-10) (see Appendix A). Each of these ranks place specific expectations upon the soldier and his/her spouse (Crossley & Keller, 1993; Harrell, 2000). Since these expectations vary, I assumed, based upon my own experience and that of other wives I have encountered over the years, the experiences of these women would somewhat vary with rank, an assumption later proved to be true as I began to code the data.

Rank in the military also determines association. Higher-ranking soldiers are typically discouraged from interacting socially with lower ranks. However, this sanction does not officially carry over to wives. Despite the lack of official sanction, fraternization is still quite uncommon despite the opportunities provided by the Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) (see Appendix A) for wives with husbands of different rank categories to interact with one another and form alliances, which oftentimes evolve into friendships. However, the tendency, more often than not, is for wives whose husbands fall into the same rank category (Jr. Enlisted, NCO, and Officer) to cluster together and form associations. That is not to say women do not form connections outside of the rank category in which they most commonly associate; bonds of friendships can be formed between wives of higher and lower rank categories. The special nature of military wives' relationships, the structure of their social network, and my insider status made initial access quite easy and enabled me to initiate contact with respondents from each rank category.

While this system of interaction was my friend, it was also my enemy. Social networks are Military Occupational Specialty (hereafter referred to as MOS) (See Appendix A) or Battalion-based; therefore, it was necessary for me to look outside of the Military Police (hereafter referred to as MP) for referrals. MPs, while stationed throughout the world, tend to hold the same hours and job functions. Because of this homogeneity, MP wives experience many similarities that other MOSs in the military might not experience. Working under the assumption women make friends with other wives outside of their husband's MOS, I used snowball sampling, a technique which begins with a respondent who provides referrals and those participants provide further

referrals (Esterberg, 2002; Patton, 2002), a tactic which provided me with respondents who had a broader range of experience than those I encountered within the MP Corps.

Initial contact with wives was made through personal approach and referrals. I began by speaking to the few military wives with whom I had an acquaintance. Upon the conclusion of their interviews, I asked for referrals; two of the three women gave me a few names and I called these women to set up interviews. For the most part, I obtained the majority of my interviews in this manner. However, during the course of my research, a Military Wives Conference was held on the post at which I was conducting research; seeing this as an opportunity to collect data and make contact with more wives, I attended the conference where I was able to approach more women and ask them if they would be willing to let me interview them. I made contact with four women from the conference, all of whom gave me referrals as well. The conference also provided me the opportunity to interview three women whose husbands held senior officer ranks. Typically, given my own husband's rank, I would not have had access to these women, but my attendance at the conference enabled me to approach them after a panel discussion and inquire as to their willingness to be interviewed for the project. All three women willingly agreed with the understanding and continued confirmation they would remain anonymous.

Due to the nature of my sampling strategy, I was able to acquire contacts in each rank category: 3 Junior enlisted, 10 NCO, and 10 Officer. While my NCO and Officer numbers are even, I encountered limitations when attempting to interview Junior NCO wives. This limitation was partially due to my own acquaintance with NCO and junior officer wives, as well as the lack of interaction most NCO and Officer's wives have with Junior Enlisted wives outside of FRG meetings. The junior enlisted wives I did interview were made possible through personal contact at the conference and then through referral.

Other demographics included age, hometown, education level, years married, and years in the military (see Appendix B). Race, however, was not factored in as a demographic simply because the majority (87%) of wives were Caucasian. However, in the future a more representative sample could be sought, to include blacks, Hispanics and Asians. One other factor that emerged during the course of the actual interviews were wives with prior military service; however, as with race this was not factored since the majority (87%) of wives had no prior service time.

Interviews

Upon approval of the study's IRB application (see Appendices C & D) I began to contact the participants and schedule interviews. Since the aim of my study was to listen to women's voices and translate them into representative pieces of textile art, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each woman that agreed to let me interview her. Semi-structured interviews, as compared to structured interviews, provide for a less rigid, more in-depth examination of a respondent's thoughts because each interview centers on that particular respondent (Esterberg, 2002). In utilizing this interview technique, I was able to move and adapt to the flow of the conversation rather than stick with a rigid set of questions that might not have been appropriate for that particular respondent's experience as a military wife.

I often found that the women were curious as to my own experiences as a military wife and would ask me questions in regard to the things I had done. I had to be careful that I did not present a biased view of the military, so I chose to relay my experiences in the same manner as they did. I presented anecdotes about my life in a factual manner, being careful to leave out any personal opinions I held in regards to the military lifestyle. I was also careful to heed Weiss' (1994) advice about providing honest self-disclosure that does not detract from the interview; I would answer their inquiry and continue on with the interview. However, my insider status, though I am generally considered an unconventional military wife due to my education level and appearance, helped build rapport and move the conversation forward in regards to certain acronyms and experiences unique to the military lifestyle, including bridging the differences I may have had with that particular participant.

The interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to 2 hr 30 min. They were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Due to the recorder's voice recognition settings I had to go back and clarify a few points with some of the women because they either spoke too quietly, which did not allow the recorder to pick up their voices, or outside noise interference was louder than them when they spoke. Both of these situations resulted in some lost data, which I did not discover until I began transcribing the interviews at a later time. When these discoveries were made, I noted it in the transcript

and did not use that particular question during the analysis process, unless I had been able to clarify the point with the participant.

All interviews were conducted at a location of the respondent's choice. Upon initial telephone contact, I introduced myself, and the reason for my call. At this point, I set up a date, time, and location most convenient to each woman. Some of the women elected to have the interview conducted in their home, which gave me an opportunity to take notes about their household environment and balance that with their interview responses when I began my analysis. Those that did not want to be interviewed in their homes either asked to come to my house or wanted to meet me at a restaurant. The majority of women, however, did have me come to their homes. Usually there were children or, in a few cases, husbands present when the interviews were conducted in the home.

While children did not often present an overt problem (other than excessive noise and endless questioning) during the interviews, a few issues did arise when the husbands were present. First, it is important to note that the husband's presence often seemed to inhibit the conversation. There was an overt behavioral difference between these wives and the ones whose husbands were not present during the interview process. Many questions, such as those centered on household and/or relationship issues, would not be answered until the wife glanced at her husband or he at her. Even I found myself wary of asking questions that he might perceive as too probing. Another issue I encountered when the husband was present was his tendency to answer questions, rather than letting the wife speak. Three out of the five husbands who were present for interviews consistently interjected and answered questions before their wives had an opportunity to speak. Sometimes the wife would follow-up after her husband spoke, but other times I was simply left with his answer and had to move on to the next question.

Upon arrival at the specified location, I conducted the interviews which consisted of three stages: reading and signing of the Informed Consent (see Appendix E), filling out a brief survey of background questions (see Appendix F), and the interview itself. Though the interviews were semi-structured, it was still necessary to use an interview guide (see Appendix G). In constructing the interview questions, I strove to address multiple areas of military life, concentrating on the following categories: general

questions regarding military life, the “ideal” military wife, social contacts, household division, deployment and separation, and conformity to the military system. Asking these questions provided the participants with the opportunity to share their experiences and express their techniques for handling the challenges that accompany marriage to a soldier.

As I began the interviews I referred to the interview guide, however, as the interviews progressed I found myself moving away from the guide and simply responding to the conversation as it took place. This occurred more often in the later interviews than it did in the earlier interviews. As a result, my later interviews were quite varied; however, I was sure to ask each woman key questions from the guide especially in regards to deployment, friendships, and their likes and dislikes regarding military life. Interviews were recorded with a Sony Digital Voice recorder and were later transcribed with Express Scribe software. Inquiries as to whether or not each participant would be open to follow-up questions if the need should arise concluded the interviews.

I determined saturation had been reached as the answers I received from wives became more homogenous. I found towards the latter portion of my interviews that many of the wives responded either the same or in a similar manner to questions regarding deployment, like and dislikes, and what the ideal military wife represented. Another area in which answers became homogenous was that of the household structure and workload. Once these answers became consistent, I determined that my data set was adequate and ceased interviewing.

Data Transcription, Coding and Analysis

Once saturation had been reached, I began transcribing the interviews using Express Scribe. Interviews were transcribed to include all nuances of language including discourse markers such as “umm,” “ahh,” “like,” “you know,” and other indicators of hesitancy or thoughtfulness that often serve to convey emotions participants were hesitant or unable to express out loud in spoken form. It was during the transcription process I began to look for emergent themes and noted specific quotes or ideas that inspired me. These notes, which were jotted down in a notebook I kept by the computer as I transcribed, served as the beginning of my creative process and provided the initial

groundwork for some of the final pieces. As I went through the note-taking process during transcription certain themes: friendship, pride, and deployment kept appearing. These beginning themes helped to guide my coding as I moved into NUDIST.

As I completed the transcriptions, the data was entered into NUDIST 4, coded for emergent themes, sorted for relevance, and inclusively integrated. Analysis of the data was issue-focused and inclusively-integrated because these strategies provided the most opportunity for cohesively structuring the information gathered from all the respondents (Weiss, 1994). Weiss defined an issue-focused analysis as one that considers what can be learned about “specific issues...from any and all respondents” (154) and permits the researcher to smoothly move from one set of issues to another. Inclusively-integrating the data allowed me to weave these issues together and create a cohesive story that resulted in a coherent whole (Weiss, 1994). Because I was listening to the stories of military wives and considering their overall experience, many areas of life were discussed, resulting in over 1,000 pages worth of data. An issue-focused approach permitted the material to be presented in a logical, cohesive manner with the focus on military wives’ experience being viewed, not only as a whole, but from the individual perspective as well (Weiss, 1994).

The initial themes that emerged as I created free nodes in NUDIST were “Army Life,” “Deployment,” “How to be a military wife,” “Likes and Dislikes,” “Marriage,” “Self-fulfillment,” “Other military wives,” “Social contacts,” and “Household matters.” I further refined each of these categories until I began to see crossover between the themes. The ones I saw as most recurrent were those of “Relationships,” “Separation,” and “Collective Experience.” Because these themes were the most frequently represented through the women’s words they are the ones I chose to represent their voices and began to jot down potential pieces of textile art that could be created from these themes.

Practice-based Overview

Upon the completion of transcribing and coding I moved full-time to the practice-based portion of the study. During this phase of research I spent my time constructing the artwork inspired by the themes found during the initial data analysis phase, documenting my personal design process through the use of photos, notes, and rough sketches and

engaging in a continual analysis cycle between the data, the artwork and the design process. These activities resulted in my utilization of practice (arts)-based research tools. Various methods were employed during the practice-based phase of the research. These methods will be discussed in detail in Chapters five and six.

Chapter Summary

Since none of the three methodologies (phenomenology, feminist thought, practice-based) I utilized to structure my research employ a specific set of methods, but all deal with lived experience, the use of qualitative methods were most appropriate in achieving my project aims and objectives. Through in-depth interviews with 22 military wives, whose husbands varied in rank, coupled with my own experience, I was able to collect a sufficient amount of data and reach saturation. The participants were recruited through personal contact, referral, or previous acquaintance and interviews were conducted at their convenience in the location of their choice. Though an interview guide was strictly followed at the beginning, it was soon discarded, save for a few common questions, as it often hindered the natural flow of conversation, especially given my insider status. I personally transcribed all 22 interviews over the course of several months, constantly jotting down ideas for the design portion of the study as I went along. Once all interviews were transcribed, I entered them into NUDIST and began to code and sort them for emergent themes. The three most common themes were “Collective experience,” “Separation,” and “Relationships.” These themes served as my inspiration moving into the design portion of the study.

However, the first aim of my study was to discover the voice of the military wife and examine that voice from a feminist perspective. In order to do this, it was necessary for me to consider not only my positionality as a military wife and woman, but also my subjectivity as the artist. Despite the subjectivity utilized in the design portion of my study, I approached the following chapter, “Analysis and Discussion of Data,” as one in which the women’s voices remained central and controlled the context of the story.

Chapter 4 - Analysis and Discussion of Data

“Make it what it is. If you come into this with a horrible attitude, you’re gonna have a horrible experience. If you come into it with a good attitude, you’re gonna have a good experience. Because that’s what I decided. I was like I’m just gonna be happy. I’m not gonna be upset or stressed about this.... You can’t tell a teacher not to go to school. You can’t tell a doctor not to go to the doctor’s office. You can’t tell a soldier not to deploy.... And I just try and have that kind of attitude with everything.... just whatever happens, happens. Let it be.”

--Theresa

“Married to the Military” for 1 year

The life of a military wife is anything but easy. It is fraught with constant change, uncertainty, and scrutiny from those who don’t understand why their husbands chose this lifestyle; and why they, themselves, have decided to engage in a life that is anything but peaceful or positive in many respects. However, despite these challenges and obstacles, military wives are strong women, and for the most part, exemplify feminist qualities, such as a concern for women’s rights and issues, even if they do not declare themselves as such. Their experiences within the military community force them to become strong individuals with a “tough skin” and a need to become independent in order to forge their way through the tumultuous path of military life. Though the independence is often forced, their lifestyle provides them with a way to find themselves, as not only individuals but as women who are able to draw off their own strengths in order to survive.

Survival, however, comes in many forms; one of which is obtained through acceptance of the military as a central focus in their lives. The idea that they support the military institution is not necessarily a given, it is something that happens by default through their marriage. Knowing this enables them to understand, and on some level accept, the expectations that accompany life as a soldier’s spouse, even if that means quieting their own voices as a means of protecting their status, as well as that of their husbands (Houppert, 2003). Struggling with issues such as seeking new employment and/or educational opportunities every few years, being unwilling single parents,

maintaining a long-distance relationship with their spouse, establishing a new home and developing new friendships because of a move they never requested, balancing the household chores and finances, as well as nurturing their families and spouses, all serve to create a potentially hazardous climate for their personal happiness.

However, many military spouses are happy and fulfilled by the lives they lead. Though they don't deny the difficulties, they also recognize the joys and the possibilities for self-development with which they are presented on a regular basis. These possibilities usually arrive due to, not just the nomadic nature of the military lifestyle, but its inherent diversity as well. While we live in a diverse society, civilian women whose husbands are not military oftentimes do not get to have such a wide range of experience, making the military wife's life distinct from that of her civilian sisters.

The diverse nature of the military also creates a veritable mish-mash of cultures, beliefs, ages, races, and life experiences, as well as religious, political, and social views. This variation, as well as the all female respondent population, provided ample entry for feminist thought and analysis, especially in regards to women's voice. These voices became quite clear throughout the course of the interviews as key themes began to emerge. The overarching theme of militarization was found throughout all areas of the wives lived experience; however, several subthemes, both positive and negative, emerged as well. These subthemes: marriage, expectations and rank, self-fulfillment and independence, job security, pride, lack of voice, relationships with both civilians and other military wives, as well as separation and deployment, all eventually emerged into three separate themes: "Collective Experience," "Relationships," and "Separation." The resulting themes served as the inspiration and guide to the textile art, as well as the installation. This chapter will examine both the positive and negative aspects of being married to a U.S. soldier as it relates to not only the overarching theme of militarization, but to the final three themes used as a means of making these women's voices heard.

Militarization

“The military’s got a big, a big impact. I mean, they tell you where to go; you can’t say no. You know? They tell you to jump, you gotta say ‘how high?’ and you can’t get around it.”

--Jennifer

“Married to the Military” for 2.5 years

The over-arching experience of being a military wife is lacking control over the course of one’s life. Military wives, such as Jennifer quoted above, whether consciously aware of it or not, are subjected to the same type of occupational strategies Enloe (1983) presented in her discussion of militarization. Enloe (1983, 2000) paints a vivid picture of the military’s ability to occupy the lives of people at both a societal and personal level. Whether overt or covert, the occupational strategies used by the military serve to oppress women and oftentimes work as a way to socialize the wives so they may “further some of the military’s own goals” (Enloe, 1983, p. 48).

In the context of the military wife’s life, these strategies range from unplanned moves to late night phone calls requiring her husband’s immediate presence at work to unpredictable work hours and schedules. Because these incidents are a part of her husband’s job, which is often the sole means of support for the family, she is forced to accept them and make them work within the context of her own life. Casey, a 16-year veteran of the military wife brigade, felt that the “framework” of the military life forced her to “figure out how to live...life within that structure” and as such was a “huge” influence in not just her day-to-day life, but in her long range choices as well.

Monitoring their own behavior was important to the wives, they felt that if they “act the fool” (Karen) in public or don’t “sit down and shut [their] mouth” (Claire) when the time calls for it then they are violating military norms and could possibly affect their husband. One wife stated:

You know I’m not like some people who don’t have that filter between head and mouth. I’ve got the filter. Yeah, in order to survive you’ve gotta have it, especially in this way of life. You have to because, like I said, with us reflecting on our husbands you have to acquire that filter. (Jennifer)

Another claimed:

You know, I try not to get in trouble 'cuz I think, you know, if you get arrested or something...I don't think that it could come back to haunt them but I think that, once again, their superiors could look down on that, you know, "why is your wife acting like she's twelve?"(Karen)

These statements exhibit the fact that wives are acutely aware their behavior can reflect on their husbands. In prior years, the possibility of a wife's actions affecting her husband's chances for promotion was a reality (Enloe, 1983); currently, however, this is not necessarily the case. Yet these women still monitor how they act or what they say for fear of affecting either their or their husband's standing with his unit, especially his command. Oftentimes, what this leads to is a self-imposed silence or sense of shame if they should express something that runs counter to the military's goals.

While most wives maintain this self-imposed silence during the course of their husbands' careers, some are not afraid to stand up to the institution and those in charge of its functioning, especially if their decisions are affecting the well-being of their family. Claire, 26, whose husband is an E-3, recounted an experience they had upon first joining the military and how it pushed her out of silence and into direct confrontation with her husband's command:

He was living in the barracks. I was living in our hometown 'cuz I was working....[Her husband was directed by his Sargeant to move out of the barracks despite the fact their married housing on-post had not yet been assigned, which resulted in financial strain on the couple]....He didn't have anywhere to go. He didn't have any money. I mean, he had just become an E3. He had pulled out three loans to get a car.... I had pawned everything that I had owned to get him in hotel rooms, to get him something to eat. He wasn't eating. Once all the money was gone...he was living in his car.

Claire recounts that her patience snapped when her husband called and expressed his concern that he would get in trouble if his command found out he was living in his car and not eating. She continued:

So, that was the final straw for me....I called his company and I feel really bad for the person who answered the phone because I just exploded on them. I called

them every name in the book; I wanted the company commander; I don't want anybody lower. I wanted some answers. I wanted it taken care of.

After about four minutes of them playing hot potato with the phone, the company commander finally gets on the phone and he was like, "How can I help you ma'am?" And I just, I told him everything. I was like, "I don't know what, who you all think you are. I don't know what you all are trying to do over there. These guys go fight for this country, knowing the fact that they may never come home to their families, the least that you all could do is put a roof over their heads, even though that they are married. We are geographically separated." I told him, I said, "We are geographically separated because we are waiting on a house. You all have absolutely no right kicking him out just because he is married....I told him, I said, "Because of you all we are in this much debt with the bank, because of you all my husband is living in his car, he hasn't eaten."

And the company commander was like, "I had no idea that this was going on." And I told him, I said, "Well, mm, that says a lot about you. You're the company commander and you have no idea this is going on inside your company." And I told him, I said, "If I find you that y'all retaliated against my soldier in any way, shape or form 'cuz I had contacted you and not him. Um, you all, someone's gonna be in trouble." And...that's when I had told him "I don't wear the uniform you all do. You all wear the patch. I don't care what the patch says. If, if I have a problem, I'm gonna take it up with you and if you have a problem with me, I expect you to take it up with me. Do not take it out on my soldier. I'm coming to you, not him." So then he told me that he was gonna call me back.

The issue was resolved that day and by the end of the month they had on-post housing. However, the chances of the problem being resolved by itself without Claire breaking her silence was slim due to her husband's fear of getting in trouble. Claire's insistence to the Commander that her husband not suffer punishment because of her phone call was also not unwarranted as things such as extra duty or longer work hours have been known to crop up unexpectedly when a wife chooses to speak out against the military and how it treats the soldiers.

All of the wives expressed a sense of dismay at how their husbands' schedules impacted their day-to-day lives. Many commented that his long hours, lack of availability for family activities, and job that often invades the privacy of their home makes military life quite difficult. They acknowledged that despite their best efforts, the presence of the military was central in their homes and was not something that could be ignored, even if they tried to do so. As a result, most wives chose to accept it and recognize its presence as a way to maintain a connection with their husbands.

However, not all wives feel impacted in a negative way. While they recognize the power the institution has over their lives they do not feel oppressed or imposed upon, but fully embrace it for what it is – a way of life, created for them by the military. Jennifer stated, "I love my way of life. I love being in the military," even though, at first, she found being in the military a bit difficult. She later went on to say:

And then once the FRG stood up and we started doing things, I really realized how much I could get out of this. Out of being a military spouse. And that, well yeah, it was gonna be a challenge, but if I looked at it the right way and approached it the right way it's a really good life. And I enjoy it. I mean I really do.

Her experience was reflective of how many wives felt, as they chose to immerse themselves in the lifestyle rather than fight against it, even as they acknowledged its somewhat oppressive nature. Several expressed the notion that by embracing all the military has to offer; such as job security, built-in support networks, medical insurance, and the opportunity to travel and meet new people, their lives were fulfilled in a way that many civilian women would never be able to experience. Their experiences led me to reflect upon my own, as I had always focused on the negative. However, as I conducted my interviews, I too, found that marriage to a soldier, while difficult at times, did have its benefits as well.

“Collective Experience”

Being married to a soldier requires tolerance and understanding, since his job is 24/7, 365 days a year. When the phone rings at 2 a.m. and he speaks to whomever is on the other side it usually means life is going to be altered in some manner. Whether this

alteration is temporary (someone got a DUI and everyone must report) or he is going to be leaving on an unexpected deployment does not matter. What the wife considers is how her life is susceptible to change with a mere phone call. Newly married wives often find it difficult to adapt to the sudden changes brought about and struggle with making their marriages work, especially if they were civilian wives prior their husbands' joining. Throughout the interviews, many aspects of marriage to a soldier, both positive and negative, emerged as central to the overall life experience of these women. All of these aspects coalesced into an idea of how a military wife, whether consciously or unconsciously presented herself to the public at large. As such, I chose to draw together the sub-themes that evolved: expectations and rank, self-fulfillment and independence, lack of voice, politics, job security, and pride, along with the qualities the women felt a military wife needed to possess in order to succeed in the lifestyle, into one central theme of "Collective Experience." These ideas about marriage and the ideal qualities a wife should possess were all very similar, and as a result, I choose to design a gown that attempted to show the all-encompassing experience a woman endures when married to a U.S. soldier. Central to this theme were the expectations they felt that came with the title of military wife, despite their status as senior ranking or junior enlisted.

Expectations and Rank

The life of a military wife, depending upon her husband's rank, has certain expectations. If her husband is a high-ranking official the demands placed upon her are greater than those of a woman whose husband holds a lesser position. How they chose to view these expectations varied, but many of them embraced the added responsibility they felt as their husbands climbed through the ranks of military life. Both Veronica and Allison expressed that their responsibilities have increased as their husbands, who are high-ranking Senior officers, have moved up the Army career ladder; however, they both embraced the new expectations as they provide them with the opportunity to show younger, less senior wives, that those in higher command do care about their lives.

Harrell's research (2001) showed that many wives felt their husband's rank influenced not only their level of responsibility in regards to how active they must be in the FRG, but also in how much support they should offer to wives whose husbands

ranked lower than their own. Allison felt that as her husband's responsibility for the soldiers increased her own did as well, since many senior wives feel "responsible for their [the soldiers] families." Allison went on to remark that the expectations placed on her as a senior wife extended beyond her husband's command and into that of the wider net of the "Army nation...everything Army-wide." Her experience supports the contention that a wife is responsible for presenting herself in a manner that is respectable and "appropriate [for] public places" (Harrell, p. 60) especially those involving military related functions. She is able to do so by following, or in some way conforming to, the "rules and regulations of the post" (Harrell, p. 61) of which she and her husband are members, especially since, as Allison claimed, "there's more focus and more attention put on you" as a woman's husband climbs in rank.

While Allison and Veronica feel much is expected of them, they both agreed that much of the pressure they feel is "self-imposed" and not placed on them by the military. Other wives, even those whose husbands hold lower rank than either Allison or Veronica's, also did not feel that the military imposes expectations on them, other than those they place on themselves. One expectation wives place upon themselves, and often on one another, is participation in the FRG. Because the group functions as an informational/social medium that depends on volunteers in order to function, women are encouraged (pressured) to participate. Traditionally, junior wives are not expected to hold leadership positions in the FRG or maintain a visible presence within the social structure of their husband's unit. Because the FRG leader position has become one that is open to all wives, many junior wives are becoming more actively involved on their own, so they feel as if they are making a valuable contribution to the unit and their husband's career path. One junior wife described her role in the FRG as her "second job," while another, whose husband is an E-3, held two separate positions—point of contact and secretary—and maintained her two best friends were the leader and co-leader of the group. The positive experiences of these women and their willingness to participate was shared by many of the wives since they felt that little is actually expected of them by the military institution, sometimes even despite their husband's rank.

Rank structure within the military is a double-edged sword. While it provides wives with increased security, it also brings on added responsibility and the ideology of

separation from wives whose husbands have not attained the same rank as their own husbands. Senior officer wives often experience an increase of responsibility as they serve as the substitute for their husbands when they are unable to attend formal functions (Harrell, 2001); however this stricture does not necessarily hamper interaction between the spouses whose husbands have different ranks. Veronica, whose husband is a senior military officer has always made it a point to connect with women of lower ranks, sometimes forming friendships with them even if it did run counter to her husband's career path. Allison, another senior officer's wife, has also made an attempt to befriend wives outside of her husband's rank category. Unfortunately, however, according to Allison, some younger wives have a less positive perception of senior wives than is warranted. She felt that this impression comes from the "...old Army [when] there was a lot of separation, there was a lot of rank-consciousness." She went on to explain, "but honest to goodness, I can tell you being a senior leader spouse, it's not there anymore from that side of the house." Her perception is that all the wives, both junior and senior need to understand that:

...We are all, we're all in the same boat;... we all have children; we all have families; we all have the same things that we're worried and concerned about and it's a different culture of senior officer spouses now. We are just like we're all in the same boat; we really are.

Because the experiences military wives encounter are so similar, it is integral that rank issues remain outside the doors of the FRG, especially given that the majority of spouses who attend these meetings and functions are junior wives. However, the reality is that wives do tend to associate with women whose husbands share the same, or similar rank categories. This often results in cliques, which reflect military rank structure, even though the military does not discourage higher and lower ranking wives from interacting with one another.

One reason this separation outside of military-sponsored events might occur is that many wives, especially those who have not been a part of the military for any extended period of time, are uncertain as to how to handle the rank differences between their husbands, since they are unsure as to how this affects their own life. Sue, who has been a part of the military for a little less than a year, stated:

And that was one of the questions that I asked [husband's name] like, I know that the above ranks aren't supposed to hang out with the lower ranks, but I didn't know if the wives were allowed to hang out. You know what I mean? Kinda like, uh, I guess my example was...okay if I become friends with a girl whose husband is a private...you know...Is our lives always gonna be separated or can we not have them over for a barbeque, or you know what I mean?

He said he thinks that they could probably, like, come over for a barbeque or for dinner some night or something, but they wouldn't be able to hang out. They wouldn't be able to, like, "hey, let's go play pool tomorrow night." You know. They wouldn't be able to become friends.

This inability to form friendships with both members of the couple due to the military's rules about fraternization often prevents women from actively developing connections with others outside of their husbands' rank category. When they do develop these friendships it is with the understanding that it can only be between the wives and not extend into the lives of their husbands as well.

One way some wives circumvent the issue is to not even ask other wives about their husband's rank. Tabitha, whose husband is a Captain, stated, "I try not to even know, and then it usually comes out eventually. But I try not to even know." By avoiding the issue of rank, women are often more comfortable hanging out with one another, since it does not influence their lives outside of their marriage. Tabitha went on to elaborate, "Because I, I honestly, I think it's degrading to...the wives. I understand the dudes talking... the importance of that. But I think it's degrading to, it has nothing to do with the wife. Nothing." Fortunately, Tabitha's attitude is shared by many military wives, myself included, despite the unspoken expectations and invisible lines of demarcation that exist within the military structure.

However, the lines of demarcations they felt do exist in regards to their husband's rank were often related to how they interpreted their need to interact with wives whose husbands ranked lower or higher than their own. Many of them saw their role as being that of a mentor, with lower-ranking wives feeling that these women were also guides from whom they could glean knowledge or solicit advice when the situation was

warranted. This mentor relationship served as a way for younger wives to more easily navigate the often murky waters of military life, while providing more senior wives with a way to dispel some of the myths surrounding fraternization among wives.

Self-Fulfillment and Independence

Rank expectations, as well as being part of a societal institution due to the mere fact that they chose to marry a military man, set specific parameters within these women's lives. However, despite many of the parameters which structure their lives, research found that military wives seek ways to sustain themselves, not only as a means to an end while their partners are away, but also as a way to feel as if they are offering something to the marriage other than their presence. The desire to seek avenues of self-fulfillment also emerged as way of gaining control over their lives since they often feel as if this is something they lack. One area in which they find fulfillment is through employment, either inside or outside of the home. Earning their own income and having some place to go each day not only fills many of the long hours they face alone when their spouse is gone, but also gives them a sense of purpose, control and independence. However, it is not just employment that enriched their lives, many women also chose to further their education, help out with the FRG, or develop hobbies and interests they can maintain over the long-term.

Faced with long days and empty hours, many military wives are at a loss for what to do with their time when their husbands are gone on a deployment, at training, or just even at work. Others, however, choose to foster their interests and fill their days in ways that make them a contributing partner to the marriage. More than half the wives interviewed were employed outside of the home, an impressive number, especially given that in 2010, when the majority of the interviews were conducted, it was reported that only 47.8% (U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011) of married women were employed. Though many of them got jobs just to fill the time, others did so out of a need to foster a sense of independence, a quality many wives felt a spouse needs to possess in order to survive the military lifestyle. Meredith claimed:

... it's important to me to make sure, like, I'm not depending on my husband for my entire life fulfillment. Like I want to be able to be fulfilled on my own and

then, you know, offer something to him rather than me depending on everything that he does to give me fulfillment.

Another wife stated:

I always seem to do better when I have a paycheck coming in and have, like I feel like that's my money....a paycheck's a big deal to me. I don't care, like I said, when I say career I shouldn't 'cuz I really don't care what it is I'm doing. I mean I, as long as it's not tortuous. I don't have to derive serious, what is, what word am I thinking of, I don't have to be fulfilled by the job itself. I just, 'cuz like when we were at Grand Forks, I just worked, I wrote contractor passes. I didn't care; I got my paycheck. I got to interact with people; that's good enough for me. (Tabitha)

However, not all the wives were interested in working or attending school as a way of finding or maintaining fulfillment. Several were content to develop hobbies or interact with female friends outside of the home. Theresa used grocery shopping and going for coffee with friends as a means of filling her time, while Veronica immersed herself in the numerous tourist opportunities she seeks out wherever they moved. No matter how the wives chose to fill their time, all of the activities in which they engaged helped them to foster a sense of independence in a life which doesn't easily accommodate that need.

While in some ways, military wives are often forced to give up their independence based upon the needs of the Army, in other ways they must also become independent whether they want to or not. Faced with numerous separations, either due to training exercises, schools, or deployments, they are thrust into a life in which many decisions are left to them, and them alone. Oftentimes, this independence can feel onerous; however, most women find it to be liberating and struggle with relinquishing their newfound freedom when their husbands return or leave the military for civilian life. However, the transient nature of the military lifestyle also dictates that they give up their ability to make independent decisions about their lives, something which leaves many women feeling conflicted.

Being required to relinquish her independence in regards to decisions about her own life is a basic requirement for a military wife. Since the Army's mission is

paramount in her husband's life, she must be willing to sacrifice, even if she does not necessarily want to do so. Allison, married for 30 years, stated:

It's a really hard life. You have to give up a lot. And, um, by that I mean you have to give up, um, sometimes obviously your, your independence. Your ability to say where you're gonna live and what you're gonna do.... So you have to give up a lot and because of that I think you need to have some fulfillment as well.

Her statement is reflective of the conflict wives often feel being married to a military man—on one hand she has to give up her sense of independence, but on the other she has to find a way to remain self-fulfilled, something which generally involves a certain level of independence. Some women, such as myself, chose to place themselves as far outside of the military's influence as was conceivable. Refusing to serve as a volunteer, saying no when asked to participate in a particular function, not attending FRG functions and/or meetings were some of the ways wives claimed that they maintained a sense of independence. However, most also acknowledged the impossibility of having complete independence from the military institution due to the fact that it dictated the course of major decisions in their lives.

Another issue wives face is being forced to become independent under duress. Many resist the idea of being responsible for all the decisions, but others embrace it. Georgette, commenting on forced independence believed “when you are put in a situation where you have to take care of everything, either you fail or you rise to the occasion. And in most instances, Army wives rise to the occasion....” Others, who refuse to accept the decision-making of the military institution, may go home to their families so as to maintain a sense of security or support. Others recognize their dependence on the partners, but admit the forced independence allowed them to grow and has even made their lives better. Jennifer described her experience and how it changed her outlook:

Before he left I would actually say I was pretty dependent. Even before we got married....I always had to have somebody else with me. And, I mean now, yes I still have him but I was forced to be independent. I was forced to be able to do everything on my own at home....I had to be able to take care of all the bills. Everything that would happen at the house, the car, you know, his

family, my family. I had to still step up and take over his role a little bit. So I definitely think I'm more independent now....I've noticed like before he left I wouldn't want to go out and do anything while he was at work. I'd wait until he came home and, you know, go out to the mall or Walmart or whatever. Now, I'm like, "Eh, I gotta go." Otherwise, it's not gonna get done. If I wait to have somebody else go with me, I mean, it's more fun, yes, but if I wait to make sure someone's gonna be next to me, I could be waiting a week before I go get food. You know, and it's, that's stupid now to me. I look at it now and just realize that it's just kinda a hindrance to be that dependent now.

Jennifer's experience is not uncommon, as many women feel that they were dependent upon their husbands before they left, especially if it was the first time they were separated, but discovered the need to "rise to the occasion" (Georgette) and become more self-sufficient as a way to survive life in the military.

Having risen to the occasion, many women are not willing to give up the independence they have acquired during the absence of their husband; as a result, conflict crops up in the marriage. During her husband's deployment, Georgette claimed she "...grew a lot more independent," which impacted the relationship with her husband because:

any time he tried to do something or do this or that, I was always questioning. Not out of that I didn't trust him; it was more or less just like a motherly thing 'cuz I had grown up. So I felt more like the mother than, you know, just trying to take care of him because I took care of so much that I just felt that everything had to come through me. Like I had to be in control....And of course he grew up too, so that's why we clashed.

Other wives also expressed that this has been an issue for them as well. Wood, Scarville, and Gravino (1995) also found the unwillingness to give up independence to be a common reaction for the wives in their study. They found that military wives, having developed a sense of independence, even as they looked forward to their husbands shouldering more of the responsibility in the home once again, realized that tension was going to occur as they relinquished some of their newfound autonomy.

Job Security

Given the instability of the economy and reports of many people being laid off, military wives were willing to relinquish their autonomy and accept the strictures placed upon them by the institution because it afforded job security in a time in which that is not always feasible in the civilian world. Described by most as “stable” or “secure,” many wives commented that the job security their husbands had was nice because they know “that he’s not in any danger of being fired...” (Lisa) especially during a period of time in which people are being laid off on a regular basis.

Besides stability and security, they also felt the fiscal benefits the military afforded were worthwhile. Not having to pay for health insurance and receiving a set paycheck every month was comforting to these women. Sue, who has only been married for a little over a year, stated:

I think the good thing...is there’s a set pay. You know, like, I know how much we’re gonna get every two weeks and I know what bills I can pay with that and I know how much we’ll have left over.

Her feelings were supported by other wives who felt that “having a guaranteed paycheck” (Theresa) and knowing that their health care would still be in place next month provided a sense of security, especially given that many people do not even know if they will have a paycheck or health insurance from month to month.

Even wives who were employed outside the home felt comfortable with what the military provided for them since it often meant they did not have to be concerned about the stability of their own employment or the benefits it might provide. Meredith, who at the time of our interview was completing her Master’s and working at the local university, expressed her thoughts regarding her future job situation after finishing her thesis:

We’ll be fine if I don’t find a job. That’s a luxury of being in the military, I don’t have to and who can say that as a civilian? Hardly anybody that I know can say, “oh well when I finish school I’ll just wait and see what happens.” I mean that’s a huge luxury that I have....if I seem to think that I can get a job somewhere, I can apply for it. You know? And there’s no harm, no foul. I don’t need benefits; I’m

taken care of. I mean, that's kind of, especially in this economy...we can't say enough about how nice that is.

However, Meredith further expresses that job security is not the only reason she feels this way. Though it is nice to have choices and not need benefits in a tight economy she also felt that she "deserved it" because of the fact that her "husband's in the middle of a war zone" so the benefits provided "a perk [she] thinks [she] deserves." At first glance, this may seem to be rather entitled, however, when one considers the long hours, low pay, and somewhat sub-standard health care military members actually receive, these perks are often a point of pride in an otherwise tenuous existence.

Pride

Pride in their husbands, and their own status of being a soldier's wife was also evident in the interviews. While most of the women discussed pride in relation to their husbands and their willingness to do the job they do, others talked about how that pride spills over to themselves and makes them feel good about being able to stand for something and share the commitment their husbands have made to the country. Some women described themselves as being "overly proud" (Jennifer) and willing to display that pride on both their person (sweatshirts, rings, etc.) and in their homes (wall plaques, certificates, medals, etc.), but they felt these actions were justified by the willingness their husband has to "take a job that puts their life on the line for crap money" (Jennifer). Leann felt the pride she had in her husband and other soldiers was a "privilege" that military wives possess, and another wife felt this pride was reflected in her whenever she saw the flag raised or encountered a veteran.

The pride women felt in their own status as a wife was also important. Many enjoyed knowing they were part of something bigger than themselves and that they were contributing to the good of the country by supporting the troops and the military mission. One wife felt:

I like knowing that I'm part of that. I think that is the most fulfilling part, and probably I won't understand what that means to John as a soldier, but as a military wife that's what it means to me. And it means something to me when I see the wives standing there, you know. It means something to me about the sacrifice that

is made for, for the greater good or, you know, the mission of the military. I think that's the best part of it. (Meredith)

Her feelings were shared by other women who felt that their pride enables them to stand "behind their husband regardless" (Pamela) of what happens. Pride was often interconnected with the quality of being supportive as this displayed a sense of loyalty to both their husband and the military, and as one wife expressed, "his commitment becomes our commitment to that same [organization]," (Carrie) and while many outside of the military may think of this as a hindrance, for many wives it serves as a point of pride in their lives.

Lack of Voice

Despite the fact that the military provides these women with ample alone time to develop a sense of independence and their own interests, a lack of voice or control over one's own life choices, emerged as a prominent sub-theme in the course of the interviews. Over half of the women with whom I spoke claimed that the lack of control they experienced in regards to which direction their life would take was often a point of contention in their marriages, since the military's needs came before those of their marriage and/or their family unit.

Wives also discussed their feelings of resignation or helplessness in regards to making decisions about not just their lives, but those of their children as well. Their comments also belied a sense that they were silenced, as many of them felt that no matter what they felt, or said, their thoughts did not matter if it conflicted with that of the Army, or the military's overall mission. Casey described this lack of control as being subject to someone "...directing your lives from above" and leaving you no ability to make choices on your own or appeal to those that do not satisfy or complement your desired lifestyle. These feelings of frustration, helplessness and being without options are compounded by the fact that the military institution leaves no "structure system in place....for arguing" (Casey) and makes the wife a marginal member of her own life. Veronica, whose husband is a high-ranking senior officer, however, while acknowledging this lack of voice, and citing it as one her least favorite parts of being married to the military feels that as a wife she must:

Just be able to go with the flow. Um, I mean there, there are times when you...you can't be a control freak. You cannot be a control freak. Because, number one you don't have any control about where you're gonna go live, what house you're gonna live in, especially at this point, um, it if you're a commander you live in the commander's house, that's it.

Veronica's acquiescence to the needs of the military exhibit her understanding that the military's needs are paramount and that she is unable to change the course of her life as long as she remains married to a soldier. Furthermore, her comments about being able to "go with the flow" and not being "a control freak" are good advice for young and old wives as it reminds them that the unknown is going to be a central part of their existence being married to a soldier.

Army first

Being unable to determine what would happen in their lives on a day-to-day basis was a major concern for many of the wives. They felt that the unknown presented the greatest detriment to achieving of their own goals and expectations. Karen and other wives expressed frustration at their inability to make plans for birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, or vacations given they never knew when their husbands would be around. Another aspect of the unknown that bothered the wives is, as Karen stated, "just that unknown of when is that ball gonna drop to get that next piece of paper." The piece of paper can be either orders to PCS (See Appendix A), deploy, or be sent off to a school. No matter which reason the paper states, it causes tension in a wife's life as she then only has "that year, or what not, to figure out the next year after that of what [she] needs to do prior to, to get everything taken care of before he leaves so that's less things that could likely come up while he's gone" (Karen). Linda also saw this as being problematic and representative of not being able to maintain control over her life, with it causing hard feelings in both her and her husband alike:

...that kind of thing is tough when there's all of a sudden something happening in your life that you're or "oh and by the way you're gonna be deployed for fifteen months" and "oh by the way this, and by the way that" and, you know...It's stuff that's completely beyond your control that the Army is doing to you that you have to, you know, deal with together and he's disappointed and upset and angry, and

you're disappointed, upset and angry and there's nothing either one of you can do about it...

Unfortunately, being able to accept this lack of control is an integral part of a wife's life, and even her relationship. For highly organized women the inability to plan becomes even more frustrating as they ride the emotional rollercoaster anticipating either the upcoming move or his upcoming departure.

However, even trying to plan which date he is going to leave becomes impossible at times as the dates for moves or deployments often change from one month to the next. These unknowns are also not uncommon in regards to their daily schedule as well. Karen further remarked, "A lot of times it is day-by-day and literally hour-by-hour at moments. And I hate it because we can't plan a whole lot, extended, you know, a month from now because I don't know what he's gonna be doing, and his schedule at work changes constantly." Theresa lodged a similar complaint in regards to her husband's schedule in that she is unable to plan for dinner and will often just wait until he arrives home, otherwise she ends up feeding him a meal that is either overcooked or not yet ready when he walks in the door.

Yet, women recognize that while the unknown plays a major role in their lives, it is not the fault of their husbands, but that of the military institution itself. Linda referenced it as 'big nebulous black cloud that does things to people' and unfortunately those people to whom these things are done have no choice but to accept it because in the world of being married to the military, one must accept that the military always comes first, even as it claims to have the family's best interest at heart.

The military's efforts to present itself as part of the family serves to "encourage men to feel emotional bonds to a collectivity beyond their own wives and children," in the hopes that it will also "bind soldiers' wives and children to the larger institution in which their husbands and fathers serves" (Enloe, 1983, p.64). Enloe makes a good point here, especially given that part of the Army motto is "Family First." However, most wives do not see that motto as applying to themselves, simply because they acknowledge that the military mission and institution are central in their husband's lives. Mary relayed that her biggest pet peeve with being a military wife was the knowledge "that the Army always came first and it would always supersede any plans or any, anything that we

wanted to do.” While this is frustrating to her, it is not far from the truth. In the course of my own experience as a military wife I have had to accept that the military played first string in my relationship and I often had to be content to taking the back seat in many parts of my husband’s life. Whether that be his ability to share with me at the end of the day or even sleep in my bed at night, my role was, and still is, secondary, no matter how much he loves me.

Being able to recognize this is central to a wife’s experience, especially because though she may “not always [be] sure that [their] relationship is number one” (Lisa), and, more often than not, feel as if it is second in her husband’s list of priorities, she must be able to accept and adjust to it even though that may prove to be difficult, since reality dictates that fulfilling the military’s mission is the source of her family’s livelihood. As such, she also has to recognize the stress that this obligation to the military mission may place on her husband, since he is probably struggling with the feeling of having torn loyalties as well as a lack of control over his own life. Because of the struggle her husband faced in light of the military’s needs Mary felt that a wife needed to “be supportive...and know that things are out of his control.” She went on to say:

You know, when he says, I, I have to do this understand that he has to do that and it’s nothing against you; he’s not doing it ‘cuz he wants to hurt you or anything like that, it’s just the military comes first and they have, you have to be able to understand and accept that....So a lot of military wives they always get mad when their husband has to go do something; you know. He has no control; he had to do it.

In being able to recognize this and provide support to her husband, a wife often makes the experience of military life a bit easier, since as Veronica stated earlier, she is more readily able to “go with the flow” and accept the hierarchal institution that enters her living room on a nightly basis and serves to dictate the course of her life and bind her to the very institution that creates so much stress in her environment.

“Separation”

“There is no right way to be a wife; there is no right way to go through a deployment. There is no correct way; it is your way.”

--Allison

“Married to the military” for 28 years

In a happy marriage, being separated from one’s spouse is never pleasant; unfortunately, for the military wife it is inevitable and is something with which she must deal on a regular basis. The various difficulties wives encounter being married to a soldier are nothing compared to the strain multiple separations place on their relationship and their own emotional stability. Orthner (2002) found that longer separations presented more adjustment problems than short-term separations, with the bulk of these issues being related to household maintenance and emotional health. Most of the wives interviewed expressed similar views in that they were unhappy about the number and length of separations they were expected to handle because it meant not only time away from their spouses, but missed birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays apart, as well as added responsibility for them to shoulder. Karen, whose husband has been away at numerous schools and gone through three deployments said in regards to how separation affects her life as a military spouse:

I feel it all the time and I, I bitch about it all the time. You know, I’m tired of taking care of the dog constantly; I’m tired of doing all the laundry; I’m tired of this; I’m tired of the bills; I’m tired...I’m tired. And, um, you know, and it’s, it’s tiresome when that person is not there and you are a sole provider for your family, your house, you’re doing everything that you can and continue to work and continue to put on the happy smile, and it’s, it’s hard. And, again, I would not do it again. But I wouldn’t take it back either. ‘cuz I think it has, it has kinda made me stronger, it has made me appreciate certain things a lot more, um, the time that he is there I adore it, ‘cuz I don’t know when the next moment is gonna be. God, I feel like a new woman now.

While being separated is the least favorite part of Karen's life, it also provides her with benefits because it has shown her how to be strong and given her a greater appreciation for her husband. Sandy echoes Karen's thoughts in her claim that "spending time apart makes you appreciate the time that you have together. I mean it really does." Other wives expressed that these separations do not make them feel stronger, but just make them feel as if they have no voice in regards to the direction their life is going to take.

However, how the women perceived these separations differed depending upon the circumstances surrounding the separation. While school and/or training separations presented many inconveniences in their lives, they were not viewed as negatively as deployments. One wife described the emotions surrounding the two situations as having a "huge difference in the stressors" (Laurel), while another described separations due to schools and training as being "a cakewalk" (Georgette) compared to a deployment.

Furthermore, both types of separation also provided positive aspects in these women's lives. Segal (1986) reported many women experienced a surge in independence, as well as an improvement in their relationship due to a mutual appreciation for one another. Because deployment and separation emerged as central foci throughout the course of the interviews, they were combined and turned in one of the themes I chose as a central focus when creating the artwork, in particular the Fallen Soldier. The following sections provide examples of these two perspectives.

Non-Deployment Separations

While no wife is overjoyed when her husband comes home from work and says he has to go to the field for a training exercise or report to a school in another state, she is much more accepting of these types of separation than deployments. Schools and training exercises, while inconvenient, do not place an inordinate amount of stress on the wife's life, other than her being the one who has to "do it all" around the house and with the children. Leann felt that just "knowing they're in a school or...just doing a training exercise" provided her with a "different [sense of] security" that she did not have when he was away on a deployment. Veronica even stated that her attitude about schools and training was more "just kinda like okay; whatever" and did not cause her any undue stress because she knew he was out of harm's way.

Not needing to worry about their husband's safety, the wives experience a "huge difference in the stressors" (Laurel), but this still does not change how she feels about being burdened with the household responsibilities. Unfortunately, since she recognizes this is a central part of his job, she has to accept it, and usually without complaint, even though it still bothers her and at times can create a breakdown in communication between her and her husband. Karen stated that her and her husband just try to "pick up the pieces, move forward and...discuss what... has happened during those times..." however, they do not necessarily discuss everything, including her feelings. She continued by saying, "I guess I kind of pretend like he hasn't been gone and continue with life as we both know it." By not discussing their feelings, wives like Karen maintain the silence that Lehr (1999) claimed has remained "firmly locked behind closed doors" (p. 117). In maintaining this silence, even within the confines of their own homes and relationships, women continue to reinforce the power the military institution has over their lives and that of their husbands. However, while Karen and other wives work to pretend her husband never left during short separations, this is something that also occurs during the course of the more traumatic longer separations caused by overseas deployments.

Deployment

There is no doubt that deployments cause stress on both the couple and the individual. Numerous studies have been conducting analyzing how these long-term separations affect the military family and the soldier himself. However, the wife's perspective has rarely been considered, and when it has it is generally focused on the negative impact deployment has on her mental and emotional health.

The time before a soldier leaves on an extended deployment is always difficult for the military couple, but other aspects of deployment including their prolonged absence, and even return cause consternation for the military wife. Many struggle with how to juggle their emotions, and whether or not to share them with other wives or even their friends. All of them worry about their husband's safety, especially when the phone or computer remains silent for a few days. However it was not just the husbands silence that stood out in the interviews, but theirs as well, especially in regards to their fears about his injury or death. This silence among the wives can lead to greater amounts of stress or

even, as Allison has seen in her 30 years of experience, “a lot of mental issues, a lot of health issues [and] a lot of marital issues.” Once again, by keeping quiet the wife refrains from rocking the well-established hold the military has on her life.

While there is no doubt that deployments find the military wife under incredible amounts of stress, it often also provides her with a new perspective on her life, which oftentimes is more positive than negative. Many wives discussed how they realized a new sense of strength in themselves as well as a greater sense of independence when their husbands are gone. However, they also struggled many times with having to give up some of that newfound freedom, even as they desired more time with their husbands. These feelings of ambivalence often begin as early as the time prior to his departure as they both struggle with the impending changes in their life and look forward to a certain amount of freedom.

Pre-departure

Faced with an unknown future, one in which their husbands might never rejoin them, military wives respond in numerous ways to his impending deployment. Several wives remarked that they became “clingy” or worked hard to not “squander away any time” they had left with their spouse before he deployed. But often the uncertainty of when they were actually going to leave got in the way and as the time drew nearer, wives become more anxious and even restless just waiting for their husbands to leave. Meredith, whose husband had left for his first deployment two weeks prior to our interview, claimed:

I mean, the truth is, so far the deployment’s been easier than waiting for the deployment because now when I wake up every morning I know that tomorrow is one day closer to him coming home rather than tomorrow is one day closer to him leaving.

Her sentiments were similarly echoed by Sandy, who felt frustrated at the changing dates:

I said quit changing it already. Because it was...later and then it was sooner and then it was in-between the two and then I’m like “okay, just make up your mind and get them out of here already. Just get it done and over with; get it started so that they can come home.”

Both of these women, and other spouses with whom I spoke, felt a sense of restlessness prior to their husbands leaving and felt that his departure was more of a positive since it meant his return was closer than his departure.

This restlessness often translated into a desire to spend time with their husbands and remain close to them as their departure came closer. Many cited trips to see family as being a priority, as was helping him pack his gear, getting their financial and legal issues in order (which often creates a new sense of stress), and just spending time alone without the children or other people as distractions. Yet though many of them tried to accomplish this, others felt resistance from their spouses and believed he resisted their need to be close as a way of preparing himself for the emotional separation that was about to occur.

However, tension within the relationship was also presented as a reality in a wife's day-to-day existence prior to a deployment, emotional withdrawal being the most common response to his impending departure. Allison, whose husband was leaving for a 15-month deployment four weeks after we met, said she knew that they had "already started to separate" but claimed that this was a normal behavior for most military couples, as evidenced by Veronica's statement that she too, since her husband was also getting ready to deploy, had begun "building [her] wall up." Yet, both Allison and Veronica, as well as several other wives, felt that this wall even served, over the "long term," to bring her and her husband closer together, especially upon his eventual return. This wall of which they speak typically serves as a way to lessen the stress and pain of a soldier's deployment and prepare the wife for her newly added responsibilities. Furthermore, some wives claimed that this process of emotional separation helped them to prepare for his absence; Sandy, however, felt otherwise: "You can't, whether you've been through it once or ten times, you can't prepare yourself enough for it."

Whatever the emotional response, it was often accompanied by feelings of angst as women struggled to maintain a sense of normalcy in their lives and not let go of the activities they did on a regular basis, as they feared this would de-center them once he left. Yet this was often accompanied by a sense of guilt, especially if the couple spent any time arguing prior to his departure. Allison claimed this guilt most often found her after his departure when she began to ask herself: "Oh my gosh, why didn't I spend my last

two months with him doing this and that? Or why did we get into arguments?” These feelings were not uncommon among all the wives, but were usually freely expressed during their discussions about, not just the time before he left, but throughout his absence as well.

Absence

Besides guilt at the possibility she did not invest enough time in her relationship prior to his departure, loneliness was the most commonly cited emotion. Wives spoke of crying for days, locking themselves away in their homes, or just feeling unable to move past his departure and carry on with a normal way of life. However, they all finally admitted to waking up and realizing the kids still needed to be fed, the house still needed to be cleaned, and if they were employed, they still needed to show up for work. Meredith described the feeling as being able to “breathe again because I can get back in my routine.” She felt that despite the struggles leading up to his departure, and her initial loneliness she was able to reestablish her life in a different rhythm and find a sense of balance.

But this balance is often shaken by major mishaps occurring once he leaves. Several wives claimed that every time their husband left for a deployment something major would break in the house or the vehicle. Karen echoed this sentiment, “It never seems to fail; something breaks around the house: something tragic happens; they’re gone and you’re there alone to pick up the pieces, move forward, fix whatever has been broke.” No matter the issue, military wives must deal with unexpected mishaps that always seem to mysteriously happen, only when their husbands are far from home.

His absence however was not necessarily a bad thing for all of the wives. Some, like Linda, felt that the experience of “kinda being forced to do a lot of stuff that most people wouldn’t normally choose to do...such as go through deployment,” left them feeling as if they had “come out better on the other side.” Linda went on to explain, “I can be thankful...for the experience without really wishing it on anyone or want to do it again...and kind of appreciate it for what it was.” Surprisingly enough she was not the only wife who found a sense of growth during her husband’s absence. Others were grateful for the deployment saying things such as “it has made me a stronger person” (Karen), or that they would have time to finally engage in some of the activities they

enjoy but don't often do when he is home, such as watch romantic comedies (Lisa), paint (Carrie) or read non-academic books (Meredith). These months of freedom often help the relationships, although they do cause strain as well, because husbands come home to wives who are stronger, more independent, and better able to handle the struggles of military life, including those periods of silence that are inevitable whenever he is overseas.

Silence

I remember when my husband left for Iraq, the first time, the hardest part of his absence was the extended silence. My first contact with him after he left on April 2, 2003 was a brief phone call at the end of May. With a war raging and no phone calls or letters, I was always prepared to hear the worst. The relief that washed over me when he called was palpable and gave me the strength to carry on for the next two months until he was able to call again. This intermittent communication caused a great deal of stress on me while he was gone, as it did on our relationship; however, once he returned we were able to work out the kinks that developed due to his prolonged periods of silence. Thankfully, technology has improved since 2003, but this silence still exists when the men are gone and it is perhaps one of the most difficult things a wife has to deal with when her husband is gone.

While dealing with the house, kids, finances, vehicles, and all the other realities of life seems overwhelming at times, most wives end up throwing themselves into these things as a way to make the time move more quickly; however, time often comes to a standstill when the phone remains silent for days on end and their email box remains empty as well. Not hearing from their husbands was one of the biggest stressors wives felt when he was gone, this silence often left their minds wandering over the worst possible scenarios and them feeling unable to function.

Claire, who had not heard from her husband in almost a week when we spoke said she was starting to get stressed and anticipated crying when he was finally able to call. Other wives, when the silence became too prolonged began "freaking out" (Sandy), fearing for "his mortal safety" (Carrie) or even feel "faintish and have no energy" (Lindsay). All of these feelings can become compounded if women watch the news since they felt it generally served to "mislead" them about "what is going on" because "it might

not be as big of what they're really going through" (Lindsay); however, when the phone doesn't ring it's easy to believe the television when it's the only official voice they hear.

Obviously the stress of their husbands being in a war zone, especially if they don't hear from their husbands or watch the news on a regular basis creates a certain element of fear in military wives. However it was not just the wives' fears about their husbands' silence that stood out in the course of the interviews. What became more intriguing was their own reluctance to voice their fears out loud about potential injury or death. Even when directly asked, most chose to allude to the answer without every truly stating the words. This silence was intriguing and as a result became a major part of the separation theme.

Injury

Most of the wives had a tendency to focus more on the possibility of their husband being injured than on him dying; however, none choose to really say this. When asked about their greatest fear the responses varied, but most were along the lines of "him coming back and not being the same person" (Laurel). Another said, "well the obvious that something will happen" (Leann); "I mean there's an element of fear, you know, for the unknown, and hopefully everything goes as we planned, but in the military things change..." (Meredith), and "He's not here and people are shooting at him" (Veronica). Jennifer also expressed that her biggest fear was if he was being shot at, but in the same breath she also said she wondered even more if he was taking care of himself. While all of these responses recognize the possibility of injury, none of the wives come out directly and say "I am afraid he will come home injured." But while these allusions to injury were minimal, those of his potential death were almost non-existent.

Death

The area in which the wives remained the most silent was in regards to the possibility of their husband's death. Throughout the course of 22 interviews, many wives alluded to death by saying things such as they fear "him not coming back" (Laurel) or worry about his "mortal safety" (Carrie), and even know that "people are shooting at him" (Veronica), but only one was willing to openly speak about it with me and discuss

why she felt military wives were so reluctant to open up to one another about something that is so very real in their immediate culture.

Allison's husband, who is a Senior commanding officer, has deployed three times in their 28 years of marriage. She understands the fears and struggles a wife goes through, especially given her husband was one of the first, like my own husband, to enter into the ground war that began in Iraq in 2003 and resulted in almost daily deaths. During the course of her interview Allison mentioned that military wives don't speak about their fear of death to one another and said that "as you get more senior, it gets even less." She posited that the military breeds this expectation in wives that "you just deal with it or...it's part of the lifestyle" and as a result of these attitudes women don't feel comfortable discussing it with one another. However, Allison felt that by suppressing these fears wives are creating more stress on themselves because "it's always something that's in our forefront. And even if it's not in the forefront; it's there. We won't admit it and we might even, people even try to ignore it, but it is always there." She later stated that if wives were more willing to recognize, talk about, and lean on one another in regards to their fears about the possibility of their husband's dying in combat it might help make the experience just a little bit easier to get through.

Homecoming

While his absence is often hard and fraught with concerns regarding his safety, his homecoming can prove to be even harder. Because she has been forced to handle everything on her own, the military wife often discovers a newfound sense of freedom and independence in her husband's absence. No longer bound by the normal boundaries of her married life she is free to do as she pleases, when she pleases. Lindsay said when her husband is gone she will often forgo making dinner and just call a friend to "meet up" and dine out. However, once her husband returns she feels the need to make dinner each evening and have a family dinner, something which creates more work for her since "when he's deployed...it's just [her] and [her] daughter [and she] can just...make a quick meal," or as previously mentioned, go out to eat with a friend. Allison claimed her biggest struggle has always been adjusting to having him in her space. Used to coming and going as she pleases, a military wife can often feel oppressed or put upon by her husband when he asks her where she is going and when she is going to return. Claire

described it as him “invading [her] territory” and making her redefine her time. This feeling was actually more common than not since most of the wives had separate lives outside of their marriage, including activities, friendships and priorities. Several wives said their husbands didn’t feel “needed” any longer because the women had become so much more independent in his absence.

Nonetheless, not every aspect of deployment is negative as it can often have a positive impact on the couple’s relationship, once they readjust to him being home. Karen, whose husband has been deployed three times, stated, “I mean it sucks that they’re gone...it really does but the time that you spend apart makes you appreciate the time that you have together.” Besides appreciating one another, a deployment can serve to bring a couple closer together since they have to relearn each other’s boundaries and often even just get to know one another again, since both partners have inevitably experienced some change in their personalities since they were last together.

The one thing all the wives agreed upon was that a healthy, happy adjustment to their husband’s return took time. Whether it be in the bedroom, the kitchen, the living room, the yard, or related to the finances or her newfound priorities, time was essential for a couple to maintain balance in their relationship and reestablish their life together. Leann said:

You’ve gotta go into it slowly. You can’t rush it. You can’t have a husband come home and expect to take right back over, because that’s not gonna happen. You can’t rush it...you gotta just slowly ease back into things I think. And I think if you just kinda take your time and ease back into it things will eventually fall back into place.

By allowing time to get to know one another again, most military couples find themselves better able to “refocus on the things that are important and not just the petty kind of stuff” (Laurel) that often leads to misunderstandings. However, despite the struggles that come with being separated for long periods of time, most of the military wives interviewed still had no desire to do it all over again in a different way because of the pride they felt in all that their husbands do and the relationships they formed as a means of dealing with separations from their spouse.

“Relationships”

“You’ve gotta break out of your bubble; break out of your shell, and get to know people.”

--Pamela

--“Married to the Military” for 3 years

Maintaining relationships with others was perhaps, outside of deployment, the most frequent theme to emerge during the course of coding. Every wife interviewed spoke at length about her experiences with other people, both inside and outside of the military. Though their experiences varied, most of the women shared many similar thoughts on the value of the military and civilian connections. Many women had friends in both communities as well. However, they felt that these connections served different purposes as explained by Pamela:

It, it’s that people I can call when I don’t want to talk to someone who’s in the military; who’s just gonna say, “Well, you know how the military is.” I don’t, I don’t like that. And then, you know, I can go and talk to them. Or if I don’t want to talk to this person who’s gonna be like, “Okay I don’t understand what’s going on.” I can go talk to that military wife who’s like, “Oh. Yep. I’ve got you. I understand. Yeah, that’s not fair.” So it’s, it’s nice to have both sides and, like I said, I have an equal amount pretty much.

Keeping this sense of balance was important to these women, and many of them felt that by maintaining ties to the civilian community, they were able to do so. Ultimately, connections with both the military and civilian communities provide the military wife with an extended support network she is able to call on in times of need. Thus, relationships served as the overarching theme for the creation and exhibit of the 32 silhouettes that lined the gallery walls.

Friendships

Most of the women claimed that the friendships they made, both inside and outside of the military community, were one advantage they had over civilian wives. They felt that these friendships were bonds that not only provided them with a strong

support network, but also gave them an extended family all over the world. These friendships often become the center of their world, outside of their children, when their husbands work long hours or are off at a school, a training exercise, or an extended deployment. Allison claimed that if she had not been a part of the military her friendships would have all been centered in one town; however, since she is a military wife her experience is otherwise:

I have now friends all over the world. Um, I just went to the post office the other day and bought two hundred and fifty stamps for Christmas, 'cuz that's how many letters get sent out...between two and three hundred letters get sent out. We don't correspond with all of those friends all over the world, um regularly, but we do it once a year, and that's at Christmas time.

While Allison acknowledges that she doesn't keep in contact with all of these friends year-round she does keep several with whom she does maintain regular correspondence. However, Allison's experience of having a host of long-distance friendships was not unique. All the wives interviewed recognized that their military friends were mobile and could be counted on to leave at some point, given the transient nature of the military. Yet, they still formed strong bonds with other military wives and civilians because though "you lose friends and you gain friends...you'll know your true friendships, the ones that'll stand the test of time because you'll stay friends with them no matter where you go" (Pamela).

Having the comfort of a lasting friendship despite the many miles between often provides a military wife with an outlet for her frustrations and a strong shoulder to lean on in times of frustration and despair. Karen expressed her gratitude towards her first military friend "especially through the first deployment" because the woman "had been a military wife for about fifteen years at that point and..." provided her with much needed advice about how to survive when he was gone. These friendships serve to strengthen the sense of family many women begin to feel as they move to a new place, encounter new experiences together, and help each other endure long, and sometimes painful, separations.

Civilian friends

Civilian connections fulfilled different needs than those of the military ones. Women claimed that by engaging in friendships with civilians they were able to look at the military from a fresh perspective because most of the “people that you made friends with were interested in... they wanted to find out about [the military lifestyle]” and try to understand even if they are never truly able to do so. Wives also said that they generally engaged in the same type of activities with their civilian friends as they did their military ones, often bringing the two groups together to form stronger support networks and provide the civilians with more insight into the lifestyle. Casey, however felt that no matter how often she melded the two groups when it came to the civilians, “I don’t know if they could truly understand some things; I think they probably didn’t want to otherwise they would have been in the military.” Despite the lack of understanding, maintaining connections with the civilian community were an integral part of most of these women’s lives.

Having secure community connections is important to staying sane for a military wife, especially if living off-post. Being able to meet people outside of the unit is often more satisfactory since those friendships may feel more genuine. Maria, in describing her civilian friendships stated: “My friendships that I make outside of the military are more secure because I’ve chosen them and they’ve chosen me. It’s not, we’re not hanging out because our husbands work together.” I, too, have experienced this over the years and feel that the friendships developed outside of the military enclave of my husband’s unit are more stable since as one wife claimed, “there are a lot of dysfunctional friendships and marriages going on and it’s just very hard. Very hard. Once you have a problem with somebody, everybody takes sides” (Maria), something which becomes problematic when the husbands must go to work together each day and try not to get involved.

However, not all civilian interactions are positive. Though these relationships were important to military wives, many said that their interactions with civilians were oftentimes tenuous, even if those people were their friends. Many wives felt their civilian friends “had no clue” as to what they were going through during a deployment and, as a result, “couldn’t really talk to them,” because, often, when they referred to something

military related their friends did not understand, seemed confused, or were fascinated by a life many wives felt was commonplace.

Struggles with civilian friends are only one aspect of the military wife's challenge with those outside of the military community; people with whom they are not friends often present more of a difficulty, since they are not familiar with the intricacies of the military lifestyle. The most common place for issues to arise is in the workplace. Karen, 35, whose husband has deployed 5 times stated:

The hardest thing that I have honestly endured is where I work. I work in a small town; absolutely none of them have ever been military and when my husband...did come home for his R&R for them to accept the fact that I was taking time off, because that could be, once again, the last time that I ever see my husband alive or walking or capable of hugging his wife, it was very, very hard...for them to comprehend. It's very hard for them to comprehend everything but I have been there six years now and it has taken a full six years for them to realize that my husband will come before my work.

Karen's experience is not unique. Numerous wives, myself included, have encountered difficulties on the job because of wanting to spend time with our husbands prior to, during, or immediately following a lengthy separation.

Work is not the only place in which wives encounter issues with civilians. Often the general public, and even family members, lack a sense of understanding as to either why women chose to marry a soldier or why their husband became a soldier in the first place. Theresa, 20, who has only been a member of the military community for a little over a year, explained that she enjoys living near an Army base because the people around it are more understanding of the military. Her experiences back home in the South, however, present a different story:

I had a shirt that said 'Proud Army Wife'...and a woman stopped me in Walmart and she said, 'That is the most horrible thing to be proud of; to be an Army wife. Why are you proud of that? They go and kill people. They're murderers....They don't have their own mindset, they just listen to whoever's above them.' And, and she was saying all these hateful things and I said, 'you know what? The reason I'm a proud Army wife is because my husband decided to join so that your

husband wouldn't get drafted.' And it just made me so mad, I never said anything that mean to anybody.

She later goes on to discuss her own family's confusion as to why her husband chose to join the military and said they thought "he made the dumbest decision in the world" and that she "was stupid for going with him...and marrying him, knowing that he was gonna join eventually."

Military friends

One of the strongest bonds military wives have with one another, and oftentimes, even other soldiers, is their mutual understanding of the military lifestyle. Familiar with both the happy times and the struggles, military wives expressed that they often turned to other wives in times of trouble because they understood their marriage more than their civilian friends. Referenced as a "common ground," by several of the women interviewed, friendships with other military wives provide a support network that can be utilized in the event of deployments, moves, and even just the stress of day-to-day life. The connections with other military wives often become deeper than just friendships. Claire described her military connections as family:

I have my family, I have my friends, and I have my military family. And, next to my family, my military family is next in line to be the strongest versus my friends. I have my Army friends, my civilian friends, but my Army friends...I mean my military friends go in to the military family. Because we are, we are one big family and we help each other when things go bad. We help each other when our soldiers are deployed. Um, I love my military family. Granted, there are some that you just wanna knock into next week, but there are some that you would just lay your life on the line for. I, I love my family, I love my military family. That's the best thing.

While her family takes precedence over both the military family and her friendships, it is her military family that she depends on more than her friendships that exist outside of the military community. However framed, this sense of family served to create an interconnected support network that the women could depend on when their husbands were deployed or sent off to other training exercises.

Veronica also described the military as a family, saying that no matter where she went she always felt as if she were part of an extended family, even if it was just as a “distant cousin.” This family metaphor shows the significance of military connections, many of which are difficult to maintain, but as Casey claimed, “since most people’s families are somewhere else...you have to make friends,” especially given the transient nature of the military lifestyle.

Moving every two or three years is stressful on a friendship and can even make some women wary of forming friendships with other wives. As a result of this uncertainty about how long they might be living in one place, many wives choose to limit their interactions and form friendships with more military wives than civilian women. One wife felt that she formed more friendships with military wives because they were better able to sustain a long-distance friendship than was a civilian. She felt that “the military spouse knows better how to handle a long-distance relationship and try to keep those ties than a civilian does. It’s just because most civilians don’t have to and they’re used to having their friends right here” (Jennifer). However, for the most part, all the women interviewed agreed that because they moved so often it was important to “break out of [their] bubble,” and “put [themselves], out there and be willing to go to different things” (Jennifer). Allison, a 30-year veteran wife, felt it was important to “hit the ground running” when forming friendships in a new place since there is a lack of certainty as to how long they may be in that place. They believed that by doing so, they were more likely to form “battle buddies” who became even more central to their lives when their husband’s were deployed.

Having a “battle buddy” or a whole group of them is essential to the military wife’s experience as she, more often than not, spends a good portion of her marriage alone. These friends are able to understand the experiences she is having and many wives felt that their military friends were “more compassionate,” usually because they are going through the experience themselves, or have been there before. Several wives even credit their military friends with helping them adjust to a new post or even with just learning the ropes of living the military lifestyle.

Chapter Summary

The life of the military wife is anything but easy. Once she marries a soldier she becomes a part of a larger institution, which she may or may not support. This institution often regards her as more of a hindrance than it does a help, even as it attempts to appear otherwise. One of the main issues military wives face is a lack of control over the course of their own lives, something which causes stress in their lives as many of them feel a need to monitor their behavior and keep quiet in order to be supportive of their husbands' careers. Their marriages, being subject to the whims of the government, often left them feeling as if they had no voice in the decisions that affected their lives, especially in regards to long-term separations and the unknown. Many wives who felt that they were expected to fulfill certain obligations to their husband's unit or the Army at-large responded by seeking other means of self-fulfillment and independence. However, not all wives saw being married to a soldier as a negative experience; many claimed that the job security it provided was essential, especially given the unstable nature of the economy. Others felt proud of both their role as a supporter to their husband and the military, as well as the job their husband does on a daily basis, even if this does mean prolonged separations during the course of their marriage. These separations are generally made easier through the connections she makes with other people, military and civilian, which serve as her support network during long work hours and even longer deployments. The deployments she endures serve as a dual-edged blade in that they wreak havoc on the routine of life, but they also often serve to make her a stronger, more independent individual who feels capable of taking care of any problem that comes along. Yet this independence can cause ripples in her marriage upon the soldier's return, but with time and patience these issues could be worked out, possibly leading to a stronger, closer marriage. Wives also felt the relationships they developed with other women provided them with a strong support network to work through the separations and help them achieve self-fulfillment.

Ultimately, this chapter provided the three main themes for the textile art pieces discussed in the following chapter. The themes of "collective experience," "separation," and "relationships" all served to inspire the ideas that formulated in my mind as I listened to these women's voices and imagined how best to move them into the studio and

translate them into 3-dimensional pieces of textile art that honored both their voices and their lived experience.

Chapter 5 - Design Process

Art serves as a multi-modal means of communication with a larger audience than that of the artist. Since the early 1970s feminist artists have produced artwork that seeks to “change the nature of art itself, to transform culture in sweeping and permanent ways by introducing into it the heretofore suppressed perspective of women” (Broude & Garrard, 1994, p. 10). This desire to “transform culture” and provide a new insight into women represents the journey on which I embarked in my studio. My aim was to release the voices of military wives through my studio work, and provide the community with a new perspective about military wives and the experiences they go through being married to soldiers. For so long, military wives have been unheard, never asked, or simply silenced. In my studio, I worked to provide their voices with a vehicle of expression and do as Leavy (2009) claims art should do – create a space for emotion in which people are able to connect with one another.

Reaching the final goal of providing a visual representation of these women’s words entailed quite a few stops and starts along the way. At the beginning stages of this project, I proposed a set path of creation; however, what I found is my design process dictates a constant series of changes based upon how I was examining the data on a particular day, interpreting new ideas, and feeling the best method of relating said ideas into pieces that worked with the women’s words. My initial vision was transcribe, analyze, sketch, create, exhibit. What I found happening instead was transcribe, sketch, experiment, transcribe, analyze, create, sketch, create, analyze, ad infinitum. In essence my process was composed of a series of interrelated steps that constantly influenced one another. As a result of this process I found myself constantly reanalyzing and reinterpreting each idea as I worked through the transcription and analysis of the data.

Prior to engaging in a long-term commitment to any particular piece, extensive experimentation with techniques, such as paper mache, machine-lace creation and draping, and materials, including the selection of appropriate textiles, was conducted. These experimentation processes were documented through journaling, sketches, and photography, then were later referenced as the pieces began to take form. However, before the final pieces were developed, numerous initial ideas were considered and

discarded. The design development section of this chapter is organized by the three installation pieces: “My Ring is My Uniform;” “Same, Same, but Different;” and “Fallen Soldier.” Following a brief overall description and statement of relationship to the data, a detailed description of the technical process is presented, followed by a more thorough discussion of how the data influenced the design decisions.

Studio Practice

Studio practice is one of the most important elements of a practice-based research project because it is in the studio that the artist is able to physically explore the range of possible ideas generated by the data collection. de Freitas (2002) claimed “studio practice results in artists and designers acquiring knowledge about concepts, materials, processes and applications” (Introduction, para. 3), all of which are essential to the creation of an artwork. The practice of which she speaks often begins with an experimentation of both techniques and materials as the artist attempts to solidify the initial design ideas. Construction (the step-by-step process of creating an artwork) of these ideas is often full of false beginnings, egregious design errors, and, more often than not, satisfying endings. This was exemplified throughout the construction of the installation pieces as I worked through the various stages of studio practice and experimented with different processes in order to achieve the final outcomes.

Process

Once the data had been collected, coded, analyzed for themes, and loosely translated into design ideas I began working on the creation of the pieces for the exhibit. The pieces often began as one idea and ended up evolving into something else entirely different as I experimented with various techniques: collage, machine-lace, materials, and construction methods. However, while the themes and data guided the decision-making process, my husband and mentor’s input both served as a sounding board throughout. These informal critiques served as additional contributions to changes that emerged as I developed each piece.

Multimedia Documentation

As a way to track the design process and refer back to it for later reflection and analysis, I used three methods of documentation: a visual reflective journal, a transcript notebook and photography. Initially, I felt these methods would serve as a way to gain the broadest perspective of how the process was unfolding, and I anticipated my documentation to be more in-depth than what reality dictated at the end of each workday. However, always keenly aware of documentation's necessity, especially since it serves as an "exploratory tool that has the potential to influence work in progress...[and move the artist] intellectually or creatively from the known...to the unknown...[it becomes] an inherent part of studio practice" (de Frietas, 2002; Analysis of Results, para. 2), I made a concerted effort to somehow document my ideas and the pieces as they were being constructed. My tendency, as usual, was to occasionally document thoughts or ideas in the journal and then forget about it until I needed to jot down a measurement, a quick exploratory sketch or a particular material selection. Because I have always been more akin to writing down my initial ideas rather than sketching them and then working with the piece as it emerges, I found the transcript notebook and photography to be the more helpful methods as I always had a visual and, in essence, aural representation of what I was thinking at a given time.

Visual Reflective Journal

The visual reflective journal was where I recorded sketches, material selections, techniques and other design ideas. Initially, I envisioned records would be made at least twice a week to start, and almost daily as the design process evolved and construction progressed; however, as mentioned above reality was quite different. Because inspiration strikes at odd times, in odd places, I ended up using various sketchbooks, random pieces of paper—including a class assignment—and even the pages of books. Each time I attempted to restrict myself to one location (i.e. sketchbook) I felt frustrated and uninspired. In order to not disrupt the flow of what I was thinking or working on at the time I just jotted down my thoughts on the closest piece of paper; however, more often than not, I would at least assign it a date. My initial idea was to record written reflections about the design process; however, I found I was much more inclined to do this in my

computer or hold a discussion with my husband (especially given his constant presence in my studio) to work through my thoughts regarding what had occurred in the studio on any given day.

Transcript Notebook

I also wanted to make sure the journal was kept from the start of the interview process. As a result, I began a separate notebook in which I took notes about the interviews. These notes usually took the form of inspirational ideas and/or comments about a particular interview as it stirred up ideas regarding specific quotes. Since the interviews were fundamental to the actual creation of the artwork, reflection before, during and after the interviews occurred was necessary to help inform later design decisions and analysis. I found the transcript notebook provided me with a guiding method of reflection as I worked in the studio and processed ideas, since it contained my thoughts as I transcribed.

Given the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research, my thoughts regarding the decisions I made and the feelings I experienced as I worked with the interview transcripts, and began thinking about how the women's words could be translated into textile art needed to be available to me for later reference and reflection. By recording my ideas, I was able to better navigate areas of conflict or trouble and enhance my decision-making process as I selected and discarded various ideas throughout the course of the project.

Photography

Step-by-step photographs allow a researcher to replicate techniques used in the design process. By photographing the pieces as they were being constructed, I provided myself with visual documentation to help me understand not only how I think and how I work when I am in creative mode, but how each piece changed as I sought more suitable ways to make a specific artwork fit its given theme or themes. Because it is often difficult to remember the steps taken in the studio to create a specific piece, photographs provided me with a means of recollection, which was integral as I moved further along in the process of creation, data analysis (discussed in Chapter 4), and discussion.

Design Development

My original goal was to produce 10-15 pieces of work. However, this changed throughout the data analysis process. Through constant consultation with the notebook of ideas I kept as I transcribed and the emergent themes of relationships, separation, and collective experience emerged my original concepts decreased from double digits to three installation pieces. The pieces created were 1) “Same, Same, But Different” – a series of 32 fabric-collage silhouettes, 2) “Fallen Soldier” – a 3-D mixed media fabric sculpture, and 3) “My Ring is My Uniform” – a wedding gown.

Silhouettes

The first piece in the installation was a series of 36 fabric-collaged, female silhouettes (Figure 5.1).

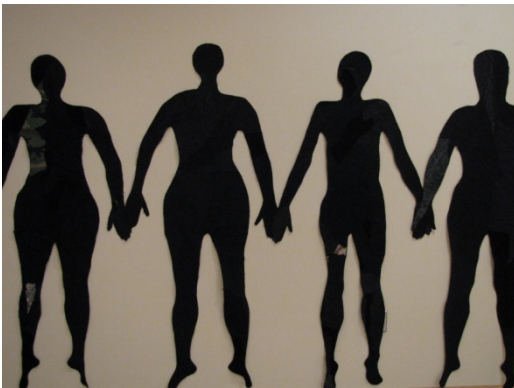


Figure 5.1 Fabric Silhouettes

The idea for the silhouettes developed as I transcribed the interviews and took notes on the data. Unlike the soldier piece, which went through numerous manifestations before the final product, my ideas for the silhouettes were pretty stable once I decided to create them. My main uncertainty regarding their design was whether to make them more realistic or just keep them abstract. Eventually, I decided on something of a happy medium and choose to create a shadowy form that followed realistic lines. However, because I recognized the importance of keeping the women’s voices central in the art, I chose to make them life-size.

The silhouette project began to evolve as I moved deeper into transcription. A few ideas developed as I transcribed, all of them related to the idea of relationships with other women. To begin, one of the recurring themes that kept coming up during the interviews

was about the relationships they fostered with other military wives and civilians. While their military friends were unanimously the support system most wives turned to in times of need, civilian friends also played a large part in their support networks. The idea of connectivity with other women, as well as the soldiers their husbands worked with, was paramount in these conversations. As a result, I felt that an installation piece depicting this aspect of their lives was essential to truly convey what it meant to be a military wife.

Construction

Before the silhouettes could even be realized or make it to the studio phase I had to contact each woman I interviewed and ask if she would be willing to let me trace her body for inclusion in the art exhibit. The women I was able to reach were more than cooperative. Unfortunately, some women had moved and others did not respond to my phone calls. During this phone call I scheduled a time and place for the tracing to take place. Most women chose to come to my studio; however, a few requested I come to their house or their office. I requested at this time that they wear fitted clothes to the tracing appointment as this would make it easier to get a true silhouette without the bulk of clothing. However, I did not just use military wives for this portion of the exhibit. I also contacted civilian friends and acquaintances and asked them if they would agree to be traced. The inclusion of civilians was necessary given our bond with them as we travel the course of our lives. In the end, I had a total of 36 women who agreed to be traced—17 military and 18 civilians.

Each tracing session began with a photo session. A full body shot and a close-up head shot were taken in case they were needed later for reference. Due to anonymity, I do not include individual images of the women photographed. However, at this point in the process I had not yet decided how I would be constructing the silhouettes or what their final outcome was going to look like, so I captured each woman's likeness in the event I might need it later if I chose to create a realistic image. After the photos were taken I had the women lie on a 6 x 4 foot wide piece of canvas ripped from the 6 foot x 30 yard roll of canvas I purchased through Art Supply Warehouse. Each woman was asked to lie in the same position so as to maintain consistency with the silhouette images. She was instructed to lie with her legs slightly spread, arms away from her sides, and hands

relaxed as if she were getting ready to hold someone else's hand. Once in position I traced the women using a 2B pencil (Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2 Canvas with 2B

Afterwards, each silhouette was photographed in its raw state (i.e. the way it was traced) and then trued to create more even, realistic lines. As the lines were trued, either a red and/or blue pencil was used, with a second tracing done in red Sharpie® (Figure 5.3 & Figure 5.4).

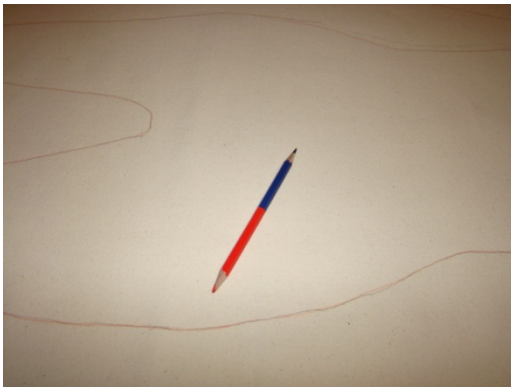


Figure 5.3 Canvas with trued lines

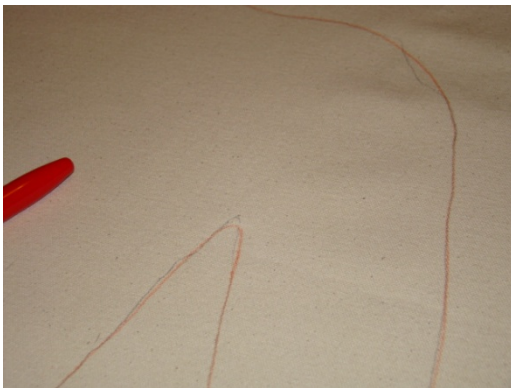


Figure 5.4 Canvas outlined in red Sharpie®

This technique was used to create a visible line through the stitching that would be applied. Once the silhouette was trued, it was hung in order to release wrinkles (Figure 5.5).



Figure 5.5 Trued silhouette

When all tracings were completely trued a one-inch border was drawn around each silhouette and the surrounding canvas was cut away (Figure 5.6).



Figure 5.6 Border around silhouette

By removing the excess canvas I was better able to manage the silhouette while working with it.

At this stage, I had decided to turn each canvas silhouette into a fabric collage. As the artist and a fellow military wife, it was important to me that I include a part of myself in each of these pieces. Due to a large weight loss the previous year I had a surplus of black clothing (my wardrobe color of choice) in various materials. These discarded clothing items became the material for the fabric collages. I used a variety of fabrics: leather, various laces, velvets, fake fur, taffetas, knits, and wovens. Fiber content also varied, there was a combination of silk, rayon, polyester, cotton, leather, and microsuede. However, prior to attaching the fabric to each silhouette it was necessary to deconstruct

the garments so I would be better able to judge how the fabric pieces should be laid out on each canvas base. My husband and I spent each evening for 3 weeks deconstructing black garments. Once the clothing was deconstructed I moved it to the studio and began cutting it randomly. The goal was to get fabric pieces of different sizes. During this stage I spent a large amount of time trying to create a sheer fabric made from strips. I created several hundred strips of different fabrics and attempted attaching them to ACU fabric (Figure 5.7).



Figure 5.7 Fabric experimentation

My idea was to cover each military wife with ACU fabric that had in turn been covered with fabric strips. After ruining an iron, experimenting with different types of fusible interfacings, and realizing the ACU fabric was not as visible as I wanted it to be I scrapped the idea and moved in a different direction.

Still uncertain as to exactly how I wanted to proceed I just began placing fabric scraps on top of a military wife's silhouette. As the fabrics were laid out I decided to just incorporate pieces of ACU and BDU uniforms into each military wife's fabric collage. I also made sure that each silhouette contained some of the same fabrics so as to establish and maintain the idea of connectivity between each individual silhouette. I began the pinning process by working on the military wives first. Each silhouette was laid out on my cutting table with fabric pieces placed on them and rearranged until I was pleased with the overall aesthetic. The layout was difficult at times because I wanted to make sure the ACU/BDU fabric was visible but not overwhelming. My intention was to make it clear she was married to a soldier, but not make the soldier's uniform the main focus of the piece. The civilians were a bit easier as I chose to only use the black fabrics, so for them it was just a matter of making sure they all had a common fabric between them and

the military wives. Once the fabric decisions were made, pins were inserted into the fabric to hold the pieces to one another as well as to the canvas while the silhouettes were being stitched (Figure 5.8).



Figure 5.8 Pinned silhouettes

Laying out and pinning the fabric took approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours per silhouette. Time was usually dependent upon the size of the figure. Once 3-4 silhouettes were pinned I would then stitch them. I had to switch between the two tasks quite often due to the fact that I would run out of straight pins after 4 silhouettes.

Stitching often proved to be a bit of a challenge. I can't begin to count how many times I was stabbed in various body parts, how many needles were broken, how many times the bobbin thread broke/came unwound/ejected itself from the machine (actually, this only happened once), or the upper thread broke. The levels of frustration encountered during stitching often made it a challenge to continue. However, continue I did. When stitching I chose to stitch in a circular motion for the wives, and a vertical motion for the civilians (Figure 5.9 & Figure 5.10).



Figure 5.9 Military wife stitching



Figure 5.10 Civilian stitching

The stitch appearance was significant in the fact that I wanted to convey not only the difference between the women (military vs. civilian) but the constant change military wives encountered and how that change involves constant connection with others. The straight vertical stitching used on the civilian women signified the more stable, solid nature I, as the artist, see their lives as having when compared to the military wife's world of uncertainty.

Each silhouette was stitched using free-motion stitching with the feed dogs lowered and a darning foot attached. Black polyester thread was used on all silhouettes, and stitching time ranged from 1-2 hours each; again, this time was largely dependent upon the size of the figure and how many times the thread and/or needle broke. When I began stitching I was using a size 14 needle; however, after uncountable breakages, I switched to leather and/or denim needles, both of which broke less often and provided me with some relief from needle-breakage frustration.

After the silhouettes were stitched they were flipped over and cut along the red tracing line. My original thoughts about the silhouettes were to place them on some sort of framing device so they would stick out from the gallery wall, thus the original one-inch border left around each one. As I moved through the process and hung a couple of them on my studio wall, I decided I preferred them flat on the wall. The fabric gave them the sense of dimensionality I wanted to convey; I previously believed this would only be possible by making them 3-D and having them project from the wall. However, this change in perspective created a bit more work because I then had to go back through and trim each silhouette once more, this time along the original tracing line. Once again my

husband proved invaluable as he spent many a night sitting in front of the television trimming silhouettes as I worked on the soldier or the gown.

In order to ensure the fabric at the edge of each silhouette stayed down and did not move forward to reveal the canvas underneath it was necessary to overlock stitch the edges of each silhouette (Figure 5.11).



Figure 5.11 Serged silhouette

After experimenting with some spare canvas and fabric scraps, I found the right tension, stitch length, and stitch type. At this point, I was ready to serge (overlock stitch) the silhouettes and completed 2 of them in about 3 hours. The time each silhouette was taking began to take a toll on my stress levels as the gallery opening was swiftly approaching. My husband, yet again, offered to help out; so I taught him how to use the overlock machine. He proceeded to serge the rest of the silhouettes as I worked on the gown. After a week of solid sewing, the silhouettes were all serged and hanging from various areas in the studio (Figure 5.12 & Figure 5.13).



Figure 5.12 Serged silhouettes



Figure 5.13 Detail view of serged silhouettes

My greatest struggle at this point was still with the edges of the silhouettes. I wanted uniformity and was displeased with the amount of canvas still showing on the edge of each silhouette even after they were serged. Though the bulk of the canvas was hidden by the black thread, there were still pieces that stuck out through the threads of the canvas (Figure 5.14).

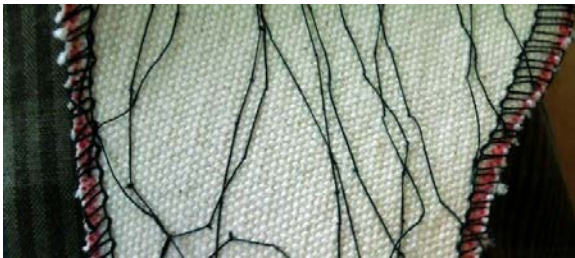


Figure 5.14 Close-up view of canvas threads

Many hours were spent pacing the studio and staring at the hanging silhouettes in an attempt to figure out how to best cover the canvas. One day during a moment of artistic malaise I picked up a piece of scrap fabric from the sewing table and started coloring on it with a Sharpie®. That was when I found the solution to my problem. I grabbed a silhouette from the wall, plopped in the studio beanbag, and proceeded to color the edges with the Sharpie®. A half-hour later, after both coloring and trimming away longer canvas threads with scissors, the canvas was no longer quite as visible at the edge of the silhouette. My husband, Dom spent most of his remaining time in the studio coloring the edges of silhouettes, as did I when I needed a break from working on the gown or the soldier (Figure 5.15 & Figure 5.16).

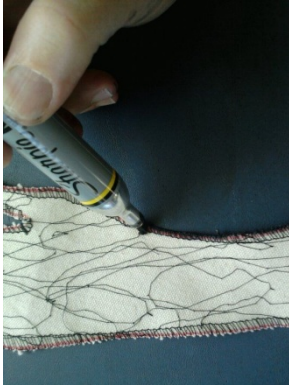


Figure 5.15 Coloring the back



Figure 5.16 Coloring the edge

Once a silhouette was fully stitched, serged, and colored it was hung upside down from a pants hanger in readiness for the gallery.

Thematic connections

As the interviews progressed, it became apparent that the theme of relationships was central to these women's lives. Once coding and analysis began it was even more apparent that there was a difference in how they viewed these relationships. I began to consider ways in which this theme could be used as inspiration for textile art. What developed was the idea of the silhouettes. By tracing the actual women interviewed, I was able to not only keep them central to the exhibit, but also show their sense of connection to military wives and civilians. Distance was conveyed by placement in the gallery, as the wives were spaced apart in an attempt to show though they are separated, the relationships between them still exist. The inclusion of my own silhouette in the exhibit allowed me to show how my experience as a researcher was inextricably connected to theirs, as well as my dual role as a woman and a military wife.

As previously mentioned, the idea of relationships with other women was a recurring theme in the course of the interviews. The point was mentioned not only as a means of support but also discussed in regards as to how they connected with other people. The experiences they had meeting other like-minded individuals varied. Many women cited they made connections at church, daycare, FRG meetings, Company functions, or their place of employment. Whether they met one another at a military function or in the civilian world, these women valued the connections they made with other women, especially given the transient nature of their lives. As such, I wanted to convey this connectivity in the creation of the silhouette series, all while attempting to keep each individual's voice central to the experience.

Because I was the artist, I felt it was also important to include my own sense of connection to many of these women; therefore, I asked civilian friends, as well as the wives I interviewed to serve as models for the silhouettes. In this manner I was able to produce silhouettes that were not only life-size, but ones that provided a direct connection to me. My connection to the silhouettes was further reinforced through the use of materials as all of the black fabrics utilized in the pieces were cut from my old clothing. Through design decisions such as these, I was able to not only forge a strong connection to the women, but also keep their voices central and convey their sense of connection to others even as they moved from post to post.

The transient nature of the military dictates a world in which one can make friends but need to leave them a few months later; because of this, many wives expressed their need to make friends as quickly as possible and to have "battle buddies." Claire, a 26 year-old woman whose husband has been in the military for two years, noted that friendships with other wives are like "a wildfire effect [that] just spreads." She further stated:

That's how our friendships are; that's how we've become so close...they have their battle buddies over there, we have to have ours. And, granted, some of the time the soldiers only have one, but, us, we have like fifty, forty battle buddies to one person. And it's just, it's awesome.

Claire's comments were reflective of how many wives felt in regards to the friendships they made with other military wives. Theresa, commented:

The friends that you make here [at the military base] are, it seems more tight knit more like you're needed as a friend here, not just—I wanna friend, but I really need a friend. I need a battle buddy...It just seems more tight knit...

These feelings became more pronounced, especially in regards to the struggles they encountered as their husbands deployed for months at a time. These connections gave the women a way to carry on as they faced multiple challenges without their husbands. One wife remarked that she “filled in gaps with people,” as a means of helping her work through her husband’s first deployment. Many of the other women felt similarly, in that the connections they made helped them to function when “things go bad” or provide them with a means of support when the soldiers are deployed.

These comments served as a way for me to view the silhouettes as an interconnected piece that served to create a “wildfire effect.” As such, I realized I needed numerous silhouettes to occupy the gallery. By creating 32 pieces that occupied the wall space of the gallery, I was able to show how the connection between these women spreads and that each woman is connected to the other despite the distance they may have between them.

However, I also wanted to convey these women as joined, therefore I asked each woman who let me trace her to lie with her arms out, as if she were going to hold hands with the person lying next to her. In this way, I was able to create a series of individuals who were “connected” to one another by appearing to hold hands. I further displayed this connection to other military wives by incorporating uniform fabric in each of their silhouettes as a means of distinguishing them from the civilian connections.

Yet these connections also exist outside of deployment and separation. Many of the women stressed the importance of having these individuals in their lives as a way of making the constant change in the military lifestyle more bearable. Several wives explained that part of the allure in meeting people comes from the stories they hear, especially as they encounter others who have lived different lives than themselves. Karen, whose husband has been in the military for twelve years, felt that her connectivity was dependent upon the fact that she met people “from everywhere that have been so many places and it’s just kinda cool to hear where they’ve been, what they’ve done.” Her feelings were echoed by many of the wives as they emphasized the allure of meeting

women who had different life experiences than themselves. I myself have experienced a few of these friendships and am still quite close to some wives I befriended 15 years ago when we were stationed at Fort Bragg or Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. These friendships, often based on the differences in our lives, have provided me with a sense of solace and support over the years as I have moved about the country and been forced to make new friends.

As evidenced in my own experience, as well as that of the wives interviewed, these bonds, no matter the distance, often remain strong even after both women have either moved on to other duty stations or their husbands have left the Army. The sense of connection exists despite distance. However, it can also be difficult to maintain these friendships, thereby creating a sense of distance between the wives even as the connection remains.

Yet, it was not only relationships with other military wives that were emphasized during the interviews. Many wives discussed the close relationships they have either maintained since before they became a part of the military or developed with civilian women as they move from duty station to duty station. Similar to those friendships developed with other military wives, many of these friendships also continue despite distance. I was truly able to connect with this part, given that the majority of my friendships over the last twenty years have been with civilians.

However, while civilian friends were important to the majority of women I spoke with, many wives preferred to work harder on their military friendships because they felt it was easier since other military wives were more likely to “understand” the challenges put before others in similar situations. Karen, a 35-year old, who has been involved in the military lifestyle for 11 years, explained she felt her civilian friends just aren’t “absorbing it” when she tries to explain the complexities of military life. She claimed:

They’re listening and they’re trying to be supportive and they do what they can, but they don’t understand it. It is frustrating. ‘cuz you’re trying to explain it, you’re trying to paint this beautiful picture with all these colors and, to me, a lot of times I feel that they see black and white. They’re not seeing the whole picture. They’re not looking into it. They’re seeing the structure.

I too have encountered this frustration as a result of civilians being unable to fully understand the struggles that come with being married to a U.S. soldier; however, the frustrations do not lessen the connection with these civilian women, it just makes the connection different.

Another wife who, prior to her husband joining the military, had military friends felt that though she tried “to help support them” she often found it difficult because she was unable to truly relate to “some of the feelings and thought that [her friends had] as being part of the military.” Her comment regarding the “feelings and thoughts” were often easier to form because they are all “in this together” and attend the same functions or meetings and live close to one another, especially if they live on-post. As a result of the discussion centered around friendship and connectivity with other wives I wanted to make sure that the silhouettes included both military wives and civilians; thus my asking civilians to take part in the project and my use of some of the same fabrics into both the military and civilian silhouettes.

The next aspect of connection I wanted to convey was that of women and the bonds we form. By creating a series of women holding hands along the wall I was attempting to emphasize the sense of commonality women share with one another. Linda, a 38 year-old woman, whose husband is an officer, stated “military wives have a tendency to think in very similar veins because we experience a lot of the same.” Because I had already heard many of the same or similar experiences being shared by different women during the course of the interviews, her comment drove me to emphasize this sense of commonality while collaging each silhouette. However, it was also important to relay the differences between the women. Connection does not imply homogeneity so I used different fabrics to create each collage; however, in order to maintain the idea of connection I did make sure there were at least 2 pieces of fabric that were the same throughout all 36 pieces. The collages were also pieced differently to further emphasize the difference between the women. Because I used tracings of each woman’s body there was also a marked difference in size and shape, further marking the difference between women.

Fallen Soldier

The soldier presented one of the most difficult challenges as I metamorphosed from my original concept to the finished product. Initial thoughts had been to utilize my husband as a model for the soldier. Initial sketches and ideas included the soldier lying with arms folded over the chest and the body composed solely of black machine lace with a red cutout -- to represent the heart-- in the center of the chest. He was to be lying in a coffin composed of plexiglass and broken eggshells (this would depict life's fragility); however, I shied away from using my husband as a model when I realized that covering him with either chicken wire, plaster of paris, or paper maiché was impractical. Besides the impractical aspect of using a live model, I also came to the conclusion than I wanted to use a less is more approach in regards to how I presented the soldier and the idea of separation. The goal was to convey how separation impacts a soldier and his wife. Upon reaching this decision I was quite stuck when I realized that I needed a male mannequin. As the soldier was one of my last pieces to complete, acquiring a mannequin in a timely manner seemed impractical, at best, since it would cost more for shipping than it would for the actual mannequin. My struggle, however, was not truly related to acquiring the mannequin, but how to convey such a prominent part of the military wife's life in an honorable and sensitive manner.

Separation is a constant in the life of a military family. However, in the last ten years, deployment has played a bigger role in this than years previous. Many of the wives I spoke with discussed the impact deployment has had on, not just on their marriages, but on their personal psyches as well. The influence of separation, whether school or deployment-related impacts they way they function in their daily lives. Their depictions of separation influenced how I thought this aspect of life in the military could be best illustrated through the Fallen Soldier.

Construction

I acquired a Styrofoam head (male) at a local craft store and began working on it while I deliberated how to solve the rest of my dilemma about the timely acquisition of a mannequin (Figure 5.17).



Figure 5.17 Styrofoam head

To begin, the head was covered with thin wire mesh (Figure 5.18).



Figure 5.18 Covering head with mesh

Once the head was completely covered with wire I cut strips of Army issue 100-mile an hour tape and covered the entire head (Figure 5.19).



Figure 5.19 Taped head

After shredding multiple BDU and ACU Army uniforms I then covered the head in these strips. Each fabric strip was sprayed with adhesive and then placed on the head (Figure 5.20).

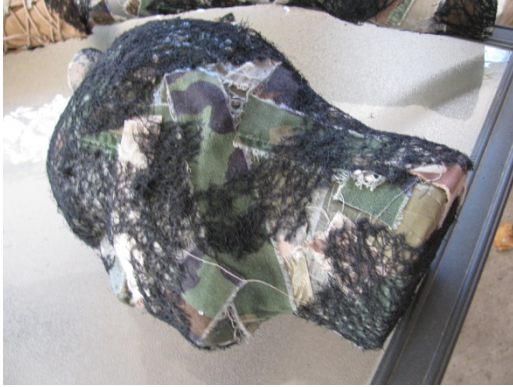


Figure 5.20 Finished head

My original intention was to use the Styrofoam as a mold and remove the wire, tape, and material covered portion; however, as I worked, I found this idea to be not only impractical, but illogical as well since my piece would lose body and structure. Therefore, I decided to keep the Styrofoam head intact as a means of ensuring a more realistic looking final product. The final step in completing the head was placing pieces of black machine lace on top of the uniforms (Figure 5.20).

Unfortunately, once the head was complete my quest for a male model was still not over. At a loss, I took a walk one day on a break from working in the studio and stumbled upon a male mannequin in a store window (Figure 5.21).



Figure 5.21 Mannequin in store window

I promptly entered the store and offered the owner a fair amount of cash to walk out of her store with the mannequin. She hesitated, took my number and told me she would call later after speaking with her business partner. A few hours later I received a call telling me they would sell me the mannequin. I took my vehicle and loaded the mannequin into the car (Figure 5.22 & Figure 5.23).



Figure 5.22 Mannequin in car



Figure 5.23 Mannequin in car

Later that evening, with the help of my husband, I began to deconstruct the mannequin into the pieces I envisioned using. The idea was to have a separate trunk, a single leg from the knee down, a full leg, a full arm, and a single hand, as well as the Styrofoam head that had already been completed (Figure 5.24).



Figure 5.24 Dismembered mannequin

Using a Dremel® fitted with a fiberglass cutting blade, the mannequin was cut into the specified pieces (Figure 5.25).



Figure 5.25 Dremeling® the mannequin

The head, having already been completed, was set aside and I began working on the other body parts. The first step for each part was covering them in 100-mile an hour tape (Figure 5.26).



Figure 5.26 Taping the leg

Using various-sized pieces of tape I covered each body part. Once the pieces were completely covered in tape, I then tore strips of BDU, ACU, and Desert uniforms to complete the next layer of the piece in the same manner as the head. The final step in completing all the pieces except for the full leg was to cover them in machine lace.

In order to accommodate covering the body parts it was necessary to create a sufficiently large piece of machine lace. Using a Brother® sewing machine, 10” round embroidery hoop, and water-soluble stabilizer I created a 6’ by 3’ piece of black machine lace. Once the lace was completed I placed it in the bathtub and immersed it in warm water to dissolve the stabilizer (Figure 5.27).



Figure 5.27 Soaking machine lace

After dissolution, the lace was cut into random pieces and placed on each of the taped pieces (Figure 5.28 & Figure 5.29).



Figure 5.28 Lace application



Figure 5.29 Finished trunk

The final construction step was to place a desert combat boot on the full leg and place machine lace over it (Figure 5.30).



Figure 5.30 Finished leg and hand

Thematic Connections

Separations, due to deployments or other training activities, wove their way into all aspects of the interviews, many times without a question about them ever being asked. As such, it was evidently one of the most central themes in the data. Emerging from the theme were several sub-themes that led to the soldier piece, most notably those of loneliness, connection, and silence in regards to the possibility of his injury and/or death. However, the silence ended up speaking in the loudest voice of all and served as the main inspiration for both the creation of the fallen soldier piece and its eventual placement and layout in the gallery.

Including the soldier in some way was one of my original ideas. Even before I began interviewing women I knew the soldier had to exist in the exhibit because of the topic. As a military wife I live in constant fear of my husband's death. When he is deployed I dread the sound of a car pulling up in front of my house and often find myself scanning the street in front of my house for strange cars before I even pull into the driveway. Given my own fears, and willingness to discuss them with my friends, I expected this to be something other wives readily discussed. I, however, was wrong. What I found was an unwillingness to talk about their fear of death. When asked about their greatest fear during a deployment most wives skirted the subject with comments such as, "Uh, well the obvious that something will happen;" "If I go a couple of days without talking to him, I'm freaking out;" or "I guess I am fearful....for the unknown." These sentiments were repeatedly expressed, but no one ever mentioned death was their greatest fear. Instead what I found was a willingness to share how they felt on a good day, which was "when he calls or he emails and I know that he's safe," or their faith in his training as a soldier. This was to be my experience time and again until I met Allison.

Allison, the wife of a Senior military leader, has been a part of the military her entire life, since her father was also a Senior military leader. During the course of the interview, I raised the topic of death and the reluctance I encountered from the other wives to acknowledge it by actually speaking the words. Her comments on the topic were quite illuminating:

I think it's because of that whole underlying thing of you don't know what's gonna happen, you never know....So I think it's normal for us to feel that, but we

never voice it to each other. We kinda hold it in to ourselves...I don't know if it's because we have this expectation that, maybe a cultural expectation—a military cultural expectation—among wives that you just deal with it or, you know it's a part of the life....But I don't think I've ever had a friend, a military friend, that I've talked to about it.

Allison's thoughts on the subject, given her long-standing military experience provided an explanation as to why military wives might be reluctant to discuss death as one of their greatest fears. Interestingly, both Allison and I did find that we discussed the possibility of our husbands' deaths with our non-military friends.

As a result of death not being mentioned, and my in-depth conversation with Allison regarding the subject, I chose to include body bags in the "Fallen Soldier" piece because it conveyed this fear and showed its quiet centrality in the lives of military wives. The mannequin was dismembered as a way to not just convey death, but to also show the impact of separation. For while we worry about their death, their dismemberment, or them returning to us in a condition other than they way they left, we also worry about the impact separation has on our relationship and our personal lives.

Both the departure and return of a soldier impacts the family. The months leading up to a deployment or separation are fraught with emotions, not all of which are positive. Many wives talked about their tendency to "emotionally separate," something they felt their husbands did as well, a technique attributed to making the "separation thing" not as painful for both parties. One wife, whose husband was preparing to leave for a 15-month deployment stated, "We have already started to separate....We love each other very much and we're always close, but we start to separate." Many also said they "feel drained because you know that this long period of time is happening where you're not going to be together," "stressed and overwhelmed," or that it just "wreaks complete havoc on our relationship." Their comments presented to me a vignette of pain that came with a soldier's eminent departure.

Yet it is not just departure that causes issues, it is also return. Established in a set routine and used to his absence, many wives feel they struggle to reconnect once he does come home. Sometimes this is due to circumstances beyond their control, such as night terrors, PTSD, or a sense of distance they feel their husband has placed between them,

which one wife described as him being “off in his own little world,” present in their lives but not truly there emotionally and mentally. These circumstances left some wives feeling as if they were not “ready and able or even wanting to deal with” these issues. However, other issues arise because the wife has to deal with him being back in her space. After having spent months alone she is suddenly faced with trying to learn how to incorporate his presence in not just her daily life, but her bed as well. These issues present many difficulties for couples as they try to reintegrate, and some couples just do what needs to be done in order to, as one wife stated, “pick up the pieces, move forward and...kind of pretend like he hasn’t been gone and continue with life as we know it.”

Because they each discussed this idea of emotional separation, coupled with their own feelings of stress, withdrawal and being overwhelmed, as well as the difficulties they encounter when their husband’s return, I wanted to convey the complexity of deployment and its impact. One way in which I chose to do so was to dismember the mannequin. The mannequin’s dismemberment represented not necessarily death, but the idea of separation itself. By breaking him down into pieces I wanted to show the distance deployment creates in both spouses lives. I further explored this idea of distance by covering the soldier with military tape and shredded uniforms. Though a man may love his wife and family, if he is a soldier his first obligation is to the military—something many of the wives I interviewed acknowledged as a given when married to a soldier. All of these factors combine to create a relationship that is often delicate in nature, as a result, I covered parts of each mannequin with machine-lace. The lace was often torn and/or frayed because, like these relationships, lace is delicate and easily damaged if not properly cared for; however, it was also important to me to include the lace on each mannequin piece because of its association with the feminine; for even though a soldier is alone during a deployment, he is always present in her thoughts, making him never truly alone or separate from the ones back at home. The lace was my way of establishing that long distance connection, even through a separation.

Wedding Gown

The wedding gown, which I used to represent the military wife, served as the central piece of my research. It was created as a means of embodying the life of a military

wife. Because of this I was particularly selective about not only my choice of materials, but how I chose to make these materials convey the experience of a military wife's life. The gown went through several conceptions before it was actually constructed. Each idea was directly related to something said by a wife or several wives during the course of the interviews. However, I realized the importance of editing my ideas, so as not to create a gown that was cumbersome and ended up not conveying any meaning to the viewer.

Construction

Construction of the wedding gown took place from October 2010 to April 2011. It began with the collection of ACU's from my husband, soldiers in his unit, and other military wives who responded to an email I sent out requesting donations. Once the uniforms were received they were deconstructed. Deconstruction involved a few steps; (1) remove all buttons and pockets, (2) if pants, remove waistband and bottom cuffs; if jacket, remove collar, cuffs, sleeves and front placket; (3) rip remaining seams; (4) press pieces flat using a steam iron. Upon completion of the previous steps, the pieces were stacked according to type, i.e. all sleeves placed together, all left legs together, etc.

As deconstruction was taking place, I began to create some initial sketches of the gown as ideas came to me. In these sketches I determined there would be a large underskirt created from collaged ACUs. Because of comments made during the interviews I also chose leather, machine lace and lightweight silk chiffons as materials for the gown, which will be explained in-depth in a later section.

Once I determined the underskirt silhouette, I created a quarter scale sample pattern to get an idea of how the skirt's dimensions would look once it was created full size. The sample pattern was followed by the creation of a quarter scale muslin, which was fitted onto an appropriate sized dress form where fit issues were noted so they might be addressed during the drafting of the full scale pattern. Upon completion of the ¼ size pattern the full skirt pattern was constructed using flat-pattern techniques (Figure 5.31).



Figure 5.31 Pattern creation

Six separate panels were created; one front panel (60" x 72"), two left side front panels (left and right, 67.5" x 75"), one back panel (100" x 72"), and two side back panels (left and right, 87.5" x 75"). The pattern pieces were then laid out and the waistline was trued, as was the bottom hem (Figure 5.32).



Figure 5.32 Panel pattern pieces

The next step involved creating the material from which the skirt would be cut. Laying out each pattern piece, one by one, I would lay various pieces of deconstructed ACUs from waist to bottom, rearranging or replacing pieces as needed until the desired aesthetic was achieved (Figure 5.33, Figure 5.34, Figure 5.35, & Figure 5.36



Figure 5.33 Deconstructed ACU's



Figure 5.34 ACU layout fabric



Figure 5.35 Pattern placed over ACU fabric

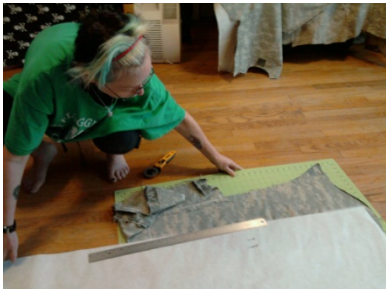


Figure 5.36 Lining up pattern with ACU fabric

This process was followed with all six panels. When satisfied I would pin the fabric pieces together at the point they would be stitched. Each panel was individually collaged, pinned and stitched using white polyester thread and a suture-like stitch (Figure 5.37).

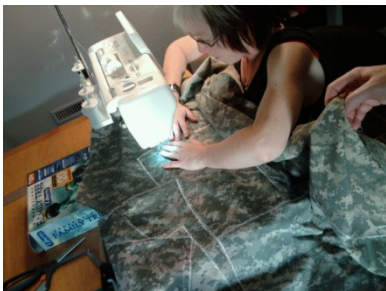


Figure 5.37 Stitching ACU fabric

When the panels were complete, they were laid out next to one another so as to line up the fabric and create side seams that would later be stitched together (Figure 5.38, Figure 5.39, & Figure 5.40).

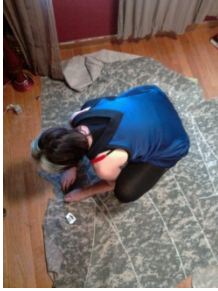


Figure 5.38 Pinning panels



Figure 5.39 Lining up panels

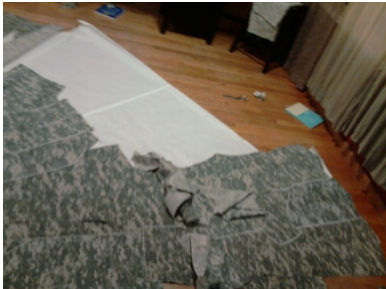


Figure 5.40 Lining up panel bottoms

When all the pattern pieces were laid out next to one another, I also began to lay out the final bottom pieces (Figure 5.40 & Figure 5.41).



Figure 5.41 Pinning bottoms



Figure 5.42 Stitched bottoms

This process enabled me to line up the curves at the skirt's hemline. When all six pieces were laid out together on the floor, they were pinned at the side seam (Figure 5.43 & Figure 5.44



Figure 5.43 Pinned at the seams (view 1)



Figure 5.44 Pinned at the seams (view 2)

Because of the skirt's sheer size, weight, and volume, stitching was quite difficult and required assistance from my husband so the seam line would come out even. As I stitched he would hold the skirt to the side of the machine and help guide the fabric through the machine (Figure 5.37). Assistance became even more crucial as panels were added since the skirt's weight increased with each addition.

After the panels were stitched to one another, the skirt was moved from my home to my studio where it was placed on the dress form (Figure 5.45 & Figure 5.46



Figure 5.45 Skirt spread out in studio



Figure 5.46 Close-up of skirt

Once the gown was placed on the form it became obvious that there were fit issues at the waist. Upon consultation with my mentor, Dr. Haar, it was determined she would correct the issues so I could move forward with the dress bodice. The following week, Dr. Haar returned with the skirt and we discussed the changes. She had taken in the sides to correct the fit issue at the waist and installed pieces of twill tape at the waistline to help support the weight of the skirt.

After skirt construction, the next step was to decide on an edge finish. Having used the ACU uniform sleeves at the bottom edge of the panels, the skirt had a nice, curving flow and I found that the sleeve caps were a sufficient edge finish. I chose not to do a final hem, as I wanted the under-layer of the skirt to have a rough, unfinished look.

Having completed the underskirt, the next step in the process was to drape the bodice. However, before draping I created an outline of the bodice shape on the dress form (Figure 5.47, Figure 5.48, & Figure 5.49).



Figure 5.47 Bodice style lines (side view)



Figure 5.48 Bodice style lines (back view)

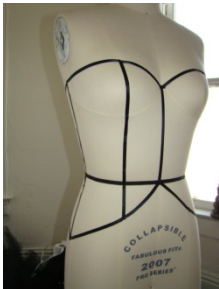


Figure 5.49 Bodice style lines (front view)

Using plain muslin, I followed the steps in Amaden-Crawford's (2005) chapter on draping a princess bodice and created a rough pattern. I then transferred the muslin pattern to paper and stitched a sample from spare ACU fabric so I could get a true fit with the fashion fabric. Several fit issues were noted, such as gaping at the armholes and chest, and corrected using the sample pattern pieces. Once the fit issues were corrected, the finished muslin pattern was once again traced onto paper and then the actual fashion fabric was cut. Two sets of each pattern piece were cut and stitched, creating the bodice and the bodice lining.

As the bodice was being constructed, I created channels on the bodice lining for the boning used at center front (5 ½"), both front princess seams (5"), both side seams (7 ½"), and both back princess seams (5 ½"). I elected to use flexible, spiral steel boning

as it is easy to work with and conforms quite nicely to both the form and the human body. Upon completion of the bodice and underling, I attached khaki hook and eye tape to the center back of the bodice (Figure 5.50). Because I was unsure as to how I might finish the waistband of the skirt, I pinned some of the tape (the eye portion) to the top of the skirt and found that I liked the flow it created between the two pieces. As a result, I stitched the eye half of the hook and eye tape to the waistband of both the bodice and the skirt as the finish (Figure 5.50).



Figure 5.50 Bodice edging

With the bodice structure completed out of ACU fabric, I had to move on to making it look more like a wedding gown by incorporating traditional wedding gown fabrics, such as lace and chiffon. Originally, I had envisioned creating the gown from different weight silks, but as I draped them on the form, over the ACU bodice and skirt, I found they disguised the military fabric too much, taking away from the overall effect of this being a military bride. Instead, lightweight silk chiffons and white leather strips became the main overlay fabrics.

Initially, I was going to use leather as the main fabric of the bodice; however, as I began to drape it in the way I had originally envisioned the piece I found it was becoming a duplicate of “Shattered Armour” (Barnes & Haar, 2010), something I did not wish to happen as the two pieces were not examining the same aspect of women’s lives. Though I was changing my original idea about the bodice I still wanted to incorporate the leather into the bodice since it was reflective of “tough skin,” something which many of the women talked about in the course of their interviews. I began cutting strips of leather and randomly draping them on the bodice in an attempt to find a look that was both aesthetically pleasing and artistically logical regarding the theme. What I found to be the most cohesive and appealing look was leather strips at the top of the bodice, under each

breast, and circling the waistline from front to back (Figure 5.51, Figure 5.52, & Figure 5.53).

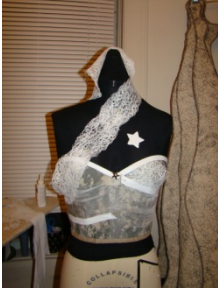


Figure 5.51 Leather placement



Figure 5.52 Leather placement close-up



Figure 5.53 Final leather placement

The leather strips were then filled in at the bodice with white machine lace (Figure 5.54).



Figure 5.54 Close-up view of machine lace bodice cups

In order to create the lace for the bodice, and what I originally envisioned to be a high, raised collar, I used three sizes of embroidery hoops: a large 10" circle, a small 6" circle, and a 9" oval. In utilizing the oval hoop I was able to create a piece of lace that was more conducive to shaping the bodice cups than I had been able to achieve with the round one (Figure 5.55).



Figure 5.55 Bodice lace cut and placement

Just as with the lace for the soldier, I sandwiched water-soluble stabilizer in the hoop and used free motion stitching with white thread on my Brother® sewing machine. I created a total of 8 ovals, 8 small circles, and 4 large circles.

Once these were complete I began draping them onto the bodice in order to create a cohesive design. Through the draping process I found I did not want to create a collar, as I originally envisioned, as it made the gown look like a costume from a science-fiction movie (Figure 5.56).



Figure 5.56 Bodice experimentation

Since I had so much lace leftover after creating the bodice cups, I decided to stiffen it with Aleene's Fabric Stiffener® and cut stars from both the stiffened lace and the white, leather. I was unsure as to how the stars would play into the gown's design, but I felt as if they needed to be incorporated somehow since they conveyed an idea of patriotism and pride.

After the fabric was stiffened, I traced four different sizes of stars (2", 3", 4", 5") using cookie cutters I purchased at Hobby Lobby (Figure 5.57).



Figure 5.57 Traced stars

Approximately 50 stars were cut from each size, providing me with ample material to incorporate into the gown. I began to place the stars on the gown's bodice area, but could not find a way to place them that worked for the design (Figure 5.58 & Figure 5.59).

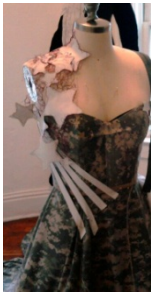


Figure 5.58 Star experimentation



Figure 5.59 Star experimentation close-up

I then decided to put them in a trail from the shoulder down to the bottom of the gown. My intention was to pool them at the bottom of the skirt. However, again, as with the bodice, once the stars were in place I was not happy with the design and decided not to use them.

Because I had abandoned my original silk overlay fabrics I was in the position of trying to find something else that would work. With the opening a couple of weeks away, I felt a bit pressured to come up with an idea. I knew I wanted to drape light fabrics over the entire gown, but I needed to play with different weights. When I began the project I had ordered a single white habotai silk scarf from Dharma. The scarf, which was 6 feet in diameter, provided a fair amount of coverage at the bottom of the skirt, so I decided to order six more scarves, connect them to one another and have them serve as the bottom of the overskirt.

With the main portion of the overlay seemingly settled, I went back to finishing the upper portion of the bodice. First, I used white thread and hand-stitched the machine lace to the bodice underlay over the breast cups and around the back of the gown to the edges of the hook-and-eye tape closure (Figure 5.60 & Figure 5.61).



Figure 5.60 Hand-stitched machine lace (side view)



Figure 5.61 Hand-stitched machine lace (back view)

I then began to determine final placement of the leather strips on the bodice. For the top edge of the bodice, both front and back, I attached ½” white leather strips with fabric glue (Figure 5.62 & Figure 5.63).



Figure 5.62 Glued leather strips (front view)



Figure 5.63 Glued leather strips (back view)

I chose to use glue because I did not want stitch marks in the leather, and since the gown would only be shown on a dress form, I was not concerned that the leather strips might become unattached. After I draped sheer silk chiffon over the middle of the bodice, I cut it to fit and hand-stitched it with white thread to the lower edge of the machine lace covering the cups. Upon completion of the hand stitching, I glued 1” leather strips from front to back, completely encasing the machine lace.

Though I was finished with the upper and middle portions of the bodice, I was uncertain as to how I might finish the lower section. For some reason, the idea of a gathered lower bodice appealed to me and I took two 1 yard pieces of silk chiffon and put gathering stitches in their top edge (Figure 5.64).



Figure 5.64 Stitched chiffon

Unfortunately, once I completed this step I realized the dress form looked pregnant. As a result, I scrapped the idea and began to randomly drape silk chiffon on both the front and back portions in an attempt to find a more suitable look (see Table 3, Images 42 & 43). Once I found a desirable look, I trimmed the silk chiffon to fit the bodice and hand stitched it to the bodice underlay. Leather strips were then attached slightly above the waist, as was an appliqué created from one of the lace stars and a piece of beaded lace purchased from a local fabric store (Figure 5.65).



Figure 5.65 Lace star appliqué

Because I had decided earlier to not move forward with the 6' scarves at the bottom of the dress I was faced with the dilemma of how to create a train. I had a 5 yard piece of lightweight silk chiffon left so I decided to try draping it in various ways on the dress form (Figure 5.66);



Figure 5.66 Overlay experimentation

what eventually ended up emerging was a chiffon scarf that fit midway between the upper bodice and the neck and flowed down the back of the bodice and skirt (Figure 5.67 & Figure 5.68).



Figure 5.67 Final placement of chiffon close-up



Figure 5.68 Final placement of chiffon with dog tags in back

Initially, I considered placing a set of dog tags at the back of the scarf (Figure 5.68) but decided against it because it made the back of the scarf less flexible. Once pleased with the placement of the scarf, I hand stitched the chain of the dog tags to the front of the bodice and then placed the scarf through the chain. The final step was to drape the scarf over each shoulder and spread it out in the back. When spread, the scarf became a train that reached the end of the underskirt and finished off the dress (Figure 5.69).



Figure 5.69 Completed gown (back view)

Thematic Connections

By far the most significant theme, marriage presented itself as a challenge in the course of trying to interpret the data and use it as inspiration for the textile art. Though I had conceived of creating a wedding gown from the start, it wasn't until after I finished my interviews and began coding that I felt the particular challenge of trying to draw together 22 different voices into one piece of art that would encompass their experiences. As such, I chose to pull the most common themes about marriage as well as the qualities most wives found necessary to survive as a military wife to use as inspiration for the wedding gown. In this way, I was able to convey those experiences, either through construction or placement of the final piece, that were shared among the wives while still displaying their uniqueness of their individual experience.

The first step I took in creating the wedding gown, which would serve as the representative piece since it was to actually portray the wife herself, was to select the materials I would use. Because fabric selection is always integral to a design's structure and aesthetic, I had to consider these aspects as well as the inspiration that came about during the course of my research. As a result, I chose to use sturdy military ACU fabric for the underskirt and bodice, several different weights of silk chiffons for the bodice and skirt overlay, as well as the finishing scarf/train, and leather, metal, machine lace, and traditional lace for the detail work. All of these materials worked well together in not only a functional and aesthetic sense, but in an inspirational sense as well.

As both a military wife and artist I felt it was critical to include military uniform fabric in the construction of the gown. Because ACU fabric is sturdy and created to withstand harsh weather and/or living conditions I knew it would serve well as the underlay for the garment for it would provide an adequate amount of support for the gown's overlay. However, its use for the purposes of strength and function were also driven by many of the comments regarding strength as being a core characteristic for a military wife. The majority of wives, when asked what characteristics they felt a wife should have, cited "strength" or "inner strength" as an essential quality. Not just because they are often left to manage a household on their own or "deal with a lot of stuff that most people don't have to," but also because they are faced with the fact they are not as

central in their husband's lives because "the military kind of rules their life" as stated by one veteran wife.

Because the military plays such a central role in their husband's life a military wife is constantly surrounded by, and many of the decisions regarding her personal life are dictated by, the military. As such, she is constantly encased in the military environment. Casey, an ex-military wife, stated "I don't think you can ever leave the military outside the door....That's your life....You're part of a system." Inspired by comments such as the previous one and statements made by several other wives regarding the military being all-consuming I felt the ACU fabric was the most appropriate choice as the underlay because it would completely surround the wife; thereby depicting the idea of her being "married to the military" and incorporating it into her being because of its ever-present nature.

Over the decades, military uniforms have changed both structurally and visually, but there is always a discernible feature that enables the viewer to recognize the wearer as a soldier. One of the features most closely associated with the U.S. Army is the pattern found on the uniforms. My decision to use ACU fabric rather than the more traditional BDU or desert fabric was centered on both the desire to create a gown with a cohesive aesthetic and relay the idea of a wife being able to "fall to the background" when needed. Because ACU fabric was designed to camouflage its wearer, in a particular setting, I felt its use conveyed the idea of the wife disguising herself when required, but still being constantly connected to both her husband and the military.

However, association with the data was not the only reason I chose this fabric. The other reason I selected it was for its particular style. Because this particular military uniform is in light shades of gray, I felt it was the most appropriate to fulfill my vision of an aesthetically appealing wedding gown. Since traditional wedding gowns are generally white, cream, or some other light shade, the ACU fabric was the easiest choice since it came closest to the light colors used in wedding gown fabrics.

While developing my ideas for creating the material for the underlay, I began transcribing the interview with Laurel, who served as the inspiration for the pieced skirt. Asked what advice she would give to a new military wife, Laurel responded:

I would say that everybody's experience is different and...I guess, um, everybody has unique insight and I'm not saying to ignore that, but take what they say and use it to the best of your abilities, to how it fits you. Just, it's not a one-size fits all lifestyle.

This remark stirred a flurry of inspiration in me as both a wife and an artist. Faced with the challenge of creating the fabric for the underlay from a variety of uniform pieces, I was often stymied by how to best go about doing so. My approach thus far had been more technical and concerned with how to "make it work" as Tim Gunn would say and not with what would work in regards to a military wife. Laurel's comment drove me to create a skirt that conveyed the sense of uniqueness present in every wife I spoke to, as well as represent my own "best abilities" as an artist. I chose to do this through the puzzle-like construction of the fabric and the sheer size of the skirt. In the end, I felt the underlay was the piece in the exhibit that truly showed, through its enormous, chaotic, puzzle-piece looking skirt that life in the military is not "one-size fits all" but is vastly different and unique for each person who experiences the lifestyle.

The lifestyle experienced by these women though often trying is also one that inspires pride. The inclusion of the ACU fabric (at least during my initial thought process) was only central to showing the connection military wives have to both their soldier and the military itself. However, as I spoke to women and began coding the data, what I found was each wife spoke about the enormous sense of pride she had in her husband. This pride stemmed from encounters with strangers: "I get pride from when people thank me because no one knows as a military wife what I have to go through;" the dedication their husbands had to the military; the love they felt for their soldier, or even just the pride they felt when seeing "the flag go up" or even a military veteran. However, what truly inspired me was the sense of pride they felt in themselves and their desire to uphold what one wife referred to as an "inspiration" or "ideal." She further stated that her desire to "represent military families in a good light" was driven by her desire to provide civilians with a "different view of the military." What she wanted to convey to others outside of the military was the sense of pride she had in herself and what she had done in her life with the military, as well as her ability to be a good example for others. The thoughts expressed by this particular woman are similar to those expressed by others

during the interviews. As such, I wanted to make sure the gown truly embodied the military and conveyed the sense of pride experienced by these women when they consider, as one wife said, “the sacrifice that is made for the greater good or the mission of the military.”

Having completed the underlay, which did not look much like a wedding gown, I began to focus on the overlay and how to transform my wife into a bride. For the overlay, a variety of materials: lightweight silk chiffons, machine lace, lace appliqué, leather and metal were used. These materials were selected since they were either most traditionally associated with wedding gowns or they were inspired by comments the wives made during the interviews. I struggled for a bit between using chiffons or satins, but since so many wives felt two defining characteristics were “flexibility” and a “willingness to go with the flow” I felt chiffon was a more appropriate choice given the light, flowing nature of the fabric. Another reason I reached this decision was I wanted to be sure the underlay showed through, as that was to be the defining part of the bride’s “uniform.”

The machine lace and lace appliqué were both selected because they were also representative of a traditional wedding gown and created a connection to the “Fallen Soldier” piece. Lace, in its various forms, is often found on wedding gowns; therefore, I felt it was necessary to include some on the military bride. Wanting to create a strong connection between “Fallen Soldier” and the gown I opted to create white machine lace rather than purchase readymade lace. The white lace on the gown, which was not frayed or torn, stood in direct opposition to that found on the soldier, especially since his was torn and frayed. I also utilized a machine lace star, with a traditional lace appliqué attached to the top, as a detail piece in the center of the bodice. The leather, however, was purely from inspiration found in the data.

My initial thoughts about leather were to construct a bodice that resembled armour; however, as previously state, I felt that was taking me too close to an earlier design and moving me away from the idea of representing the military wife. I was quite excited during the interviews when a few of the wives stated they felt “tough skin” was necessary to being a military wife because it created an entryway for the inclusion of leather into the gown’s construction. Though it is a tough skin, leather is also pliable and flexible, which were also qualities many of the wives felt were necessary to navigate life

in the military. I chose to wrap the leather around the body in order to emphasize the idea of being pliable and flexible, even while maintaining a sense of strength and toughness.

Chapter Summary

My aim for the design portion of my project was to release the voice of the military wife through the work performed in the studio. While I thought my process would be quite linear, I found as I worked that it was constantly evolving based upon the words of the women. Many pieces began with one idea but became finalized in an entirely different fashion. Design ideas were noted and developed in a visual journal and transcript notebook, while the actual creation of the pieces were tracked and documented in both a sketchbook and through photography. Once the themes were selected, work on the pieces began and developed into three installation pieces: 1) “Same, Same, But Different” – a series of 32 fabric-collage silhouettes, 2) “Fallen Soldier” – a 3-D mixed media fabric sculpture, and 3) “My Ring is My Uniform” – a wedding gown.

The silhouettes were created by tracing the bodies of the women I interviewed as well as some of my civilian friends onto large sheets of canvas. Black fabric and military uniforms were then cut, pinned, and stitched onto the silhouettes in a collage fashion; however, only the military wives had uniform fabric incorporated into their silhouette. Stitching also differed between the two sets, military wives were stitched in a circular fashion, while civilians were done in an vertical manner. Once stitched, they were then machine-serged along the edges and colored with black marker. Based upon the theme of connectivity that emerged, the silhouettes were created to look as if they were holding hands, so as to establish the strength of the connections military wives developed with other wives and civilians over the course of their husband’s careers. The fabrics used were consistent between the women as this represented their similarities and the constant connection they maintained with one another despite distance and other challenges to their friendships. Besides differences in size and body shape, difference between the women was further emphasized by the use of stitching between the military wives and civilian women, as well as the unique fabric layout of each silhouette.

The soldier was developed from a store-bought life-size male mannequin, machine-lace, various styles of military uniforms, and military issued tape. The

mannequin was deconstructed so he would be in pieces and then each piece was covered with tape. After the tape was attached, fabric strips created from the various military uniforms were affixed using spray adhesive. The final step of construction involved the random placement of shredded machine-lace on each body part. Developed from the theme of separation the goal of the soldier piece was to convey the impact separation has on a military couple. I chose to convey this by dismembering the mannequin to represent not just death, but the overall feeling of separation in general. Connection to the bride was shown by the incorporation of machine lace on each body part, especially given that this particular fabric was used on all the silhouettes and formed the bodice of the wedding gown.

The final piece, the wedding gown was the central focus of the project, as it was created as a means of embodying the life of the military wife. Composed of three separate pieces; an underskirt, a bodice, and an overlay, the gown was the most complex piece to create. The underskirt fabric was created from military uniforms, which were deconstructed and then pieced back together to form a large underskirt measuring approximately 6 feet around. The bodice was dual-layered. The bottom layer matched the gown's underskirt and was created from military uniform fabric. Placed on top of the bodice's lower structure were machine-lace, leather strips and chiffon. The final piece to be constructed was the overlay which was created from chiffon and dog tags. Consisting of a long chiffon scarf which flowed down the back of the gown to form a train, and three panels attached to the sides and front of the bodice, the overlay served to soften the look of the gown and make it feel more like something a bride would wear on her wedding day. Because the gown was representing the women's voices, I was selective about material choice as well as construction since I wanted to make sure that together they truly conveyed the experience of a military wife's life. Because marriage and personal qualities emerged as strong themes I chose to collapse them together and view them as a single theme of collective experience.

Chapter 6 - Installation Process

In order for research to be considered valid it must be transmitted to a larger audience in some manner. Because research is conducted as a way to produce new knowledge and share said knowledge with others, its eventual dissemination allows future researchers to “build upon the knowledge” presented (Lyons, 2006, p. 4) and practice-based research is no different. However, practice-based research has a special context in that “as research, it communicates new knowledge and contributes to the wider understanding of the subject being investigated” (Lyons, 2006, p. 3) with that knowledge generally being in the form of an actual physical artifact, or in the case of my study, a series of artifacts. As such, it is important to consider where and how the artifacts will be displayed. Lyons (2006) presented the argument that:

Where and how research is disseminated is a critical part of the inquiry and must be dealt with as early as possible....Research should be creative and revelatory in its journey as well as its outcome, and for a practice-led researcher this is doubly so. Finding the appropriate context in which to reveal this is the final hurdle for the PhD student (p. 6).

Because my outcome was to create textile art inspired by the women’s voices, it was important that my work be displayed in an art gallery. However, I did not want to limit it to a university audience since my research focused on members of the surrounding military and civilian community. Therefore, I chose to display my work in a gallery setting off-campus, the local arts center.

Once the pieces were fully constructed they were transported to the Manhattan Arts Center to be installed and displayed to the general public for six weeks. The exhibit was open from April 16th to May 28th, 2011. The installation pieces were placed in the gallery by a team of volunteers consisting of me, my mentor, my husband, and several M.A.C. volunteers. We installed the exhibit over the course of two days, finishing the install the day before the show's private opening and two days before the public opening.

My desire to make sure the community, especially the wives with whom I spoke, had ready access to the exhibit also prompted me to hold a private opening. For the private opening I personally contacted the wives with whom I spoke and invited them to

the opening, along with their family members and/or significant others. Many of the wives had moved, some were divorced from their soldier spouse, and others were otherwise engaged. However, several wives, along with a couple of my committee members, did attend the private opening reception on April 15th, 2011, providing me with initial feedback about how they felt their voices were represented by the pieces and the installation.

During the six weeks the exhibit was open, numerous people saw the show, many of who commented about the installation pieces in a journal provided for them to record their thoughts regarding the installation. Comments, both positive and negative, were written in the book, indicating that the work had a desired effect—it stirred the emotions of its viewers.

The following chapter will discuss the installation of the exhibit. The first section is a description of the process leading to my decision where to exhibit and how I prepared to create the pieces for the gallery space. I then go on to discuss why and how each piece was installed, making connections between where it was placed in the gallery and how I felt that was relevant to the words of the wives. Finally, I present a discussion of the comments received and how those comments served as indicators that the exhibit had achieved its goal of being art.

Prior to installation

In the early winter of 2009, the period of time in which I was finalizing my ideas about what pieces I wanted to create for the exhibit, I went to survey the gallery when it was free of art. Though there were a few pedestals placed about the room in preparation for the next show, I was able to get a good idea of the space in which I had to work (Figure 6.1, Figure 6.2, & Figure 6.3).



Figure 6.1 Wide view of empty gallery

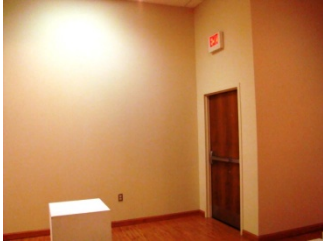


Figure 6.2 Side view of empty gallery

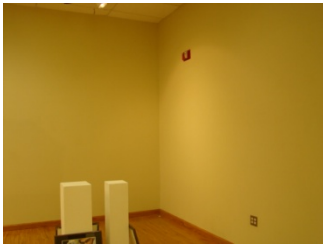


Figure 6.3 Corner view of empty gallery

Because my ideas were still forming and I was unsure as to how I wanted to display the work (whether I wanted to do large installation pieces or several smaller works), assessing the space and layout of the gallery was a necessary first step in the exhibit as it gave me a groundwork from which to launch my final ideas. During this initial visit I was able to sketch the empty gallery, and consider where I would place the gown. I also began to create initial sketches of where I wanted to locate the movable wall during the exhibit.

As the months progressed, and following a consultation with Professor Andrus who advised me to focus on large-scale installation pieces, I finalized my ideas for the main pieces of the exhibit. Once I knew which pieces were going to be created, it was necessary for me to go back to the gallery and view it once more. This second visit allowed me to figure out how many silhouettes could actually fit in the gallery. During this trip I took a friend with me and we stood side-by-side along the gallery walls in the same position as the silhouettes. Circling our way around the gallery enabled me to do a physical count of how many silhouettes I needed to fill the amount of space I wanted to occupy. It was also during this visit that I made the final decision about the location of the movable wall and the gown's final resting place. The soldier was still a bit questionable as I was uncertain as to how I was going to depict this piece, but I knew it would go in the recessed nook; what I was uncertain of was its proximity to the gown.

Actual Installation

The actual installation began after I completed construction and delivery of all three pieces (Figure 6.4).

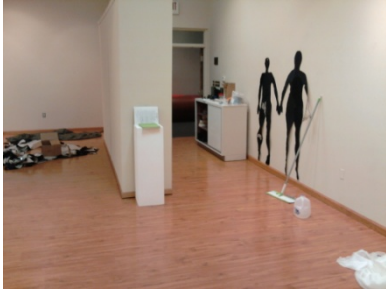


Figure 6.4 Beginning of installation

Though the pieces were delivered at the same time, we began the install with the wedding gown since it was to be the central focus of the exhibit. However, prior to setting up the gown, the first thing we did was place the moveable wall so it hid the main portion of the gallery and placed two silhouettes along the main wall in order to determine how the eye was led upon entering the gallery doors (Figure 6.4). My intention was for the viewer to enter the gallery and immediately be exposed to the “Out of Iraq” posters on their right and to the silhouettes directly in front of them as a way of leading them into the room and around the corner. Once I was pleased the viewer’s eye would be led in the manner I desired, installation of the gown began.

“My Ring is my Uniform”

Since my study focused on the women’s voices, it was imperative that the gown be the central focus of the exhibit. In order to accomplish this goal I need to make sure it stood out and was visible to the viewer as soon as they came to the end of the movable wall. I began by placing the gown in the center of the gallery space on the other side of the movable wall, and determining in which direction I wanted it to face. Initially, the gown faced the viewer as they rounded the corner; however, upon closer thought I decided it was more important the gown face the recessed area of the gallery (Figure 6.5), which would house the soldier, as that was the wives’ central connection to the military life. Upon determining location and direction, we stood the dress form on a small, wooden platform, unfortunately, this proved a bad idea since it caused the skirt to bunch at the bottom and take away from the drama created by its voluminous spread across the

floor. The platform was removed, and I began to situate the skirt so it spread as far from the form as possible, this was done as a way to give the wife as much presence in the room as was physically possible. My intention was to make visitors carefully pick their way around the gown and remain close to the walls. It was during this time I found the spread of the skirt was not as large as I had originally hoped and actually left plenty of room between the skirt's edge and the walls for visitors to walk.

Once the skirt was spread, I began to situate the overlay on the gown and place the scarf around the neck (Figure 6.5). Wanting to create a train from the scarf, I spread it out along the back of the skirt to its edge. Unfortunately, due to transport and being



Figure 6.5 Gown set-up

moved around the gallery, both the overlay and the scarf were severely wrinkled and would not lay flat; as a result, Dr. Haar and myself had to carefully steam each panel until the train would flow gently down the back of the dress and reach the edges of the skirt.

The gown in place, I began to consider its title and how that would affect the overall tone of the exhibit. During the course of my interviews, several quotes stood out; however, one in particular moved me and actually caused goose bumps when she spoke the following words during a discussion with her boss who was refusing her time off because as he said “you are not military.” The wife’s response:

My specific words were, “I don’t have to wear the uniform to be military. I wear my wedding ring; that is my uniform. My husband is sworn into the Army. He is a soldier. I am still a part of the military. I am a military wife. Keyword, first word—military. I do not have to wear the uniform to be military. So you will not tell me I am not military....I wear my ring; I have my marriage license. I’m military. We go through the same things as the soldiers do....We still get

deployed. From our soldiers. You cannot tell me I am not military. You will not tell me I'm not military.

Her quote inspired me as I worked on the gown; however, it was not just her words that moved me to title the gown as I did. As I began to think about what the gown stood for and how it represented the women's collective voices, especially given that many of them spoke of "being married to the military," which meant not just being there for her husband but being there for the military as well. I thought the gown's title should reflect this connection between the wife, the soldier, and the military institution. Because the aforementioned quote moved me and summed up what so many women said I felt the title needed to be drawn from the quote. However, being such a long quote, it was necessary for me to cut it down to a reasonable length, so I chose "My Ring is my Uniform" as the gown's title, a phrase that I felt fully represented both the women's voices and the gown I had created to reflect those voices.

"Same, Same, But Different"

Once the gown was situated we began to work on the installation of the silhouettes. While their installation was the most laborious, it was conceptually the easiest. One of my previous visits to the gallery, as mentioned earlier, was done in order to size the gallery in regards to how many silhouettes would be needed to line the walls. My desire was for them to begin on the other side of the table at the gallery's entrance (Figure 6.4) and continue along the walls until reaching the fire door (Figure 6.6, Figure 6.7, & Figure 6.8).



Figure 6.6 "Same, Same, But Different" (corner view)



Figure 6.7 “Same, Same, But Different” (front view)



Figure 6.8 “Same, Same, But Different” (side view)

These silhouettes were to serve as the viewer’s guide into the gallery. Because they created a continuous line, they took viewers around the corner of the movable wall and forced them to see the gown.

While I wanted the silhouettes to guide the viewer’s eye to the gown in the center of the gallery, I did not want them to overpower the impact of the soldier and his connection to the gown. Therefore, I decided that the recessed area of the gallery where the soldier was going to be installed should only contain a few military wife silhouettes (Figure 6.9), as I only wanted them to help create more impact and not distract the viewer from the soldier.

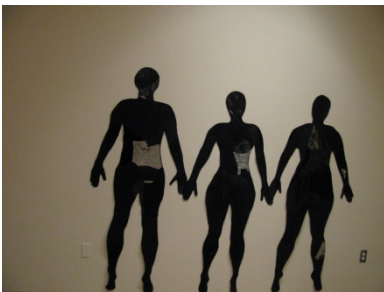


Figure 6.9 Silhouettes in recessed space

A total of 5 silhouettes were used in this part of the gallery—3 on one wall, 1 on a small wall, and 1 more on the other small wall—and all of them were silhouettes of wives. I decided not to include civilians in this section, as I wanted to make it seem as if the wives were looking over/at the “Fallen Soldier” installation.

Though all the silhouettes in the recessed portion were wives, the final three silhouettes attached to the movable wall facing the gown and the line of silhouettes across the gallery (Figure 6.10), was composed of 2 civilians and 1 wife.



Figure 6.10 Silhouettes on movable wall

Their close proximity to the soldier was not an issue, as I was not concerned about them being distracting. Instead, I was working to create a sense of connection between all the silhouettes, even the ones that stood separately from the others. In order to accomplish this goal I had to make sure that the silhouettes, when situated on the gallery walls, always had another silhouette or group of silhouettes facing them, which is why, in the recessed area, I placed a single silhouette on each small wall (Figure 6.11). Though these silhouettes stood alone they maintained a connection with the others because they faced one another.



Figure 6.11 Solitary silhouette

The idea of connection was also reinforced by the design of the silhouettes and the ways in which that design allowed us to maintain the idea of connection throughout the installation. Because the silhouettes were designed to look as if they were holding hands this was the first way in which the design helped to establish the idea of connection. Placing them on the wall, we alternated between military and civilian silhouettes, with hands overlapping. Each silhouette was initially tacked to the wall using

pushpins and then small blackhead pins were pushed into the heads, the hips, the shoulders, and the hands (Figure 6.12, Figure 6.13, & Figure 6.14).



Figure 6.12 Close-up view of hips



Figure 6.13 Close-up view of chest

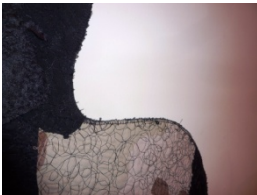


Figure 6.14 Close-up view of shoulder

However, prior to placing the black pins into the hands of each silhouette we made sure the hands overlapped one another, thereby reinforcing the connection between the women as they stood in the gallery.

While I wanted to maintain a connection between all the women, I had to make sure that the viewer understood both military wives and civilians were being represented. As such I incorporated difference between the two groups into the design of the silhouettes. Military wives—all of whom had at least one piece of military uniform fabric on their body (Figure 6.12, Figure 6.13, & Figure 6.14)—were alternated with civilians—all of whom only had black fabric on their body—along the walls of the gallery. They were placed in this manner because all the women interviewed emphasized the importance of the connections they made with other women in both the civilian and military communities. I felt that by alternating them with the wives, rather than isolating them on a separate wall, I was able to guide the viewer to seeing the connection between military wives and civilians was just as important as the connection between wives.

The only place where the silhouettes were not alternated was in the recessed portion of the gallery. I chose this placement strategy because military wives generally turn to one another for support during deployment and other trying times, despite their friendships with civilians. Many of the wives with whom I spoke discussed how much easier it was to maintain military friendships during deployments because of the shared sense of understanding that exists among the women. These connections, even when the wives had civilian friends, were the ones that they held on to the tightest. Many women said that in their experience they often found it difficult for their friends outside of the military to understand the struggles, emotions, and doubts they endure when their husbands are separated from them. Other wives, however, understand since they too have generally encountered similar experiences and/or emotions.

My choice of title for the silhouettes, “Same, Same, but Different” (a phrase spoken to me on a regular basis when I was in the markets of Cambodia), was influenced by the differences and similarities in the women. I wanted to further emphasize the fact that though the civilians were included in the wives’ circle of connection and support, they were also different from the wives. Difference also comes into effect with the wives as well. Though they are all connected to the military that does not mean they share all of the same experiences. Being individuals their lived experience would differ slightly from that of other wives; thereby, creating a sense of difference, even in light of their similar status.

However, the idea of lived experience was not exclusive to the voices of the wives I interviewed. I felt that it extended outside of the military wives’ circle and into that of their civilian friends. When asked if they did different things with their civilian friends than they did with their military friends, the majority of the women said they did not. They explained that their activities were essentially the same since they enjoyed interacting with both sets of friends simultaneously. As a result, many of their civilian friends participated in some of the same lived experiences as the military wives. I also felt the similarity existed in the sheer fact that these were all women, and by virtue of being a woman, all had shared experiences. While those experiences may not be exactly the same, they would be similar enough that the women could understand another’s point of view.

“Till Death Do Us Part”

The most obvious place where difference and distance existed among the military and civilian women was that of understanding the pangs of separation a military wife feels when her soldier is off in another country fighting a war. Meant to embody the fear of the military wives that remained largely unspoken during the course of the interviews, the soldier was a difficult piece to place. My initial concept for the soldier (him lying down in a coffin) presented an easy placement in the gallery; however, as my idea evolved how to place him in the gallery became more of a challenge. Because he was in pieces, and I was including body bags in this particular installation piece, I had to carefully consider where each body part was going to be placed. I wanted to make sure the viewer felt his placement had meaning and not just walk away feeling as if I had just tossed the parts in a random way. However, on the other hand, I did want it maintain a somewhat randomized look since this is one of the ways in which he would “fall” if a casualty of war. As such, I tried several different placements (Figure 6.15, Figure 6.16, & Figure 6.17) until I was satisfied that the final locations of all the body parts and the two body bags relayed the meaning I wished them to convey: that of separation, death, and fear.

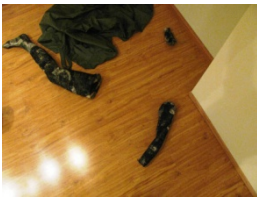


Figure 6.15 “Till Death Do Us Part” experimentation

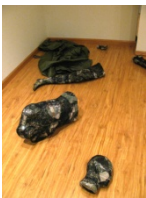


Figure 6.16 “Till Death Do Us Part” experimentation



Figure 6.17 “Till Death Do Us Part” final placement

When placing the pieces, I focused on a few key parts as integral to creating meaning in the installation: the body bags, the head, the trunk, the arm with the hand and the single hand. All of these parts were carefully placed in a specific way so as to maintain a sense of connection to the military wife. Each body bag was placed in a separate corner of the recessed portion of the gallery (Figure 6.11) directly under the military wife silhouette on that particular wall. This placement was meant to show the close connection these women have with the constant threat of death when their husbands are deployed and that this was a prevalent fear, though largely unspoken in both the interviews and among themselves in daily life. The bags, however, were left empty and crumpled in the corner because death is always only a possibility and never a certainty. In the final placement of the body bags, I left one leg close to a bag so as to further indicate this ever-present fear of injury and/or death (Figure 6.18).



Figure 6.18 Body bag placement

After situating the body bags, I turned my focus to the head and the trunk of the body. Being the main parts of the body, I wanted them to play a central role in this particular piece of the installation; however, I did not want them to overpower. It was also important to me that they both faced the gown. It was purely symbolism that caused me to situate these pieces the way I did. Symbolically, the heart functions as a marker of love and as a representative of the deep connection that exists between a soldier and his spouse; on a literal level it is the lifeblood of the body and maintains our status as living beings. Because the trunk of the body contains the heart I wanted it to face the gown as a way to maintain that connection of love, all while showing that disconnection from life. My placement of the head was also done in a similar way. I considered what the eyes and lips represented on a symbolic and literal level when making my final decision regarding its placement. Again, I chose to have it facing the gown because I wanted to maintain a connection between the lips (which through words and kisses physically express love),

the eyes (which gaze lovingly and are often called “the windows to the soul”), and the gown. By placing these pieces so they faced the bride I indicated that though the separation existed, be it distance or death, the two of them would always be connected. His heart would always be hers and she would always remember his face and hear his voice, even when he has left her sight.

While these two pieces helped establish a connection between the soldier and the bride they were not very literal. My placement of the hand with the arm attached was done in a way as to show a more literal meaning of connection between the soldier and the spouse. The final placement of this piece, which moved around quite a bit before ending up where it did, was centered between the bride and the rest of the body parts. As a result, this particular piece appeared to stand alone (Figure 6.19), as did the bride.



Figure 6.19 Reaching to her

However, my intention was not to make it separate from the rest of the body, but to make it look as if it were reaching for the bride, struggling to come back to her where he belonged. It was meant to convey the sense of loneliness felt on the part of both the soldier and his wife when he is away. The final step in the placement of this particular arm was a machine-lace star, similar to the one on the gown’s bodice, placed under his fingers (Figure 6.20).



Figure 6.20 Hand and star

By placing the star under the hand I was hoping to cement the connection between the two and show the viewer that despite the separation, the fear, and the possibility of death or injury, a soldier's love for his spouse, and hers for him, remains strong (Figure 6.21).



Figure 6.21 Arm and Gown

The single hand was the final piece in the exhibit to which I gave careful placement (Figure 6.22).



Figure 6.22 Single hand

Unlike the other pieces where I was trying to establish a connection between the soldier and the bride, this piece was purely meant to show a sense of despair and/or supplication. I placed it facing upwards as if to indicate a sense of resignation. It was also positioned at a short distance from the arm to which it was once connected (Figure 6.18). Both the placement of the hand in an upward position and its distance from the arm were meant to convey the hopeless feeling one has when they lack control in their lives. Unfortunately, I do not believe this came across as readily as I desired.

The idea of lacking control in one's life is what initially inspired my idea for the title of this piece. I was ready to call it "Fallen Soldier" as a way to indicate that the soldier's life was unstable due to circumstances outside of his immediate control. However during the course of a conversation I had with my husband while installing the exhibit the title changed. I was attempting to explain to him why I thought this was a perfectly representative title for the piece when he asked me why I didn't call it "Till

death do us part...” He presented me with the logic that it was imbued with more meaning since the soldier was in parts and it was a phrase commonly found in traditional wedding vows. Sticking with the theme of the exhibit was important to me, and after some careful thought about the matter, I chose to take his advice and title the piece according to his recommendation.

Lighting

Once all the pieces were in place and titled, I began to focus on the lighting for the exhibit. The night before the private opening found me in the gallery with the M.A.C.’s lighting technician. The first step in the lighting process was the silhouettes and the fallen soldier. He placed the lights so it illuminated the silhouettes while casting their shadows on the floor (Figure 6.23).



Figure 6.23 Lighting the silhouettes

This proved to be a powerful visual, especially as one walked through the entire gallery and saw both the silhouettes and their shadows, something which “doubled” the population of the bride’s connections. After situating the lighting for the silhouettes we focused on the soldier, attempting to make it a bit darker than the rest of the show without causing it to be too dark. After quite a few tries he was able to create effective lighting that illuminated the central part of the piece, but left the corners with the body bags a bit darker (Figure 6.17, Figure 6.18), which served to create quite a somber effect in that portion of the gallery. Our final lighting issue was that of the gown. Because the bride was the central focus of the exhibit I wanted the lighting to make her stand out from the rest of the installation pieces. He adjusted several lights so there would be a strong light on the front and back of the gown (Figure 6.24 & Figure 6.25), as well as the upper portion of her body.



Figure 6.24 Gown lighting



Figure 6.25 Gown lighting

The overall result was quite striking and served to draw the viewer's eyes to the gown as they entered that portion of the gallery.

Once the lighting was completed, the installation was almost finished; however, I added a last minute element right before the show opened. The night of the private opening found me scattering various sizes of lace and leather stars around the gallery floor. Not included in my initial thoughts about the installation, I chose to put the stars down right before the opening to create a stronger connection between the bride and the military. I felt this would be an appropriate addition since the stars were initially created for the gown to indicate the patriotism and pride many of the women expressed in regards to the military and their husbands. Left with so many stars and no place to put them I decided they could join the exhibit as a way to serve as the physical representatives of that patriotism and pride. I was only hoping viewers would understand why the stars were there. Interestingly enough, I believe they did get it. The stars were quite a hit with the viewers of the show as was indicated by their dwindling numbers throughout the course of the exhibit.

The final piece to be installed was that of the exhibit statement (Appendix J). Displayed on the front counter as one walked into the gallery, the statement gave the viewer a prelude of what was to come. I began by explaining how I conducted the

research and went on to describe the themes that emerged from the data. Unfortunately, I do not feel my artist statement did a good job of explaining the connections I was attempting to make between each piece. While I did explain how these women served as my inspiration, I did not give a good explanation of how that inspiration managed to evolve into the pieces they were about to view. Upon reflection, I would give a more detailed explanation of how the pieces emerged from the themes and why I felt it was important to reflect those themes in the manner I did.

Final Exhibit

The exhibit was on display at the M.A.C. to the public from April 16-May 28, 2011, during this time multiple people viewed the show and presented their input as to how the show impacted their emotions. In this respect, I accomplished my goal of stirring emotion from my audience. However, I also had to consider how the placement of each piece represented the voices of the women with whom I spoke. My own status, as not only a military wife, but the researcher and artist, affected how people perceived the show was integral to how it was presented to the public.

Positionality

As a feminist researcher and artist, I strove to reach my audience in a manner that exposed not just the plus sides of being a military wife but also the struggles that were prevalent within these women's lives. I often struggled to make sure that I kept the women's voices central in the course of placing the pieces in the exhibit; however, given the feedback received from viewers I feel I succeeded in this respect.

Every aspect of the installation, from the design of the promotional flyer (Figure 6.26) to the final outcome was influenced by not only the wives' words, but my own status.

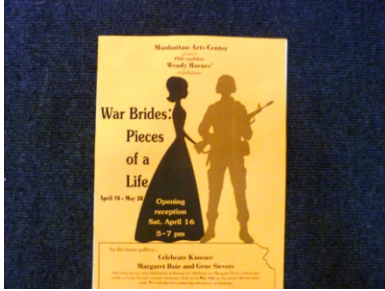


Figure 6.26 Exhibit poster

The title of the exhibit, evolved from my own pieces, created 2 years earlier when I was struggling with my own fears and emotions about my husband’s second deployment to Iraq. Historically, military wives have been termed “War Brides,” something which many of us never thought of when dedicating our lives to a military spouse. A Senior officer’s wife commented that when she entered into her marriage she “wasn’t thinking about war....I really wasn’t” (Allison). However, the younger generation of wives, many of whom I interviewed know their husbands are inevitably heading off to a war zone. What this creates is a new generation of wives: a generation that is more prepared to recognize the perils and emotional pitfalls that come with being married to a soldier.

One of the ways in which I tried to depict this idea of the knowledge that their husbands were in danger was through the posters at the entrance of the exhibit. Along the movable wall to the right of the viewer as they entered the gallery was a series of posters against the war in Iraq. These posters not only stated, “US OUT OF IRAQ,” they also presented facts and figures about military and civilian deaths as a result of the war (Figure 6.27).



Figure 6.27 Gallery side view with protest posters

These posters represented not just the political climate of our country but my own feminist objections to the injustices that occur as a result of war. Many wives expressed their own discomfort at the thought of the war; one of whom even went so far as to state;

“And I honestly, and personally, believe that we’ve been fighting this too long; our guys should come home. And if they have a problem with it, just get a bomb and drop it on them and call it good.” Her opinion, while radical, is a reflection of the general feeling within society that we need to move away from this war and bring our soldiers back home. It was comments such as hers that inspired me to place the posters at the entrance of the exhibit, because I felt that though this wife did not speak for every wife with whom I spoke her words were probably representative of what many wives felt on some level.

The bond between the wives and their friends, especially in regards to the war and the effect it has on everyone’s lives was a key point I tried to portray in the exhibit. My desire to show a connection between military wives and their civilian friends was expressed in the continuous line of women holding hands throughout the gallery (Figure 6.28 & Figure 6.29).

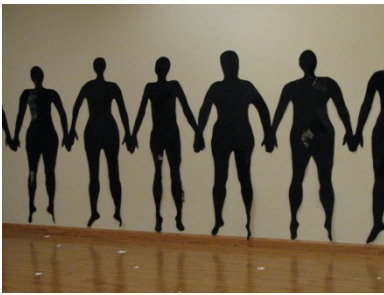


Figure 6.28 Silhouettes (side wall)

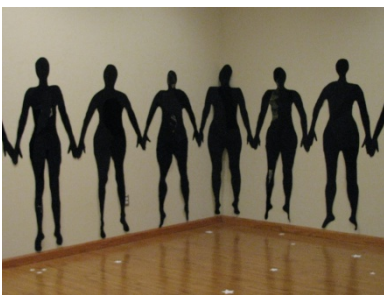


Figure 6.29 Corner Silhouettes

These silhouettes represented the support network that exists for military wives as they navigate the often dark waters of being married to a soldier. I felt confident in this placement because all of the women I spoke with talked about how important these connections were to them as they went through the struggles of being alone and facing the fears that come with having a husband who is in a dangerous setting. However, as previously discussed I felt that placing only military wives nearest the soldier was

essential since civilians would never be able to truly relate to the fears they possess (Figure 6.30, & Figure 6.31).



Figure 6.30 Silhouettes and Soldier (Left)



Figure 6.31 Silhouettes and Soldier (Right)

Placing the gown as a central focus in the exhibit was also integral to showing the military wife's perspective. Though my own experience as a military wife influenced how the exhibit was presented and designed, the gown was the representative of the collective. It was meant to show not only the pride these women felt in their husbands and the military, but their strength and vulnerability as well. The bride's positioning, central to the entire exhibit (Figure 6.27, Figure 6.32, Figure 6.33, Figure 6.34), conveyed the importance of her words to shaping not only the design of the pieces, but the layout of the entire exhibit as well.

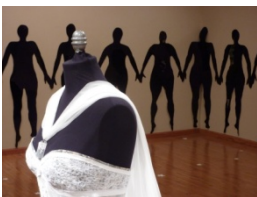


Figure 6.32 Close-up of Gown



Figure 6.33 Gown (right side)



Figure 6.34 Gown (left side)

While she did not face all of the silhouettes, the sense of connection was implied as they surrounded her (Figure 6.32, Figure 6.35 & Figure 6.36), providing her with the support of which each of the wives spoke during the interviews.



Figure 6.35 Gown (front view)



Figure 6.36 Gown (back view)

Her placement was also contingent upon how I perceived the women felt about their husbands being deployed or separated from them at any given point in their lives. The soldier piece represented the fears the wives had when their husbands were gone. These fears, however, were largely unspoken. As the artist, I chose to make them just as central as the bride's presence in the room. Her positioning, facing the recessed area in

which the soldier lay (Figure 6.36), was not only indicative of her dedication to her husband, but also her own fears regarding his injury and/or death.

Setting up the soldier I wanted to create a disturbance in the gallery that would cause people to pause and reflect not just on death and injury, but in the sense of chaos that comes with being married to a soldier. As a military wife I am aware of the fears we have as our husbands' leave for a war zone. The thought that he may not return, or return as someone other than the person we sent off, is ever-present in our minds. However, what I found in the course of my research is that we are not willing to broach that subject out loud. Allusions to death and injury were made during the course of the interviews, but other than one Senior officer's wife who was willing to directly address the subject, all the wives skirted the subject and never openly spoke about their fears. The silence spoke to me more than the words they uttered. As such, I felt it was important to bring this silence to light and show the connection between the soldier and the fears his wife had regarding his mortality. My interpretation of this silence was to make the bride face the collection of body parts that represented the soldier (Figure 6.36).

The soldier's life was shown as one that is not just scattered, representing the constant change that exists within the life of a military couple, but as also trying to maintain the connection he has with his bride (Figure 6.30, Figure 6.31, Figure 6.37).

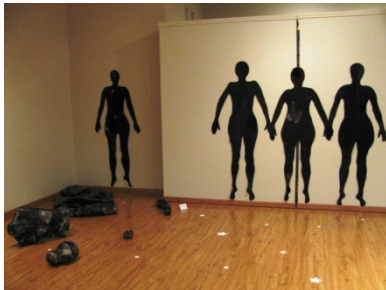


Figure 6.37 Silhouettes on moveable wall



Figure 6.38 Soldier facing bride

His hand reached towards her, touching a lace star—the first in a trail of stars that led to the front of the gown; his head faced her, as if gazing at his bride (Figure 6.38), both of these parts were positioned so as to keep the connection clear between the couple. However, I did find that the trail of stars leading to the bride often had to be replaced since people kept taking the stars as “souvenirs.”

Responses

However, the stars were not the only way people showed their appreciation, and in some cases, disdain for the show. My husband procured a military journal, several U.S. Army pens, and a U.S. Army coffee cup for me; these items were placed on top of the counter located at the entrance to the exhibit. Looking through the book after the show closed I felt satisfied that people understood what I was trying to do and that my work had inspired emotion. Several comments came from military wives, one of whom had this to say:

This exhibit is amazing! Having been a part of the military community in the past, and having a bevy of friends who are still there, there was such a strong emotional aura that this possessed. The connections that you made, the links between the individual and the Army wife community are incredible. The line “the ring is my uniform” is a key phrase to this particular way of life.

Her comments indicated her understanding of the ways in which I was trying to convey not just the connection wives have with other women, but the idea that military wives are part of the military by virtue of being married to a soldier. Other wives also commented on how powerful they felt the exhibit was and how well they felt it represented the life of the military wife. One woman claimed that the exhibit “sums up the extremes we are dealing with—dark & light,” while another felt that I “captured the chill, presence, and silent pain of the silent ranks.” She continued by saying “It could have only come from one of our own.” These women indicated their understanding of the darker side of the show through their comments, which proved to me my aim of creating art had been fulfilled, as I was able to evoke emotion, understanding, and cause other military wives to pause, consider the meaning behind the pieces, and connect them to their own lives.

Further indicators that I had succeeded in my aim of creating art can be found in other comments that referenced the exhibit as “a visual of the experience so many have lived,” “a very impressive emotion-evoking installation,” “simple yet complex with its multiple meanings,” and “so realistic & so real.” These comments indicated to me that I was reaching viewers on a visceral level and they were able to absorb the message I was sending regarding the military wife and how important it was to allow their voices to be heard and understood.

However, not all the comments about the exhibit were positive. Others felt the darker side of the exhibit—the soldier—was horrifying. One viewer commented; “made me shiver and cringe! NOT for kids!” Another person wrote “This exhibit should not have had to take place... war is the last resort, not the first.” While I wanted to evoke emotion in people, I didn’t imagine I would receive responses such as these; however, I felt proud that I was able to stir such strong words and feelings from these individuals. Though these comments provided me with valuable feedback it was the words of one military wife that I found particularly:

I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to view your artwork. However, I must admit that the scattered body parts of the maniken was disturbing. My husband is deploying in 2 wks., so you can see why this would be a tender thing to view.

Her words moved me and provided me with a sense of accomplishment, not because I disturbed her but because my artwork moved her to share a part of her private world with me.

Making a connection between the women’s voices, the artwork, and the audience was a key part of accomplishing my overall aim. Indicators, such as the stealing of the stars and the numerous comments I received about the exhibit, as well as the critiques I received throughout the design and installation process from Dr. Haar, show this aim was accomplished. The importance of women’s voices came through as indicated by this woman’s comment: “Very important interesting perspective. Women’s needs, women’s experiences, women’s strengths. We must stick together.” Her words sum up what I wanted to portray in speaking with military wives and using their stories as the basis for my artwork.

Chapter Summary

As the final phase of my research, the installation process and exhibit allowed me to explore alternative ways to disseminate knowledge about a group of women whose lives are rarely displayed to the civilian world. Because I selected a community art gallery as the venue for the exhibit, rather than one of the galleries on-campus, I was able to extend my work outside of academia and into the surrounding military and civilian communities. Prior to installation, I visited the gallery and consulted with Professor Andrus who advised me on several ways to lay out the exhibit. The installation involved seven phases; setting up the gown, hanging the silhouettes, placing the soldier, fixing the lighting, scattering the stars, putting the posters on the wall, and writing the exhibit statement. Each phase of the installation was carefully executed so as to result in a final exhibit that highlighted the connections between the pieces. During the installation process, I considered my own positionality as a military wife, feminist, and artist – all three of these positioning played a part in the choices I made regarding placement of the pieces. Remaining reflexive in this manner helped me keep the women's voices central, and use placement that would make strong connections between the women and the viewer. The exhibit, on display at the M.A.C. from April 16-May 28, 2011 elicited numerous responses, both positive and negative, from viewers. These comments, along with the critiques offered by my mentor, served as reinforcement that I had accomplished my goal of creating textile art by using these women's words as inspiration.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

The preceding chapters illuminated the ways in which my research presented a new perspective of the military wife's lived experience, as well as show how practice-based research might be used to employ feminist inquiry in the field of Apparel and Textiles. The current study's aim was to discover the voice of the military wife, examine it through a feminist lens, and then translate that voice into textile art, inspired by the emergent themes found in the collective, lived experience of the women studied. In order to accomplish the aim, the study was approached from a phenomenological, feminist, practice-based standpoint. These three methodologies guided the manner in which the research was formulated and conducted. However my own positionality was constantly taken into account, especially given my insider status within the community being studied. The combination of these three theoretical perspectives, intertwined with the recognition and understanding of my own positionality during all stages of the research, provided a clear theoretical base, and a foundational approach to creating artwork in a manner consistent with academic scholarship. As such, the aims and objectives of the study as a practice-based research project were accomplished. According to Bird (2000) a true practice-based research project must meet the following standards: have a well-researched contextual framework, display thorough documentation, be presented in a written format, and involve extensive practice of the artist's skills.

In order to establish the contextual framework for the artwork, interviews were conducted with 22 military wives, and then successfully transcribed, coded, and analyzed for emergent themes, all while considering my own positionality, since that was a crucial aspect to the study being a successful feminist inquiry.

The life of a military wife, though difficult at times is also filled with numerous positive aspects. Though the majority of academic literature colors it as an inherently oppressive and difficult lifestyle, many women with whom I spoke felt it was essentially positive and fulfilling. That being said, most women also recognized the ways in which the military dominated their lives and made it difficult for them to stand separate even though several made a concerted effort to do so. This domination was most apparent in their silenced voices regarding decisions they were unable to make concerning their own

lives, especially in regards to their relationship. Several themes emerged as being central to the wife's experience; relationships with others, separation from their spouse and the overall experience of being a military wife. These themes became the focus for the textile art installation pieces created to represent the voice of the wives as they shared their experiences.

It was also essential, through the use of journaling, sketches, and photography during the transcription and design portions of the study, to carefully track, monitor, document, and record my personal position and process as a means to understanding why certain themes were selected and how those themes could best be portrayed from conception to completion. Because the aim for the design portion of the project was to release the voice of the military wife through the work performed in the studio, design ideas were noted and developed in a visual journal and transcript notebook, while the actual creation of the pieces were tracked and documented in both a sketchbook and through photography. Upon final theme selection, work on the pieces began and developed into three installation pieces: 1) "Same, Same, But Different" – a series of 32 fabric-collage silhouettes, 2) "Fallen Soldier" – a 3-D mixed media fabric sculpture, and 3) "My Ring is My Uniform" – a wedding gown.

The silhouettes were created by tracing the bodies of the women interviewed as well as some civilian women onto large sheets of canvas. Black fabric and military uniforms were then cut, pinned, and stitched on in a collage fashion. Once stitched, they were then machine-serged along the edges and colored with black marker. Based upon the theme of relationships that emerged, the silhouettes were created to look as if they were holding hands. The fabrics used were consistent between the women as this represented their similarities and the relationships they maintained with one another despite distance and other challenges. Besides differences in size and body shape, differences between the women were further emphasized through the use of different stitching on the military wives and civilian women, as well as the unique fabric layouts on each silhouette.

The soldier was developed from a store-bought life-size male mannequin, machine-lace, various styles of military uniforms, and military issued tape. It was deconstructed into several pieces, which were then covered with tape, fabric strips

created from various military uniforms, and randomly placed, shredded machine-lace. Developed from the theme of separation the soldier conveyed the impact separation has on a military couple. This was done through the mannequin's dismemberment which represented death and the overall feeling of separation in general. Connection to the spouse was established through the incorporation of machine lace on each body part, since this particular fabric was used on both the silhouettes and the bodice of the wedding gown.

The wedding gown was the central focus of the project, since it represented the collective lived experience of the women interviewed. The gown was composed of three separate pieces; an underskirt, a bodice, and an overlay. The underskirt fabric was created from deconstructed military uniforms, which were pieced together to form a 6 ft underskirt. The dual-layered bodice was constructed from military uniform fabric, machine-lace, leather strips and chiffon. The final piece to be constructed was the overlay created from chiffon fabric and dog tags. The overlay served to soften the look of the gown and make it feel more like something a bride would wear on her wedding day. Choices regarding material as well as construction were carefully considered since it was essential that together they truly conveyed the experience of a military wife's life, thus the use of military uniform fabric, and the pieced construction of the underskirt. Because marriage and personal qualities emerged as strong themes they were drawn together into the theme of collective experience.

As the final phase of the study's design portion, the installation pieces were exhibited at a community art gallery in order to extend the chance of their visibility outside of academia and into the surrounding military and civilian communities. Prior to beginning the installation, gallery visits, and consultations with Professor Andrus were conducted. The installation involved seven phases: setting up the gown, hanging the silhouettes, placing the soldier, fixing the lighting, scattering the stars, putting the posters on the wall, and writing the exhibit statement. Each phase of the installation was carefully executed so as to result in a final exhibit that highlighted the connections between the pieces. Once again, my own positionality as a military wife, feminist, and artist were carefully considered since all three of these positionings influenced placement choices in the gallery. Remaining reflexive in this manner helped keep the women's voices central,

and make placement choices that showed strong connections between the women and the viewer. The exhibit, on display at the M.A.C. from April 16-May 28, 2011 elicited numerous viewer responses, both positive and negative; these comments, along mentor critiques, served as reinforcement that the extensive use of artistic skill was evident in the installation pieces.

Limitations and Recommendations

While the overall study was a success, several limitations did exist. These limitations were as follows:

1) The initial biases I held as the study began. At the start of the study the aim was to examine how military wives achieved a sense of independence and/or autonomy within the structure of the military framework and then interpret the results into an exhibit of textile art. This concept was borne out of my own frustrations with military life and the struggles I have undergone in order to feel a sense of autonomy from the Army. I believed that the majority of wives probably shared my feelings about the military and also possessed a desire to be independent of its overarching influence. However, as research began I found not all women were interested in the idea of being independent or autonomous. Similarities in our perspectives, especially in regards to shared experiences, emotions, and thoughts we believed civilian wives did not generally encounter were noted. Once these similarities were recognized and acknowledged, the project aim was altered. I realized that what I needed to focus on was what we all had in common and not what I felt we should all feel. After I chose to accept my bias towards the military the ability to monitor myself throughout the rest of the process became possible and I was able to ask meaningful questions that contained less of an embedded search for the answers I expected to hear. By engaging in reflexive practice about my biases going into the study, I was better able to understand how it initially impacted interaction with my participants, as well as the potential outcome of the study.

2) A population imbalance in regards to rank and race. Though the number of senior enlisted (NCO) and officer wives interviewed were equally represented, there was a much lower number of junior enlisted wives. Only 3 of these wives were interviewed as opposed to the 10 NCO, and the 10 Officer wives with whom I spoke. This limitation was

partially due to my own acquaintance with NCO and junior officer wives, as well as the lack of interaction most NCO and Officer's wives have with Junior Enlisted wives outside of FRG meetings. The junior enlisted wives I did interview were made possible through personal contact at the conference and then through referral. A similar issue existed in regards to race, as the sample was 87% Caucasian; thereby, creating a racial imbalance in the population being studied. As such, race was not factored into the analysis. A future recommendation to overcome this imbalance would be to expand the search through attendance at various FRG meetings, since the majority of participants are junior enlisted wives, thus increasing the chances of recruitment. In regards to race, a more representative sample will need to be selected, especially given the sample was highly imbalanced (87% Caucasian), in order to allow for adequate analysis of lived experiences based on race.

3) Husbands who were present during the interviews. The presence of husbands during the interviews also served as a limitation to the study since their presence often impeded the interview, thus altering the data. Their presence not only inhibited the conversation, it created an overt behavioral difference as exhibited by the wife's unwillingness to answer many questions, such as those centered on household and/or relationship issues, until glancing at her husband or he at her. My own behavior was also altered, as I was often wary of asking questions that he might perceive as too probing. Finally, when the husband was present he had a tendency to answer questions, rather than letting the wife speak. Three out of the five husbands who were present for interviews consistently interjected and answered questions. Sometimes the wife would follow-up after her husband spoke, but other times I was simply left with his answer and had to move on to the next question. A recommendation for solving this issue in the future is to schedule the interview during a time in which the wife will be available and alone.

4) The exhibit statement could have been more thorough. Because the exhibit statement was meant to guide the viewer and give them a strong understanding of each piece and how it evolved, it did not do a good job of explaining the connections I was attempting to make between each piece. While it did explain how the women's voices served as my inspiration, I did not give a good explanation of how that inspiration managed to evolve into the pieces they were about to view. A recommendation for

solving the issue in the future would be to allow more time to write the statement and give a more detailed explanation of how the pieces emerged from the themes and why those particular artifacts were reflective of those themes.

5) A lack of research into previous textile art, installation art, and feminist art. Though I glanced through several books on feminist art to see what had been done prior, more in-depth research could have been conducted as a way of drawing inspiration from other artists. Because I did not conduct research prior to the design process, I feel the pieces lacked a bit of sophistication that could have existed otherwise. A recommendation for solving this limitation in the future is to conduct thorough research on current installation, textile, and feminist artists prior to beginning the design process.

Contribution to Field

The interdisciplinary nature of my study provided an opening for me to delve into not only practice-based research, a methodology that is just now emerging within the field, but to also incorporate feminist thought into a discipline to which it has traditionally only exhibited a marginal connection. Also, currently, most doctoral candidates with a focus on apparel design do not necessarily engage in the creation of textile art as a means of translating another person's lived experience. As such, I have contributed a new method of approaching design centered practice-based research in the field of Apparel and Textiles. Furthermore, the written portion makes a contribution to both academic and non-academic literature, as it presents a dual view of military wives experience and provided them with a solitary voice.

Future Work

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the current study, it provides multiple areas for future research. Further practice-based research projects could include an examination of how the life experience of male military spouses is both different from and similar to that of the female military spouse, with the final artifact being an exhibition. Other research may include projects employing practice-based research in large-scale mixed media textile art utilizing machine-lace and needle-punch techniques, as well as an historical analysis comparing and contrasting women's apparel as portrayed in artwork by female artists and self-proclaimed feminist artists.

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Appendix A - Definitions

Duty station – The military post at which a soldier performs his main job

Family Readiness Group (FRG) – A group of family members, soldiers, and military leaders that serve to disseminate information, offer moral support and sponsor social functions for its unit members

Junior Enlisted – Soldiers holding the ranks of E-1, E-2, E-3 or E-4

Military Brat – A child who is raised in the military community and moves from place to place

Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) – The job or career path the soldier has in the military

Officer – Soldiers who have completed either four years of college, OCS, or completed the Green to Gold program and hold the ranks of O-1 – O10, as well as W1 – W-5. These are the soldiers who serve as the immediate leaders of the junior and senior enlisted personnel

PCS – Permanent Change of Station, these are orders a soldier receives moving him from one duty station to another

P.T.—Physical training

Projects – Forecast of number of units leaving for training missions during a given fiscal year

Senior Enlisted – Soldiers holding the ranks of E-5, E-6, E-7, E-8 or E-9. These are the soldiers who serve as the immediate leaders of the junior enlisted category

Appendix B - Population Breakdown

Table B.1 Population

Name	Age	Hometown	Education	Years Married	Years in Military	Husband's Rank
Theresa	20	Louisville, KY	Some college	1	1	E-2
Sandy	21	Orlando, FL	Some college	2	2	E-3
Claire	26	Corpus Christi, TX	Some high school	2	2	E-3
Georgette	38	Oswego, NY	Some college	10	10	E-5/E-7
Pamela	24	Denver, CO	High school	3	5	E-5
Jennifer	33	Utica, NY	Some college	2.5	3	E-5
Mary	28	Hawaii	Bachelor's	8	4.5	E-5
Laurel	27	Colorado Springs, CO	Master's	4.5	5	E-6
Leann	31	Tacoma, WA	High school	9	10	E-6
Carrie	50	Minneapolis, MN	MFA	4	4	E-6
Maria	35	San Diego, CA	Some college	10	15	E-7
Lindsay	27	Tacoma, WA	Bachelor's	8	9	E-7
Karen	35	Manhattan, KS	Tech school	6	11	E-7
Lisa	30	Rapid City, SD	Master's	2.5	4	CW2
Marge	32	Mobridge, SD	Bachelor's	9	10	CW2
Sue	28	Manhattan, KS	Associate's	1.5	6	O-1
Meredith	27	Jacksonville, NC	Master's	1.5	4	O-2
Linda	38	Washington D.C.	Master's	9	5	O-3
Tabitha	32	Beaumont, TX	J.D.	6.5	7.5	O-3
Casey	46	Wichita Falls, TX	ABD	16	16	O-4
Veronica	52	Iowa City, IA	Bachelor's	27	29	O-7
Marybeth	53	Fort Carson, CO	Master's	24	26	O-8
Allison	49	Aschafferburg, Germany	Ph.D.	28	28	O-8

Appendix C - IRB Application

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

NLY: IRB Protocol # _____ Application Received: _____
Routed: _____ Training Complete: _____

Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB)

Application for Approval Form

Last revised on June 2008

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:

- **Title of Project:** (if applicable, use the exact title listed in the grant/contract application)

A Qualitative Examination of Military Wives and How They Navigate Independence Alongside Their Husband's Career

- **Type of Application:**

New/Renewal Revision (to a pending new application)
 Modification (to an existing # _____ approved application)

- **Principal Investigator:** (must be a KSU faculty member)

Name:	Angela Hubler	Degree/Title:	Director/Associate Professor of Women's Studies
Department:	Women's Studies	Campus Phone:	785-532-5738
Campus Address:	03 Leasure Hall	Fax #:	785-532-3299
E-mail	ahubler@ksu.edu		

- **Contact Name/Email/Phone for Questions/Problems with Form:** Angela Hubler/ahubler@ksu.edu/785-532-5738

- **Does this project involve any collaborators not part of the faculty/staff at KSU?** (projects with non-KSU collaborators may require additional coordination and approvals):

No
X Yes

- **Project Classification** (Is this project part of one of the following?):

Thesis
 Dissertation
 Class Project
 Faculty Research
 Other: _____

- **Please attach a copy of the Consent Form:**

Copy attached
 Consent form not used

- **Funding Source:** Internal External (identify source and attach a copy of the sponsor's grant application or contract as submitted to the funding agency)

Copy attached Not applicable

- **Based upon criteria found in 45 CFR 46 – and the overview of projects that may qualify for exemption explained at <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/decisioncharts.htm#c2>, I believe that my project using human subjects should be determined by the IRB to be exempt from IRB review:**

No
 Yes (If yes, please complete application **including** Section XII. C. 'Exempt Projects'; remember that only the IRB has the authority to determine that a project is exempt from IRB review)

Last revised on June 2008

If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or comply@ksu.edu

Human Subjects Research Protocol Application Form

The KSU IRB is required by law to ensure that all research involving human subjects is adequately reviewed for specific information and is approved prior to inception of any proposed activity. Consequently, it is important that you answer all questions accurately. If you need help or have questions about how to complete this application, please call the Research Compliance Office at 532-3224, or e-mail us at comply@ksu.edu.

Please provide the requested information in the shaded text boxes. The shaded text boxes are designed to accommodate responses within the body of the application. As you type your answers, the text boxes will expand as needed. After completion, print the form and send the original and one photocopy to the Institutional Review Board, Room 203, Fairchild Hall.

Principal Investigator:	Angela Hubler
Project Title:	A Qualitative Examination of Military Wives and How They Navigate Independence Alongside Their Husband's Career
Date:	3/20/09

NON-TECHNICAL SYNOPSIS (brief narrative description of proposal easily understood by nonscientists):

This study attempts to answer the question: How do civilian women married to U.S. soldiers maintain their independence while living in a highly, structured, militarized environment. Through interviews with military wives we will explore the choices they have made and the struggles they have encountered in an attempt to keep their two worlds in balance.

I. BACKGROUND (concise narrative review of the literature and basis for the study):

Civilian women married to military men are confronted with numerous obstacles and institutional expectations. She is not only expected to fill the role of wife to her husband, but she must also be ever mindful of how her actions may affect his career progression. Past and current literature has not only examined the wife's struggle with unit expectations such as volunteer work and mandatory attendance at certain social functions, it has also looked at her struggles with finding and maintaining employment and/or education in the face of frequent moves, navigating the complex social world of the military, and dealing with frequent separations from her soldier spouse. As a civilian, she is faced with managing in two worlds, one of which is highly structured and militarized. Feminist researcher Cynthia Enloe (1983) defines militarization material and ideological process focused on creating the illusion that "women's service" to the military institution is a form of liberation. This militarization process can create a struggle for civilian wives who wish to keep their lives separate from their husband's jobs.

II. PROJECT/STUDY DESCRIPTION (please provide a concise narrative description of the proposed activity in terms that will allow the IRB or other interested parties to clearly understand what it is that you propose to do that involves human subjects. This description must be in enough detail so that IRB members can make an informed decision about proposal).

This research is an investigative look at how civilian wives feel about their role in the military world and if they feel a need for independence. The research will involve interviews with military wives whose husband's hold various ranks. Interviews will cover the following areas: deployment/separation, social contacts, conformity, the "model" military wife, household work division, general questions regarding military life. Once the interviews are complete they will be coded and analyzed ; after a full examination of the data, significant quotes will be selected to help inform the design process of 12 pieces of original artwork regarding the unique struggles faced by military wives.

III. OBJECTIVE (briefly state the objective of the research – what you hope to learn from the study):

The first objective of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of how military life impacts civilian women married to U.S. soldiers, and examine the ways in which these women respond to and navigate the struggles they face as military wives. I will also look at how these women's words might be incorporated into artwork so as to represent the unique obstacles faced by women trying to maintain a balance between two separate worlds.

IV. DESIGN AND PROCEDURES (succinctly outline formal plan for study):

- A. Location of study: **Respondents houses, restaurants, anywhere the respondents are comfortable conducting interviews**
- B. Variables to be studied: **Relationships with self, spouses, the military, and other wives;**
- C. Data collection methods: (surveys, instruments, etc – **Interview schedules, attached PLEASE ATTACH**)
- D. List any factors that might lead to a subject dropping out or withdrawing from a study. These might include, but are not limited to emotional or physical stress, pain, inconvenience, etc.: **No undue stress is anticipated. All interview subjects will have the right to terminate interviews at any time or to refuse participation in the study.**
- E. List all biological samples taken: (if any) **N/A**
- F. Debriefing procedures for participants: **Debriefing statement is included on the consent form, and participants will be offered access to all reports resulting from this research**

V. RESEARCH SUBJECTS:

- A. Source: **Surrounding community**
- B. Number: **75**
- C. Characteristics: (list any unique qualifiers desirable for research subject participation) **25 wives of junior enlisted soldiers (E1-E4), 25 wives of NCO's (E5-E8), 25 wives of Officers (O1-O10 and/or W1-W4)**
- D. Recruitment procedures: (Explain how do you plan to recruit your subjects? Attach any fliers, posters, etc. used in recruitment. If you plan to use any inducements, ie. cash, gifts, prizes, etc., please list them here.) **Personal approach, referrals**

VI. RISK – PROTECTION – BENEFITS: The answers for the three questions below are central to human subjects research. You must demonstrate a reasonable balance between anticipated risks to research participants, protection strategies, and anticipated benefits to participants or others.

- A. **Risks for Subjects:** (Identify any reasonably foreseeable physical, psychological, or social risks for participants. State that there are “no known risks” if appropriate.) **No known risks**
- B. **Minimizing Risk:** (Describe specific measures used to minimize or protect subjects from anticipated risks.) **All names will be kept confidential. Standard confidentiality procedures will be strictly followed – all consent forms and interview materials will be kept separate, and only project staff (myself and a graduate student) will have access to tapes or verbatim transcripts.**
- C. **Benefits:** (Describe any reasonably expected benefits for research participants, a class of participants, or to society as a whole.) **Allow participants to explore their sense of self in relation to their husband’s job, and provide insight into how the military might better serve soldier’s wives so as to increase quality of life and family satisfaction with the military lifestyle.**

In your opinion, does the research involve **more than minimal risk** to subjects? (“Minimal risk” means that “the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.”)

Yes x **No**

VII. CONFIDENTIALITY: Confidentiality is the formal treatment of information that an individual has disclosed to you in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others without permission in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure. Consequently, it is your

responsibility to protect information that you gather from human research subjects in a way that is consistent with your agreement with the volunteer and with their expectations. If possible, it is best if research subjects' identity and linkage to information or data remains unknown.

Explain how you are going to protect confidentiality of research subjects and/or data or records. Include plans for maintaining records after completion.

All interview materials and signed consent forms will be held separately. Interview tapes will be coded only by interviewee (Jr. enlisted, NCO, Officer) and code number. Consent forms will be held for three years and then destroyed. Tapes will be destroyed after transcription.

VIII. INFORMED CONSENT: Informed consent is a critical component of human subjects research – it is your responsibility to make sure that any potential subject knows exactly what the project that you are planning is about, and what his/her potential role is. (There may be projects where some forms of “deception” of the subject is necessary for the execution of the study, but it must be carefully justified to and approved by the IRB). A schematic for determining when a waiver or alteration of informed consent may be considered by the IRB is found at <http://www.ksu.edu/research/comply/irb/images/slide1.jpg> and at <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm#46.116>. Even if your proposed activity does qualify for a waiver of informed consent, you must still provide potential participants with basic information that informs them of their rights as subjects, i.e. explanation that the project is research and the purpose of the research, length of study, study procedures, debriefing issues to include anticipated benefits, study and administrative contact information, confidentiality strategy, and the fact that participation is entirely voluntary and can be terminated at any time without penalty, etc. Even if your potential subjects are completely anonymous, you are obliged to provide them (and the IRB) with basic information about your project. See informed consent example on the URCO website. It is a federal requirement to maintain informed consent forms for 3 years after the study completion.

Yes No Answer the following questions about the informed consent procedures.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----|---|
| x | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. | Are you using a written informed consent form? If “yes,” include a copy with this application. If “no” see b. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | b. | In accordance with guidance in 45 CFR 46, I am requesting a waiver or alteration of informed consent elements (See Section VII above). If “yes,” provide a basis and/or justification for your request. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | c. | Are you using the online Consent Form Template provided by the URCO? If “no,” does your Informed Consent document has all the minimum required elements of informed consent found in the Consent Form Template? (Please explain)
I am using a simplified version of the form that includes all of the required elements of informed consent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | d. | Are your research subjects anonymous? If they are anonymous, you will not have access to any information that will allow you to determine the identity of the research subjects in your study, or to link research data to a specific individual in any way. Anonymity is a powerful protection for potential research subjects. (An anonymous subject is one whose identity is unknown even to the researcher, or the data or information collected cannot be linked in any way to a specific person). |
| x | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. | Are subjects debriefed about the purposes, consequences, and benefits of the research? Debriefing refers to a mechanism for informing the research subjects of the results or conclusions, after the data is collected and analyzed, and the study is over. (If “no” explain why.) |

*** It is a requirement that you maintain all signed copies of informed consent documents for at least 3 years following the completion of your study. These documents must be available for examination and review by federal compliance officials.**

IX. PROJECT INFORMATION: (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them

in one of the paragraphs above)

- | Yes | No | Does the project involve any of the following? |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | a. Deception of subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | b. Shock or other forms of punishment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | c. Sexually explicit materials or questions about sexual orientation, sexual experience or sexual abuse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | d. Handling of money or other valuable commodities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | e. Extraction or use of blood, other bodily fluids, or tissues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | f. Questions about any kind of illegal or illicit activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | g. Purposeful creation of anxiety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | h. Any procedure that might be viewed as invasion of privacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | i. Physical exercise or stress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | j. Administration of substances (food, drugs, etc.) to subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | k. Any procedure that might place subjects at risk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | l. Any form of potential abuse; i.e., psychological, physical, sexual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | x | m. Is there potential for the data from this project to be published in a journal, presented at a conference, etc? |
| x | <input type="checkbox"/> | n. Use of surveys or questionnaires for data collection |

IF YES, PLEASE ATTACH!!

X. SUBJECT INFORMATION: (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them in one of the paragraphs above)

- | Yes | No | Does the research involve subjects from any of the following categories? |
|--------------------------|----|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | a. Under 18 years of age (these subjects require parental or guardian consent) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | b. Over 65 years of age |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | c. Physically or mentally disabled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | d. Economically or educationally disadvantaged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | e. Unable to provide their own legal informed consent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | f. Pregnant females as target population |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | g. Victims |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | h. Subjects in institutions (e.g., prisons, nursing homes, halfway houses) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | i. Are research subjects in this activity students recruited from university classes or volunteer pools? If so, do you have a reasonable alternative(s) to participation as a research subject in your project, i.e., another activity such as writing or reading, that would serve to protect students from unfair pressure or coercion to participate in this project? If you answered this question "Yes," explain any <u>alternatives options</u> for class credit for potential human subject volunteers in your study. |
| X | | j. <u>Are research subjects audio taped? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?</u>
Tapes will be destroyed after transcription. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | k. <u>Are research subjects video taped? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?</u> |

XI. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Concerns have been growing that financial interests in research may threaten the safety and rights of human research subjects. Financial interests are not in themselves prohibited and may well be appropriate and legitimate. Not all financial interests cause Conflict of Interest (COI) or harm to human subjects. However, to the extent that financial interests may affect the welfare of human subjects in research, IRB's, institutions, and investigators must consider what actions regarding financial interests may be necessary to protect human subjects. Please answer the following questions:

- | Yes | No | |
|--------------------------|----|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | a. Do you or the institution have any proprietary interest in a potential product of this research, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, or licensing agreements? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | b. Do you have an equity interest in the research sponsor (publicly held or a non-publicly |

- held company)?
- X c. Do you receive significant payments of other sorts, eg., grants, equipment, retainers for consultation and/or honoraria from the sponsor of this research?
- X d. Do you receive payment per participant or incentive payments?
- e. If you answered yes on any of the above questions, please provide adequate explanatory information so the IRB can assess any potential COI indicated above.

XII. PROJECT COLLABORATORS:

A. KSU Collaborators – list anyone affiliated with KSU who is collecting or analyzing data: (list all collaborators on the project, including co-principal investigators, undergraduate and graduate students)

Name:	Department:	Campus Phone:
Wendy Barnes	Apparel, Textiles and Interior Design	785-532-0876

B. Non-KSU Collaborators: (List all collaborators on your human subjects research project not affiliated with KSU in the spaces below. KSU has negotiated an Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), the federal office responsible for oversight of research involving human subjects. When research involving human subjects includes collaborators who are not employees or agents of KSU the activities of those unaffiliated individuals may be covered under the KSU Assurance only in accordance with a formal, written agreement of commitment to relevant human subject protection policies and IRB oversight. The Unaffiliated Investigators Agreement can be found and downloaded at <https://urco.ondemand.ksu.edu/COMS/player/content/IRB/content/Application/Application/Unaffiliated%20Inv.%20Agreement.pdf>

The URCO must have a copy of the Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement on file for each non-KSU collaborator who is not covered by their own IRB and assurance with OHRP. Consequently, it is critical that you identify non-KSU collaborators, and initiate any coordination and/or approval process early, to minimize delays caused by administrative requirements.)

Name:	Organization:	Phone:

Does your non-KSU collaborator’s organization have an Assurance with OHRP? (for Federalwide Assurance and Multiple Project Assurance (MPA) listings of other institutions, please reference the OHRP website under Assurance Information at: <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/polasur.htm>).

- No
- Yes If yes, Collaborator’s FWA or MPA # _____

Is your non-KSU collaborator’s IRB reviewing this proposal?

- No
- Yes If yes, IRB approval # _____

C. Exempt Projects: 45 CFR 46 identifies six categories of research involving human subjects that may be exempt from IRB review. The categories for exemption are listed here: <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/decisioncharts.htm#c2>. If you believe that your project qualifies for exemption, please indicate which exemption category applies (1-6). Please remember that only the IRB can make the final determination whether a project is exempt from IRB review, or not.

Exemption Category: _____

XIII. CLINICAL TRIAL Yes No
(If so, please give product.)

Export Controls Training:

-The Provost has mandated that all KSU faculty/staff with a full-time appointment participate in the Export Control Program.

-If you are not in our database as having completed the Export Control training, this proposal will not be approved until your participation is verified.

-To complete the Export Control training, follow the instructions below:

Click on:

<https://online.ksu.edu/templating/courseHomePage/index.jsp?courseId=101464>

1. After signing into K-State Online, you will be taken to the Export Control Homepage
2. Read the directions and click on the video link to begin the program
3. Make sure you enter your name / email when prompted so that participation is verified

If you click on the link and are not taken to K-State Online, this means that you have already completed the Export Control training and have been removed from the roster. If this is the case, no further action is required.

-Can't recall if you have completed this training? Contact the URCO at 785-532-3224 or comply@ksu.edu and we will be happy to look it up for you.

Post Approval Monitoring: The URCO has a Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM) program to help assure that activities are performed in accordance with provisions or procedures approved by the IRB. Accordingly, the URCO staff will arrange a PAM visit as appropriate; to assess compliance with approved activities.

If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or comply@ksu.edu

INVESTIGATOR ASSURANCE FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

(Print this page separately because it requires a signature by the PI.)

P.I. Name: Angela Hubler

Title of Project: A Qualitative Examination of Military Wives and How They Navigate Independence Alongside Their Husband's Career

XIV. ASSURANCES: As the Principal Investigator on this protocol, I provide assurances for the following:

- A. **Research Involving Human Subjects:** This project will be performed in the manner described in this proposal, and in accordance with the Federalwide Assurance FWA00000865 approved for Kansas State University available at <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/polasur.htm#FWA>, applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines. Any proposed deviation or modification from the procedures detailed herein must be submitted to the IRB, and be approved by the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) prior to implementation.
- B. **Training:** I assure that all personnel working with human subjects described in this protocol are technically competent for the role described for them, and have completed the required IRB training modules found on the URCO website at: <http://urco.ksu.edu/IRBOverview.html>. I understand that no proposals will receive final IRB approval until the URCO has documentation of completion of training by all appropriate personnel.
- C. **Extramural Funding:** If funded by an extramural source, I assure that this application accurately reflects all procedures involving human subjects as described in the grant/contract proposal to the funding agency. I also assure that I will notify the IRB/URCO, the KSU PreAward Services, and the funding/contract entity if there are modifications or changes made to the protocol after the initial submission to the funding agency.
- D. **Study Duration:** I understand that it is the responsibility of the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) to perform continuing reviews of human subjects research as necessary. I also understand that as continuing reviews are conducted, it is my responsibility to provide timely and accurate review or update information when requested, to include notification of the IRB/URCO when my study is changed or completed.
- E. **Conflict of Interest:** I assure that I have accurately described (in this application) any potential Conflict of Interest that my collaborators, the University, or I may have in association with this proposed research activity.
- F. **Adverse Event Reporting:** I assure that I will promptly report to the IRB / URCO any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others that involve the protocol as approved.
- G. **Accuracy:** I assure that the information herein provided to the Committee for Human Subjects Research is to the best of my knowledge complete and accurate.

(Principal Investigator Signature)

(date)

Appendix D - IRB Approval Letter

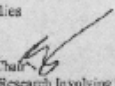
B. IRB Approval



University Research
Compliance Office
700 State Hall West
Stable Maintenance
Manhattan, KS 66506-1102
785-532-3224
Fax: 785-532-4278
irb@kstate.edu

Proposal Number: 5034

TO: Angela Hubler
Womens Studies
03B Leisure

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair 
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: May 15, 2009

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "A Qualitative Examination of Military Wives and How They Navigate Independence Alongside Their Husband's Career."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is approved for one year from the date of this correspondence, pending "continuing review."

APPROVAL DATE: May 15, 2009

EXPIRATION DATE: May 15, 2010

Several months prior to the expiration date listed, the IRB will solicit information from you for federally mandated "continuing review" of the research. Based on the review, the IRB may approve the activity for another year. If continuing IRB approval is not granted, or the IRB fails to perform the continuing review before the expiration date noted above, the project will expire and the activity involving human subjects must be terminated on that date. Consequently, it is critical that you are responsive to the IRB request for information for continuing review if you want your project to continue.

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

- There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.
- There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCCO.

Appendix E - Informed Consent

Informed Consent Statement

A. General Information

1. Name of Researcher: Angela Hubler, Ph.D., Director/Associate Professor, Women's Studies. Wendy D. Barnes, Doctoral student, Department of Apparel, Textiles and Interior Design, Kansas State University

2. Title of Study: A Qualitative Examination of Military Wives and How They Navigate Independence Alongside Their Husband's Career.

3. Objectives of Study: The research will investigate how civilian wives feel about their role in the military world and if they feel a need for independence. Through thoughtful examination of these women's words, I will examine how their experience might be incorporated into original artwork (apparel, quilts, and mixed media paintings) that represent the unique obstacles faced by women trying to maintain a balance between two separate worlds. Through this creative expression I hope to show the diverse outlook of military wives and the ways in which they survive the struggles associated with being married to a United States soldier.

4. Description and purpose of procedures: This part of the research consists of interviews with 75 military wives. This interview will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes and will include questions about feelings regarding military life in general, social contacts, household divisions, conformity, deployment and separation, and "ideals" surrounding military wifehood. These interviews will be tape recorded and later transcribed. This information will be used to gain a deeper understanding of how civilian women married to U.S. soldiers balance the civilian world with military life.

5. Use of results: Data collected in this project will be used in both the written portion of a dissertation, as well as in the creative art work (apparel, quilts, mixed media paintings), which will be displayed as part of a dissertation exhibit.

6. The risks and discomforts are minimal. They may include: Strictly the use of your time is required. No physical risk is involved, and your behavior or responses will not be manipulated in any way. All information will be kept confidential and all identifiers will

be removed to preserve confidentiality. Access to the data will only be available to the researchers associated with this project.

7. Possible benefits to you or to others from participating in this study: Interview subjects in this type of research typically report some subjective benefit from being able to express their opinions on matters of concern to them in their personal lives. The information you provide may also be helpful in the process of creative expression as a means of exploring personal feelings.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may refuse participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. Please be aware this research project is not military sponsored and the results will not be shared with military officials. All research information will be handled in the strictest confidence and your participation will not be individually identifiable in any reports. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the above items. If you have questions about the research that arise after this interview, please feel free to contact me at (785) 532-0876. Questions about the role of the university or your rights as a participant in this research should be directed to Rick Scheidt, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Kansas State University, (785) 532-1483

B. Signed Consent Portion

I understand the study entitled: A Qualitative Examination of Military Wives and How They Navigate Independence Alongside Their Husband's Career as explained to me on pages 1 & 2, and I consent to participate in the study. My participation is completely voluntary. I understand that all research information will be handled in the strictest confidence and that my participation will not be individually identifiable in any reports. I understand that there is no penalty or prejudice of any kind for withdrawing or not participating in the study.

(Signature)

(Date)

Appendix F - Background Questions

Background Questions

Age:

Where were you born:

What is your highest level of education:

How many years have you been married:

How old were you when you married:

How long were you together before marriage?

Was he a part of the military prior to your getting married?

How many years has your husband been in the military:

What is your husband's rank:

How many times have you PCS'd to another duty station:

Where have you been stationed:

On average, how long have you been at each duty station:

How many times has your husband been deployed:

Where:

Do you have children:

If so, how many:

If no,

do you plan to:

What ages are your children:

Gender:

Do you work outside the home:

Appendix G - Interview Guide

General Questions Regarding Military Life

Have you had any difficulties adjusting to military life? If so, what are/were they?

How do you feel about your husband reenlisting:

How much influence do you have on his decision to reenlist:

What do you like most about being a military wife: Least:

The “Ideal” military wife

How would you describe the ideal military wife?

What qualities are necessary for a wife to be considered a “loyal” military wife?

What type of influence do you have over your husband’s career path? Are there specific behaviors you avoid in fear of getting him in trouble or impeding his next promotion?

Social Contacts

When you move to a new duty station what is the first thing you do:

Where do you meet people:

What affiliation do your friends have with the military:

How often do you and/or your husband socialize with other couples from his unit?

Do you have friends whose husbands are a lower/higher rank than yours? What are their ranks?

How often do you attend FRG meetings:

How often do you attend FRG sponsored events:

If you are active in the FRG what motivated you to become active:

What do you enjoy most about the FRG? The least?

What kinds of activities do you participate in with other military wives:

Do you have civilian friends? If so, where did you meet them:

Household Division

Who is in charge of the finances in your household:

Do you work outside the home:

If so, what kind of work do you do and how long have you done so:

Who is the primary caretaker of the children:

How do you divide the household responsibilities:

Deployment and Separation

Have deployments decreased or increased the closeness you feel towards your spouse?

In what ways has your relationship changed due to deployments? Stayed the same?

How many times has your husband been deployed since you have been married? How many months was he deployed?

How many times has your husband been away at school, field exercises, or other training since you have been married? How many months total would you say he has spent away from the home?

What emotions do you encounter when your spouse is deployed? How do these emotions differ from those you encounter when he is away at a school or field training exercise:

How does your life differ when your husband is gone?

What is the most challenging part of your husband being gone?

What kind of struggles do you encounter when he returns?

Conformity

Have you ever felt pressured to conform to military standards or values:

How much influence does your husband's unit have on you:

How many hours per week do you volunteer for your husband's unit:

What type of volunteer activities do you participate in:

What advice would you give a new military wife that you wish someone would have given you at the start:

Appendix H - Gallery Contract

MAC GALLERY CONTRACT



Manhattan Arts Center
1520 Poyntz Avenue
Manhattan, Kansas 66502
(785) 537-4420
(785) 539-3356 fax

www.manhattanarts.org programs@manhattanarts.org

Please complete, sign, keep a copy and return original to MAC. Thank you!

ARTIST Wendy Barnes SS # (if work is for sale) _____

MAILING ADDRESS 800 Church Ave. Manhattan, KS 66502

PHONE (day) 341-1923 (eve) same EMAIL wdb3838@ksu.edu

TITLE of exhibit War Brides

DATES of exhibit 4/16/11 - 5/28/11

OPENING Reception Date/Times 4/15/11

GALLERY A approximately 114 running feet)

GALLERY B _____ approximately 32 running feet, 2 large windows w/UV protective blinds)

Art will be delivered to MAC on Apr 12 by _____

Installation date/time Apr 12 Are you available to help hang exhibit? Yes

Art pickup time May 30 by _____

For publicity purposes we need the following information by _____

1. Current resume
2. Photos of work - slides, prints or other promotional material

❖ **Complete listing of works including title, brief description & value, to be exhibited must accompany work when it is delivered to the gallery.**

SALES & INSURANCE

Manhattan Arts Center will receive 30% commission, unless otherwise noted, on sales of artwork. In addition, Kansas State Sales Tax will be collected by the Center. All work is to remain on display for the duration of the exhibit. Artists will receive payment for sales within 30 days after exhibit closes. In case of loss or theft, artist will be reimbursed for 70% of the value of work; damaged work will become property of the Center. All work is insured while on the premises of the Manhattan Arts Center.

W Barnes _____ 7/22/09
Artist/Exhibitor (date)

Representative of Manhattan Arts Center (date)

form 6/04

Appendix I - Exhibit Statement

The installation you are about to view came from the interviews I conducted with 22 wives of U.S. soldiers. Upon completion of the interviews I analyzed the transcripts, seeking common themes or ideas. What I found was pride, connection, and many unspoken fears.

What these women gave me, as an artist and fellow military wife, was a new way of looking at the ever-changing, often chaotic, but fulfilling lives we lead as we follow our husbands throughout their careers.

Their words served as my inspiration.

With these pieces I strove to honor their words, their emotions, and the lives they have led or continue to lead.

I hope you enjoy the installation and the vision I have presented into the hearts and minds of these wonderful women.

This exhibit is in partial fulfillment of my Ph.D. in the College of Human Ecology, Department of Apparel, Textiles, and Interior Design, at Kansas State University.

Appendix J - Intent to Submit

Manuscript

A manuscript of the written dissertation has been prepared and will be submitted to the Clothing and Textiles Research Journal during the summer of 2012.

Design Work

A proposal for Oral Presentation in the form of a proceedings paper has been submitted to the annual International Textile and Apparel Association conference being held in November of 2012. Furthermore, the gown and proceedings paper will also be submitted to the juried exhibition call in early June, 2012 for the same conference.