

“WELL, BESIDES THE FACT THAT DEPLOYMENT KINDA STINKS...”:
ADOLESCENT VOICES IN LITERACY DURING MILITARY DEPLOYMENT

by

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B.S., Kansas State University, 1985
M.S., Kansas State University, 1994

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

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Abstract

By the end of March 2011, 2.3 million active-duty military personnel and reservists had deployed to combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan (Golding, 2011). Many of them had experienced multiple deployments in which they served in war zones for 12 to 15 months, returned to the US for 12 months, and then deployed again to another war zone (Huebner & Mancini, 2008; Morse, 2006). Adolescents in military families whose service members are deployed repeatedly, and for longer durations, experience circumstances unique to current conflicts. Documents such as the *Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment* (retrieved 2008) recommend various literacy practices as a means of coping with the circumstances of deployment. This qualitative phenomenological inquiry seeks to extend the body of research in the area of adolescent literacy by examining the perceptions of adolescents regarding their out-of-school literacy practices within the experience of deployment.

In this study, the perspectives of five adolescents were examined regarding their literacy practices as they shaped their identities, enacted agency, and navigated structures of power during deployment. Phenomenological analysis, critical discourse analysis, and sociocultural theory were applied to data gathered from initial interviews, literacy logs, and follow-up interviews.

During the phenomenological analysis, descriptions of each participant's experiences were developed, replete with the words and expressions of the adolescents themselves. Horizontalization of significant statements from these descriptions yielded a composite description offering an understanding of what it is like to engage in out-of-

school literacy practices within the circumstances of military deployment. Three themes emerged; ambiguity, responses, and roles.

A theoretical analysis utilizing critical discourse analysis and sociocultural theory examined the discourses of the participants and interpreted relationships between the adolescents' literacy practices and their experiences with deployment. This examination offered insight to the ways these adolescents established identity and enacted agency within power circulations as their families experienced deployment.

This study places the voices of adolescents at the foreground of consideration. Listening to their words and reading their texts offers true insight into their literacy practices as they navigate the lived experience of deployment.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Pat Beach (1947-2009), who, by her life and her words, encouraged me to “grow, Grow, GROW”. When the prospect of writing this dissertation seemed too daunting to consider, she looked me in the eye, smiled her knowing smile, and said, “Well. I think the best thing for you to do is to start.” She was right.

CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

The third week of school was underway in my sixth grade reading and language arts classroom. The first hour class of students that surrounded the tables in my room was an amazing group. In the previous ten days of school, each of the eighteen boys and girls had returned their parent letters with the requisite signatures. Most had mastered their locker combinations with moderate consistency and the majority showed up with their notebooks, folders, and pencils each day. They were a well-mannered, good-humored group who listened attentively, interacted enthusiastically, and laughed at my jokes. The work they were turning in was carefully done, and I was not surprised when I examined the previous year's state assessment results and discovered that 100% of them had met standard, exceeded standard, or scored in the exemplary performance category.

On this third Monday of the school year, we were having a conversation about shared experiences. The students had brought items to school that triggered memories for them and then had composed a brief narrative about each object. One young man was sharing his writing about memorabilia he had brought from his father's last military deployment. In my previous years teaching in this school, the number of my students experiencing military deployment had fluctuated from 10% to 25%. On this particular day, as the boy finished sharing his narrative, I asked the class how many of them had a parent who was currently deployed, had been deployed, or was about to be deployed. Eleven of the eighteen, 61% of the class, raised their hands.

The conversations continued as the rest of the students shared their narratives, but I was distracted by this realization. Sixty one percent! Over half of my students in this

particular class in this small, rural K-12 school had experienced, or would experience, military deployment. As their reading and language arts teacher with no military background, what did I really know about the impact of this experience on their lives? While adolescence is often considered to be a stressful time for most young people, it would seem these students were experiencing circumstances that would compound that stress. In order to better understand this experience, I began to search for information regarding the impact of deployment on adolescents.

During this search, I made note of two things. First, many of the resources available to parents and educators who seek to help adolescents cope with the stress of deployment suggest strategies that would most likely be implemented outside of the school setting. Many of these strategies fall into the broad scope of what could be categorized as literacy practices; journaling, writing stories and poems, writing cards and letters to the deployed family member, engaging in art activities, scrapbooking, and participation in group discussions (Huebner & Mancini, 2005; National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2008). Secondly I noted that, while strategies were suggested *for* adolescents, the voices of the adolescents for whom these strategies were suggested were glaringly absent. I began to focus my thinking around these two ponderings: *What literacy practices do adolescents experiencing deployment engage in outside of school hours and how do they perceive these practices as they attempt to cope when one of their family members is deployed?*

Overview of the Issues

This section will provide a brief overview of the issues of the stress of military deployment and adolescent literacy.

Stress of Military Deployment

Adolescents awaken each day to stresses and strains that simply go along with being a teenager. Puberty, school transitions, peer relationships, and family interactions are *normative stressors* that occur as part of normal development. The military deployment of a parent to a war zone is a *non-normative stressor* that occurs above and beyond those associated with normal development (Huebner & Mancini, 2005; Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007). Adolescents whose families are experiencing the deployment of one or both parents are especially vulnerable as they encounter additional strains layered upon the normal, everyday strains of adolescence. These adolescents may experience even greater concerns, worries, and levels of stress than younger children because of their increased awareness of the effect of military conflict on world events and the impact on their own lives (Oates, 2002).

Each phase of the deployment cycle is accompanied by unique stressors for adolescents and their families. During the ‘pre-deployment phase’, plans are made for when the service member is mobilized. At this time, the family may be dealing with financial issues, employment issues, and childcare arrangements as they prepare for the emotional and physical separation from the parent. Sometimes, the family may be required to relocate to a different home while the parent is deployed (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2008). Adolescents may find themselves transitioning to new schools or living with extended family. A move to a new school and/or community combined with altered living arrangements may mean a change in or loss of the social support system they previously had with family and friends (Huebner & Mancini, 2005).

During the ‘deployment phase’, the deployed parent or parents actually become geographically separated from the family. Even if the family did not have to relocate, the

absence of the parent can be extremely stressful. The remaining spouse becomes a single parent, and the roles and responsibilities of all family members may shift (Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007; Geneman & Lemmon, 2008). In addition to finding themselves assuming increased responsibilities for household management, adolescents may also be called upon to offer emotional support and encouragement to the remaining parent and to other siblings. They may experience feelings of isolation if they have infrequent communication or no communication with the deployed parent. Worries about the parent's safety and concerns for the family's future may weigh heavily on the adolescent's mind (Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007).

The 'post-deployment phase' is a time of celebration when the deployed parent returns home. However, along with the celebration may come additional stressors as the deployed parent is woven back into the fabric of the family's everyday life. Depending on the length of the deployment, the family may have functioned without the family member for a period of time ranging from several months to several years. During that time, a balance may have been achieved that now must be restructured or renegotiated to include the returning parent (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). Adolescents who had to assume additional responsibilities while the parent was deployed may be uncertain about what tasks or duties continue to be theirs. They may be hesitant to relinquish responsibilities that had resulted in their establishing new identities within the family structure while the parent was deployed.

As adolescents in military families find themselves in the midst of normative stressors that are common to all young people their age, they also concurrently experience many non-normative stressors as they move through the deployment cycle.

These stressors can lead to dramatic, life-altering changes. If literacy practices are suggested strategies for adolescents to employ to help them cope with these changes, then it is critical to develop an understanding of literacy itself as well as the literacy practices of these adolescents as they experience deployment.

Adolescent Literacy

Literacy is not a tangible object. Attempts to *define* literacy have led instead to *descriptions* of literacy, and what it means to be literate. Literacy has been described as a set of skills that reflect the needs of the time, needs that are influenced by various societal aspects related to money, power, and human relationships (Beers, 2007; Kinzer & Leander, 2003). Because these societal aspects are continually changing, descriptions of literacy also must shift and change. Kinzer & Leander (2003) note that literacy may be thought of as a “moving target” as its meaning continually changes in response to expectations from society (p. 547). Rapid change in literacy is happening as information and communication technologies are changing at a rapid rate. Because of this ongoing change, literacy has been described as being increasingly *deictic*, meaning that its definition is redefined on a regular basis and is not defined by time or space, but rather by new technologies and the way those technologies continuously change the way communication occurs and information is gathered (Leu, 2000; Kinzer & Leander, 2003; Bruce, 1997). This deictic nature of literacy is especially evident when considering new literacies and popular culture as aspects of adolescents’ overall literacy practices.

New Literacies

To understand the literacies practiced by adolescents, we must take into account the world in which they live. This world shapes and molds them as they concurrently

shape and mold the world. Adolescents use various forms of literacy to inform, define, and transform their lives. Most adolescents today are confident and competent in engaging in digital literacies through the Internet and other information communication technologies such as instant messaging, emailing, chatting, blogging, text messaging, and online role playing (Alvermann, 1998; Phelps, 1998; & Alvermann, 2007). Today's adolescents have been referred to as Digital Natives. They were born into the digital world, and they are "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games, the Internet, and text messaging. Outside of the school setting, they have grown up on the "twitch speed" of video games and other media, and are accustomed to instantaneous responses from a stroke on a keyboard or a click of a mouse. They have been networked for their entire lives, and often have very little patience for traditional literacy instruction in schools (Prensky, 2001). The literacy practices today's adolescents engage in, on the surface, look very different from the literacy practices their parents and educators engaged in during their adolescent years. They also may be very different from the literacy practices their parents and educators engage in as adults.

The job of today's adolescents is to make sense of the world in which they find themselves. They are continuously reaching out to all sources of information. As evidence of the deictic nature of literacy, adolescents today do not necessarily see print as the primary source for making meaning of their culture. They actually *consume* print in a much different manner than the adults in their lives (Kist, 2005; Kist, 2003; Mackey, 2003). The majority of most adults' literacy experiences have involved books. Books traditionally have been written with the intent that they would be read from left to right, and that a reader who picks up the book will read the words of the text in the same order

as they were read by previous readers. Internet and online environments are ‘written’ with quite a different intent. A reader who logs on to a web page, for example, may begin by reading the text in the middle of the screen, or he or she may begin by reading the text that is written in the side bar. The reader who begins reading in the side bar may perhaps note a hyperlink for related material, and may click on that word or phrase and be instantly linked to a different page within the website, or perhaps a different website altogether. That reader may or may not return to the original web page, and may never read the text in the middle of the screen. There are a multitude of options for consuming the interactive, non-linear text of the Internet and other online environments that offer a much different literacy experience than the traditional experience of reading a book (Kist, 2005; Mackey, 2003).

Today’s adolescents are not only familiar with navigating these environments, but are proficient and most comfortable with acquiring and producing knowledge in this manner. Hence, they often find themselves in contradictory circumstances. The breadth of the literacy practices in their lives outside of school is ever widening, while in school high stakes testing has narrowed the scope of what counts, or is valued, as literacy (Alvermann, 2007). If literacy is indeed a set of skills that reflects the needs of the time, literacy must enable adolescents to navigate the distances between their needs at school, at home, and in their social communities. For adolescents experiencing deployment, the distances between those needs may be great indeed.

Popular Culture

The landscape of popular culture is ever changing. It has been explored and navigated by cultural theorists who hold various theoretical perspectives and whose

attempts to define popular culture have utilized different critical approaches. At its simplest, popular culture could be defined as “simply culture that is widely favoured or well liked by many people” (Storey, 1998, p.7). Another definition is that popular culture is what is left over after standards of high culture are established – the cultural texts and practices that don’t measure up to high culture value judgments. Yet another definition suggests that popular culture is a mass culture that is highly commercial. Studies tend to focus on certain areas of the popular culture landscape and are most often divided between “the study of texts (popular fiction, television, pop music, etc.) and lived cultural practices (seaside holidays, youth subcultures, the celebration of Christmas, etc.)” (Storey, 1998, p. 19). Farber, Provenzo, Jr. & Holm (1994) use the term popular culture to refer to “the symbolic forms transmitted by various media such as television, film, popular magazines, and music” (p. 11). This reference to the term could be expanded to include digital literacies of texting, instant messaging, emailing, blogging, video gaming, and social networking.

Popular culture as a distinct category of literacy practices is centuries old. Traditional texts of popular culture included the work of those such as Shakespeare and Dickens, who were considered popular in their time. During contemporary times, the study of popular culture has broadened to include texts and practices that have come to be known as new literacies (Hagood, 2008). Hagood (2008) asserts the relevance of popular culture in literacy research is based on the shift to an expanded definition of texts and reading to include non-print as well as print focused-texts (p. 531). This relevance is also reinforced by the acknowledgement that literacy develops not only by cognitive factors, but by social and cultural factors as well.

When examining the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents experiencing deployment, a focus on popular culture may shed light on how these adolescents identify with other people, ideals, or concepts in order to cope with the stress of their situations. By seeking to understand their perceptions of their engagement with popular culture, this study may document their process of becoming as they construct their identities when a parent is deployed (Hagood, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

As we seek to learn more about the literacy practices of adolescents, it is critical to understand that, for adolescents, literacy is much more than just reading and writing. For them, literacy involves purposeful social and cognitive processes that help them uncover new ideas and glean meaning from them. Literacy enables them to express their own ideas and opinions and to produce and convey their messages through a variety of media (NCTE, 2006). It is also critical to understand that literacy is not an isolated skill that is acquired once and for all during primary school years. It is a progression of competencies that is developed over many years, well into adolescence. One of the ironies of research in adolescent literacy is that often the perspectives and perceptions of the adolescents themselves are discounted or overlooked entirely (Alvermann, 1998). A wealth of insight into the literacy practices of adolescents could be available if what *they* have to say is given as much credence as what is said *about* them (Moore & Cunningham, 2006). Listening to the perceptions and perspectives of adolescents would offer valuable insights into how they use their literacy as they establish and enact their identities and function within the agency and power of family and other social communities (Moje & Dillon, 2006).

When military personnel are engaged in or facing deployment, members of their families are subject to the stressors associated with this experience. There has been an upsurge in research focusing on stressors experienced by family members. More and more resources are becoming available to support families during the deployment cycle that offer possible strategies and practices to help mediate those stressors. Most resources for adolescents experiencing deployment make mention of various literacy practices, such as journaling, emailing, instant messaging, texting, phone conversations, video recording, and scrapbooking (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). Research that examines how adolescents engage in these various practices, and their perceptions of how these practices help them cope with the stress of deployment, would offer insight into how educators, medical experts, parents, family members, and other caretakers could support their use of literacy as they deal with the non-normative stressors of deployment that compound the normative stressors associated with adolescence.

Research Question

The following question guided the research and the data analysis for this study:

What are adolescents' lived experiences as expressed through out-of-school literacy practices during the military deployment of a family member?

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been defined in order to provide a clear understanding as they are presented in this study.

Adolescent: a child between the ages of twelve and eighteen

Agency: the strategic making and remaking of selves, identities, activities, and relationships within structures of power (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007)

Epoche: the ability to suspend, distance ourselves from, or “bracket” one’s judgments and preconceptions about the nature and essence of experiences and events in the everyday world (Schram, 2003, 2006)

Identity: a stable, internal state of being that takes into account the different positions individuals enact or perform in particular settings (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007)

Literacy: a “repertoire of practices” that enables the learner to communicate and to accomplish tasks in social and cultural contexts (Nixon, 2003)

Literacy Practices: the ways in which people engage in literacy

Phenomenology: the description of one or more individuals’ consciousness and experience of a phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2008)

Phenomenological Qualitative Inquiry: a study the purpose of which is to obtain a view into participants’ life-worlds and to understand their personal meanings constructed from their lived experiences (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Schram, 2006)

Social Communities: groups of people joined by common interest or identity

Purpose of the Study

It is the goal of most educators to equip their students with the literacy skills necessary to succeed beyond state mandated tests and the attainment of adequate yearly progress (AYP). These educators long to see their students succeed in the world outside the classroom. The ultimate realization of this goal happens when students use their literacy in meaningful ways, ways that enable them to survive difficult circumstances and develop an awareness of their identity as individuals. This study identified and explored

the literacy practices of adolescents that help them deal with the stress they experience when a parent or family member is deployed, stress that compounds the normal every day trials of adolescence. Rather than focus on what literacy practices may be missing from the lives of adolescents, this study identified literacy practices that *are* in place outside the school setting in their homes and communities and the ways in which adolescents engage in them. The study also explored the ways in which literacy as a sociocultural practice helps adolescents as they develop and cope with identities and agency within circulations of power (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007) that may factor into the deployment experience.

This study focused on the perceptions of the adolescents themselves regarding the stress often associated with deployment and how they use their literacy practices to cope as they continued to function in the social communities around them. Those perceptions were used to understand implications for educators who support adolescents experiencing deployment.

Significance of the Study

By the end of March 2011, 2.3 million active-duty military personnel and reservists had deployed to combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan (Golding, 2011). Many of them had experienced multiple deployments in which they served in war zones for 12 to 15 months, returned to the U.S. for 12 months, and then deployed again to another war zone (Huebner & Mancini, 2008; Morse, 2006). Over half of active duty military service members (55%) were married and approximately 43% of them had children, 23% of which were between the ages of 12 and 18 (Office of the Deputy Under

Secretary of Defense, 2009). Adolescents in military families whose service members are deployed repeatedly and for longer durations experience circumstances unique to current conflicts. This study extends the body of research in the area of adolescent literacy by examining the perceptions of adolescents who are experiencing some phase of the deployment cycle. Many current documents such as the *Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment* (retrieved 2008) recommend various literacy practices as a means of coping with deployment. This study accentuates the perspectives of the adolescents with regard to the role of out-of-school literacy practices as these adolescents shape their identities, enact agency, and navigate structures of power as they simultaneously experience normative stressors associated with adolescence and non-normative stressors associated with deployment.

Methodology

Creswell (2007) states that phenomenology provides the richest and most descriptive data, making it an ideal research process for eliciting cognitive representations (p. 267). This phenomenological qualitative inquiry involved the study of the phenomenon of out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents explored through five adolescents whose families are experiencing the military deployment of a family member. The study explored these literacy practices through the perspectives of the adolescents by collecting data from multiple sources, including but not limited to semi-structured interviews, literacy logs, and artifacts such as journal entries, letters, emails, instant messages, text messages, scrapbooks, and video recordings.

I focused on five adolescents in a rural school district within twenty miles of a major military base. In each case, the adolescent was interviewed regarding his/her

experiences with deployment and the literacy practices he/she engages in during the deployment cycle. To ensure the accuracy of the data collection, interviews were audio taped, video taped, and transcribed. Researcher field notes were logged to enhance ideas and observations gathered during the interviews. Following the initial interview, each adolescent kept a literacy log recording his/her literacy practices over a two-week period. Follow up interviews were conducted with each participant to review data gathered from the literacy logs and examine reactions and perceptions of each participant. Participants had the opportunity to share artifacts with the researcher at this time. Data obtained from interview transcripts, and literacy logs was analyzed for categories and themes, allowing me to identify literacy practices engaged in during the deployment cycle. The perceptions of the adolescents regarding their literacy practices gave me insight into the ways in which these practices may or may not mediate the stress of deployment.

Researcher's Stance

The goal of this study was to achieve depth of understanding of the lived experiences of adolescents as they engaged in out-of-school literacy practices while experiencing the military deployment of a family member. As the reading and language arts teacher of these students, I had the opportunity to observe these students' school-based literacy practices. As a researcher, I was a participant rather than an observer since the literacy practices studied occurred outside of the school setting. The sample size was small and limited to five adolescents from the same school. This small sample size is well within research experts' recommendation of the number of participants when seeking to conduct an interpretive study looking for depth rather than breadth of information. The data collection focused on five adolescents purposely selected because

they indicated they would remain for the duration of the study. As in all qualitative studies, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other adolescents experiencing deployment. However the findings gathered from this study provide a description of the deployment experiences and the literacy practices of these adolescents and provides insight into their perceptions regarding these experiences and practices. This qualitative study allowed me to capture the voices of the participants and to reflect upon the perspectives and perceptions of adolescents. Data collected was not quantified, but was used to describe and understand the literacy practices of adolescents who are experiencing a deployment in their families.

Organization of the Study

Chapter One introduces the study and the issues of adolescent literacy and the stressors of deployment in military families. The chapter includes an overview of the issues, the statement of the problem, research questions, the definition of key terms, the purpose of the study, the significance of the problem, the researcher's stance, and the organization of the study.

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature on adolescent literacy and families experiencing military deployment. This chapter also includes information on phenomenological qualitative inquiry, sociocultural theory and critical discourse analysis and their usefulness in offering a research agenda that allowed me to understand the social and cultural experiences of the participants with regard to literacy.

Chapter Three describes the methodology of the study, focusing on a description of phenomenological methodology and design. The role of the researcher and the procedures for data collection and data analysis are described.

Chapter Four presents a phenomenological analysis of the findings of the researcher based on Literacy Logs interview transcriptions, and field notes. Descriptions of the experiences of each participant are presented. Themes discovered from each participant's experience are presented and described.

Chapter Five presents a theoretical analysis of the findings based on sociocultural theory and critical discourse analysis. Themes discovered from the research are presented to offer insight into the perceptions of adolescents and their uses of literacy to mediate the effects of deployment.

Chapter Six offers implications for those working to support adolescents experiencing deployment. Recommendations are offered for future research extending beyond the deployment experience to other stressors adolescents may experience.

CHAPTER 2 - Review of the Literature

Just as the issues faced by adolescents are complex and varied, so are the potential areas of study for researchers of adolescent literacy. When compounded with the experience of the military deployment of a parent, those issues become multitudinous for adolescents and the researchers who seek to understand their experiences. As I sought to understand the perceptions of adolescents regarding their out-of-school literacy practices while a parent is deployed, I reviewed the literature as it relates to adolescent literacy and military deployment.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section reviews the literature as it relates to adolescents who are experiencing the military deployment of a family member. The second section reviews literature as it relates to adolescent literacy and the literacy practices of adolescents outside of the school setting. This section is then broken into two subsections, the first of which examines literature that relates to new literacies and the second of which explores literature that relates to popular culture. The third section provides a theoretical framework for the study by reviewing literature that examines sociocultural theory and critical discourse analysis in relation to literacy practices. The fourth section reviews literature that addresses the perspectives and perceptions of adolescents and the relevance of those perceptions in adolescent literacy studies.

Adolescents Experiencing Deployment

In the document titled *Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment*, The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) offers background

information for civilians, and educators in particular, for whom the distinct “history and traditions of the military; the dress, language, rank structure and mobile lifestyle” may seem foreign.

The United States military is a total force made up of the Active and Reserve components including the Army, Army Reserve, Army National Guard, the Navy, Naval Reserve, the Marine Corps, Marine Corps Reserve, the Air Force, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve.

Children of military members can be from the active duty or reserve components. They can live on or near a large military base or they can come from geographically isolated commands. Your students may have one or both parents in the military. The children may be sent to live with a relative or guardian in times of deployment. Children of military members may have experienced numerous deployments or may be experiencing the stresses of deployment for the first time (p. 2).

The NCTSN then defines deployment as “the name given to the movement of an individual or military unit within the United States or to an overseas location to accomplish a task or mission. The mission may be as routine as providing additional training or as dangerous as a war” (p. 3). Deployment, as described by NCTSN, has three phases: *pre-deployment* in which the service member prepares to mobilize, *deployment* when the service member becomes geographically separated from the family, and *post-*

deployment in which the service member returns home and is reunited with the family.

While the emotional impact of each phase and the associated stressors have been studied and documented, it is important to remember that each adolescent will have unique responses and reactions (p.3).

Perhaps more so than younger children, adolescents in military families have special concerns and higher levels of stress because of their awareness of world situations and the impact of military conflict on their own lives (Oates, 2002; Pittman & Bowen, 1994). As they face many normative stressors that are inherent to adolescence such as puberty, potential school transitions, or changing social and peer relationships, they must also face multiple non-normative stressors when a parent or family member is deployed. These non-normative stressors may include relocation, changes in family roles, and changes in the family's daily routines (Huebner & Mancini, 2005; Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007). In the decade prior to this study, the nature of military service has come to include a more intense operation tempo, increased number of deployments, relocations, and family separations. This has resulted in more military families facing more stressors than in previous decades (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). Adolescents may become especially vulnerable as these strains are layered upon the usual strains of adolescence and they reach deep into their coping repertoire to meet these emotional demands.

As these young people function within the deployment cycle, they must cope with the concept of *ambiguous loss*. In their study that examines parental deployment and youth, Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass (2007) explore the uncertainties associated with a military deployment and the concept of ambiguous loss. Ambiguous

loss is defined as a loss that is vague, unclear, and indeterminate (Boss, 2007; Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007). Huebner, et al (2007) note

From a situational perspective, the only certainty about the deployment of a service member during war in an era of terrorism is uncertainty from beginning to end” (p. 113).

This uncertainty is a non-normative stressor of huge import. When ambiguous loss theories are applied to phases in the deployment cycle, a different dimension is added to the understanding of this experience for adolescents.

Adolescents start to experience ambiguous loss the moment they learn their family member will be deployed. Thus begins the pre-deployment phase of the deployment cycle. Often during this time, though the loved one is still residing with the family they are away from home for many hours each day. There may be special training sessions as mobilization approaches. Even when the family member is at home, he or she may be distracted or on edge. So, though the family member is still present, in one sense he or she has already begun to leave.

Once the deployment actually occurs, the family must establish new routines and ways of functioning. As they assume new roles and responsibilities, ambiguity may increase as adolescent family members discover simultaneous feelings of guilt, resentment, and pride at being able to function while their loved one is absent (Geneman & Lemmon, 2008; Huebner, et al, 2007, p. 113). The greatest ambiguity at an emotional level is evidenced by thoughts of safety and harm. The adolescent knows that his or her family member is in harm's way, but most often will not know how close to the conflict or danger their loved one is. During times when the family has regular contact with their

loved one through phone conversations or Internet communication, though the deployed member is absent from their presence, they presume him or her to be safe, thereby reducing uncertainty. However, when lapses in such communication occur, the safety of the deployed member can no longer be presumed. While the family continues to hope for the best, the possibility of losing the deployed member becomes a more conscious focus. The lack of clarity and closure can distress or traumatize families (Boss, 2007). Adolescents, more so than younger family members, may be more aware of this on a daily basis because of media coverage of conflicts and world events (Oates, 2002; Pittman & Bowen, 1994).

In the post-deployment phase, once the deployed family member returns home and the family is reunited, a time of celebration and readjustment ensues. However, adolescents may still experience ambiguous loss depending upon the emotional and physical condition of the loved one. If the deployed family member experienced physical or emotional trauma while deployed, he or she may not appear or act the same as before the deployment. If their loved one is changed in some way, adolescents may experience yet another sense of loss (Huebner, et al, 2007, p. 114).

While the experience of deployment has characteristics that are common to all military families of deployed service members, it is also unique to each family and its members. In some cases, adolescents have been found to experience feelings of bitterness, anger, depression, and fear (Geneman & Lemmon, 2008; Boss, 2007). Some researchers have linked parental deployment to depression, acting out or other negative behaviors, poor academic performance, and increased irritability and impulsiveness (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). However, other studies have discovered a resiliency in

military youth that allows them to cope with the additional stressors of deployment (Geneman & Lemmon, 2008; Boss, 2007). For some adolescents, in spite of the additional stress, the deployment of a family member affords them the opportunity to grow and develop new identities. For these adolescents, the experience of deployment has had a positive impact.

Much of the literature regarding military deployment yields strategies for supporting adolescents as they cope with non-normative stressors. Many of these strategies suggest literacy practices that adolescents may engage in outside of the school setting. NCTSN (2008) includes these practices in its intervention strategies for middle and high school age students

- Keep a journal
- Engage in art activities
- Write poetry
- Write stories
- Write cards or letters to the deployed family member
- Participate in small group discussions
- Participate in support groups
- Listen to music

Other suggestions for literacy practices that enhance communication between the adolescent and the deployed family member include e-mails; creation of web pages; utilization of chat rooms; creation of audio cassettes, DVD's or video recordings; and the scanning of newspaper clippings or grade reports to be shared electronically or through the mail (Military OneSource, 2007; Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass & Grass, 2007;

Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996). While these practices were suggested by various resources and acknowledged in various articles, the perceptions of the adolescents for whom these strategies were suggested were not discussed. This gap in the research will be discussed in the fourth section of this chapter.

Adolescent Literacy

The question “What is adolescent literacy?” commonly appears in journal articles, book chapters, and reports that examine the literate lives of adolescents. The National Council of Teachers of English in *NCTE Principles of Adolescent Literacy Reform: A Policy Research Brief* (2006) answered this question by stating:

For adolescents, literacy is more than reading and writing. It involves purposeful social and cognitive processes. It helps individuals discover ideas and make meaning. It enables functions such as analysis, synthesis, organization, and evaluation. It fosters the expression of ideas and opinions and extends to understanding how texts are created and how meanings are conveyed by various media, brought together in productive ways. (p. 5)

The National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices offered this answer in *Reading to Achieve: A Governor’s Guide to Adolescent Literacy* (2005):

...the term “adolescent literacy” refers to the set of skills and abilities that students need in grades four through 12 to read, write, and think about the text materials they encounter. Becoming literate is a developmental and lifelong process, which in the 21st century includes becoming literate with electronic and multimedia texts as well as conventional written

material....America's adolescents need to be literate not only to succeed in school, but also to succeed in life. (p. 6)

The deictic nature of literacy itself (Beers 2007; Kinzer & Leander 2003) is evidenced in these descriptions of adolescent literacy. As adolescents continue to develop as readers and writers they must also

...simultaneously begin to develop important literacy resources and experience unique literacy challenges. By fourth grade many students have learned a number of the basic processes of reading and writing; however, they still need to master literacy practices unique to different levels, disciplines, texts, and situations...Adolescents also begin to develop new literacy resources and participate in multiple discourse communities in and out of school. Frequently students' extracurricular literacy proficiencies are not valued in school. Literacy's link to community and identity means that it can be a site of resistance for adolescents. When students are not recognized for bringing valuable multiple-literacy practices to school, they can become resistant to school-based literacy (NCTE, 2007, p.3).

As these reports indicate, the nature of literacy changes for adolescents as they respond to the ever-changing literary demands faced in the 21st century. Their literacy practices and needs go beyond a set of skills designed for mastery in a school setting to include a set of reflexive responses that allow them to compose, create, and comprehend in the many discourse communities of which they are a part, including communities outside the

school setting. The development of these skills occurs over many years, and continues into and beyond adolescence (NCTE, 2007).

Critical education theorists who are partially influenced by constructivist theories of learning (Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978) have argued that there is a need to reconceptualize traditional concepts of literacy in light of “technologically mediated access to and relations with knowledge” (Luke, 2003, p. 398). Harper and Bean (2007) examine the reconceptualization of adolescent literacy that acknowledges the changing nature of adolescents and the texts they consume. This reconceptualization encompasses postmodern dimensions that include multiple literacies, multiple texts, popular culture, and issues of adolescent identities. This reconceptualization is derived from ethnographic research indicating “many adolescents now interact with the widest array of print and nonprint media of any time in history” (p. 152). This wide array includes not only traditional forms of texts such as books and magazines, but also includes the less conventional genres of young adult novels and graphic texts, and technology-based literacy practices such as media authoring, Web browsing, and playing video games (O’Brien, 2007). Luke (2003) notes that in this blending of “old” and “new” information environments, “people draw on diverse sources of information, means of communication, and (virtual) community engagements” (p. 398).

Adolescents who engage in these diverse practices have been described as diverse, sophisticated, and multifaceted learners in this broader, more generative view of adolescent literacy. Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, and Rycik (1999) in *Adolescent Literacy: A position statement for the Commission on Adolescent Literacy of the International Reading Association* state that

adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future (p. 99).

Advances in technology most certainly have introduced changes to the nature of literacy and the way that adolescents enact their literacy to conduct their day-to-day lives. Young (2008) states “In essence, the demands imposed by many new technologies of literacy have acutely altered the nature of literacy and what it means to be a literate person in the 21st century” (p. 325). A shift in thinking is required to accommodate the simultaneous use of not only texts, but also the use of multimedia that includes sounds, images, and animation as adolescents expand their use of literacy (Hedrick, 2008). This shift in thinking is exemplified in the study of new literacies.

New Literacies

In 1994, a group of ten educators gathered for a week in New London, New Hampshire to discuss the pedagogy of literacy. These friends and colleagues who considered the future of literacy: what to teach and how to teach it in a “rapidly changing near future” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; p. 3), came to be known as the New London Group. As a result of their gathering, they published an article that “helped broaden the understanding of literacy and literacy teaching to account for the use of multimedia technologies and the multiplicity of available text forms” (Rhodes & Robnolt, 2008; p.

156). Their focus on a *multiliteracies* approach to the teaching of literacy allowed them to consider “the various ways information is communicated and the expanding relationships between text and other representational forms” (p. 156). Rhodes & Robnolt (2008) cite the work of Cope & Kalantzis (2000) as they describe multiliteracy:

Multiliteracy implies that meaning making occurs in multimodal settings where written information is part of spatial, audio, and visual patterns of meaning. These individual modes are in dynamic interaction with one another during literacy activities (p. 156).

Being literate involves the ability to communicate with others in ways that they can comprehend, as well as the ability to comprehend communications generated by others. Traditionally, literacy was considered mainly a set of page-bound skills in reading and writing that could be expanded to include listening and speaking (Mayer, 2008, The New London Group, 2000). The work of the New London Group sought to broaden the understanding of literacy to “include negotiating a multiplicity of discourses” (The New London Group, 2000, p. 9). This reconceptualization of literacy is changing to include ‘multimedia literacy’, or the ability to produce multimedia communications that others can comprehend, and the ability to comprehend multimedia communications produced by others (Mayer, 2008). Literacy is coming to be viewed as more complex than simply acquiring the skills and technical competence to read and write, and this complexity is viewed by some as something that involves “learning a repertoire of practices” that enable the learner to communicate and to accomplish tasks in social and cultural contexts (Nixon, 2003; p. 407). Leu (2000) suggests that *becoming literate* is a

much more accurate term than *being literate*, as there will always be a need to utilize regularly appearing new technologies in order to maintain the ability to communicate.

The growing body of research known as New Literacy Studies is comprised of studies that capture the breadth and complexity of literacy practices as they are situated within social, ideological, and cultural settings. No longer is the consideration of literacy practices limited to book-based reading and writing, but rather it has been expanded to include the social practices of reading and writing that occur when people interact with and communicate by digital print (Evans, 2005). In the previous chapter, literacy was described as *deictic* because of its frequent redefinition based on new technologies and their effect on the way people communicate. The relationship between literacy and technology can also be viewed from both a *transformational* and a *transactional* perspective. A transformational perspective would examine how technologies such as email, instant messaging, and blogging transform the nature of literacy and literacy learning in various contexts. A transactional perspective would examine how these technologies and literacy transact and influence each other (Bruce, 1997). From this perspective, technology transforms literacy, but literacy also transforms technology as “users envision new ways of using emergent technologies for literate acts” (Leu, 2000, p. 744). In this study, I viewed literacy from a transactional perspective as I examined how these adolescents engaged in literacy practices and as the literacy practices in turn influenced their identities.

Popular Culture

In their personal lives, adolescents engage in a wealth of literacy activities (Gainer, 2008). They are equipped with multiple literacies – multiple ways of

understanding their world. Some of these literacies can be termed visible literacies, the ones we expect students to use in school. These visible literacies may include textual literacies such as using a glossary, index, vocabulary, and library research skills (Perry, 2006). However, many of the literacies of adolescents are hidden literacies that students use at home and during their own personal time to understand their world. These literacies often aren't readily visible, or are unrecognized, in the school setting. Many of these hidden literacies that include reading media texts such as Internet websites, blogs, magazines, or television commercials, are connected to popular culture.

In some respects, our society today has made popular culture the cornerstone of its cultural identity. "Television, movies, and music provide fodder for connections among our disconnected citizenry" (White & Walker, 2008, p. 4). While in the school setting, these aspects of popular culture may be viewed as frivolous interruptions or diversions from more academic literacy, White and Walker ask "Why not use this, rather than belittle it?" (p. 4-5). They pose that television shows and other forms of popular culture can go beyond providing entertainment and may offer opportunities to examine social issues. As adolescents seek to make meaning of their world, they need to develop a "critical understanding of how all texts (both print and nonprint) position them as readers and viewers within different social, cultural, and historical contexts" (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000, p. 193). The nonprint texts of popular culture allow adolescents to "experience the pleasures of popular culture while simultaneously uncovering the codes and practices that work to silence or disempower them as readers, viewers, and learners in general" (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000, p. 194).

Research Tradition

Phenomenological qualitative inquiry as a methodological foundation offers a means to investigate the “meaning of the lived experience of a small group of people from the standpoint of a concept or phenomenon” (Schram, 2003, p. 70). This study will focus on the lived experience of out-of-school literacy practices and what that experience means for adolescents in the midst of a deployment.

Researchers utilizing a phenomenological approach focus on what a lived experience means for persons who have had the experience, and then offer a detailed description of what that experience means.

The underlying assumption is that dialogue and reflection can reveal the *essence* – the essential, invariant structure or central underlying meaning – of some aspect of shared experience (Schram, 2003, p. 71).

Johnson & Christensen (2008) state that the

purpose of phenomenological research is to obtain a view into your research participants’ life-worlds and to understand their personal meanings (i.e., what something means to them) constructed from their “lived experiences” (p. 395).

The term ‘life-world’ is a translation of the German term *Lebenswelt* used by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), philosopher and founder of phenomenology, that refers to an individual’s world of immediate experience – a combination of that individual’s thoughts, feelings, and self-awareness at any moment in time. The purpose of a phenomenological qualitative inquiry is to “gain access to individuals’ life-worlds and to describe their experiences of a phenomenon” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 395).

Creswell (2007) describes two approaches to phenomenology: hermeneutical phenomenology and transcendental or psychological phenomenology. A brief description of each approach offers insight into the appropriateness of this research tradition for this study.

Van Manen (1990) describes hermeneutical phenomenological research as oriented toward lived experience (phenomenology) and interpreting the texts of life (hermeneutics). In this approach, researchers turn first to an “abiding concern” which seriously interests them. In so doing, the researcher reflects on essential themes, what constitutes the nature of this lived experience. A description of the phenomenon is then written, maintaining a strong relation to the topic of inquiry and balancing the parts of the writing to the whole (van Manen, 1990, p. 31). Creswell (2007) notes

Phenomenology is not only a description, but it is also seen as an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation (i.e., the researcher “mediates” between different meanings; van Manen, 1990, p. 26) of the meaning of the lived experiences (p. 59).

Moustakas (1994) describes transcendental or psychological phenomenology as focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants. Additionally, Moustakas focuses on Husserl’s concept of *epoche* (or bracketing), in which investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, in order to gather a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination. Hence, “transcendental” means “in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Procedures outlined by Moustakas consist of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one’s experiences, and

collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon. The researcher then analyzes the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes. Following that, the researcher develops a textural description of the experiences of the persons (what the persons experienced), a structural description of the experiences of the persons (how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context), and a combination of the textural and structural descriptions to convey an overall essence of the experience (Creswell, 2007).

The methodology of this phenomenological qualitative inquiry utilized Moustakas's transcendental approach in structuring the data analysis.

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural theory and critical discourse analysis provided a framework for examining the literacy practices of adolescents in military families and how those practices may help mediate the stress of the deployment of a family member.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theorists who study literacy stress that there are many different ways of reading and writing that are connected to ways of speaking and listening. In other words, they emphasize multiple literacies. They assert that each of these literacies is embedded in specific sociocultural practices and each is connected to a distinctive political (in this case meaning instances where things such as power, status, or other social items are at stake) set of norms, values, and beliefs about language, literacy, and identity (Gee, 2000). Gee notes that as discourse-based and sociocultural studies converge, the mind can be viewed as "social, cultural, and embedded in the world". Viewing the mind in this way implies that meaning is always situated in specific

sociocultural practices and experiences. Looking at literacy from a sociocultural perspective requires that reading, writing, and speaking be seen not as one but many different socioculturally situated reading, writing, and speaking practices (Gee, 2000).

Lewis, Enciso, and Moje assert that sociocultural theory allows researchers to “explore the intersection of social, cultural, historical, mental, physical, and political aspects of people’s sensemaking, interaction, and learning centered around texts” (2007, p. 2). Sociocultural theory has helped shift the attention of research away from deficit-oriented research agendas. Education researchers may now conduct studies that seek to understand the social and cultural practices of people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

A goal of sociocultural research is to understand and explain the relationships between human mental functioning and the cultural, historical and institutional situations in which this functioning occurs (Wertsch, 1995). Vygotsky’s ideas on social interaction and sociohistorical theory are foundational to sociocultural theory. Vygotsky believed that lower levels of mental functioning are gradually transformed into higher levels of mental functioning through social interaction. Of particular interest are the transformations that occur in levels of discourse (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). Sociocultural theory focuses on how individuals shape their identities in relation to conflicting discourse communities. Discourse communities are groupings of people, not just physical gatherings of people in the present time, but also ideological groupings across time and space that share ways of knowing, thinking, believing, acting, and communicating. In their book *Reframing Sociocultural Research on Literacy: Identity, Agency, and Power*, Lewis, Enciso, and Moje (2007) argue that current theoretical

frameworks that inform sociocultural research do not adequately address the issues of identity, agency, and power that produce knowledge that can shed light on literacy as a social and cultural practice.

Identity can be described as a stable, internal state of being. It is socially and linguistically fluid, and takes into account the different positions individuals enact or perform in particular settings within social, economic, and historical relationships (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). Individuals form identities when they participate in these settings and then they may reconfigure their identities as they react to circumstances. Individuals also define their identities based on what they believe others expect from them. Those expectations may be based on messages they get from others and from society at large. In so doing, they may also form the ways in which others recognize their identities. These ways of being recognized are referred to by Gee (2000-2001) as a “Discourse”, which he defines as “ways of being certain kinds of people”.

Agency may be described as the strategic making and remaking of selves, identities, activities, and relationships within structures of power. Power circulates and as a result structures of power change in order to allow different degrees of agency. These different degrees of agency can resist structural constraints and can, in some cases, lead to transformative practices. Agency is a way of positioning oneself in order to allow for new ways of being and new identity development (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). In sociocultural research, the researcher is part of the process of determining what counts as agency.

In sociocultural research, power is produced and enacted through discourses, relationships, activities, space, and time by individuals as they compete for resources and

identities. Sociocultural researchers' thinking about power is influenced by Foucault's theories about power as "productive", a result of interactions and relationships rather than something that is possessed by some and desired or resisted by others. These productions may be unpredictable when individuals participate in or challenge oppressive power relations. The act of learning may be a resistance to certain skills and knowledge, or it may be an instance of seeing certain skills and knowledge in a different light (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). The act of learning, a construct of power, may have implications for how individuals conceptualize the constructs of identity and agency.

Critical Discourse Analysis

In order to examine how critical discourse analysis will contribute to the theoretical framework of this study, discourse analysis will first be described as it relates to literacy. Following this description, the literature contributing to the understanding of critical discourse analysis will be examined as it relates to this study.

Discourse Analysis

The task of defining the term 'discourse' is not an easy one. 'Discourse' has a wider range of possible interpretations than any other term in literary or cultural theory, but is often one of the least defined within theoretical texts (Mills, 2004). Discourse cannot be pinned down to one meaning, since it has had a complex history and is used in a range of different ways by different theorists, and even by the same theorists. Michel Foucault, a prominent figure in the world of discourse analysis, commented, "Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word 'discourse', I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a

regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements” (Foucault, 1972). Foucault’s work led to the development of a broad range of theories that could loosely be grouped in a category of ‘discourse theories.’ However, his work does not constitute *a* theory, or even a system, but rather a body of work that encompasses a great variety of subjects relating to discourse. Although many attempts have been made to define ‘discourse’ no simple, clear meaning of the term has been agreed upon. This serves to show the fluidity of the meaning of the term ‘discourse’ (Mills, 2004). Gee (2000/2001) makes a distinction between ‘Discourse’ and ‘discourse’. He posits that ‘Discourse’ with a capital “D” refers to ways of being certain kinds of people. He suggests that ‘discourse’ with a lowercase “d” refers to connected stretches of writing or talking. In education, discourse sometimes means no more than anecdotal reflections on written or oral texts (Gee, 2004). Gee also suggests that discourses are characteristic ways of talking and writing about people and things in such a way that certain perspectives and situations come to be referred to as ‘normal’, while others come to be referred to as deviant or marginal. Discourses may also be considered as characteristic ways of acting toward, or interacting with people or things (Gee, 2000).

Foucault offered two broad definitions of discourse. The first defines discourse as “the general domain of all statements”. He used his second definition, “an individualized group of statements”, when discussing the particular structures within discourse (Mills, 2004). Foucault (2004) used these broad definitions to theorize about discourses and the play of their operations.

I will say that in all these searches, in which I have still progressed so little, I would like to show that ‘discourses,’ in the form in which they can

be heard or read, are not, as one might expect, a mere intersection of things and words: an obscure web of things, and a manifest, visible, colored chain of words; I would like to show that discourse is not a slender surface of contact, or confrontation, between a reality and a language, the intrication of a lexicon and an experience; I would like to show with precise examples that in analyzing discourses themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice (p. 96).

According to Foucault, discourses form the objects about which they speak, and they influence the way people are treated and categorized. Such power relations are achieved by the construction first of “truths” about the social and natural world, and then definitions and categories which governments use to rule and monitor their populations and by which members of communities define themselves and others (Luke 1995-1996).

Discourse is contextualized to a particular space and time, and teachers, students, and families speak language that is affected by multiple conditions (Aaron, et al, 2006). Language is central to all social activities and is easy to take for granted. This familiarity often makes it transparent. People use language to construct versions of their social world. A principal belief of discourse analysis is that function involves construction of versions, and is demonstrated by language variation (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Mikhail Bahktin, an influential thinker of the late twentieth century for literary and cultural studies, used discourse to represent a voice within a text or speech position, sometimes using words in a way that assumed authority (Mills, 2004). In his 1934-35 work, Bahktin wrote, “Literary language – both spoken and written – although it is

unitary not only in its shared, abstract, linguistic markers but also in its forms for conceptualizing these abstract markers, is itself stratified and heteroglot [conflicting] in its aspect as an expressive system, that is in the forms that carry its meaning.” Language is never unitary, or is only unitary as an abstract grammatical system of forms taken in isolation (Bahktin, 2004, p. 675). Bahktin’s theories focus mostly on the assumption that language in any form of speech or writing is considered a dialogue, with dialogue being an act of communication between a speaker/writer and a listener/reader.

While descriptions of the term ‘discourse’ are many and varied, theorists tend to describe discourse analysis with greater clarity and agreement. “Discourse analysis is the study of the language of communication – spoken or written. The system that emerges out of the data shows that communication is an interlocking social, cognitive, and linguistic enterprise” (Hatch, 1992, p. 1). Discourse analysts tend to be concerned with analyzing language use in context, rather than focusing on idealized abstract versions of language. Their analyses focus on the structure of spoken and written language and the linguistics of the utterance or text (Mills, 2004). Discourse analysis is rooted in specific viewpoints about the relationship between *form* and *function* in language, although discourse analytic work in education doesn’t often explain form and function and is often empirical in nature (Gee, 2004).

Discourse analysis has had an important role in opening up new areas of analysis. It has initiated the analysis of the systematic and organizational properties of language and has attempted to provide a system to note and describe the organizational units. But there have been a number of criticisms of this form of analysis. One criticism is that although it considers language that is in use in real language contexts, it does not question

the way that social relationships affect the production of speech or written texts, or the power relations between participants. It has also been criticized because it does not question the interpretation or the view taken by the analyst of a particular item (Mills, 2004).

Critical Discourse Analysis

While discourse analysis focuses on the relationship between form and function in language, critical discourse analysis goes beyond the empirical analysis of the relationship and involves analyses of how the form-function correlations themselves are related to specific social practices. Since social practices by nature involve social relationships, issues of solidarity, status, and power are always at stake. Gee states that learning is a type of social interaction in which knowledge is distributed across people and their tools and technologies, spread out over various sites and stored in links among people, their minds and bodies, and specific like-minded groups. This view of learning allows an integration of work in critical discourse analysis and sociocultural approaches to language and literacy study. Critical discourse analysis adheres the meanings resulting from linguistics with cultural and social theory. Critical discourse analysis goes beyond the structure of the language and analyzes how structures are related to social practices (Gee, 2004).

Elizabeth Moje and Cynthia Lewis state “critical discourse analysis is both a theory and a method that examines how social and power relations, identities, and knowledge are constructed through written and spoken texts in social settings such as schools, families, and communities” (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 22). Critical discourse analysis specifically analyzes how members of social communities construct their worlds.

Critical discourse analysis then, according to Fairclough (1992), extends the analysis to how members' practices are unknowingly shaped by social structures, relations of power, and the nature of the social practice whose purpose goes beyond the basic production of meaning. Critical discourse analysis can help the researcher uncover how different systems of power work together by examining how cultural models and discourses become a part of an activity through language and other means of representation (Moje & Lewis, 2007).

Rebecca Rogers concurs that critical discourse analysis is both a theory and a method. She suggests that researchers who are interested in the relationship between language and society may use critical discourse analysis to help them describe, interpret, and explain those relationships. Critical discourse analysis is different from other discourse analysis methods because it includes not only a description and interpretation of discourse in context, but also offers an explanation of why and how discourses work (Rogers, 2004).

Critical discourse analysis utilizes critical discourse theory, which assumes that language is both a construction and a reflection of the social world that is inherently filled with power relations (Purcell-Gates & Strickland, 2005). However, it is difficult to identify one specific theory that informs critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysts are always concerned with the theoretical validation of their practice. It would be difficult to integrate all of the theoretical concepts into one statement of coherent theory. Critical discourse analysis is grounded in theories of discourse that define language as a social phenomenon. Fairclough assumes that peoples use language, or discourse, to accomplish social goals and that analysis of language, or discourse, must

utilize a social theory that includes social practices and the institutions in which they occur. The concepts of representation and transformation figure prominently into a description of theory. Since representation is defined as a version of reality, any change of perceived reality is representational. Transformation can then be defined as the process in which one representation encroaches upon another representation, and hence modifies it (Widdowson, 1998).

Street, (1993) proposed two models to explain different notions of literacy, or discourses. The autonomous model focuses on distinct elements of reading and writing skills and conceptualizes them in technical terms independent of social context. The autonomous model narrows the definition of literacy to sets of transferable skills involved in learning to read and write that can be measured in standardized ways. The ideological model of literacy views literacy practices as inseparably connected to culture and power structures in society. Ideological models recognize the various cultural practices that are associated with reading and writing in different contexts. Gee (2001) suggests that to understand literacy, or discourses, in a broader, world-wide perspective that includes social interaction and culture, one must look beyond the autonomous definition to the ideological model that views language as connected to experience and interaction with the world (Rivera & Huerta-Macias, 2008). Rogers asserts that critical discourse studies stem from three intellectual traditions; discourse studies, feminist poststructuralism, and critical linguistics. The theoretical perspectives of critical discourse analysis assume that a model of languages is ideological rather than autonomous and that differences in power and knowledge are points of focus (Rogers, 2004).

Critical discourse analysis merges text-oriented discourse analysis with in-depth study of society, culture, and power. It also provides a linkage between theory and methodology in discussions of everyday life, language use, and social dynamics. The major goal of critical discourse analysis in the study of discourse is to understand and express how language and power are related and to examine the connections between language use and power. In *Language and Power*, Fairclough (2001) notes that in critical discourse analysis, connections between broader social contexts and social institutions and the discourse practices in which people engage in their daily lives and social interactions are of particular interest. He also asserts that critical discourse analysis emphasizes ways to approach discourse that investigate relations of power and how those relations come to exist (Bloome & Talwalkar, 1997).

Critical discourse analysis of written and spoken texts operates critically and constructively. Critically, critical discourse analysis examines the power relations that often disguise inequities. Constructively, critical discourse analysis sets out to generate agency among people by giving them tools to see how texts represent the social and natural world, and how texts position them and generate power relations (Luke, 1995-1996). Moje and Lewis (2007) expound on three ways that critical discourse analysis demonstrates methodological precision. Critical discourse analysis examines genres [ways of acting], discourses [ways of representing], and styles [ways of being] as they work together to represent powerful social orders.

There are many ways to conduct critical discourse analysis, but all researchers who use critical discourse analysis are concerned with a critical theory of the social world, the relationship of language and discourse in the construction and representation

of this social world, and a methodology that allows them to describe, interpret, and explain such relationships. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) offer eight foundational principals of critical discourse analysis that Rogers (2004) suggests are useful to researchers seeking to utilize critical discourse analysis:

- Critical discourse analysis addresses social problems
- Power relations are discursive
- Discourse does ideological work
- Discourse is historical
- A sociocognitive approach is needed to understand how relations between texts and society are mediated
- Discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory and uses a systematic methodology
- Critical discourse analysis is a socially committed scientific paradigm (p. 2)

The intentions of the analyst always guide the theory and method of critical discourse analysis. The term critical is frequently associated with the study of power relations. Critical research and theory rejects naturalism, rationality, neutrality, and individualism. It argues for an exchange of conflicting views between individual agency and structures of power. Within a critical discourse analysis framework, analysts of discourse begin with the assumption that the use of language is always social and that analyses of language occur beyond the unit of a sentence or a clause. Researchers who share this view maintain that discourse both reflects and constructs the social world. They refer to discourse as constitutive [holding the power to appoint or establish], dialectical [having contradictions], and dialogic [relating to or written in dialog] (Rogers,

2004). Critical discourse analysis offers insight into the nature of discourse that lends itself to careful analysis and can lead to questions for further study (Bloome & Talwalker, 1997).

Perspectives and Perceptions of Adolescents

Upon reading an initial draft of *Reconceptualizing the Literacies in Adolescents' Lives (2nd Ed.)*, David Moore (2006) noted

Young people's voices offer great authenticity and intensity. Reading them – rather than what is said about them – encourages me to slow down, reflect on what they are saying, connect with other conversations I've had with flesh-and-blood kids, and be more empathetic to their situation (p. xxxii)

Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps, and Waff (2006) go on to note that educators and policy makers must remain “grounded in the day-to-day lived experiences of those whose literate identities are being affected the most” (p.xxxii). In an age of mandated assessment, achievement, and adequate yearly progress, these lived experiences and perceptions of the ones we seek to understand are not seen as foundational in the development of policy that legislates learning.

Hinchman (1998) explored the possibility that literacy researchers' ways of seeing may unintentionally minimize the perspectives of adolescents. Her inquiry sought to explore how researchers might reconsider the ways adolescents' perspectives are represented in research by moving them to the foreground of consideration and interpretation. As she examined various studies of literacy in classroom settings, she focused on the representation of teenagers and their perspectives. Her review of these

studies suggested that researchers must find ways to represent the existing communicative competencies of teenagers. She suggests

To do this, we should think about finding ways to place teenagers, quite articulate about those things that are of interest and concern to them, in the center of this research and the subsequent discussion (Hinchman, 1998, p. 188).

So what if, *what if*, educators, researchers and policy makers took the latitude to really listen to what adolescents have to say about their learning and their literacy? Alvermann (1998) noted that one of the ironies encountered when examining adolescent literacy is that the perspectives of adolescents, while seemingly valued, are often missing.

Ironically, the very persons we assume to be most important in our classrooms – that is, the students – receive the least amount of attention in our research. . . . Students' points of view received the least amount of attention, and when they were represented, typically, they appeared as brief quotations from a few carefully selected student informants whose thinking was supposedly reflective of the larger student body (p. 360).

Perhaps, when we attune to what adolescents themselves are saying about their lived experiences and listen to their perceptions about their literate identities, their rich inner lives and their thoughtful and insightful reflections will serve as a guide to understanding their perceptions and perspectives.

This study placed these perceptions and perspectives of adolescents experiencing the deployment of a family member at the foreground of consideration. Listening to their

words and reading their texts offered the truest insight into their literacy practices and the role literacy plays in mediating the stress of the lived experience of deployment.

CHAPTER 3 - Methodology

This study was designed to explore adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices as they experience the deployment of a parent or family member. I focused on the perceptions of the adolescents themselves regarding their literacy practices while they experienced stress often associated with deployment, stress that compounds the normal, everyday trials of adolescence. I also explored how these adolescents used literacy practices to cope as they continued to function in the social communities around them by establishing their identities and enacting their agency within circulations of power. In order to identify the literacy practices engaged in by adolescents and examine their perceptions of how these practices helped them cope with various normative and non-normative stressors, this qualitative study utilized interviews and literacy logs.

Following an exploratory pilot study, interview questions and literacy logs were designed to focus on the research question.

Research Question:

The following question guided the research and the data analysis for this study:

What are adolescents' lived experiences as expressed through out-of-school literacy practices during the military deployment of a family member?

I gathered the information to answer this question from interview transcripts and literacy logs.

Methodological Foundations

The body of research regarding the effects of military deployment on families includes studies that focus on the complexity of stressors experienced by adolescent family members. Often these studies offer strategies for coping that include activities such as journaling, scrapbooking, art, poetry writing, story writing, letter and card writing, small group and support group discussions and listening to music; strategies that fall within the broad scope of literacy practices (Huebner & Mancini, 2005; The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2008; & Oates, 2002). However, relatively few studies explore the *adolescents' perceptions* of their engagement in these literacy practices.

After careful consideration of the research question and available research traditions, I chose to conduct a phenomenological qualitative inquiry based on interviews with adolescents experiencing the military deployment of a family member. Schram (2003, 2006) describes the phenomenological researcher's focus in the following way:

Phenomenological researchers, particularly those of a descriptive bent, focus on what an experience means for persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. The underlying assumption is that dialogue and reflection can reveal the essence – the essential, invariant structure or central underlying meaning – of some aspect of shared experience (Schram, 2006, p. 98).

In this study, I sought to understand the phenomenon of out-of-school literacy practices from the perspective of adolescents who had a family member in some phase of the deployment cycle. Dialog from interview transcripts and literacy logs shared by participants allowed me insight into the essence of the experience of literacy practices

within the context of deployment and enabled me to provide a description of the ways adolescents perceived their literacy practices during this experience.

A critical focus of this study was to understand and describe the multilayered and complex everyday, life-world experiences of deployment (Polkinghorne, 2005). Gaining an understanding of the life-world of adolescents whose families are in some phase of deployment was prerequisite to understanding the role literacy practices played in mediating the stress of this experience. This understanding did not offer theory, but instead offered plausible insights that brought me as a researcher in more direct contact with participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Schram, 2006; Schwandt, 2001; van Manen, 1990).

Polkinghorne (1989) suggests that the reader of a phenomenological study should come away with the feeling that he or she has a better understanding of the experience being described. This inquiry was guided by five basic assumptions of the phenomenologist:

- Human behavior occurs and is understandable only in the context of relationships to things, people, events, and situations.
- *Perceptions* present us with evidence of the world, not as the world is thought to be but as it is lived. Thus, understanding the everyday life of a group of people is a matter of understanding how those people perceive and act upon objects of experience.
- The reality of anything is not “out there” in an objective or detached sense but is inextricably tied to one’s consciousness of it. Phenomenologists discuss this idea in terms of the *intentionality of consciousness*.

Accordingly, you cannot develop an understanding of a phenomenon apart from understanding people's experience of or with that phenomenon.

- Language is the central medium through which meaning is constructed and conveyed. Thus, the meaning of a particular aspect of experience can be revealed through dialogue and reflection.
- It is possible to understand and convey the essence, or central underlying meaning, of a particular concept or phenomenon as experienced by a number of individuals. This premise is associated primarily with descriptive phenomenology, an approach that rests on the thesis that essential structures constitute any human experience (Schram, 2006, p. 99).

The out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents and their perceptions of how those practices mediate stress can be understood by paying attention to the situation of deployment, the relationships between family members, and the access adolescents have to various literary and digital materials. Listening to and examining the perceptions of adolescents about the experience of deployment in their families helped me understand the experience that is uncommon to adolescents from non-military families, but is often common in the everyday life of adolescents from military families. The reality of deployment is not an 'out there' concept in an objective sense, but rather it is inextricably tied to the consciousness of those experiencing it. Spending time with the participants in this study, conducting interviews, and examining literacy logs, allowed me to understand their experiences and perceptions. This study allowed me to understand the essence of

military deployment for adolescents and their perceptions of the role out-of-school literacy practices played in mediating the stress of this experience (Schram, 2006).

In seeking to understand how literacy practices of adolescents mediate the stress of military deployment, I decided that sociocultural theory and critical discourse analysis would offer a framework with which to examine and interpret data. In examining interview transcripts and literacy log data and responses, I approached discourse utilizing both of Foucault's broad definitions – the general domain of all statements and an individualized group of statements. I hoped to show that the discourses represented in the data “are not... a mere intersection of words and things” but rather the “intrication of ...an experience” (Foucault, 2004). As Bakhtin's theories assume that language in any form is considered a dialogue, I approached these texts as dialogue as well; dialogue between adolescent and researcher, adolescent and parent, or between the adolescent and himself or herself. I examined the literacy practices reflected in these discourses and their influences on the identity and agency of the adolescents (Bakhtin, 2004).

While discourse analysis would have allowed examination of the data for its form and function, I wanted to look more critically at the discourses. By applying critical discourse analysis to the study, I was able to examine discourses and their interplay with social and power relations, individual identities, and the making of knowledge. Through critical discourse analysis, I was able to note and analyze connections between the social contexts and situations in which adolescents participate in their everyday lives, as well as their interactions in their social communities. This theory/method allowed me to merge text-oriented discourse analysis with a more in-depth look at sociological aspects of literacy, society, and power. Fairclough assumes that people use language for many

different social goals. I worked with this assumption, and examined the ideological contexts in which participants engaged in discourse (Bloome & Talwalkar, 1997).

Lewis & Moje (2007) draw on Fairclough's work when they suggest that critical discourse analysis analyzes how members of social communities produce their 'orderly' or 'accountable' worlds and then extends beyond the scope of discourse analysis to analyze how members' practices are often unknowingly shaped by social structures, power, and the very social practices in which they are engaged. They also suggest that the stakes in these social practices go beyond producing meaning in written or spoken discourse. Upon examining the data, I looked beyond the autonomous model of literacy that focused on the distinct elements of literacy skills, and employed an ideological model that recognized the various cultural aspects of literacy (Gee, 2001). In sharing the view with other researchers that language is a social practice that both reflects and constructs the social world and experiences of the participants, I gained insight into how the discourses of participants were a reflection of their experiences during deployment, as well as how these discourses actually constructed some of the experiences themselves.

Sociocultural theory, when applied to literacy, emphasizes how each of the many different literacies are embedded in social practices. Researchers Lewis, Enciso, and Moje also emphasize the importance of looking at the role of identity, agency, and power in sociocultural research. Upon examination of the discourse communities of the participants in this study, I analyzed each of these aspects of sociocultural theory. I sought to understand how the adolescents defined their identities and how potentially reconfigured identities due to the circumstance of deployment were reflected in their discourses. I sought to understand the aspects of agency that were reflected in the data;

how adolescents positioned themselves in order to allow for new ways of being in the circumstance of deployment. I also examined aspects of power reflected in the discourses of the participants. By adopting Foucault's theories about power as a result of interactions and relationships rather than something possessed, resisted, or desired, I examined the discourse for instances in which power relationships among participants circulated and in which power relationships between participants and others outside the family were reflected in or created by the discourses.

Research Procedures

In order to address the primary research question regarding the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents during the military deployment of a family member, I conducted semi-structured interviews with adolescents who were in some stage of the deployment cycle. Interview questions were designed to narrow the research question into the core of the interview protocol (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). Following the initial interviews, participants were given literacy logs on which to record and reflect upon their engagement in literacy practices over a two-week period. Following the two-week period, the literacy logs were collected and examined. Follow-up interviews were then conducted to review the literacy logs and allow participants to respond and reflect upon their literacy practices over the two-week period.

Trustworthiness

As I gathered and examined data, rather than establishing reliability or validation I sought to establish trustworthiness. The nature of this phenomenological qualitative

inquiry necessitated that I focus on trustworthiness with the broad perspective that results would be subject to change and instability (Creswell, 2007). Wolcott's (1990) perspective in such studies was that one could identify "critical elements" and hence glean "plausible interpretations" from them. Examining this data allows one to "understand rather than convince" (p. 146).

From the outset, to establish trustworthiness I clarified any researcher bias in the lived experiences summation, which describes my perceptions and assumptions about the phenomenon of adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices within the context of the military deployment of a family member. In this practice of epoché, describing my perceptions and assumptions allowed me to comment on any past experiences, biases, prejudices, or orientations that may have shaped the interpretation and approach to the study.

The data analysis of this study included thick, rich description of data obtained from interviews and artifacts. This description allowed me to identify and interpret critical elements or themes. The description of each participant's lived experiences also allows the reader to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants who engaged in out-of-school literacy practices while experiencing military deployment and to determine if this information could have indications in other settings because of shared characteristics (Creswell, 2007).

The participants in this study are all children of active duty, career service men. The perspectives and perceptions of these adolescents reflect their experiences with this type of military life. Children of reservists who face deployment may have much different perspectives and perceptions of the experience.

When selecting the participants for this study, the pool of students who were experiencing deployment and who planned to remain in the area until after the study was completed included mostly male students. Four male students and one female student agreed to participate in the study. Therefore, due to the disparity in numbers of male and female participants, conclusions cannot be drawn based on gender.

Selection of the Site

In this study, I wanted to understand the perceptions of adolescents who, for the purposes of this study, were defined as children between the ages of twelve and eighteen. The site selected for this study is my own school, a single building that houses Kindergarten through twelfth grades located twenty miles from a major military installment. As a teacher and administrative assistant in this building, I had a high level of access to adolescents of various ages and in various grade levels.

West Lakeside School

West Lakeside is a rural, Class 2A school, comprised of grades Kindergarten through twelfth grade. All 317 students attend classes in the same facility, which has gone through several building additions. At the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year there were 130 students enrolled in grades K-5, 71 students enrolled in grades 6-8, and 116 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Students in grades K-5 attend self-contained classrooms in a separate wing of the building. Students in grades 6-12 attend 49-minute class periods in classrooms taught by content area teachers. Grades 6-8 operate as a junior high school rather than a middle school. All of the instructors but two who teach content courses for grades 6-8 also teach high school level content courses. Teachers of

physical education, music, and art courses teach students in Kindergarten through twelfth grade.

According to beginning of the school year 2009-2010 enrollment numbers, the 201 students enrolled in grades K-8 were designated as 74% Caucasian, 21% unclassified, 1.5% Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, 1% Hispanic or Latino, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.5% Asian, and 1.5% refused to designate. Of the 116 students enrolled in grades 9-12, 88% were designated as Caucasian, 5% unclassified, 3% Hispanic, 1.7% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.9% Asian, and 0.9% refused to designate. The school's 2007-2008 Building Report Card indicates that in grades K-8 29.76% of the students were economically disadvantaged while in grades 9-12 19.59% of the students were economically disadvantaged. The building is part of a unified school district, which includes a Class 4A high school, middle school, and two elementary schools in a neighboring town.

In the 2008-2009 school year, West Lakeside School grades 3-8 met the building-wide Standard of Excellence in Reading, Math, Science, and History/Government. In grades 9-12, West Lakeside School met the building-wide Standard of Excellence in Reading, Math, and Science.

The 2008 population of the city of West Lakeside was 870. The town had experienced a 3.8% increase in population since the year 2000. The median resident age was 35.1 years. The 2007 estimated median household income for West Lakeside was \$52, 721 compared to the estimated median household income for the state of \$47, 451. Community members in 2008 were designated as 95.2% White, Non-Hispanic; 14% two or more races; 1.2% Hispanic, 1.2% American Indian; 0.8% Black; and 0.6% other race.

The 2008 cost of living figure in West Lakeside was 78.4, which was low compared to the U.S. average of 100 that year.

Selection of Participants

Phenomenology refers to “the description of one or more individuals’ consciousness and experience of a phenomenon” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 395). van Manen (1990) states that

In phenomenological research the emphasis is always on the meaning of lived experience. The point of phenomenological research is to “borrow” other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience in the context of the whole of human experience. (van Manen, 1990, p. 62)

In this phenomenological inquiry, I borrowed the experiences and reflections of adolescents experiencing the deployment of a family member in order to better understand how these adolescents used out-of-school literacy practices as they coped with normative and non-normative stressors. Because of the uniqueness of the site set in a K-12 school building, I had access to adolescents of all ages. Since the goal of this phenomenological inquiry was to describe the essence of the phenomenon of the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents experiencing deployment, I selected participants from both the junior high (grades 6-8) and the high school (grades 9-12) student body. I also chose participants from various stages in the deployment cycle: pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment. These choices assured variety and a range of perspectives, but not representativeness nor typicality (Stake, 2005). A factor in the

selection process was also the span of accessibility of individual participants based on possible military relocation of the family. Students who indicated they would not be relocated during the data collection phase of the study were chosen over students who indicated they would potentially be relocating during that time period.

I selected participants who shared the common phenomenon of having a family member who is in some stage of the deployment cycle and whom I consider to be typical to this phenomenon because of their experiences. In considering these cases to be *typical*, I do not take lightly the impact of this experience on the adolescents and family members. As I tried to understand their experiences with deployment and the role out-of-school literacy practices played in helping them cope, I hoped to offer rich descriptions of their individual perceptions of their experiences.

Researcher's Role

Although I was the classroom teacher of junior high participants in grades six through eight, I also had the opportunity to interact daily with high school participants in grades nine through twelve. Many of the students who attend high school in this building were my students when they were in junior high. In this small school setting, I had the opportunity to maintain acquaintances and relationships with students beyond their junior high years.

As a reading and language arts teacher, my focus has been continually on literacy and the literacy practices engaged in by my adolescent students, both in and out of the school setting. This study allowed me to examine their out-of-school literacy practices more deeply by seeing them through the eyes of participants who, beyond the inherent normative stressors of adolescence, were experiencing the additional non-normative

stressors of military deployment (Huebner & Mancini, 2005; Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007). Because of my acquaintance and relationship with the students and their families, time that often must be spent becoming acquainted with participants and earning their trust at the beginning of a study was used in this research to engage in early conversation about the perceptions, perspectives, and interpretations of the adolescents regarding their literacy practices and their experiences with deployment. These conversations, in the form of semi-structured interviews, afforded me the opportunity to listen to the perceptions of the participants and gain a preliminary understanding of the perspectives of each participant.

Data Collection

As the intent of this study was to understand the perceptions of adolescents regarding their out-of-school literacy practices within the circumstance of the military deployment of a family member, the data collected was qualitative in nature. Initial one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted in March and April 2011. Interviews were audio taped, video taped and detailed in field notes. Following these interviews, participants kept literacy logs for a two-week period. Each day, participants placed a check beside literacy practices they engaged in and reflected upon their experiences. During the two weeks that participants were keeping the literacy logs, I transcribed the initial interviews. After examining the interview transcripts and literacy logs, I conducted one-on-one follow-up interviews. These interviews revisited the initial interview questions and allowed each participant to reflect upon the experience of keeping the literacy logs and upon their out-of-school literacy practices. These interviews were conducted in April and May 2011.

Interviews

The data collection process began and culminated with in-depth, one-on-one semi-structured interviews from which I hoped to understand the perspectives and perceptions of the participants. After carefully considering the research question, an interview protocol was designed to narrow those questions in order to give the participants opportunity to reflect on their literacy practices and their experiences with deployment. Interview questions were designed to focus the participants' thinking on their perceptions of literacy and their literacy practices outside of the school setting. Other questions were then designed to redirect participants' thinking toward their experiences with deployment. The final questions were designed to help participants merge their thinking about literacy practices and deployment and begin to examine the combination of the two phenomena.

Artifacts

For the purpose of this study *artifacts* was defined as written or visual sources of data that contributed to my understanding of what is happening in the lives of adolescents experiencing the military deployment of a family member (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). Literacy logs, on which participants recorded the literacy practices they engaged in each day and noted their reflections upon those practices, were artifacts collected from each participant. By asking participants to adopt an expansive view of what "counts" as a literacy practice, I hoped each participant would consider the various literate acts they performed each day and reflect upon their engagement in them. (Creswell, 2007).

Data Analysis

As I described the essence of the phenomenon of adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices during the experience of deployment and the adolescents' perceptions of these practices, I approached the data using two layers of analysis. The first layer of analysis of the data was guided by an analytic strategy that utilized Moustakas's modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). This strategy was structured for this study by configuring the initial analysis into segments. The second layer of analysis utilized guiding questions offered by Moje & Lewis (2007) as I examined the data utilizing sociocultural theory and critical discourse analysis.

Phenomenological Analysis

I began the analysis by describing my own personal experiences with the phenomenon of literacy practices of adolescents who are experiencing deployment. This practice of epoché (Schram, 2006), in which I attempted to set aside my own preconceived experiences with this phenomenon in order to better understand the experiences of my participants, allowed me to bring to the surface and examine my own recollections and reflections with regard to students in my classroom, their literacy practices, and their experiences with deployment. As I worked to become aware of my own assumptions, feelings, and preconceived notions about what participants were experiencing and to put them aside for a time, I hoped to gain a fresh perspective toward, and a new understanding of, the way their out-of-school literacy practices helped them cope with the non-normative stressors of deployment (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994, Husserl, 1967). While it may have been too simplistic to completely put aside my own

thoughts and ideas about adolescent literacy practices and deployment, by writing down and making explicit my own ideas I established a mindset that bracketed my own ideas from the views of the participants (Lichtman, 2010). In spite of the difficulty of separating personal experiences, this bracketing allowed me to suspend my understanding in such a way that curiosity was cultivated with regard to the experiences of these adolescents (LeVasseur, 2003).

Once I examined and described my own perspectives, I focused on the data collected. After the initial interviews were conducted and transcribed and artifacts were gathered, I developed a list of significant statements, sentences, or quotes from the interviews that described how my participants were experiencing the phenomenon of out-of-school literacy practices during deployment. In this horizontalization of the data (Moustakas, 1994), I treated each statement as having equal worth, and then worked to develop a list of statements that did not repeat or overlap. After developing this list of significant, nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements, I grouped them into larger units of information that could be described as “meaning units” or themes. These themes then guided me as I examined the literacy logs and artifacts submitted by participants at the end of the two-week data collection period and developed questions for the follow-up interviews. The follow-up interviews were conducted using these questions in a secondary interview protocol, unique to each participant that allowed them to reflect on the experience of examining their literacy practices and view those practices through the lens of deployment.

After grouping the information into themes, I wrote a textural description that explained *what* the participants experienced. This description included examples of

verbatim text from interview transcripts and literacy logs that reflected their literacy practices outside of the school setting (Creswell, 2007).

I also used these significant statements and themes to write a structural description of the experience, a description that explained *how* the experience happened. In this description, I reflected on the setting and context in which the literacy practices occurred and the ways in which the setting and context influenced how the participants experienced and perceived these practices in the circumstance of deployment. This description detailed where the adolescents engaged in literacy practices, what technology or media was used, and the emotions and feelings they were experiencing as they engaged in these practices.

To complete the analysis, I wrote a composite description of the phenomenon that incorporated both the textural and structural descriptions. This description represented the culminating aspect of the study and represented the essence of the phenomenon of the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents experiencing deployment (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). This description, which focused on the common experiences of the adolescents taking part in the study, offered an understanding of what it is like to experience and engage in literacy practices within the circumstances of the military deployment of a family member.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Sociocultural Theory

Critical Discourse Analysis is both a theory and a method that helps researchers describe, interpret, and explain relationships between language and society (Moje & Lewis, 2007; Rogers, 2004). Sociocultural theory, when applied to literacy, emphasizes how each of the many different literacies are embedded in social practices. As discussed

earlier in this chapter, applying critical discourse analysis to this study will allow me to examine the discourses of participants and their role in shaping individual identities, in the making of knowledge, and in the social and power relations of the adolescents in this study. Utilizing a sociocultural perspective, I described and interpreted the relationships between the adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices and their experiences with deployment as they shaped their identities and enacted agency within circulations of power.

Moje & Lewis (2007) offer guiding questions that I asked as I examined data utilizing sociocultural theory and critical discourse analysis. I considered the following adaptations of these questions in analyzing my data:

- What are some of the social features of the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents experiencing deployment?
- What discourses (or ideologies) surface in these practices?
- What social identities are enacted in these practices (through language use, linguistic constructions, discourses, generic features, actions)?
- What identities are enacted in these practices (in action, talk, and silences)?
- What relations of power are enacted and/or produced in these practices? How are these power relations locally produced? How are these power relations tied to and reproductive of larger systems of power?
- What aspects of the action, talk, and silence could be considered agentic? How? Why?

- *What* is made and remade in these practices? How, if at all, does the making and remaking destabilize local and global power relations?
- What tools are being used to engage in these agentic practices? How are these tools both local and global? How are they embedded in power relations? How, if at all, does the use of these tools destabilize power relations?
- What is being learned via these practices?
- How do identities get constructed, shifted, contested, and/or changed?

(p.25)

Consideration of these questions as themes emerged from the data allowed me to describe, interpret, and explain information from a sociocultural perspective.

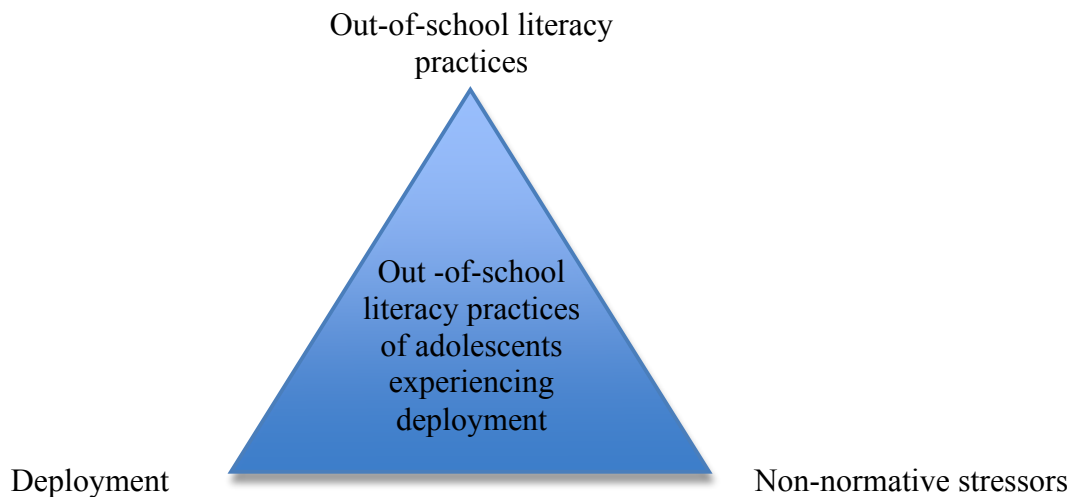
Summary

This phenomenological qualitative inquiry was designed using sociocultural theory and critical discourse analysis. After conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews with five students from a small, rural school, I examined artifacts collected from participants and then conducted follow up interviews to examine the literacy practices engaged in by the students and their perceptions of the ways in which those literacy practices helped them cope as they experienced deployment of a family member. Sociocultural theory and critical discourse analysis was used to understand how these literacy practices helped these adolescents shape their sense of identity, enact their agency, and influence the circulation of power within their families' situation of deployment.

CHAPTER 4 - Phenomenological Analysis

In this chapter, I will begin the analysis of the phenomenon of adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices during the deployment of a family member. This phenomenon, comprised of literacy practices, deployment experiences, and non-normative stressors inherent with deployment, is depicted below:

Figure 4-1: The Phenomenon



In order to describe the essence of the phenomenon of adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices during the deployment of a family member and to give voice to the adolescents' perceptions of these practices, I applied two layers of analysis. This chapter includes the first layer, a phenomenological analysis guided by Moustakas's modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). In Chapter Five, the second layer of analysis, guided by questions

offered by Moje & Lewis (2007), utilized sociocultural theory and critical discourse analysis.

Phenomenological Method of Analysis

A modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994) offers a structural method of analysis for data in a phenomenological qualitative inquiry. A simplification of the steps in this method that I utilized in this study is as follows:

- Engage in the practice of epoché by describing personal experiences with the phenomenon under study. This practice begins with a full description of my own experience of the phenomenon in an attempt to set aside my personal experiences (which cannot be done entirely) in order to direct focus on the participants of the study.
- Develop a list of significant statements from interview transcripts and other data sources regarding how participants are experiencing the topic (horizontalization of the data). Treat each statement as having equal worth and develop a non-repetitive, non-overlapping list.
- Group significant statements into larger units of information, establishing “meaning units” or themes.
- Write a composite description of the phenomenon that incorporates both the textural (*what* the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon, the *what happened* of the experience) and structural (*how* the experience happened, reflecting on the setting and context in which the

phenomenon was experienced) descriptions. This will describe the *essence* of the experience.

I began this analysis with a practice of epoché, in which I examined my own preconceptions and experiences with the phenomena of the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents and military deployment.

Epoché

In this section, I will bracket my own lived experiences both as an adolescent and as an educator, with adolescent literacy and military deployment.

Experiences with Out-of-School Literacy Practices as an Adolescent

When I was an adolescent, literacy practices were an integral part of my existence. I was a strong reader and writer. My mother read to me from infancy and our home contained a plethora of books, newspapers, and magazines. Frequent visits to the library and purchases of books via discount stores and school book club orders were the mainstay of my literacy life. I subscribed to *Young Miss* and *Seventeen*, magazines for teen girls, and I frequently read my mother's *Good Housekeeping*. I kept a diary beginning in fourth grade. I was a frequent letter-writer, sending missives to pen pals in Wisconsin and Germany. I maintained an ongoing correspondence with relatives who lived far away and aging family members who lived near but enjoyed getting mail. The technology of the time for our family included a colored television set, a console stereo complete with a turntable, cassette player, and an eight-track tape player. Our communication devices were wall-mounted rotary dial telephones and two-way CB radio units with a whip antenna mounted to a pole outside our kitchen window.

My out-of-school literacy practices as an adolescent included reading novels, reading magazines and scrapbooking their articles, writing poetry, writing letters, listening to music, playing the piano, and talking to friends and family on the telephone and two-way radio. I always felt supported by my family in these endeavors and felt encouraged by them to engage in these practices whenever I wished.

Experiences with Military Deployment as a Child and Adolescent

My father served in the National Guard for six years before I was born. He volunteered for a six-month basic training active duty and then was inactive duty for the remainder of his service. When I was of preschool age, three of my uncles served in Viet Nam. One was drafted into the Army, one served in the Navy, and one was a career officer in the Air Force. I have vague recollections of them being “gone” and remember being excited when one of them sent reels of audiotape home to us so we could hear his voice. I recall the transparent sheets of thin paper and the envelopes with the red and blue stripes around the edges that we used to send our written communication back and forth. One of my uncles returned home from his tour physically unscathed. I am certain he bore inward scars, though he never mentioned them. After the war, he was discharged. He could talk freely about his experiences in the army any time he was asked. Another uncle was a different matter. He had served in the Navy and suffered wounds while on a boat in the jungle. His physical wounds healed, and he has led a rich and productive life since the war. However, he will not freely discuss his experiences about his time in Viet Nam. When I was in high school, we tried watching film reels he brought back with him, but he could barely comment on them or discuss them as we watched. I remember another uncle, who was a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force and a

career officer, as always being stationed with my aunt and cousins several states away. I do not recall any stories from him about Viet Nam. I remember always being proud of the way we were saluted when my aunt would drive us on base when we visited. I enjoyed his stories of his time as a navigator on refueling planes.

Though the farm I grew up on was within twenty-five miles of an army post, most of my classmates were from local and farm families. Throughout my junior high and high school years, I had very few classmates who were from military families. Our graduating class was a small one with sixteen students and none had a parent who was active duty military. In spite of having uncles who served in the military during my childhood years and living so near a military installation, as an adolescent I knew very little about the experiences of military families.

Experiences with Adolescents' Out-of-School Literacy Practices as an Educator

I perceive that the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents today are wide and varied. When the school day is done, many remain at school for extracurricular activities. Upon returning home, they have a broad spectrum of activities to choose from that could be categorized as new literacies. Engaging in web-based activities such as social networking, online gaming, accessing YouTube, and surfing websites are options readily available to many adolescents. Playing video games, often connecting with other friends or family members via a web connection is another way that adolescents engage in literacy. I feel that students are reading and writing frequently in these situations, with this reading and writing taking different forms from the traditional literacy practices that I engaged in as an adolescent. Many students still engage in these more traditional literacies of reading fiction, graphic novels and expository works in addition to their new

literacy practices. I think some traditional writing activities occur, such as letter writing and journaling, but with much less frequency than writing through texting, posting on social networking sites, and blogging.

Experiences with Military Deployment as an Educator

I began my career as an educator teaching primary grades. I completed my student teaching experience in a first grade classroom in a K-3 primary building in a small, rural town. I taught second grade in that same building for ten years, then began looping to third grade with the same group of students. I taught this second and third grade looping rotation for the next six years. During my first few years, I had no students from military families. With the expansion of the military post thirty miles away, a few families who were active duty or retired military moved to the town. From then on, I had one or two students each year with some sort of military connection or background.

After teaching sixteen years at this primary school, I transferred within the district to the K-12 school where I currently teach sixth, seventh, and eighth grade reading and language arts. I attended this school from kindergarten through my senior year. The town where this school is located is within twenty-three miles of the military post. Over the past ten years, the student population has grown to include a larger number of students with military backgrounds. Often these students are children of officers or career military personnel who are nearing retirement and seeking a small community in which to settle.

I perceive my students who are from military families as mostly well adjusted. Their academic skills are commensurate with non-military students. Their behavior and social skills seem to be within the same ranges as those of non-military students. Often,

students who have attended multiple schools throughout the years due to moves necessitated by the military speak of liking the smaller school atmosphere and the community. They seem to connect quickly with local students and form friendships with ease. Students whose family members are facing deployment often miss school, often at times when their attendance at school is crucial such as during testing, but the number of absences seem to be comparable to the absences of students who are not from military families.

Horizontalization of Data and Developing Themes

I began collecting data by conducting initial interviews with each participant. During these interviews, participants were encouraged to share their experiences of military deployment and to examine the literacy practices in which they engage after school. Following those interviews, I gave each participant a literacy log on which to record their out-of-school literacy practices for the next two weeks. When the literacy logs were completed and returned to me, I conducted follow up interviews with each participant inviting them to reflect on the literacy practices they identified. Participants were also encouraged to share more about the current deployment experiences of their family members. After bracketing my own perspectives by writing to describe my perceptions about adolescent literacy practices and military deployment, I began to carefully read and re-read the participants' interview transcripts and literacy logs.

This close reading of the data allowed me to list significant statements and group them into larger units of information, thus establishing themes. The horizontalization of the data from the ten interviews and five literacy logs allowed me to group the significant

statements into three themes common to all five participants: ambiguity, responses, and roles.

Description of the Experience

In this section, I will describe the experiences of each participant as he or she engaged in out-of-school literacy practices within the circumstances of the military deployment of a family member, including significant statements from interviews and literacy logs. These descriptions will be replete with the words of each participant, allowing their voices to convey their perceptions and feelings. Within these descriptions, I address each theme in the context of the perceptions and significant statements of each participant. I will conclude this section with a composite description of the essence of the common experiences of all participants.

Timothy

Timothy, age 12, is a sixth grade boy who has attended West Lake School for two years. His mother is a para-educator at West Lake School and his stepfather is an E5 Sergeant in the United States Army. He has a younger stepbrother who is three years old. Timothy refers to his stepfather as his dad.

Timothy is an average student who is conscientious about his work. His academic grades are mostly A's with a few B's. Timothy tends to be quiet in the classroom and is well liked by his peers. He participated in basketball and track during his sixth grade year and was a percussionist in the sixth grade band. When I visited with Timothy about participating in this study, he smiled and said, "Yes, I'd be glad to."

We had scheduled Timothy's interview for a Monday after school. I attended an out of state conference the Thursday and Friday before the interview. When I returned to

school on Monday, I learned that on the previous Thursday, Timothy's stepfather had been injured in Afghanistan when his armored truck hid a roadside bomb. Timothy's mother was at school that Monday, and upon visiting with her, I learned that Timothy's stepfather's injuries were severe, but the last report she had received was that they were not life-threatening. He was currently receiving treatment in Germany and would be transferred back to the United States when he was stable. Until they received word when his transfer would occur, they would remain in West Lakeside and try to carry on as usual. They had been informed that he would likely be transferred to a hospital in Texas, and when he arrived, they could make travel arrangements for the family. When I asked if Timothy would prefer to reschedule, his mother said that he had already told her that he still wanted to do the interview.

When Timothy came by my classroom after school, he was very quiet. I asked him if he still felt like visiting with me, or if he would like to do the interview another time. He replied that he would like to continue. After thanking him for talking to me, I asked him about the possibility of making a trip to Texas. He replied,

Yeah, my dad got really injured because of a roadside bomb.

When I asked him about receiving the news, and he said,

Um, she [his mother] talked to me about it because the soldiers were coming there to look for her. And for all of a sudden, she was really sad.

When I said that I was glad they would be able to see him soon, Timothy's eyes lit up and he nodded, saying

I'm just hoping it's not too hot there!

After then talking about this potential trip and another planned trip to Colorado, Timothy described his family

Well, for right now, it's me, my mom, and my brother, which he's 3. And my dad's out on deployment. My grandma, both my grandma and grandpas are out in Colorado, my aunt and my uncle is out in Colorado, my uncle and my cousin's out in Colorado.

He indicated that the town where his grandparents lived was a small town similar to West Lakeside and that when he visited there he had a good time and that his grandparents "kind of spoil" him.

In this session, Timothy did not offer information about military life or deployment without prompting. He often responded to questions with nods rather than words. When asked about the hardest part of deployment, speaking softly and blinking rapidly, he replied

When he's actually going.

At this point, Timothy spied the literacy log on the table, and our conversation shifted from deployment to literacy practices. When I asked him how he saw himself as a reader, writer, and speaker, he chose to talk about writing first. He expressed enjoyment of writing and said that he thought he was a "pretty good writer". He felt that writing came easier to him because "you just have to write what you think". When asked to describe himself as a reader, he replied, "Um, I'd say I'm in the medium." He mentioned that he played the drum and spent some time practicing, and he felt that he would remain in band the following year. He said that when he would go home after school, he would practice his drums and then get on his Xbox.

Timothy became very animated when he spoke about playing video games. He was not hesitant in offering information and said that sometimes in his games he had to read things like Codes of Conduct. He mentioned that when his dad was overseas, he was not able to play with him online, but that he thought he had met someone from a game company.

With the mention of his dad, the conversation returned to deployment. Timothy shared that he really did not know about the nature of his dad’s work during this deployment. I asked about the ways he and his mom kept in touch with his dad. He said that when his dad was in the hospital in Germany, his mother had to call someone from here [the United States] to connect to the hospital in Germany. Timothy shared that he really had “no clue” about how long they were able to talk or about how the phone was delivered to his dad since he did not have a phone in the room with him. He said when his dad called his mom, he just “called us with a weird phone number”.

At the conclusion of our first conversation, Timothy agreed to complete a literacy log, daily recording his engagement in out-of-school literacy practices. The following tables reflect Timothy’s responses.

Table 4-1: Literacy Log - Timothy

Literacy Practices	Number of times participant engaged in practice
E-mail	
Texting	
Instant Messaging	
Facebook	
My Space	
Journal writing	
Story writing	
Telephone conversation	
Blogging	
Letter writing	
Twitter	
Cartooning	
Videotaping	
Skype	

Drawing/sketching/painting	
Writing song lyrics	
Listening to music	
Playing a musical instrument	2
Reading a novel	4
Reading a magazine	
Reading on-line articles, blogs, material on websites	
Played videogames	13
Watched TV	14
Scrapbooking	
Photography	

Table 4-2: Literacy Log Questions - Timothy

Questions about literacy practices	Responses
What shows did you watch?	Stormhawks Dragon Ball Z Kia The Fairly Odd parents (mentioned 11 times)
What websites did you visit?	
What books did you read?	The Lightning Thief (mentioned 3 times)
Please jot down any thoughts you have about your literacy practices today?	

When Timothy and I met for our second interview, we had just returned from an excursion to another school in our district. The day had been fun, but exhausting. He was in good spirits and mentioned that the only thing wrong with the day had been the rain. We began our conversation with my inquiring about his dad. He spoke of his dad’s condition

Well, my dad still can’t move his right arm, and every time we go somewhere he’s really tired, so, he really goes to bed whenever he can.

Well, it’s hard for my dad to get his clothes on and stuff. But he’s a left hander, so he’s kind of good right now!

Timothy said that his responsibilities had increased since his dad was home, more than when his dad was deployed. He told about a recent project they tackled after his dad returned home.

When he needs help with something, like moving the fridge, which I think we did about a month ago, we moved all of that, replaced a cord. Well, yeah, it was mostly the hardest part, what we did, though.

He mentioned that things were more stressful for his mom because of all the appointments and things to check out for his dad. When asked specifics about the plans for his treatment, Timothy said, “Honestly, I don’t know.” He said that his dad’s injury had most affected him by requiring him to help his dad and “kind of watch out for him”. He noted that his little brother handles the situation “fine”.

Timothy was eager to talk about the information he had recorded on the literacy log. His first comments were about the television shows he liked to watch. He was very enthusiastic in describing a cartoon that had previously been off the air, but was now back in the line up so that he could watch it after school. He also described in detail a new show that was a remake of an older cartoon. He described the original story line and predicted that while the focus of the plot would remain the same, there would be “more graphics and more color and stuff”.

He became even more enthusiastic when talking about the video games he liked to play. He gave a quick synopsis of his after school routine.

Um, well after school, I probably either walk or get a ride. And when I get home, I either do homework if I have any, and band, and see if I can get on the Xbox or something. And then, after that, I wait. Then I play it for a little bit just until about, I can’t remember, 5:30, just until about 5:25, yeah. Then we have to leave for soccer. And come back and probably get on it again. And watch TV for the rest of whatever I have left!

Timothy was most enthused about the games *Call of Duty: Black Ops* and *Dead Space*. He said that what he liked about *Call of Duty: Black Ops* was that

it teaches you about guns and has a really good story line. It's kind of confusing, though, to me.

He then explained the different levels and how you had to read online to find codes to change what you could do in the game. He gave precise details about what was happening at each level and the kinds of things he, as a player, had to do to advance in the game. He said that the adventure was pretty high, but it could be "kind of confusing, too." He said that he had owned the game *Dead Space* since Christmas and had been playing it off and on. When trying to explain the story line to me he said,

And it's not pretty. Okay. You know a gorilla? Just imagine a gorilla plus a tank!

He said that he was stuck at a certain part right now, a part that he really hates. He agreed that you have to have a lot of patience to play video games.

Timothy described how he played *Call of Duty: Black Ops* online with his friends. He said that he talks to them and that he prefers to play online with more people because "then you won't get eaten as much!" He said that when he uses the Konnect feature on his Xbox he can not only talk to his friends and play with them, but he can see them as well. He told how he stays in "the chat" to see them as well as talk to them while he plays. He said, "It's kinda hard. At least you get to see 'em."

He was less animated when our conversation shifted to a book he had been reading. When we began discussing *The Lightning Thief*, he said that he had seen the movie first and then tried to read the book. He felt the movie was "pretty good", but

“The book is way different.” He went on to describe in detail the differences between the book and the movie, indicating that while he had preferred the movie, he could recall the elements of plot from both the book and the movie. He shared that he liked another book by that author, *The Red Pyramid*, better than *The Lightning Thief*, describing it as “kinda cool”.

When asked about his plans for the summer, Timothy thought that they might be going to Colorado to visit his grandparents for a while, but he was not sure. He agreed that his dad’s injuries had changed their plans a little bit. When I asked him if there was something specific that he could tell me about what it is like to be in a military family he said

It’s kind of hard. Because, mostly after some deployments, the first or second time? We actually have to move. Somewhere where you don’t know.

He said that “it actually is not hard” for him to meet people or to make friends. He shared that after moving to West Lakeside, he helped his family get unpacked and right away he met a new friend at the park. But, he said that he made a good friend the first week he moved here and then that friend had to move. That was hard. In addition to the difficulty of have having to move, Timothy said

It’s hard to know that your mom or dad is going out in somewhere that’s really dangerous. Where they could get injured. Or worse.

He mentioned that his dad’s injuries were serious, but that his dad’s friend, who was driving the armored truck that hit the roadside bomb, was in more serious condition. He said that he didn’t know too much about his dad’s friend’s injuries, but he knew that they

had to strap him down in the hospital so he couldn't move. He said that he didn't think his dad had been able to speak with his friend, or see him, since they had returned to the states.

Timothy said that being in the military is "kind of stressful". After learning of his dad's injuries, being with friends helped him through the worrying.

I went to Clint's house and asked him if he could play outside. And we went to the park. That really helped.

He said that watching television and playing video games helped to take his mind off things for a while, but that it also helped to be with friends. He enjoyed being with friends while playing on video games, both in person and online. He was looking forward to the summer and having more time to sleep and interact with his friends.

The following themes emerged as Timothy described his experiences with deployment and literacy practices.

Emerging Theme: Ambiguity

Throughout both of my conversations with Timothy, it was evident that he experienced a great deal of ambiguity regarding his family's military experiences in general and deployment in particular. When I asked him how long his dad had been in the army, he said,

Eleven years. Eleven years he's been in the army. As old as I am.

He was not certain if he had been in the army before that. He indicated that it was not only difficult having to move, but also difficult to not know where you will be moving.

It's kind of hard. Because, mostly after some deployments, the first or second time? We actually have to move. Somewhere you don't know.

When asked how many times his dad had been deployed, he said,

Well, or, four. Three or four. I don't know.

He did not know exactly what his stepfather did as part of his deployment. He did not know what his job was in the army. When asked specifically about the mission and the convoy his dad was a part of at the time of his injury, he said that he didn't know what his dad's role was.

Ambiguity was also evident when we visited about his dad's medical treatment. Timothy had a grasp of the extent of the injuries, but did not know what might lie ahead for their family as a result. His mother had shared with me that they did not have a clear direction from their doctors, so the ambiguity existed beyond Timothy's perception of the situation and was actually the nature of their experience at this point.

With regard to the use of literacy practices within this experience, ambiguity was evident when Timothy was asked about communicating with his dad while he was overseas. He knew that the calls had to be first directed to a number stateside and then transferred to a number overseas, but he was uncertain about the specifics of making contact. While Timothy often utilized video games and online computer games to interact with and communicate with his friends, he said that when his dad is overseas, he was not able to play games with his dad online because of the slow connections.

Further ambiguity was evident when discussing plans for the summer. A scheduled trip to Colorado to see his grandparents was uncertain because the timeline for further treatment of his dad's injuries was unknown. Timothy said,

Uh, we might go for just a little while. Just about a week. We might go.
But I'm not sure if we're going.

Many significant statements shared in the description of my conversations with Timothy indicated that the ambiguity that resulted from the military deployment of and subsequent injuries sustained by his stepfather was very stressful. In our initial interview that took place only days after his injuries occurred, Timothy was much more subdued and his facial features were drawn and tense. He spoke quietly about learning of his dad's injuries and how it made his mother sad.

During our follow up conversation, Timothy indicated that while his family was coping with his dad's injuries, the uncertainties that still existed were stressful. I had learned from his mother that the extent of the injuries included severe nerve damage to the right arm, tendon and joint. He also had sustained a traumatic brain injury. While he had returned to work on the military post, the nature of his work had greatly changed, and ongoing treatment from specialists would occur. Timothy's statements:

It's hard to know that your mom or dad is going out in somewhere that's really dangerous. Where they could really get injured. Or worse."

and

It's kind of stressful.

indicate that he has an understanding of the danger involved with a military deployment and that he identifies his experience as stressful.

In each interview, when asked about the hardest part of deployment, Timothy mentioned the moment of separation: "When he's actually going, that's the hardest part. and "I'd say when he's actually going" [eyes blinking and tearing up]. Timothy mentioned that it was hard to know that your mom or dad is "out there somewhere that's really dangerous". He spoke of a previous deployment that occurred when his family

lived in a different state, and said that the longest his dad had ever been home was two years. After his dad was injured in Afghanistan, he was taken to a hospital in Germany and then flown back to the United States. Timothy had anticipated traveling to the hospital in Texas, but the family's travel paperwork was delayed. His dad was eventually transferred back to the post where he was stationed and released to stay at home and drive to the military post for his treatment. Timothy expressed relief that this separation was over, yet he also indicated that the uncertainty of travel arrangements and treatment options continued to be difficult to cope with.

Timothy's use of literacy practices seemed to offer consistency amid the ambiguity of deployment. When our conversations shifted from deployment experiences to the literacy practices he engaged in outside of the school setting, Timothy's enthusiasm was most evident when he spoke of playing video games. His in depth descriptions of games, their plots and characters, and the strategies he utilized to "beat" the games confirmed that he regularly spent time playing them. He did mention parts of video games that were difficult, challenging, and frustrating, but then he spoke of how good it feels when he would "beat a level" or he managed to not "die" in the game. His engagement in this particular practice seemed to offer him an opportunity to do something that was a normal part of his routine and something that he enjoyed as he coped with the ambiguity and stress of his current circumstances.

Emerging Theme: Responses

Timothy's responses to his family's experiences with deployment including the resulting injury to his stepfather varied. Understandably, Timothy expressed sadness when he spoke of his stepfather's injuries.

Yeah, my dad got really injured because of a roadside bomb.

and

Well, my dad still can't move his right arm and every time we go somewhere he's always really tired, so he really goes to bed whenever he can.

He spoke of the sadness his mom experienced after the soldiers came to deliver the news that his dad had been injured, and the difficulties his dad had with dressing himself and working around the house.

When he reflected on literacy practices that he had engaged in while his dad was in Afghanistan and following his return home, Timothy connected this engagement in video games to interaction with his friends. He said that when his dad is overseas, they are not able to play video games together on line because of the connections. He said that mostly he communicated with his dad by phone, but he didn't know much about making the actual calls. He said that sometimes his dad called them "with a weird phone number."

When Timothy spoke of using reading and writing outside of school, he responded that he perceived himself as a better writer than reader, saying that writing "comes easier because you just have to write what you think." He liked to communicate via online video games because you can "talk to more people". He said that by chatting online while playing video games he can "talk to my friends without even going, and wasting go time". He said that sometimes he invites his friends to play in the game and sometimes they invite him. He likes the video chat feature that is part of some of his games because it lets him see them while they play and chat.

As Timothy responded to his circumstances during this deployment/post-deployment phase, he continued to utilize literacy practices for entertainment, to take his mind off his dad's injuries, and to communicate with his friends. His animated responses as he conversed about video games and television shows is evidence of the role these practices played in as he readjusted to his own changing roles.

Emerging Theme: Roles

The post-deployment phase of this deployment has been much different from previous deployments for Timothy and his family. His dad departed for Afghanistan in January, was injured in March, and returned home two weeks following his injury. Though the duration of the separation was brief, the resulting trauma and stress were very different from previous deployments. Timothy's mother continued to work, having to occasionally take time off to take his dad to appointments and to fill out paperwork. Timothy did not miss any school after his dad was injured and was very matter-of-fact in describing what he needed to do for his dad when his injuries prevented him from accomplishing daily tasks. He agreed that it was hard for his mom, scheduling appointments and keeping up with things, but he said that his little brother was handling his dad's return home "just fine". He was glad that this time they did not have to move when this deployment was over. During this time, Timothy's role in the family structure has changed to accommodate new responsibilities and make readjustments.

Timothy described the increase in his responsibilities when his dad was deployed in Afghanistan. He said "it kinda changes a little" because he does things that his dad would do if he were home. I expected him to talk about chores he had to do around the house. However, the first thing he mentioned was his dad asking him to be responsible

for giving his mother a Valentine. This was a very emotional thing for him to share with me, and he took a few moments to compose himself before our conversation continued.

The nature of this deployment experience resulted in different responsibilities for Timothy during the post-deployment phase. After previous deployments, his responsibilities usually decreased.

Well, I have less responsibilities. He really stays, and we go, probably, somewhere. To Colorado.

This time, though his stepfather returned home, he not only could not resume some of his usual responsibilities, he now also required assistance in dressing and getting around.

When I asked Timothy whether his dad would ask for his help or if he had to be watchful and aware of when he needed help, he said, “Well, I do both.” He said that this time, he has “a little more” responsibility when his dad needs help with something. He said

Well, he does need help with a lot of stuff, and pretty much he does whatever he can.

Timothy seemed to respond to these shifts in his role and responsibilities with willingness and an accepting attitude. While he had different and increased responsibilities upon his dad’s return home, he still found time to frequently engage in the literacy practices of playing video games and watching television. Again, these practices seemed to offer him a source of consistency and normalcy while his family readjusted to the circumstance of his dad’s injuries.

Barry

Barry, 13, is an eighth grade boy who had attended West Lakeside School for seven months. His family moved to West Lakeside over the summer. His mother, a

former teacher, is currently volunteering at the school, and his father is a CWO2 (Chief Warrant Officer) in the United States Army. He has two younger brothers, James, 12, and Nathan, 8. James also participated in this study.

Barry has done very well academically at West Lakeside School. His grades are mostly A's and a few B's. He does not participate in athletics or band. He is very outgoing and in the very beginning, struggled a bit to fit in at West Lakeside. However, after the first few weeks he seemed to have found a place among his peers. In class, Barry often talks about adventures and experiences he has had being part of a military family. He was eager to tell me about them during our interview.

At the time of our initial interview, Barry's family was in the pre-deployment phase of the deployment cycle. His father was scheduled to deploy the following month. Barry's mother had applied for a grant for their family to go on a retreat for families facing deployment. They planned to leave in two days. Barry was very excited about this trip.

We're going to Wyoming. It's like for deployed people, families with deployed stuff. People and their family....what's really cool is that the place we're going to is like connected to Yellowstone.

Though his family had been awarded the grant and had been registered by the army for the retreat, his father had not yet been released by his commander. All of their travel arrangements had been made through the army, and they were hoping that the release would soon be granted.

We spoke about his father's impending deployment. When I asked him when he would leave, he said, "I, I actually don't know. All I know is that he's deploying." He

stated that this would be his father's third deployment. His dad had been active duty for Barry's whole life. He said,

He was in the army before I was born, but I don't know how long. Yeah, actually almost all of Nathan's [8-year-old brother] life he hasn't even really seen him because he's been deployed. And the only times he did see him was when he was teeny tiny.

He noted that this deployment would be a different experience for Nathan because he will be a little bit older and he "can kinda understand it more". Both of his father's previous deployments had been to Iraq, but the impending deployment would be to Afghanistan. He said that usually the deployments last for an entire year. He said,

Usually it's for a year in the Army. The Air Force in Germany? They only had six-month deployments, but we had to go a whole year.

Barry described the deployment phase as the hardest part of deployment.

It's not really hittin' ya until they're gone....Before he goes is not that bad, 'cause we just go on. Usually we do stuff with him a little more often, during the weekend. He usually stays at work 'til dinner, so. But he can leave whenever he wants, which is really cool. Post-deployment – is awesome, 'cause that's when he comes back and everything. I'd have to say during deployment, or right when he leaves is probably the worst part. 'Cause, you know, the last time you see him for like a year. Unless you're on Skype, or on Facebook or something.

Before moving to West Lakeside, his family lived in Kindsbach, Germany. He described his time living in Germany as "awesome". The family lived there for four

years. When I asked Barry if his family got to spend more time with his father while they were in Germany, he said,

Well, we lived there four years. He only lived there two....It started when we went to Germany, and then two months afterward, he left. It was kinda...So, he was gone most of the time, but we talked to him almost every night.

He said that his mother had known that his father would be deployed after they arrived in Germany, but he had not been aware at the time.

We talked about his father's plans after this impending deployment. Barry was uncertain about whether or not his father was close to retirement.

I think he said, I can't remember exactly, but once he gets promoted, he gets 17 years. Because I think he said he's been in [pause] 22 years – that's what it was. I was trying to remember and he's almost done.

When asked to talk about being part of a military family, he said,

Yeah, there were a lot of cool things....getting to see other places.

I asked what the down side would be. He said, "Yeah. The deployment stuff."

He said that the first time his father was deployed "...the very first deployment, and they did the thing, I can't remember what it's called. We had to stay at this dumb daycare. It was stupid". He said that when his father returns from a deployment there are many meetings, but that those mostly happen when he is in school, so he does not have to attend them.

When I asked Barry about changes that occur in their family during deployment, he spoke about his experiences in Germany. He said,

Yeah, we have to do a lot more chores. And my grades dropped last time.

Yeah. Really bad. I almost failed.

He said that he felt that he would do better in West Lakeside School because

Well, this school is a whole lot smaller, so it's a little bit less distractions

[laughs].

Lowering his voice, he said,

Cause, in Germany, we had, aside from a couple more distractions, I just plain straight up didn't even like my teachers.

This surprised me because at West Lakeside School, Barry got along well with all of his teachers and was a hard worker. He continued.

They were kinda mean. I think it's 'cause, because they got chosen to go to Germany aside from everyone else. That's what I think... We were all military in my school, 'cause we didn't go to a German school. Because, we were really close to one, but it was in Landstuhl, and that was the other way... You're a lot nicer teacher than my last one, because she would have got, given me like a whole stack of homework. One time she, I had her for social studies, too, and she lost a stack of papers that big [indicates with his hands], and they weren't just separate papers... She made me do them like three or four different times. And then, I went in to give them to her, and she showed it [the original stack] to me. She's like, "Oh, I found these." We had stapled them all together to make sure she didn't lose one of them, and she had them all together and everything. And I tried to give

her a present one time and she just left it on her desk the whole year....It was, it was sad.

Barry spoke of making friends with other military students who lived in his neighborhood in Germany. He said that there were other kids there who spoke German, but that they also

kind of understood us maybe because, and they told us that one of their parents was English and one of their parents was German. So I think that's probably why they knew a little bit of English. Everyone else in our neighborhood, they were all American.

For Barry, the stress of deployment was evident in his school experience. He mentioned again that school in Germany was stressful for him. He indicated that he knew he needed to do well in school, so that his father wouldn't be stressed out. But when he worked harder he also worried more about his father. He tried to explain the pressure he felt:

Yeah. Because, they're not there to help you out. Then you think, 'If I don't do good, then they're [the deployed parent] gonna be kinda more stressed out', but then if you do pretty good, it's a little bit more stressful 'cause you have to try harder, 'cause you're thinking about that, at the same time you're thinking about the other thing, so...you're always thinking about something else, the opposite of what you're other thinking.

Though he acknowledged the stress of deployment, Barry was eager to talk about the adventures he had experienced. He was very animated when he said,

Well, besides the fact that deployment kinda stinks, it's actually kinda cool because, well, not cool, but...when my dad was deployed there was this thing. This thing called Edelweiss...there was a meeting at this super cool place. It had like a hot tub and everything...Edelweiss Garmish, yeah, and we went there and we went there like five other times for skiing and cause we could go there, and then there was another time...we just went there randomly...I can't remember why. We went there with friends. It was really fun.

He spoke of other trips:

And, kind of to get the stress off, we'd go different places. Like one time we went to, uh, Munich, and then some other time we would go to Rothenburg. We went there three times, and it was actually pretty fun. I mean, besides the fact that our dad wasn't there...he went with us once. Yeah, and it was really cool, because it's this big walled city, and it's this one scene, and you see it everywhere. It's, the road forks off and there's this clock tower, right there, and it goes down that way, and there's this fountain, right between the fork. And my mom's got it on like three different things. And then she went to this German store and she saw it on plates, on a lot of things, and a lot of other cool stuff. She's got curtains of it too!

Barry had shared pictures from his visit to the Anne Frank House in Holland with our class during a Holocaust unit. When speaking again about the trip, he said,

That was our thing over a weekend. ‘Cause we were actually, it was only like a seven hour drive down to Holland, I think. And we got to see the North Sea. And I remember the hamburger! It was GROSS!

He went on to talk about the wonderful food he had eaten and other places they had visited during their stay in Europe. He said that if he could, he would like to go back to Germany someday.

If I could, I would go back to Germany, because that is a really cool place.

If I could go back to Kindsbach, that would be even better.

When I encouraged Barry to record or write down all the stories from his experiences we talked about how he perceived himself as a reader, writer, and speaker.

He said,

Speaker? Not really good. I kinda get, sometimes it feels like I get dyslexic when everyone’s looking at me, I can’t read. Writing? If I enjoy it, like if it’s just a free-write sort of thing, and I’m thinking of it as I go, then it’s more fun. But if it’s like in typing, where you have to type it, or if you have to copy something, that’s when I, when it’s not so much fun. And reading. I’ve read some pretty big books. Like *Inkdeath* and stuff. I read, I raced, I raced the girl across the street reading the *Twilight* series. She won...it was close! We were both on the last book.

I asked Barry about the things he liked to do when he got home from school. He said that recently he had been more structured with his time.

Okay. Here, since a couple of days ago, I’ve got it kind of planned out. I get home. I have sort of a routine. I get a drink of water. Then I do my

chores. I go downstairs. I check my Facebook, might chat with someone for a second, and then play my Xbox. Then I'll eat, and then basically from there it's just kind of whatever we do after dinner...And if I have homework that day, that goes with my chores. But, usually I don't get homework.

Barry described the literacy practices he engaged in while playing video games and using Facebook.

Usually, it's kinda just audio, so you hear it [referring to video games]. But then on Facebook, you read it and a bunch of stuff. And unless you type it correctly, no one's gonna understand what you're talking about! They'll start thinking you're like using an abbreviation or something, like 'lol' or something like that.

He said that his Facebook time or video game playing sometimes is a way of communicating with other people. He might play video games with local friends, or sometimes he plays with his friends in Germany. He said,

It's kind of hard to play with our friends there, 'cause they've got an Xbox, too, and we've got them on our Xbox. But it's hard because you don't usually see them [on] 'cause at 10 o'clock, it's already 5 o'clock there...So it's kinda hard. The last time I played with them was when I stayed up all night...I was up all night trying to see if they'd get on.

Barry said that sometimes his father plays video games with him.

He does, sometimes. Like, a couple days in a row, he played with us, Halo. And I obliterated him so bad, he thought I was cheating!

When his father is deployed, he can play computer games with him, but they only played video games one time.

Barry was excited to complete his literacy log. He did mention that he might need a little longer than two weeks because of his family’s anticipated trip. The following tables reflect his responses.

Table 4-3: Literacy Log - Barry

Literacy Practices	Number of times participant engaged in practice
E-mail	
Texting	
Instant Messaging	
Facebook	2
My Space	
Journal writing	
Story writing	
Telephone conversation	
Blogging	
Letter writing	
Twitter	
Cartooning	1
Videotaping	1
Skype	
Drawing/sketching/painting	8
Writing song lyrics	
Listening to music	14
Playing a musical instrument	
Reading a novel	
Reading a magazine	
Reading on-line articles, blogs, material on websites	6
Played videogames	13
Watched TV	11
Scrapbooking	
Photography	

Table 4-4: Literacy Log Questions - Barry

Questions about literacy practices	Responses
What shows did you watch?	Invader Zim Dragonball Z (mentioned twice) Dragonball Z Kia (mentioned twice) Avatar (mentioned four times) Total Drama: World Tour Mythbusters (mentioned four times) America’s Funniest Videos (mentioned twice) Spongebob (mentioned twice)

	Troop American Pickers Dirty Jobs (mentioned twice) Pawn Stars (mentioned twice) Man vs. Food Bizarre Food
What websites did you visit?	www.bungie.net www.facebook.com www.serebii.net
What books did you read?	
Please jot down any thoughts you have about your literacy practices today.	

Much had transpired in the time between my first and second conversations with Barry. The family’s much-anticipated trip to Wyoming to attend the retreat for military families had not occurred. Barry’s mother had emailed me on the Thursday evening they were scheduled to depart. Though the grant had been awarded, all the travel arrangements had been made and approved, and the family had been registered, at the last minute, his father’s commander would not grant his release to attend. The family received the news a few hours before they were scheduled to depart. His mother said that the boys were very disappointed, but that they would be in school the next morning.

Shortly after that, his father had to have minor surgery, so his deployment was delayed. Barry was uncertain about his father’s deployment plans. “I think it’s early July,” he said. “But I’m not sure. But I think that’s what was said. I think.” When I asked him if deployment was still a pretty certain thing, he replied, “I think it’s up in the air.” He said that there might be a change since there were others who had never been deployed and this was his father’s third deployment. Barry was pleased that the deployment that had seemed a certainty now was delayed and could possibly not take place. Referring to the canceled retreat, he said, “I guess you could say it [the delayed deployment] was making up for that trip.”

Barry spoke nonchalantly about the literacy practices he recorded on his literacy log. Referring to music, he said that he “just kind of listened to anything”. He said that his brother buys music, and they have many discs from before they had iTunes. When I asked him if music relaxes or inspires him, he said, “It’s kinda there. Something to do with the time.”

He mentioned again playing video games with friends.

We used to love to play the Wii a lot. But since we got here, our uncle, he bought us the Xbox. So we play that a lot. We play Halo? You ever heard of that? Well, when we’ve got that Xbox gold stuff, we usually play with (friends) or whoever’s on at the time.

Barry told of a drawing contest that he had participated in when he was in fourth grade. He said that he liked to randomly draw when he is bored – “the doodle sort of thing”. He said that sometimes he watches television shows such as *Mythbusters*, *Dirty Jobs*, or The History Channel just so he can convince his brothers that unbelievable things are real. “So I tune in there and try to get evidence. Sometimes it doesn’t work.”

Barry said that he uses the Internet to find out information about video games and to try to figure things out. He also uses the Internet to stay in touch with friends. He said that he mostly uses Facebook to communicate online with his friends, but that sometimes the differences in time zones make it difficult.

When I asked Barry if there was something he would like to share with me about being in a military family, he said,

It's awesome. Sometimes....So when we were in Germany, we had the money to go on a cruise. And we could go to Italy and different places like that. Cause our friends live in Italy.

Barry went on to describe some experiences from a trip to Greece. He also shared that his mother was planning to go to Italy over the summer, and since his father would be home, he and his brothers would be staying with him rather than going to visit relatives in Iowa. He was looking forward to taking Drivers Ed in the upcoming weeks and then a brief trip to Oklahoma.

The following themes emerged as Barry described his experiences with deployment and literacy practices.

Emerging Theme: Ambiguity

In both the initial and follow-up interviews, Barry mentioned aspects of ambiguity. This was evident in the instance of the retreat his family had planned to attend because of the impending deployment. In spite of all arrangements having been made by, and sanctioned by, the army, in the end his father was not released to attend. At that point, the date for his deployment to Afghanistan was also not known to Barry.

I, I actually don't know. All I know is that he's deploying.

This ambiguity was not a new experience for Barry, as he had known many uncertainties while living in Germany during his father's deployment to Iraq. He did not express an awareness that his father would deploy at that time, but he said,

My mom, she knew about it, I think, but I'm not real sure.

When the plans for attending the retreat fell through and soon after his father had to have minor surgery, the family's plans again changed. Barry was grateful that his

father did not have to deploy right away, and he seemed matter of fact regarding impending plans for deployment.

I think it's early July. But I'm not sure. But I think that's what was said. He said that there was the possibility that his father might not go at all.

I think it's up in the air...Because there are some people in his motor pool that have never gone.

Barry remained hopeful that there might be a change and his father would not have to deploy again in the near future.

In several significant statements, Barry openly acknowledged stressful aspects of deployment.

Because, they're not there to help you out. Then you think, 'if you don't do good, then they're gonna be kinda more stressed out', but then if you do pretty good, it's a little bit more stressful 'cause you have to try harder, 'cause you're thinking about that, at the same time you're thinking about the other thing. So..."

He did not dwell on the hardships of the deployment, however, but often spoke of positive ways his family handled the stress resulting from the ambiguity of their situation.

And kind of to get the stress off, we'd go different places. Like, one time we went to...uh, Munich, and then some other time we would go to Rothenburg.

Barry indicated that pre-deployment and deployment are the most difficult times in the deployment cycle, but that certain literacy practices might offer help in coping with the separation.

I'd have to say during deployment, or right when he leaves, is probably the worst part. 'Cause, you know, the last time you see him for like a year. Unless you're on Skype or on Facebook or something.

Many times during our conversations, Barry acknowledged that separation from his father during deployment was a difficult thing.

It's not really hittin' ya until they're gone.

He noted that his father had been deployed for much of his younger brother's life. He mentioned that while the family lived in Germany for four years, his father was only living with them for two of those years. During that time, they were able to communicate via telephone, Skype, and Facebook.

So, he was gone most of the time. But we talked to him almost every night.

He spoke at length about the time zone differences and the challenges that presented when trying to make connections with his father. He noted that it was easier when his family lived in Germany and his dad was in Iraq because there was less of a time difference than there will be this time when his family is stateside and his father is in Afghanistan.

As Barry coped with the ambiguity that resulted from his father's repeated, and then delayed, deployment, he developed a daily routine for himself that utilized various literacy practices.

Okay. Here, since a couple of days ago, I've got it kind of planned out. I get home. I have sort of a routine. I get a drink of water. Then I do my chores. I go downstairs. I check my Facebook, might chat with someone

for a second, and then play my Xbox. Then I'll eat, and then basically from there it's just kind of whatever we do after dinner... And if I have homework that day, that goes with my chores. But, usually I don't get homework.

This established routine offered a sense of predictability as he functioned within the cycle of deployment, where his family's circumstances were often ambiguous and unpredictable.

Emerging Theme: Responses

Throughout our conversations, Barry expressed some negativity toward the experience of deployment, but he often countered those expressions with something positive. He had mentioned meetings prior to his father's first deployment that required him and his brothers to "stay at this dumb daycare. It was stupid." He acknowledged that while the extra things his family gets to do are "awesome", the "deployment stuff" is difficult. He acknowledged that deployment "kinda stinks", but he then went on to talk about things he described as "cool."

Barry gave a few indications that he had negative feelings about literacy, saying, "I usually don't read books when I'm out of school" and "Speaker? Not really good. I kinda get, sometimes it feels like I get dyslexic when everyone's looking at me, I can't read". The most indications of negativity were evident when he was talking about his school experiences in Germany. He indicated that he experienced more distractions while there, but did not elaborate on them. He described negative feelings toward his teachers.

...aside from a couple more distractions, I just plain straight up didn't even like my teachers...They were kinda mean...I think it's 'cause, because they got chosen to go to Germany, aside from everyone else.

He shared the experience of giving his teacher a gift and having it sit unopened on her desk for the remainder of the year. He said, "It was sad."

The experience of living overseas during one of his father's deployments allowed Barry different opportunities to engage in literacy practices as he communicated with his father as well as those living near him. He noted the differences in time zones.

Yeah, it's horrible. In Germany, it wasn't that bad when we were talking to our dad, 'cause in Iraq it's only a one hour difference. But if he goes to Afghanistan, now, it's an 8 hour difference. So it's gonna be a heck of a time.

He talked about communicating with his father while they were in Germany and he was in Afghanistan.

We did Skype, and then when we were at school my mom did Facebook, a lot. She'd talk to a bunch of her friends. And then a couple of times actually we'd go to our friends' house right across the street. We were really good friends with them, and we would go over there for Christmas and we'd Skype him on their computer. It was awesome!

He noted that his father was gone most of the time they were in Germany, but that they talked to him "almost every night".

Sometimes, it only happened twice, he called us. Because they had internet problems, so they called us. And they have two phones and a

bunch of soldiers [laughs]...And they only have like five minutes on the phone. So...

Barry indicated that during the deployment phase when the family is separated from his father is the worst time of the deployment cycle, because it is “the last time you see him for like a year.” He then said, “Unless you’re on Skype, or on Facebook, or something”.

The use of literacy practices to communicate with friends while his father was deployed was very evident in my conversations with Barry. He was detailed and enthusiastic when he spoke of playing video games with friends. He often chatted with his friends online through the game he was playing. He also talked about checking Facebook and making certain that his messages were typed correctly so people would understand what he meant to say. He noted the time zone differences between him and his friends in Germany.

In response to his situation within the deployment cycle, enthusiasm and gratitude were often evident. Barry was enthusiastic when he spoke of playing video games to relieve stress, avoid boredom, and connect with his friends. He frequently used the descriptors “cool” and “awesome” to express how he felt about the experiences and adventures he had had because of his father being in the military. He told of places he had visited, food he had savored, and friends he had made while living in another country. His response to and perception of the experiences is best summarized in his own words.

Well, besides the fact that deployment kinda stinks, it’s actually kinda cool...

Emerging Theme: Roles

Barry indicated that he felt a sense of responsibility for preventing even more stress for his deployed parent.

Then you think, ‘If you don’t do good, then they’re gonna be kinda more stressed out.’

He mentioned increased responsibilities at home, saying, “Yeah, we have to do a lot more chores.” He noted that when his family lived in Germany he didn’t feel like he had as many chores as he does here “because at our house in Germany, they require you to recycle”. He gave a detailed description of the sorting they did to satisfy the recycling requirements. The animated way he spoke indicated that he enjoyed the process and regarded it as a responsibility that was fun.

When Barry spoke of his grades dropping during his father’s last deployment he expressed that he knew he needed to be responsible for doing well so that his father wouldn’t worry. His negative relationship with his teachers conflicted with his sense of responsibility for doing well. Barry spoke enthusiastically, however, about engaging in the traditional literacy practice of reading outside of the school setting in the form of a competition with a girl from his neighborhood. As they challenged each other to read the *Twilight* series, he found himself reading “pretty long books”. Though the girl finished ahead of him, Barry asserted that “it was close!”

Barry described the time immediately after his father returns from a deployment.

Post-deployment – is awesome! ‘Cause that’s when he comes back and everything.

Barry and his family had undergone several readjustments related to the impending and then postponed deployment of his father. The denial of the trip to Wyoming necessitated

a shift in direction for the week following the time they were to depart. Shortly after that, his father's surgery and the even more ambiguous date of deployment required the family to again readjust their expectations and plans. He agreed that his father's delayed deployment was a "pretty happy thing" for his family.

Yeah, it was...I suppose you could say it was making up for that trip [the retreat].

James

James, age 12, is a sixth grade boy who has attended West Lakeside School for seven months. His family moved to West Lakeside over the summer. His mother is a former teacher, and is a volunteer at West Lakeside School. His father is a CWO2 (Chief Warrant Officer) in the United States Army. He has an older brother, Barry, 13, who also participated in this study, and a younger brother Nathan, 8. James has a quiet demeanor and is a high achieving student, earning an A for each course in the current school year. James is very well-liked by his peers and made friends very soon upon arriving at West Lakeside School. He was a member of the junior high basketball team and recently sustained an injury during a game. He suffered a broken bone in his foot and wore a walking cast.

When I asked James to participate in the study, he readily agreed. On the day of our initial interview, he appeared relaxed and comfortable. We began our conversation with the topic of his father's previous deployment. James said that when their family moved to Germany, his father was "with us for a few weeks and then he had to deploy...He went to Iraq the first time". He said that he thought his father was gone a little bit over a year, "maybe 13 or 14 months". During this first deployment to Iraq,

James said that his father came home one time for R & R. After the first deployment, his father was back with the family in Germany for a while. James recalled that he was back for a year, and then he deployed to Iraq for the second time. He recalled that this deployment was a “little bit shorter, ‘cause, about, just about a year”.

In talking about his experiences while in Germany, James spoke of his family’s travels.

We got to travel a lot, like to, there’s this one place called the Edelweiss, [it] has a big lodge and you get to ski there and stuff...and on one of the R & R’s, we actually got to go there and had a lot of fun there.

He remembered this trip to Edelweiss as a special one because his dad was able to go with the family.

James attended two different schools while living in Germany, moving to another school after third grade. He described his school experience there as ‘okay’.

It was okay, but it was really big. So when we left I didn’t really know everybody there. But here, I know everybody, really.

He lived in the same neighborhood for four years while in Germany. He said that most of his neighbors were in some way connected with the military.

...like the last year we were there, there were other military people, but he was in the Air Force. And then our other neighbors, he worked at the hospital, so that’s kind of another army family...they didn’t have any kids, so they were just our neighbors.

He wasn’t certain if his neighbor was ever deployed. He said, “I think he just went on training and stuff.”

James felt that the pre-deployment phase is most difficult.

Uh, usually, before he deploys, the worst part is when he tells us. 'Cause, then it's really bad, and then we know that we just have to take our time with everything we do with him and stuff...usually we try and do a lot of things together before he leaves. Um, and then like we go to deployment group here [at West Lakeside School] and stuff like that.

He mentioned that he had hoped his father wouldn't deploy again when they moved to West Lake. His uncertainty was evident when he spoke of the impending deployment.

When I moved, when we moved here, I was really hoping he wouldn't have to go again, but he said that he had, he might have to do one more. And he did. But this is probably going to be the last one because it's going to be this year. And then there's only going to be like two more years. And so, yeah. That's pretty exciting to look forward to!

He again stated that his family tries to spend extra time with his father before he leaves.

...usually when he comes home, like before he leaves we try and do as much as we can with him, and enjoy the time with him.

Explaining why he felt that pre-deployment is the most difficult time, James said,

'Cause then he leaves. And when we do our R & R, we try to do it close to the end, like maybe one or two months before he gets back, so we know it's not going to be too much longer until he comes back. Yeah.

James indicated that he and his brothers have a more regimented chore schedule while his father is away.

Usually, when he's deployed, our mom makes us do all of our chores every day. 'Cause now we don't really have to. We can kind of lay off on our chores. But then we have to really get busy on our chores when he's gone. And we usually have to help out a lot with like cooking and cleaning up and stuff. Yeah, So it gets a little more difficult...usually every day we have to like, uh, like we have pets. So we have to like feed them and scoop their litter and fix our beds and then um, we have to sweep the floor and vacuum, and do lots of chores and stuff.

James' mother has always been highly involved in assisting others in the deployment cycle. James spoke with pride of the things his mother did to help others dealing with the deployment of a family member.

Well, um, since my mom, she's like the deployment group assistant. She helps Mrs. Connelly [school counselor]. So we, we used to do speed-stacking in Georgia and we thought it would be fun to do it in deployment group. So every deployment group meeting we usually do, like cup stacking at the beginning and then we like talk about like what's going on and like how they're doing in Iraq or Africa or wherever they're deployed.

He also mentioned the role his mother plays in helping others through their church.

Well, in our church that we go to, like they have other deployed people and they have deployed dads and stuff. And my mom usually tries to help them out a little bit, like cheer 'em up and stuff.

James and his family communicate frequently with his father when he is overseas. He said that they utilize Skype as their main communication tool.

We use Skype and that's when he has like a camera that goes on his computer and we can like see each other and talk to him. Yeah. So that's pretty cool.

He indicated that his family felt Skype was a more secure way to communicate, rather than through email.

Yeah, mostly Skype, 'cause if we email, like anybody can get a hold of that, so it's kind of risky and stuff.

Referring to his father's previous deployment to Iraq when the family lived in Germany, James described how they made connection with his father.

Usually we try and go a little bit before we go to bed, because, um, when he's going to sleep, he usually has to go to sleep late because he has to work all day. So we usually go about when we're about to go to bed so then we can say good-night to him and he can say good-night to us.

James described post-deployment when his father returns home as a special time.

Well, when he gets home, we try and do something special with our family. It's really kind of hard to know that it's really him!

Though there are a lot of things his father has to do upon returning from deployment, the family tries to allow him time to readjust before having a celebration.

Yeah, usually after he gets home, he has to go back to the work place, and they have to say like, have to tell him like, refreshing the rules and everything and so, then we have to just stay home or something and wait until he gets back... Yeah, he, probably the first, second, the first two days or three days he's really tired. 'Cause it's really hard to get adjusted to the

time. And so, we don't get to really spend a lot of time with him the first two days. But then that's when we do our special event or something.

James said that in his spare time, he likes to play basketball. He spends time with his friends shooting hoops in the driveway and "we'll just talk with my friends or something". He said that when they get home from school and have their chores done, "we can pretty much just, we're free to do anything more, really".

He described going to the USO in Germany for fun and stress relief.

There was all these other kids there that we knew because we went there so much. So we'd have fun with them when their parents were deployed, too.

He said that having friends really helped with the stress of deployment.

Usually our friends, they kind of take our mind off of it.

At the close of our first conversation, James admitted that he was very disappointed about not getting to go to Wyoming for the deployment retreat. He said that his family tried to make the best of it.

Well, we kind of did something else. Like, we went to [town], and we like shopped for a while and we like got new stuff.

When I said it seemed like his family tries to find ways to have fun and be happy no matter what, he said,

Yeah, so like, we don't wanna make it like a boring weekend or something, when we were going to have a fun weekend. So we just kind of make up for it.

James agreed to keep a Literacy Log for fourteen days, asking if he could begin right away. The following tables reflect his responses.

Table 4-5: Literacy Log - James

Literacy Practices	Number of times participant engaged in practice
E-mail	
Texting	
Instant Messaging	
Facebook	
My Space	
Journal writing	
Story writing	
Telephone conversation	
Blogging	
Letter writing	
Twitter	
Cartooning	
Videotaping	
Skype	
Drawing/sketching/painting	
Writing song lyrics	
Listening to music	15
Playing a musical instrument	10
Reading a novel	15
Reading a magazine	
Reading on-line articles, blogs, material on websites	
Played videogames	12
Watched TV	12
Scrapbooking	
Photography	

Table 4-6: Literacy Log Questions - James

Questions about literacy practices	Responses
What shows did you watch?	The History Channel [mentioned four times], & saw why the states are shaped the way they are Mythbusters Spongebob [mentioned twice] Man vs. Food [mentioned three times] Top Shot Pawn Stars Discovery Channel [mentioned seven times]
What websites did you visit?	
What books did you read?	I read the fifth book in the Warrior series. Read the book Warriors #5, <i>A Dangerous Path</i> [mentioned twice] Warriors book #4 <i>Rising Storm</i> [mentioned ten times]
Please jot down any thoughts you have about your literacy practices today.	

When James and I met for the follow-up interview, he was still wearing a walking boot. He was treated at the hospital on post, but there had been a mix up in communicating the x-ray results. The fracture had not yet healed, so James had to again wear the boot for another three weeks.

When I asked for an update on the plans for his father's deployment, he said,

Well, it turns out now he didn't have to go quite soon, and he's probably, he might have to go towards the beginning of July. But, we've got a while so that's better than nothing. And so, but he might not have to go at all.

I asked him if it bothered him not knowing if his dad would be deployed or not, or if he was just happy that he doesn't have to go in the near future. He said,

Yeah, I'm happy that he doesn't have to go right now. And he might not have to go, so...

He said his family copes with the uncertainty by hoping for the best.

We just, well, I guess we just think that he's always going to go, and so we might spend the most time with him, and try and not think about him going.

Referring to his Literacy Log, James talked first about listening to music. He said that he likes to listen to a mix of songs, and that most of the time he listens "just to fall asleep, to calm down or something". He likes to listen to "all the music all the time" and doesn't have a certain pattern of habits for listening. He plays the drums in band and spends a lot of time practicing. He said that he planned to stay in band in seventh grade and to perform in the marching band. Playing his drums offered him a source of stress relief.

It takes my mind off of things. Cause, then I have to focus on my music so, yeah. I guess it is kind of a reliever.

James was glad to talk about the Warrior series of books that he likes to read. He felt a connection to the books.

Well, see, in the books there's this one cat in it, and it reminds me a lot of my cat! And then on every cover there's a picture of him, and he looks exactly like my cat. So I think it's kind of cool!

He likes the books because there is a lot of adventure and because there are many books in the series.

Usually, if I read a book there's only one book of, I won't like it because when I finish it there's not going to be a second book.

James named *The Series of Unfortunate Events*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, and *Captain Underpants* as book series he read in elementary school.

James described the video games that he liked to play as “games that you roam around and you battle and stuff like that”. He plays games on the Xbox that are filled with adventure, games where you “go around and you find stuff...and you get to drive cars and helicopters”.

The television shows that James watched tended to be informative. He spoke at length about the programs that he watched.

On Discovery Channel, I like to watch the American Chopper. I like them putting together the motorcycles and see how they come out. And Mythbusters has all the different experiments and then Cash Cab which is like that Jeopardy...[On the History Channel] I usually watch like Pawn

Stars where they sell stuff and get new stuff. I like seeing all the old kind of stuff they get. And then learning about what it is. And like American Pickers where they find old stuff.

He compared the television programs he watches here with his viewing experiences in Europe.

In Europe, you only have like one channel that you watch with all the American stuff on it. And so you never really get to pick what you get to watch. So, it's kinda fun getting different channels.

Even when his father is stationed stateside, there are occasions when the family is separated.

Yeah, they have like field and they have to go for about two weeks. And that's before they deploy. Usually. And then, like when they do deploy that's like for a year...And sometimes he has to go to like different schools before he gets promoted. And that kind of stuff.

As our conversation came to a close, James concluded with some final thoughts about being part of a military family.

I'd say I don't really like it, because you don't get to see him a lot.

Usually [he's] at work. Most of the time. But then, since we have school, by the time I get home, it's only about an hour or two before he gets home, so...Then in the summer, since he doesn't get a break, we have to wait almost all day for him to come home.

Emerging Theme: Ambiguity

James and his family seemed quite able to cope with the ambiguity that seems inherent to military life in general and deployment in particular. When the plans for attending the retreat fell through, the family tried to make the best of it by scheduling another outing for that weekend. When they relocated to West Lakeside from Germany, James was hoping that his father would not have to deploy again.

...when we moved here, I was really hoping he wouldn't have to go again, but he said that ...he might have to do one more, and he did. But this is probably going to be the last one...

When his father had to have minor surgery, the deployment was postponed. At this point the date for his deployment is not known by the family, and there is a slight possibility he will not deploy after all.

Well, it turns out now he didn't have to go quite soon, and he's probably, he might have to go towards the beginning of July....And so, but he might not have to go at all.

Reflecting on previous deployments, James said that

The first few times it was pretty much certain, but there was always a chance that he didn't have to go...

The family copes by adopting a positive attitude.

We just, well I guess we just think that he's always going to go, and so we, might spend the most time with him, and try not to think about him going.

An awareness of separation and a resulting uncertainty was evident throughout my conversations with James. He spoke of the separations his family experienced while

living in Germany when his father had two separate deployments to Iraq. He reported that most separations lasted at least a year. His family has developed ways of coping with the different stages of deployment “since we’ve done it a lot”. Many times throughout our interviews James used the phrases ‘before he leaves’, ‘while he’s gone’, and ‘when he gets back’. James also mentioned the difficulty of separation even when his father is stateside. He said that he often didn’t see his dad a lot because he was at work. After a deployment, his father may have to attend meetings and debriefing sessions, so James said they “have to just stay home or something and wait until he gets back”.

Throughout our conversations, James mentioned or alluded to stressful aspects of military deployment. He felt that pre-deployment was the most difficult part of the deployment cycle. He said, “...the worst part is when he tells us, ‘cause, then it’s really bad and then we know that we have to just take our time with everything we do with him...” He acknowledged the stress experienced by other families as well. His mother is very involved with helping others cope. She assists with the deployment group at school as well as at their church. James that she “tries to help them out a little bit, like cheer ‘em up and stuff”. He alluded to slight stress when his father returns from a deployment, saying, “It’s really kinda hard to know it’s really him.” James’s family seems to cope with stress by trying to make the best of things, and James was quite matter-of-fact when he spoke of how they handled change of plans and ambiguity.

James identified listening to music as a literacy practice that helped him cope with stress. “Most of the time [I listen to music] just to fall asleep, to calm down or something”. He said of playing his drums, “It takes my mind off of things. ‘Cause then I

have to focus on my music...I guess it is kind of a reliever". Spending time with and talking to friends also offered a way to cope.

Usually our friends, they kind of take our mind off of it.

Emerging Theme: Responses

James was very clear that he did not like being separated from his father.

I'd say I don't really like it because you don't get to see him a lot.

He describes the time before his father deploys as "really bad". After expressing negative feelings toward deployment, James would often counter with something positive.

Yeah, since we've done it a lot, usually when he comes home, like before he leaves [on deployment] we try and do as much as we can with him, and enjoy the time with him.

He explained that they try to schedule his father's R & R close to the end of the deployment, so "then we know it's not going to be too much longer until he comes back."

James described using Skype to communicate with his father when he was overseas. He stated that his family would video chat with his father via Skype rather than send messages through email because "like, anybody can get a hold of that, so it's kind of risky and stuff". They tried to schedule their video chats "a little bit before we go to bed" so that their times coordinated with their father's schedule and so that "we can say good-night to him and he can say good-night to us.

James exhibited enthusiasm for some of the experiences his family had enjoyed as a result of military life. He mentioned the trip to Edelweiss while living in Germany as a fun experience. Going to the USO while in Germany and spending time with other

friends with deployed parents were experiences that he enjoyed. He mentioned R & R time when the family traveled to see various places in Europe. While James was appreciative of these experiences, he seemed to balance them with the difficulties of deployment.

Emerging Theme: Roles

An increase in responsibility was evident for James when his father is deployed.

Usually, when he's deployed, our mom makes us do all of our chores every day. 'Cause now we don't really have to. We can kind of lay off on our chores. But then we have to really get busy on our chores when he's gone and we usually have to help out a lot with like cooking and cleaning up and stuff. Yeah. So it gets a little more difficult.

James also indicated that once his chores are done, he has the freedom to "do anything more, really".

James was aware that while the post-deployment phase when his father returned home was a happy one, there were still readjustments to be made. They try to give his father time to rest and to readjust to the time difference. James understood that his father was required to attend debriefing meetings and that that would necessitate patience on the part of the family. Once his father is better rested and the meetings have been attended, then the family has a celebration.

...probably the first, second, the first two days or three days he's really tired, 'cause it's really hard to get adjusted to the time. And so, we don't get to really spend a lot of time with him the first two days. But then that's when we do our special event or something.

When James spoke of literacy practices that he engaged in during the pre-deployment phase, he mentioned that he enjoyed playing video games, watching television, practicing his instrument, and reading novels and magazines. He indicated that he could engage in these practices after he had done his chores. He also shared that he enjoyed playing basketball with friends and just “hanging out” as a way to cope with stress and uncertainty about his father’s deployment.

Maggie

Maggie, 14, is a ninth grade girl who has attended West Lakeside School for two years, since the beginning of eighth grade. She lives in a neighboring community and commutes to West Lakeside. She is the oldest of six children. Her siblings, four boys and one girl, are Weston, 12; Brian, 11; Hailey, 10; Lon, 4; and Jack, 2. Weston also participated in this study. Her mother was a nurse in the army, and is currently a stay-at-home mom. Maggie’s father is a Major in the United States Army and returned home from deployment to Kuwait one week before our initial interview.

Maggie is a bright student. Her grades consist of an equal number of A’s B’s, and C’s. She participated in volleyball and basketball, and was a manager for the track team. She plays baritone in the band. Maggie seemed happy to spend time talking about her experiences with deployment and with literacy. She was most eager to talk about literacy, so our initial conversation began with a discussion of books.

Well, my room looks like a library! I have so many books. Um, so I read a lot...I’m kind of in an ancient Egypt phase right now, so I’m doing a lot of research on it.

Her curiosity was sparked by something she read, so she began to dig into the topic.

I read one book about it and it was real interesting, so...the mummification process and everything.

This self-initiated research project gave Maggie a respite from the stress of coping with the deployment of her father and her changing role in the family. She remarked, “I submerged myself in it.”

When she spoke about her literacy practices, Maggie described her reading life by saying

I’ve always been an avid reader. All the time...Um, I guess it was 5th grade. I had a post 12th grade reading level, ‘cause they did this testing on me and stuff...I was an independent kid, so I always like to do it by myself, and that was always something that I could do well. So, that just became my thing.

Being an avid reader, Maggie felt, helped her understand what the experience of deployment would be like “‘cause I had read about it already [laughs]”. Referring to herself as a writer,

I enjoy creative writing. But I don’t particularly do it unless I have to. I’ve journaled a little bit. About the past two months, because I was kinda going through a hard time, and it was kinda helpful.

She smiled when she described herself as a speaker.

As a speaker? Well, I like to talk! But speeches aren’t my strong point, really. [grins]

Maggie said that when she is not researching Ancient Egypt, “I talk on the phone a lot and texting and stuff. And Facebook [laughs].” She likes to listen to music, saying

I have to have noise. In the background. I have SO much music! But video games, not so much. Or computer games.

After visiting about literacy, our conversation turned to her family's experiences with deployment. She thought that this was her father's eighteenth or nineteenth year in the army. He was in ROTC in college. Maggie described what her father's job is in the army.

Um, he does a lot of computers. Like processing and stuff. The PO's and stuff and sending, and processing people home.

Maggie's father had been scheduled to deploy to Kuwait in January of her eighth grade year. At the last minute, his deployment date was changed to April. While this was in some respects good news, after preparing herself for the deployment, Maggie struggled to accept that she would have to go through this preparation again.

Yeah, there was a couple missteps, yeah, so it was kinda stressful to have to do it all over again...Like his stuff had already been sent out, and [then] he wasn't going...

Her father had been deployed one other time prior to this.

This [was] his first time to the Middle East, but he's deployed to Korea for a year before that, when I was in 5th grade. And before that it was a lot of like six-months and six-weeks periods, school and stuff.

Maggie described how the family coped with the impending deployment.

We kind of ignored that it was going to happen until like right up to it. And, um, when he left, it still kind of came as like a shock, that he was actually gone. And it probably took like a month to get over that. And

then we kind of fell into the groove of Mom kind of taking the figure-like, the leader, and I was kinda the mom. So, that, yeah. We all kind of moved up a step, really fast.

Maggie referred several times to the role she described as “kinda the mom” that she perceived herself assuming during her father’s deployment. She expressed sympathy for her two youngest brothers.

Yep. Like, [they] didn’t really even know Dad before that. So, he only got like a couple of months with Jack. But Lon was like really confused that Dad didn’t come home for a couple of days. And it was like ‘Dad’s not coming home.’

She said that living in a different community and her being too young to drive made things complicated for the family.

I think me not being able to drive [made it complicated]. So if, like, one thing, if Mom had to leave, I either had to completely cut out all my plans so I had to watch everyone else, or if I had to do something that was mandatory, everyone else had to come with us. It was really just not having two transportations. I know that sounds kinda bad...

The role of “kinda the mom” was not an easy one for Maggie to assume.

Um, I really had to be less selfish about everything I wanted to do and put everything else ahead of me...Um for a while I was pretty bad at it, and I had to go and get some counseling and stuff [laughs] but, um...

Journaling at that time helped in some ways.

It was somewhat [helpful]. It was just ‘cause, like now I can read back on it and I was like, ‘Wow! I was a mess!’ [laughs] But...

She described what it was like to be depended upon in new ways.

When Mom was trying to figure out how to pay the bills and everything...I was kind of like, if they [her siblings] were crying, it was Maggie who went to them, not them going to Mom...if they wanted a snack, they came to me...I was the bather and the jammie put-er-on-er and the put-er to bed.

In spite of the difficulty of adjusting to this new role, Maggie expressed that this experience has given her a desire to one day be a mother.

I have more ‘want’ to be a mother. I know that has nothing to do with this, but I kind of got to be the mom. So that opened my eyes up. I’d been babysitter before that, and older sister, but not the actual figurehead, or whatever.

Maggie spoke at length about her experiences living in Korea during her father’s first deployment.

We lived on base, but the base was just like a mile wide. It was teeny...like the kids could walk anywhere. You could walk there and back in thirty minutes.

Prior to attending a DoD [Department of Defense] school while in Korea, Maggie had always attended private Christian schools. She described the adjustment as ‘interesting’.

We went to a DoD school there. That was an interesting experience...[laughs]...I guess it was really just my first experience with a

non-Christian private school...[laughs]... We tried to homeschool the first half of the year. And then my mom was impregnated [laughs] so...yes, it was very stressful, so we started going to...so, um, it was just a very liberal school and my homeroom teacher was a homosexual man and I had never been exposed to homosexuality...

She said that her classes were large, with “probably 40 students”. Maggie said that having her father away during this time made it difficult for her to cope with a school experience different from what she was accustomed.

Well, my dad wasn't at home any time during that year, so um, it was mostly on Mom, and she was pregnant [laughs], so there was ...some...conflict.

Maggie indicated that she had grown because of her experiences there.

It gave me...perspective [laughs].

Our first conversation concluded with Maggie sharing how the post-deployment phase was going for her family.

Um, well, it's stressful for him [her father], 'cause he's not used to all the noise and everything. And, we all kind of had to readjust ourselves and kind of bring him back into the family again. 'Cause we had changed when he was gone, and he had changed, but we hadn't changed together. So it was...

She said that her father had to attend many meetings when he returned.

...'cause all the guys gotta go to the, like, I don't know what it's called, kind of like therapy but...so they don't get completely stressed out...

During this conversation, Maggie said that her father really doesn't want to deploy again "just 'cause he wants to stay with us". She said of another impending deployment,

I think it's very slight, but it's not probable.

Maggie said that because of deployment

I think I have experienced more. Like, just, I got to play a different role than I usually play.

Maggie indicated that she looked forward to recording her literacy practices on the literacy log. The following tables reflect her responses.

Table 4-7: Literacy Log - Maggie

Literacy Practices	Number of times participant engaged in practice
E-mail	3
Texting	6
Instant Messaging	2
Facebook	5
My Space	
Journal writing	
Story writing	
Telephone conversation	1
Blogging	
Letter writing	2
Twitter	
Cartooning	
Videotaping	
Skype	1
Drawing/sketching/painting	3
Writing song lyrics	
Listening to music	8
Playing a musical instrument	3
Reading a novel	12
Reading a magazine	3
Reading on-line articles, blogs, material on websites	2
Played videogames	1
Watched TV	7
Scrapbooking	
Photography	

Table 4-8: Literacy Log Questions - Maggie

Questions about literacy practices	Responses
What shows did you watch?	<p>None ☹️, tv remote was lost... Word girl, Wild Krats, & The Electric Company...lol, PBS Finding Nemo – we put it on to subdue Jack and Lon Lol, well actually all I pretty much watch is PBS educational shows for kids because that’s what the station was turned to. So...I’m pretty sure I watched: Word Girl, The Electric Company, and Arthur ☺️ PBS! Public Broadcasting...It’s great! Cars the movie (or the ending of it at least) American Woodshop Bob Ross (the painting show, not quite sure what it’s called...)</p>
What websites did you visit?	<p>Facebook! Yay got a message I’ve been waiting for! (from a boy, lol) Gmail (mentioned three times) IM-ed on it Facebook (mentioned four times) Poptropica☺️ I think it was looped onto my sister’s account...I got her a lot of points jeez lol ☺️ Wikipedia (mentioned twice) [the most informative but risky info giver! Looked up more on female serial killers...kinda morbid I know...] Actually I was reading up on some topics that had caught my attention in a book full of little tidbits. It was over the Lindberg kidnapping and Belle Gunness, one of America’s most renowned female serial killers:-p Interesting topics. Kind of morbid, though. Referring to FB: Gotta love Farmville ☺️</p>
What books did you read?	<p>Lol...Boy’s Life magazine The Smithsonian Magazine <i>The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe</i> – CS Lewis <i>Zombies vs. Unicorns</i> by, well, there’s a lot of authors. It’s a short story collection. But the main authors are Holly Black and Justine Larbalester. <i>The Accomplice</i> by (I don’t have it with me now...I spose I could go check.) <i>The Bell Jar</i> by Agatha Christie <i>Milkweed</i> by Jerry Spinelli <i>Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Collection</i> When you say “read a novel” does that just count as a “book”? <i>Bathroom Reader</i> (some article about theories on what really killed Hitler <i>So B. It</i> I started the Odyssey on my iPod today...emphasis on started, not even made a dent in lol. Not an easy read lol. Was grounded from reading today ☹️ but was allowed to play video games...mixed messages lol. <i>Loser</i> by Jerry Spinelli Kansas Driver’s Law Booklet thing...gonna take the test soonish!</p>
Please jot down any thoughts you have about your literacy practices today.	<p>Learned about zebra migration and the effects fences are having on them. I have read <i>The Chronicles of Narnia</i> over, and over, and over...(heart) them! (referring to <i>Milkweed</i>) sad ☹️ He didn’t save Janina ☹️ Wrote to Grandma again, replied to hers. (referring to <i>Sherlock Holmes</i>) It’s a big book lol. But I love him! So brilliant! (brains are sexy) Lego Starwars video game lol. Lon (the four year old) beat me. It only helps my pride a little knowing he’s a child genius anyways... Skyped with one of my friends from Ft. Leavenworth who moved to Germany. I miss that girl so much! (referring to <i>So B. It</i>) so saddish/sweet. Have a lot of mixed feelings on this one. Wrote a thank you letter to my gma. She’s inviting me out to VA for the summer, and we might go to Panama! Yay me! (referring to <i>Brave New World</i>) Kind of scary book...idk, just creepy (referring to Bob Ross) I wish he was my grandpa! So talented... (referring to <i>Loser</i>) Interesting book...didn’t really have a plot though. I felt sad for him. I didn’t really do anything today...</p>

Our follow up conversation began much like our initial one, with a focus on Maggie's literacy practices. Still immersed in non-fiction, she was eager to talk about a book she was reading.

Actually right now I'm reading a really good book, *The Tipping Point*.

Have you read that? Um, it's like a business book. How social epidemics start, and like how things can trend. And how advertising has an effect on how products do.

When I asked Maggie if she had thought of going into the field of business she said,

Kind of. I wanna, like when I retire and I'm old, I want to run a um, like a bookstore café like thing.

Other reading had led her to acquire interesting information about

...somewhere in Asia, kinda like they're not very free to like discriminate against the government or whatever, so they do it through their artwork. And it's really neat like...Kinda like they're rebellious in their own subtle-like kind of way.

Maggie mentioned that at the moment she was "kinda into, like alternative rock" when it came to her preference in music. She said,

Um, yeah, if I'm like putting on make up and stuff, I put on like Paramore and stuff, cause I can go faster to that. But like, when I'm reading, I put on like, have you seen the movie *August Rush*? Well it's about this like prodigy little boy with music, and I've listened to the sound track to

that...It's like orchestra music. It's nerdy...When I do homework, I listen to instrumentals to a lot of fast paced songs.

Maggie also performs music by playing baritone in the school band and playing the piano at home.

When we visited about the television shows she watched, Maggie spoke about the entertainment system in their home.

We have a couple of TV's, but we're not allowed to have them in our rooms. And the one in the living room has a computer hooked up to it as well, so that we can do the computer on the TV screen. It's pretty neat!...I mean we can't see anything we're not supposed to, 'cause the parents see everything! [laughs]

Maggie described being a reader and writer as "helpful". Most of her spare time is spent reading and engaging in the practices reflected on her literacy log. When asked if there were other things she did after school and on weekends that were not mentioned on the literacy log, she said, "Not really. I really don't have much of a life! [laughs]"

At the time of our second interview, Maggie's father had been home from Kuwait for about a month. She said that in the past week he had resumed his normal routine. In talking about the post-deployment transition, Maggie said,

The transfer of power back to Dad is kind of frustrating at first. 'Cause they're [her mother and father] kind of, they were, not conflicting, but not like fighting about it, but like she was just so used to having control and he'd come back and, "Well I'm the man" and so, that, yeah...Their punishment and parenting styles are different-ish. You know, he's more

military-istic about it – is that a word? Military-istic?...And she's more, not hippy-ish, but just more, she just kind of goes with it.

In describing how the transition affected her, Maggie said,

Not much actually. It's just easier for me, 'cause I have more of a chance to get out now, 'cause there's another parent home.

Maggie is uncertain about whether or not her father will face another deployment in the future.

Um, there's a chance, but it really depends. He wants to stay here so we can finish out high school here. And we like our house. And we don't want to move again. But he has a chance to be promoted, so if he gets promoted, we're gonna have to move somewhere, or he'll be deployed. We'd probably wind up going to like Europe or something. A couple years.

Maggie seemed mostly enthusiastic about the possibility of living in Europe.

I think that'd be cool. 'Cause before he retires, I wanna get one more like, kind of like paid vacation for a year [laughs]. But, it will probably be like a three-year deployment if we go. And that would put me, like college and that, I don't really want to go to an overseas college and I don't wanna be a country away from my family. Not so much...And I really don't wanna go to a DoD's school any more. Yeah...fun times.

Maggie acknowledged that both difficulties and benefits are associated with military life. She described her family's experience right before moving to Korea.

It can be really, really chaotic. ‘Cause, and it’s frustrating, ‘cause you don’t always know where you’re moving until a couple weeks beforehand. So, all your stuff’s packed, but you have no idea where you’re going. A couple times, when we lived in Maine, when Dad was about to deploy, just him, to Korea, we thought we were going as a family the first time, and then they changed it. We were living in a two-bedroom apartment, with like four and a half kids. ‘Cause Mom was pregnant for like a month. And...we did [stay in Maine] ‘cause we were like, ‘Oh. Apparently we’re not moving...’ So, it was kind of frustrating ‘cause we didn’t have a house or anything. And all our stuff was already shipped out and everything.

Maggie also mentioned that though her father is in the post-deployment phase, there are still frustrations and difficulties.

Dad’s got really, really late hours and really, really early hours, so we don’t really get to see him, even if he’s home. He lives here, he just doesn’t live at the house so much. He goes to sleep, and then we kind of get the butt end of him because he’s been all day with people that can be frustrating at times. ‘Cause he’s like in charge of all of them? So when he gets home, he’s kind of like, I mean, it’s good to see him, but he’s really, really tired.

Despite the frustrations, Maggie also sees the positive side of the military life and can envision herself pursuing a career in the military.

I think there definitely have been benefits. I mean, first of all, I can, even if I move out, I’m still on my dad’s military plan for a couple of years

[laughs]. And I think I probably want to join the military for a little while, now, because...but, yeah, I don't know. 'Cause if I had, if Dad hadn't been in the military, I probably wouldn't have, have never been exposed to some of the experiences I've had. I mean, definitely it's cool to live in a different country and stuff. Not everybody gets to do that.

Maggie would like to one day "work on an air ship, an aircraft carrier in the Navy".

Emerging Theme: Ambiguity

In many of the significant statements made by Maggie during both conversations, stress was evident due to the ambiguous nature of deployment in particular and military life in general. With her father's deployment and the family's move to Korea, this ambiguity was evident in an abrupt change of plans. The family was scheduled to move to Korea and their belongings had shipped, when they received word that her father was going alone, and the family would remain in the United States for a year. Maggie, her three siblings, and her mother, who was pregnant at the time, were living in a two bedroom apartment.

'Cause we were like, "Oh. Apparently we're not moving..." So it was kind of frustrating cause we didn't have a house or anything.

This ambiguity was again evident as her father faced his second deployment. His departure to Kuwait was scheduled for January, and the family had gone through all the pre-deployment steps. Two weeks before he was to deploy, his orders were changed and his departure was postponed until April. While this would seem to be good news, to the family, and to Maggie in particular, this meant they would just have to prepare to say good-bye all over again. The next months were still spent coping with the fact that he

would still be leaving, and then his return would be four months later than they had originally planned. And as always, the possibility of the date being bumped up or postponed further was a constant concern.

Now that her father has returned, there is still ambiguity regarding future deployments. Maggie stated that her father has a chance to be promoted, and if that happens they would have to “move somewhere, or he’ll be deployed”. She said that he really doesn’t want to deploy again,

...just ‘cause he wants to stay with us, but I think it’s very slight [the chance of deployment], but it’s not probable.

When considering a possible relocation of her family, Maggie did express interest in the possibility of living in Europe.

When she referred to the time when the family moves from the pre-deployment phase to deployment, Maggie described the realization that her father was actually gone as a ‘shock’.

We kind of ignored that it was going to happen until like right up to it.

And um, when he left, it still kind of came as like a shock.

She described this separation as “confusing” for her two youngest brothers. She mentioned that there have been many times where her father and her family have been apart.

This is his first time to the Middle East, but he’s deployed to Korea for a year before that, when I was in fifth grade. And before that, it was a lot of like six months and six weeks periods, [going to] schools and stuff.

She also shared that now that her family is in the post-deployment phase, her father is still often away from their house for long periods of time.

Dad's got really, really late hours and really, really early hours, so we don't really get to see him, even if he's home. He lives here, he just doesn't live at the house so much. He goes to sleep, and then we kind of get the butt end of him...I mean it's good to see him, but he's really, really tired.

Maggie indicated that her reading and researching about topics such as Ancient Egypt helped her cope with being separated from her father and dealing with the ensuing stress of that separation. She says, "...I submerge myself in it".

Maggie would not want to be separated from her family during her college years. She said that if her family relocates to Europe sometime during her remaining high school years, she would not really want to go to an overseas college, but "I don't wanna be a country away from my family".

It was evident throughout our conversations that Maggie found the ambiguous aspects of military life and deployment stressful. Though she found she liked stepping into the role of "kinda the mom", she acknowledged that that at times things were difficult. She admitted,

Um, for a while I was pretty bad at it, and I had to go and get some counseling and stuff...

Reflecting on her experience by reading through her journal, she noted

...like now I can read back on it and I was like, "Wow! I was a mess!"

After the family had prepared for her father's deployment in January and it was postponed four months, she expressed that it was hard to be ready for him to deploy, and then have to go through the whole process again in a few months.

...yeah, so it was kinda stressful to have to do it all over again .

And even after, in essence, preparing for the deployment twice, she said,

We kind of ignored that it was going to happen until like right up to it.

And, um, when he left, it still kind of came as like a shock, that he was actually gone. And it probably took a month to get over that.

Maggie indicated that the deployment was stressful for her youngest brothers.

So, he [her father] only got like a couple months with Jack. But Lon was like really confused that Dad didn't come home for a couple of days, and it was like, 'Dad's not coming home'.

Stress was evident in several of Maggie's statements regarding relocation due to deployment:

It can be really, really chaotic. 'Cause, and it's frustrating, 'cause you don't always know where you're moving to.

We thought we were going as a family the first time, and then they changed it.

'Cause, we were like, "Oh. Apparently we're not moving..." So it was kind of frustrating 'cause we didn't have a house or anything.

Stress due to the transition from a two-parent household to a one-parent household was evident in Maggie's descriptions of both of the family's deployment experiences. When her father was deployed and the family was living in Korea, her

mother attempted to home school the children. But, this proved difficult as her mother's pregnancy progressed, so the children attended a DoD school. Maggie spoke at length about the difficulty she had transitioning to this new school that was different from the private schools she had attended in the past.

...my homeroom teacher was a homosexual man, and I'd never been exposed to homosexuality, so I was a little bit scared...

During the most recent deployment, Maggie expressed that returning to a one-parent household had been difficult due to the logistics of daily family life.

I think me not being able to drive...It was really just not having two transportations. I know that sounds bad...

Post-deployment also can result in stress. She indicated that the transfer of power back to her father can be "frustrating". She noted that it was a stressful time for her father because he wasn't used to "all the noise and everything" of the household.

Maggie identified journal writing as a literacy practice that helped her cope with stress during deployment. Rereading her journal entries allowed her to reflect on the troubled times she had experienced and note the progress that she had made.

Emerging Theme: Responses

Negativity was evident in the struggles that Maggie had adjusting to the stress, ambiguity, and separation of deployment. She expressed that upon reflection she "was a mess!" and that she had to have some counseling to help her adjust. Her comments about the lack of certainty about timeframes and destinations when the family was relocating or her father was deploying indicated that these were sources of negativity for her. She struggled to adjust to a DoD school after attending a private school and being

homeschooled. Her statements about the time her father has been away from home, whether deployed or stationed stateside, indicate her negative feelings regarding the separation.

...we kinda get the butt end of him because he's been all day with people that can be frustrating at times.

In my conversations with Maggie, she did not refer to instances of communication with her father during his deployments. With regard to using literacy practices to communicate, Maggie said, "I don't really text my parents that much, but yeah, my friends. My friends." She said that she "talk[s] on the phone a lot and texting and stuff. And Facebook".

Maggie responded very enthusiastically when describing her literate life. She stated that her room "looks like a library. I have so many books!" She said that she has several people who just like to give her books, and with glee she exclaimed, "I'm sponsored!" She was eager to talk about books that she was reading and topics of interest that she was investigating. She felt that writing in her journal was a positive practice that helped her through a rough spot.

Despite the negative aspects of deployment, Maggie seemed grateful for the experiences she has had.

...if Dad hadn't been in the military, I probably wouldn't have, have never been exposed to some of the experiences I've had. I mean, definitely it's cool to live in a different country and stuff. Not everybody gets to do that.

She stated that because of deployment, she has been able to “experience more...I got to play a different role than I usually play” and “...I kind of got to be the mom so that opened my eyes up...”

Maggie expressed two goals that have emerged from her experiences with deployment. She said that she now has “more ‘want’ to be a mom”, since she has had to step into the role of caregiver for her siblings. She also said that she might like to go into the military for a while and “work on an air ship, an aircraft carrier in the Navy”.

Emerging Theme: Roles

Maggie assumed a role she referred to as “kinda the mom”, indicating that she recognized a need that would need to be filled in her family as her mother assumed many of the roles and responsibilities previously held by her father. Several significant statements illustrate her perception of the need for her to fill this role:

And then we kind of fell into the groove of Mom taking the figure like the leader, and I was kinda the mom. So, that, yeah. We all kinda moved up a step, really fast.

Um, I really had to be less selfish about everything I wanted to do and put everything else ahead of me.

...when Mom was trying to figure out how to pay the bills and everything...I was kind of like, if they were crying, it was Maggie who went to them, not they went to Mom. It was, if they wanted a snack they came to me so...

I was the bather and the jammie-put-er-on-er and the put-er to bed.

Maggie didn't feel that her responsibilities changed that much when her father returned from deployment.

Not much actually. It's just easier for me, 'cause I have more of a chance to get out now, 'cause there's another parent home.

The need for repeated readjustment was evident as Maggie spoke about military life. She spoke of having to adjust to the realization that her father would be deploying at a certain time, then readjusting expectations when the timetable for that deployment was changed. As an adolescent, she had to readjust her expectations for how she would be treated, being less selfish and putting "everything else ahead of me". Once deployment occurred, Maggie and her family had to realize that "he was actually gone" and make adjustments in their day-to-day living.

When her father returned, the post-deployment phase also held situations that called for readjustments to roles in family leadership and parenting and discipline styles. Maggie described these readjustments.

The kind of transfer of power back to dad is kind of frustrating at first. 'Cause they're kind of, they were, not conflicting but not like fighting about it, but like she was just so used to having control and he'd come back and, "Well, I'm the man" and so that, yeah...

One positive readjustment was that things seemed to be easier for Maggie once her father returned.

It's just easier for me, 'cause I have more of a chance to get out now, 'cause there's another parent home.

Weston

Weston, age 12, is a seventh grade boy who has attended West Lake School for two years since the beginning of his sixth grade year. He lives in a neighboring community and commutes to West Lake School. He is the second oldest of six children. His siblings, two girls and three boys, are Maggie, 14; Brian, 11; Hailey, 10; Lon, 4; and Jack, 2. Maggie also participated in this study. His mother was a nurse in the army, and is currently a stay-at-home mom. Weston's father is a Major in the United States Army and just returned home from deployment to Kuwait one week before our initial interview.

Weston is a quiet young man who has a cheerful disposition. He is humble about his achievements, but he is a very good athlete and a good student. His grades consist of an equal number of A's and B's. He played football and basketball and was out for track. Our first conversation began with him telling me about outdoor activities that he enjoys.

Um, go fishing. If I can, I'll go hunting. We have a basketball hoop outside our house. I play that a lot! Um, yeah, I just play around with my little brothers and sisters....Go boating. Sleep! Mow. I like sitting on the mower.

Weston's family's home is situated right on the east side of West Lakeside, and he likes the open spaces and the vast amounts of grass around his home.

Weston sees himself as a somewhat reluctant reader. He said,

I read because my dad makes me sometimes!

However, Weston admitted that he is a "pretty good reader". In school he reads some fairly challenging books and has good comprehension.

When it comes to writing, Weston stated, "Um, I don't think I'm as good at writing." He said that the most difficult thing for him was

Um, like trying to figure out what I want to say and how to put that. Make it sound interesting.

The writing that Weston produced in class was always well thought out and clear. When I mentioned this, he still maintained that he was a better reader than writer.

While Weston would express himself well in class, he said,

I guess I don't really like speaking in front of people. But I think, I like, I wouldn't have a problem doing it.

He mentioned that sometimes he used reading, writing, and speaking when interacting with his younger brothers.

Weston spoke animatedly when describing his family members.

Okay, there's my mom and dad. My mom, she just stays at home and, uh, works around the house, cleans up, just helps a lot. My dad, he goes to work, and comes back and helps and stuff. And there's Maggie. She like does the same things that I do. She stays after school, comes home, pretty much. There's me. Then there's my little brother, Brian. He, he's like a super outdoorsman! He's in fifth grade. He's eleven. Um, he likes, really, really likes being outside and playing with the dog. And like shooting his bow and stuff. Um. Yeah. That's really, really fun for him. He's not so much like into sports, but more outdoor stuff. There's Hailey. She is OBSESSED with Harry Potter right now. Yeah, um, she likes basketball a lot. She's in fourth grade. Hailey is ten. Yes. Um, there's Lon. He's in preschool. He's four. He's um, he's really, really interested in Legos right now, and the little Lego men. He has a ton of those. And

uh, yeah, he has a fun time with that. Like Lego Star Wars games, Lego ninjas. Anything Lego he really likes... There's Jack. He's two. He really likes anything that's not his!... And, oh, um, he likes Buzz Lightyear.

Yeah. And he likes Thomas the Train a lot, too.

Weston did not have much to say about his chores or responsibilities at this point, just that he has to “unload the dishwasher and then just help with whatever needs to be done”.

Weston began to reflect on his father's career in the military. He said that his father has been in the military for twenty-one years. He began his career in the Navy.

...he was in the Navy for a while. Um, and then he went over to the Army after he got his college degree.

Weston thought that his father went to college somewhere in Virginia, but he was unsure which university.

Weston described what it was like growing up in the military.

We went to all the army meetings, family meetings, everything, all the parades. We were always in them and stuff. Yeah, my little brothers didn't get it as much, because we moved here. Yeah, it's... trying to get away from the army, I guess.

The family lived on post at different times. They lived off post in Maine, but lived on post in Ft. Leavenworth, Colorado, and Korea.

Weston said that his father had been deployed three times now. He said that the pre-deployment phase includes many meetings.

They're not mandatory, but, they're just like, we've been to most of them other times, but we didn't go this time.

Weston described the work his father did while deployed to Kuwait.

He was the person that like managed every...the people going in and all the shipments coming in and out. Personnel stuff.

He felt that his father had one of the safer assignments, even though “he was on some convoys that they had to be, um, like lookouts and stuff”. Of his previous deployment, Weston said,

His first deployment he was like in an armory brigade. That one he worked with tanks and stuff. That one was a little bit more dangerous job, but...

In the deployment prior to Kuwait, Weston’s father deployed to Korea. He was there for one year and then the family joined him. Weston described his experiences there.

It was, very interesting. Um, yeah. Different. Trying to learn a new language...Like, most of them, like we went to a school on base. And they already knew English. The army base was like a little America inside of Korea. Like, we had a lot of interactions with Koreans, but like going off the base was completely different. It was actually Korea. And that was hard, ‘cause all the signs are different. I remember walking into the girls’ bathroom a lot of times.

Weston described struggles with allergies.

Um, there is a lot of pollen there. I mean, it was like, the allergies were horrible. Everyone wore masks for like a whole month, all the Koreans. They had like these masks over their face...Like you’d come out in the

morning and it's like frost. Instead of have to wipe the frost off, you had to wipe the pollen off your car...I didn't have any like bad allergic reactions, but some people did. It was bad.

In describing his own school experiences while in Korea, he mentioned Maggie's experience as well.

It's like, it was a big school. So like I would have preferred to go to a smaller school. It really, like, uh. Yeah. Maggie's teacher was, was gay. And that was hard and kind of weird. Especially on an army base. I don't think, I don't know why they would do that, but um. Yeah. I guess it was a good school, but for the most part.

Weston was in the fourth grade when he attended this school.

Weston thought that his family planned to remain at their present location for two years. After the first six months, his father deployed to Kuwait.

It was a two year place here. Six months, and then a year, and then six months until we, um, until his thing's over.

Since his father is in the post-deployment phase, Weston says they are not anticipating another deployment any time soon.

While his father was deployed, Weston indicated that his new responsibilities were more focused on helping with his brothers and sisters, rather than household tasks.

I had to be a lot more helpful. And a lot more, just there weren't two people to drive and pick ups. There was one person doing the job that two people would normally be doing. So I had to help a lot more.

He said that those responsibilities included “just help them get ready for bed and stuff. Stuff that, like, dad would normally do”. Weston commented that this separation from their father was hard on his youngest two brothers.

I mean like the little boys, they like, they didn't really know, the dad, because it was just like a person you don't really remember that. He was just a name. Because they were so little, they don't really remember him that much.

The pre-deployment phase was indicated by Weston to be the most stressful.

Probably the beginning. Just saying good-bye. Once he's gone, you get into the routine again and we're normally just so busy that it's not like horrible.

Weston mentioned the delay in his father's deployment as stressful for the same reasons his sister Maggie did.

Like, two days before he was supposed to leave, he got changed his orders. That was like having to say good-bye twice.

To cope with the stress of his father's deployment, Weston relied on physical activity.

I went swimming a lot. And doing sports. Keeping busy, like, being very, very busy. Yeah. Like, trying to do a lot of sports so I would be tired...Probably basketball [helped if he was stressed]. Just going outside.

Weston described the post-deployment phase as one that is monitored by the army to ensure the readjustment of returning soldiers.

They have a lot of weird rules. You have to like get a certain amount of hours of sleep. You're not allowed to drive for a couple of days. You have to have like a balance thing. They've had like people that go crazy after they get back home. And like they have to like turn in all their weapons so they don't do something stupid. They can't like drink alcohol because they haven't had it for a year. So, yeah.

Weston said that since this was his father's third deployment, he did not have to do some of the regulated things such as classes and meetings. He described the block leave that his father was on.

Um, after you get deployed, you have to like check in with the office for like a couple, like a week and a half and then block leave is when you get two weeks off, after that, just to stay home and do nothing. This last weekend is his last weekend of block leave.

He shared that during this time, his family planned to buy a boat, and he was looking forward to the upcoming summer.

Weston agreed to complete a literacy log for two weeks. The following tables contain his responses.

Table 4-9: Literacy Log - Weston

Literacy Practices	Number of times participant engaged in practice
E-mail	1
Texting	11
Instant Messaging	
Facebook	8
My Space	
Journal writing	
Story writing	
Telephone conversation	2
Blogging	
Letter writing	1
Twitter	
Cartooning	1
Videotaping	
Skype	
Drawing/sketching/painting	4
Writing song lyrics	
Listening to music	10
Playing a musical instrument	
Reading a novel	11
Reading a magazine	2
Reading on-line articles, blogs, material on websites	
Played videogames	7
Watched TV	6
Scrapbooking	
Photography	

Table 4-10: Literacy Log Questions - Weston

Questions about literacy practices	Responses
What shows did you watch?	Family Guy PBS Kids Glee (mentioned three times) Netflix PBS Kids Go!
What websites did you visit?	Gmail Facebook (mentioned five times) Netflix Google Earth Google (mentioned twice) Addiction Games
What books did you read?	<i>The Odyssey</i> by Homer <i>Throwing Stones</i> by Kristi Collier (mentioned seven times) <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> (mentioned three times) via iPod Touch <i>Summer Ball</i> by Mike Lupica (mentioned four times)
Please jot down any thoughts you have about your literacy practices today?	Replied to emails DARE Wrote letter to Grandma

	<p>Almost done with book (<i>Throwing Stones</i>) Read about cars Over one hour of music Page 50 in <i>Throwing Stones</i> Reached 3,000 text Modern Warfare: 1 (Wii) Created new play list: 204 songs Page 194 in book (<i>Summer Ball</i>) Started reading my first electronic book (<i>Gulliver's Travels</i> via iPod Touch) Read 150 pages (<i>Summer Ball</i>)</p>
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When we met again to discuss his literacy log responses, Weston began the conversation by talking about the music he enjoys. He said that Maggie acquired many of the songs that he listens to.

Well, Maggie buys a lot of music on iTunes. Like, she's crazy, so whatever's on my iPod, I'll just make a little playlist out of some songs I like. I'll just listen to that for a while.

Weston usually listens to music when he gets home from school, while he's sitting in his room. He says of listening to music, "It's just fun". He listed several bands that he enjoyed and described their genres.

Skillet and Close Your Eyes are like Christian bands. But, Green Day... rock music.

He said that listening to music helped him relax after practice when he didn't have the energy to do the things he usually liked to do when he got home.

Like, when I got home from football practice, I was so tired, I'd just lay on my bed and listen to music.

When he was living in Korea, Weston tried to listen to the radio, but he said he "couldn't understand any of it".

When I was over there, they had like one American station, but I didn't really have any need to or any way to. When I was in the car I just, but it was normally so noisy you couldn't hear it anyway.

Weston is currently not enrolled in band, however he used to play the cello after his mom encouraged him to give it a try. He mentioned that his mom likes listening to Christian radio stations, and that his dad "doesn't really listen to music that much. Country music".

Though in our previous conversation Weston had indicated that he read mostly when his dad made him read, during this interview he spoke enthusiastically about books that he had been reading. He said, "I like adventure. Like, a lot of action". He mentioned books that were part of a series as well as stand-alone titles. He said that he started reading *The Odyssey* by Homer, but commented, "That didn't work!" he described *Throwing Stones* as "just a good story". He said of a good story,

It doesn't get boring. And like, there's always something that you're looking forward to that you know is going to happen eventually...Uh, it's fun, when a book, when something happens that you don't expect at all.

Weston also tried using iBooks for the first time on his iPod Touch. He downloaded *Gulliver's Travels* and described his first digital reading experience.

I think it's cool just to have that in your hand instead of a book. It makes it fun.

He said that he plans to get more books on his iPod. Weston did not anticipate reading much over the summer because of all the outdoor activities he wanted to do. He had plans to spend a lot of time at the lake, swimming and boating.

Watching television is more of a family activity rather than an individual one for Weston. He said that usually one of his brothers or sisters already has the television on in the living room, so he “just sits down” and joins them. He described educational shows that he watched with his younger siblings and stated that often times he and his siblings enjoy watching a series.

Usually, one of my siblings, they’ll find, like, a series or episodes that they’ll get like hooked on, and we’ll watch the whole thing and then we’ll go to the next one. Like, we watched the *Lilo and Stitch* episodes for like half a year... We just kept watching them. There’s like a million of them. Um, the *Phinneas and Ferb* ones, um, a lot of Disney shows.

He enthusiastically described his family’s entertainment system.

It’s like, you can change the source. Our computer’s hooked up to our TV, so you can just change the source and go to the TV or go to the computer. So we’re just sitting there in front of a huge screen, playing the computer...yeah, it’s pretty fun.

Weston was not bothered by the fact that he does not often get to be the one to select the programs they watch. “I don’t spend a lot of time watching TV.”

Weston mentioned email, letter writing, and telephone conversations as ways that he communicates with others. He said that he writes thank you notes if someone sends him a gift. He said that drawing and sketching, for him, are just things he does when he feels bored.

Um, if I'm bored in class, I'll just sit there and draw on my notebook, or draw something weird. Or, if I just have a piece of paper and a pen, I'll just like start drawing...I'll draw, like little people.

When he spends time on the computer, Weston likes to look up his house on Google Earth and then find directions to other places in the world. He described it as "fun to mess around with". He enjoys playing various computer games that require dexterity such as driving games or ball rolling games. He laughed when he spoke of using Google Search to find fun information.

Sometimes, just for fun, sometimes, we'll be having an argument at the dinner table and we'll search it to see who's right!

After discussing the literacy practices reflected on his literacy log, Weston commented on his deployment experiences. He said that his father was gone for his 7th grade football season. During basketball season, he came home on leave. This was a surprise to Weston and he described the moment he saw his father.

I didn't know he was coming, so he came during basketball practice, at the beginning...I saw my mom coming through the door holding a camera. And I ran the other way. Then she started walking back, and I saw my dad, and I'm like, "Ohhhhhh! Wow!" I think he saw one or two of my games.

Shortly after his leave, his father's deployment was over and he returned home. Weston said that he made it to all of his track meets in the spring.

Now that his family is in the post-deployment stage, he described the transitions they were experiencing.

Well, it, when he got back he had leave, or R & R. And then you have block leave, which is like a second leave, but, he got just to stay home and fix stuff up. Yeah, it was just kind of like normal, having him back. And he started going back to work last week...And he said it's been really busy.

Weston described some of the readjustment of roles that the family experienced.

Yeah. There's a lot less driving for my mom. And that's nice. 'Cause, she did a lot of that when he was gone. More disciplining goes to him now. Yeah. Well, the chores stay the same for the most part, but he just like helps around and makes sure everybody is doing what they're supposed to do.

He said that there is not much change in the role he plays in the family.

Not a lot. But I guess I don't have to do as much because instead of having nobody home to, me watching them, there's an adult maybe.

As we were speaking of deployment experiences, Weston reflected on the ordeal of moving his family to Korea.

Getting to Korea was hard. Once you get there, it was fine...Well, um, my dad was already in Korea. He'd been there for a year. And then he had another year there, but he was able to come down south where it was safe or whatever. So we could come with him. So, we got on an airplane with all my siblings, or, we didn't have Jack then. Lon was a baby. So, we were over there. I didn't know you could bring a car seat and plug it into an airplane and then put the baby in there and buckle him up...I don't

know why it takes nine different flights to get to... 'Cause we couldn't go over the Middle East, 'cause it was unsafe then. So, we had to go the opposite way. So like, we were in Maine. So we had to go to like California and then...It was hard.

Weston was unsure about the possibility of future deployments.

Yeah, he'll stay here for a year, 'cause that's when his orders will change. Like, he won't...they're gonna have to give him another job after this, so they'll probably just deploy him to Afghanistan or Iraq or somewhere. He'll come back. And then, we don't know.

But there are other possible scenarios that might come to pass for the family that Weston was enthused about.

Uh, he's probably going to have to be deployed again. And then, what he thinks might happen is he's gonna deploy, come back. He's gonna have to go overseas somewhere that doesn't count as deployment. But, we're probably, we can go with him. So, like Germany or Hawaii. Then we'll come back here, and do something...So..I guess it depends on how long. It would be cool to go to Germany or Hawaii. Or definitely Hawaii! That would be awesome!

Weston summarized the experience of military life as

Um, it's hard, but it's fun. And you get a lot of opportunities and experiences other people might not get. And it's just a lifestyle that's fun. Entertaining at times.

Weston is proud of his father and the sacrifices his family makes when he is overseas.

Weston mentioned that he would like to be in the Air Force some day and fly helicopters.

Emerging Theme: Ambiguity

Weston seemed to take the ambiguity of military life and deployment in stride.

He noted that when the plans changed for his father's most recent deployment, that it was hard to say good-bye twice. However, he was very matter-of-fact about the possibility of impending deployments or relocation. He described different possible scenarios and even approached some with enthusiasm.

Uh, he's probably going to have to be deployed again. And then what he thinks might happen is he's gonna deploy, come back. He's gonna have to go overseas somewhere that doesn't count as deployment. But, we're probably, we can go with him. So, like Germany or Hawaii. Then we'd come back here and do something.

Weston's assertion that "just saying good-bye" is the hardest part indicates that the initial separation is difficult. He described the separation of his father's first deployment, indicating that the family was apart for a year before they could relocate to Korea to be with him. He remarked that the separation had resulted in his two youngest brothers not really knowing their father.

I mean like the little boys, they like they didn't really know, the dad, because it was just like a person you don't really remember that. He was just a name. Because they were so little, they don't really remember him that much.

Weston noted that the separation caused by deployment resulted in his mother assuming more responsibility for running the household. This also created a hardship when it came to the logistics of getting family members where they needed to be.

Weston also mentioned that when he attended schools on base, the topic of deployment was addressed and the school tried to help kids with the hardships that resulted.

Normally, it was like the on-base school, so, that was like part of the curriculum, was the deployment.

As Weston described his experiences with deployment, he indicated he experienced stress. Most times, he coped with that stress through physical activity.

Probably [playing] basketball. Just going outside.

He was often really, really tired during his father's deployment, and he noted that this fatigue usually occurred after an athletic practice. He spent time resting and listening to music to cope with his tiredness.

Weston also acknowledged the stress his siblings experienced, mentioning his younger brothers.

Because they were so little, they don't really remember him that much. He also noted that things were more difficult for his mom when she had to be the only parent to drive the kids to their activities and manage the household. He also described the move to Korea as being particularly stressful.

Weston described the beginning of deployment as the most difficult, indicating that "just saying good-bye" is the most stressful part. Once his father has left, the family "gets into a routine again, and we're normally just so busy that it's not like horrible".

That he would consider a military career for himself one day would indicate that he understands and accepts the ambiguity of this lifestyle and is able to cope with uncertainty.

Emerging Theme: Responses

Weston acknowledged the difficulties associated with deployment and military life, but did not dwell on them. He explained that since his father had been in the army for a long time and had experienced deployment before, his family was not required to attend some of the meetings and sessions that they had in the past. He also spoke of living off base and not taking part in some of the activities they had before. He said,

Yeah, it's, trying to get away from the army, I guess.

He also described the negative aspects of relocation, and of having to sometimes accept a change of plans that could require major adjustments in daily routines. The delay in his father's most recent deployment also had a negative effect on the process of the deployment cycle, causing his family to have to "say good-bye twice".

Weston described his communication with his father during deployment as "Really, it was just email." He said that his parents share a Facebook account, but that was not the way he contacted his dad. He said that his letter writing was mostly limited to writing thank you notes when someone sent him a gift. He utilized texting, email, and talking on the telephone to communicate with his friends. He also spoke of utilizing Google Searches to gather information to "see who's right" when arguments occur during dinner conversations.

Weston described himself as a "pretty good reader" and expressed enthusiasm when discussing books that he had read. Though he said that he didn't read much, he had

many titles and series of books to talk about. He also was enthused about reading books on the iBooks application on his iPod Touch.

Several comments made by Weston indicate that he enjoys and appreciates some of the aspects of being part of a military family. He noted that being overseas and trying to learn a new language was “interesting” and “different”. He said that the experience of being in Korea was positive.

Being able to experience, just being over there. A lot of people don't get to do that. They just live one place their whole life.

He expressed excitement at the possibility of getting to live in Germany or Hawaii in the future. And his summation of the military life indicates his enthusiasm and gratitude for the experiences he has had so far.

Um, it's hard, but it's fun. And you get a lot of opportunities and experiences other people might not get. And it's just a lifestyle that's fun. Entertaining at times.

Emerging Theme: Roles

Weston admitted that, as a result of deployment,

I had to be a lot more helpful.

He felt that really his responsibilities were more focused on helping with his younger siblings.

Um, like, just help them get ready for bed and stuff. Stuff that, like Dad would normally do.

He said that for him, there wasn't much change in his responsibilities when his dad returned from Kuwait, other than he didn't have to watch his siblings as much.

Not a lot. But I guess I don't have to do as much because instead of having nobody home to, me watching them, there's an adult maybe.

He noted that his mother's responsibilities were lessened.

Yeah. There's a lot less driving for my mom. And that's nice. 'Cause she did a lot of that when he was gone. More disciplining goes to him now.

Yeah. Well, the chores stay the same for the most part, but he just like helps around and makes sure everybody is doing what they're supposed to do.

Weston felt that during the post-deployment phase the readjustment of bringing his father back into the family's daily routine was occurring as usual. He described the things that his father was required to do, or not to do, upon returning home.

They have a lot of weird rules. You have to like get a certain amount of hours of sleep. You're not allowed to drive for a couple of days. You have to have like a balance thing...they can't like drink alcohol because they haven't had it for a year...

Weston seemed to perceive that having his father home made things easier for his mother, and allowed opportunities for him to get out more without having to watch his younger siblings.

Composite Description

The stories of the participants in this study revealed three themes inherent to the experience of deployment: ambiguity, responses, and roles. The out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents experiencing deployment varied, as did the impetus for their

engagement in them. In this section, I will describe the essence of the experience within the context of the themes revealed in this phenomenological analysis.

As participants shared their stories, a common perception was evident: deployment is stressful. This stress, seemingly inherent to deployment, was in each case connected to the ambiguity of deployment circumstances, the hardship of separation, feelings of negativity toward aspects of the experience, an increase in responsibility, a decrease in communication, and/or readjustment to changing roles in the family. During the pre-deployment phase, simply adjusting to the news and accepting the impending departure was challenging. Some families, while understanding what was ahead, tried to carry on as usual and not think about the upcoming separation. Others tried to spend as much time together as possible while preparing for time apart. When uncertainty existed about the actual date and destination of deployment, adolescents struggled with worry and concern about not only the changes in their day-to-day lives, but also the safety and well-being of the parent being deployed. The actual moment of separation, the moment when good-byes were said, was often identified as the hardest part.

The deployment phase, the time after the parent has left, was a period of readjustment. Roles within the family were reassigned and often times sacrifices were required when adolescents assumed more responsibility and were at times required to give up activities because of the logistics of going from a two-parent household to a single-parent household. The ambiguity that existed when communication between the family and the deployed parent was delayed was extremely worrisome for the adolescents. Not knowing if the parent was safe or in harm's way made it difficult to

focus on things such as schoolwork. Negative feelings often developed when the family was coping with a new structure in a world that continued as before.

When the parent returned home and the family entered the post-deployment phase, readjustments had to occur, and sometimes those changes in roles required renegotiation of power and responsibilities. A comment from Maggie seemed to best articulate the essence of these readjustments:

And, we all kind of had to readjust ourselves and kind of bring him back into the family again. 'Cause we had changed when he was gone, and he had changed, but we hadn't changed together. So it was...

The participants in this study indicated that they understood and acknowledged the stress and the negative aspects of deployment. However, participants also expressed a sense of enthusiasm and gratitude. These positive feelings were evident when four of the five participants spoke of experiences they described as “awesome”, “cool”, and “neat”. They acknowledged that they would likely not have had these opportunities if their parents were not in the military. Two of the four participants even expressed thoughts of one day pursuing a military career.

Enthusiasm and gratitude were not evident in conversations with Timothy, whose father sustained serious injuries in Afghanistan just days before our first interview. While he spoke of hardships often throughout our conversations, he did not exhibit anger or resentment. The absence of enthusiasm for military life and deployment in particular was not surprising to me, given the worrisome and frightening circumstances that this phase in deployment had resulted in for Timothy and his family.

As these adolescents spoke about their literacy practices, it seemed that they enacted their literacy outside of the school setting in much the same way before, during, and after deployment. While one participant mentioned that writing in a journal helped record feelings and facilitated reflection about the stress of deployment, all participants mentioned literacy practices as a way to connect with friends and wind down at the end of the day. Digital literacy practices involving video chatting via Skype, chatting on Facebook, and texting were ways that families stayed connected with the deployed parent. It seemed evident that their engagement in literacy practices offered them situations of constancy and normalcy throughout the ambiguity of deployment.

From the onset of this research, these adolescents were eager and willing to share their experiences. They responded to questions and prompts with frankness and honesty. They told their stories with what I perceived was an eagerness to be heard. I believe it is their words, their very voices, that express the true essence of deployment and literacy.

CHAPTER 5 - Theoretical Analysis

In the previous chapter, I provided a phenomenological analysis to record, describe, and interpret the experiences of five adolescents engaging in literacy practices within the context of the military deployment of a parent. Creswell (2007) states

Phenomenology is not only a description, but it is also seen as an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation (i.e., the researcher “mediates” between different meanings; van Manen, 1990, p. 26) of the meaning of the lived experiences (p. 59).

This assertion, that phenomenology is something that extends beyond a description to an interpretation, invites further analysis to examine the perceptions of the adolescents in this study by applying critical discourse analysis and sociocultural theory. By examining the spoken and written discourses offered by each participant, and interpreting their shared experiences according to evident themes, I was further able to describe and interpret the essence of the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents living within the deployment cycle.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Sociocultural Theory

At its simplest, critical discourse analysis analyzes how members of social communities construct their worlds. This theory/method examines how

social and power relations, identities, and knowledge are constructed through written and spoken texts in social settings such as schools, families, and communities (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 22).

Fairclough (1992) suggests that critical discourse analysis extends this examination to the ways members’ practices are unknowingly shaped by social structures, relations of

power, and the nature of the social practice whose purpose is more than simply the production of meaning. By applying this layer of analysis to the spoken discourses that emerged during my interviews with these five adolescents, I was better able to describe and interpret the relationships between the perceptions of the participants and the social communities and circumstances in which they find themselves. I adopted Gee's (2001) suggestion that in order to understand literacy, or discourses, in a broader perspective that includes social interaction and culture, one must look beyond an autonomous definition of literacy to an ideological model. This ideological model views language as connected to experience and interaction with the world (Rivera & Huerta-Macias, 2008). This ideological stance means that I viewed the discourses spoken during the interviews, the practices indicated on the literacy logs, and the written responses shared as reflections on the literacy logs as interactions between the adolescents and their life-worlds.

This theoretical analysis also includes an examination of how the enactment of the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents experiencing deployment is embedded in sociocultural practices and experiences. As I sought to understand these practices from the perspective of adolescents who share a common circumstance yet have widely varying and distinct experiences, I examined how they shape their identities, enact agency, and reconfigure their identities as they react to circulations of power that occur during the deployment cycle (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). My goal for this layer of analysis was to understand and explain the relationships and transformations between the human mental functioning of these adolescents and the cultural, historical, and institutional aspects of the deployment cycle in which this functioning occurs (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Wertsch, 1995).

The guiding questions by Moje & Lewis (2007) previously mentioned in Chapter Three of this report, served to focus my thinking on the literacy practices evident in the reflections of each participant and their expressed perceptions about deployment. In the next sections, using critical discourse analysis and sociocultural theory as framework, I analyzed the data from a sociocultural perspective. I described and interpreted the relationships between the literacy practices and the perceptions of each adolescent and his or her social experiences with deployment with regard to identity, agency, and power.

Identity

Lewis, Enciso, & Moje (2007) describe identity as a stable, internal state of being that is socially and linguistically fluid. Identity takes into account the different positions individuals enact or perform in particular settings within social, economic, and historical relationships. Individuals may define their identities based on expectations they perceive from others. These perceptions may be interpreted from messages they get from other individuals and from society at large. Gee (2000-2001) refers to this identity as “ways of being certain kinds of people”.

In the following subsections, the discourses of each adolescent are examined with regard to this concept of identity: the ways in which they “are” adolescents practicing literacy during deployment. This examination of how identities may get constructed, shifted, contested, and/or changed (Moje & Lewis, 2007), is guided by the following questions:

- What are some of the social features of the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents experiencing deployment?
- What discourses (or ideologies) surface in these practices?

- What social identities are enacted in these practices (through language use, linguistic constructions, discourses, generic features, actions)?
- What identities are enacted in these practices (in action, talk, and silences)? (Moje & Lewis, 2007)

Timothy

While all of the other participants in this study were more clearly situated in either the pre-deployment or post-deployment phase of the deployment cycle, Timothy's position in the cycle was ambiguous. Technically, at the time of our initial interview, his stepfather was still in the deployment phase. Due to injuries sustained in a roadside bomb attack, his father was hospitalized in Germany, with plans to return to a hospital in Texas. At the time of our second interview, his stepfather had returned home and was receiving treatment for his injuries. The family was in the midst of processing his return and reassignment. In this unique situation of deployment/post-deployment, very little was similar to the previous time his stepfather had returned home. Technically, the time of deployment had been brief, only three months in duration. However, in reality, this deployment/post-deployment phase would extend much longer than a typical deployment/post-deployment situation. It included non-normative stressors more intense than anticipated, and the experience could not be processed in the same manner as the previous deployment experience.

Timothy seemed to feel good about his identity as the oldest child in the family. He spoke fondly of his little brother and gave brief descriptions of his relationships with other members of his family. When he described his identity with regard to literacy, he said that he was a "pretty good writer" and a "medium" reader. He exuded confidence

when he spoke of the video games he played either by himself or with friends on line. Timothy's identity as he engaged in literacy practices outside of the school setting seemed to be unaffected by the deployment experience. He practiced his drums, read a novel, played video games, and watched television. His responses indicated that his engagement in these practices was typical for him regardless of his family's phase in the deployment cycle.

Barry

While Barry's family was in the pre-deployment phase, there was a great deal of ambiguity and uncertainty regarding the timeframe of the actual deployment. In spite of this, Barry seemed confident and secure when sharing his experiences with deployment and his engagement in literacy. He felt that he was doing well at West Lake School, but also acknowledged that this had not been the case at his previous school, where he "just plain straight up didn't even like [his] teachers".

When Barry described himself as a reader, writer, and speaker, he seemed to connect being a speaker with reading aloud. He indicated, in that sense, he was "not really good" and that when people look at him he "can't read". He indicated that he was a good writer if asked to produce self-generated writing, saying, "If I'm thinking of it as I go, then it's more fun". When he spoke of writing as typing, he described it as "not so much fun". When Barry spoke of reading silently, he shared that he had read some pretty big books. He seemed to feel confident in his identity as a literate person. Barry was enthusiastic when he spoke of other literacy practices which he engaged in outside of the school setting. He felt that he needed to appear literate even when using Facebook or

playing video games. He said, “Unless you type it correctly, no one’s gonna understand what you’re talking about!”

Barry’s identity as the oldest sibling gave him empathy for the effects of deployment on his younger brothers, particularly his youngest brother, Nathan. When he spoke of his father’s deployment for much of Nathan’s young life, he indicated that he felt sorry that Nathan had not had the chance to know his father as well as Barry knew him. Barry knew the responsibilities that were expected of him during deployment and he knew that his role changed somewhat when his father was gone. He said that he had to “help out more” and that he had a more tight schedule for his chores.

When Barry spoke of using Skype or Facebook as ways of coping with the separation of deployment, this indicated that he was aware of ways that his literacy practices could mediate stress during this phase of the deployment cycle. By staying connected with his father in this way, he continued to feel a sense of cohesiveness in the family and a security in his sense of identity as the oldest son.

Barry also exhibited enthusiasm and gratitude for the experiences that the military lifestyle had afforded him. His overall demeanor and verbalizations indicated that his family tried to make the best of difficult situations that were attributed to being in the military. Even when he spoke of his negative experiences while in school in Germany, he offered his attempt at making sense of what he perceived as his teacher’s dislike for him. He remarked

They were kinda mean. I think it’s ‘cause, because they got chosen to go to Germany aside from everyone else. That’s what I think.....

He reasoned that his teacher's dislike for him could be attributed to his or her unhappiness at being sent to teach where perhaps he or she did not want to go. Letting go of negative feelings and looking for the best in situations seemed to be an integral part of his identity within the deployment experience.

James

James is almost two years younger than his brother Barry. When James spoke of his interests and activities outside of the school setting, he appeared quietly confident in the role these activities played in his identity as the middle child in the family. When he talked about his family's current position in the deployment cycle, he acknowledged the difficulty of not knowing when his father would be leaving, or if he would be leaving at all. As his brother Barry indicated, his family tried to make the best of things by enjoying the extra time with his father and handling situations as they arose. When his family was denied the retreat to Wyoming, he described the following weekend as one where "we just kind of made up for it" by going to town and "we, like, shopped for a while and we, like, got new stuff". This 'make the best of things' mentality that his family seemed to have regarding military life made an impact on James and how he, himself, dealt with the uncertainties and disappointments that can arise.

When James spoke of the out-of-school literacy practices he engaged in, he seemed to regard them as means of communication as well as entertainment. He remarked that his family utilized Skype to communicate with his father, when he was deployed, rather than sending emails because they felt it was more secure. He mentioned a more regimented chore schedule that he and his brothers must adhere to while his father is gone. He seems to exhibit a strong sense of responsibility for doing what is expected

of him. He also recognized that when he had fulfilled those responsibilities, “we can pretty much just, we’re free to do anything more, really”. That “anything more” included listening to music and practicing his drums, reading books from a series, playing video games, playing basketball, and hanging out with friends.

James spoke proudly of his father’s service to his country and also of his mother’s involvement in activities that support other families experiencing deployment. It was evident that James valued the experiences he has had due to his family’s military lifestyle. His identity as a member of this family seemed grounded in responsibility, pride, and gratefulness.

Maggie

Of the five participants in this study, Maggie is the one who appeared to have struggled the most with her identity due to the deployment of her father. At the time of our interviews, Maggie’s family was in the post deployment phase. However, many aspects of our conversation centered around the time her father was deployed. She shared that when her father was gone, she had to step into the role she described as “kinda the mom”, and that for a time she “was pretty bad at it, and [she] had to go and get some counseling and stuff”. She mentioned that because of deployment she had to be “less selfish about everything [she] wanted to do and put everything else ahead of [herself]”. As a teenage girl beginning her freshman year of high school, she had to cope with restrictions placed upon her family due to the logistics of living in a single parent household with one licensed driver to accommodate transportation for activities in which she and her siblings wanted to participate.

When Maggie described her literacy practices, she exuded confidence and enthusiasm. She identified herself as an “avid reader” and said that her room “looks like a library!” She utilized literacy practices to research various topics of interest as a way of coping with the stress of deployment. She remarked, “I submerged myself in [the research].” She described herself as someone who enjoys creative writing, and she shared that journaling helped her cope with the hard times she was going through. As she spoke at length about these and other literacy practices, it became evident that the ways she engaged in literacy had a strong effect on her identity as someone who was coping with the non-normative stressors of deployment.

In spite of the struggles Maggie had in coping with her role in the family during deployment, enthusiasm and gratitude for aspects of the experience were part of her identity. She expressed the desire to be a mother some day and to also have a career in the military. While she had difficulty adjusting to new responsibilities, those same responsibilities influenced her aspirations for establishing her future identity.

Weston

Weston is the second oldest child in his family, the oldest son, and is two years younger than his sister Maggie. He describes himself as a good athlete and a good student. He is a cheerful young man and spoke animatedly about sporting and outdoor activities that he enjoyed. When Weston identified the members of his family, he offered descriptions of the unique characteristics of each person. He was proud of his family, of his father’s military service, his mother’s work to keep things running at home, and each of his siblings. While he described Maggie as “[doing] the same things that I do”, he used phrases such as “super outdoorsman”, “OBSESSED with Harry Potter”, “really,

really interested in Legos”, and “really likes anything that’s not his!” to describe his other siblings.

When he spoke of his role in the family during deployment, he shared that he had “had to be a lot more helpful”. He said that his responsibilities included “stuff that, like, Dad would normally do”. He was quite matter of fact when speaking of these roles and responsibilities and it seemed that he accepted them willingly. In addition to the stress of the actual deployment, Weston acknowledged that the delay in his father’s deployment was stressful also. When he spoke of that, he shared that sports and physical activity helped him cope until the eventual deployment.

Weston viewed his out-of-school literacy practices as vehicles for entertainment and communication. He did not identify them as ways to relieve stress experienced during deployment, but rather ways to occupy his time, gather with his family, or communicate with people outside his home.

It seemed that Weston valued his identity as an adolescent in a military family. He saw himself as responsible for important things beyond chores and daily tasks. He exhibited caring and concern for his siblings as they, too, lived within the cycle of deployment, and he assumed responsibilities that helped his brothers and sisters, as well as his parents, cope with the stress of deployment.

Identity, Literacy Practices, and Deployment

Each participant seemed to find a way to establish his or her identity within the social community of his or her family during the deployment cycle. Many of the out-of-school literacy practices engaged in by the participants were situated in social situations and had distinct social features. Each adolescent who mentioned playing video games

referred to playing games online with friends. Features of this practice included “chat rooms” that enabled participants to communicate with the friends who were playing online with them by either typing messages or speaking. Some games featured a video chat option so that players who had the video capability could see their friends as well as hear their friends while they were playing the game. Communicating with friends via Skype or Facebook was also mentioned as a way to interact with friends and family. As each participant mentioned these practices, they expressed their identities as part of a social community of peers.

The discourses of the participants revealed their perceptions of their own identities during the deployment experience. They acknowledged that stress was a part of the experience, but also spoke of the ways they established their identities by fulfilling roles that were expected of them, either by family members or themselves. These social identities, ways of “being” within the family community, were evident as the adolescents described their changing roles. Whether it was a description of how they cared for siblings, how they offered support and assistance to the remaining parent, or how they assumed roles previously filled by the deployed parent, each adolescent articulated his or her identity. Each participant told of changes in responsibilities and circumstances at home while describing what was required of them due to these changes.

The thoughts expressed by these adolescents seemed to reflect that they saw their literacy practices as normal extensions of their daily lives. Often they spoke of how various practices helped them wind down when they were feeling stressed, or helped them relax for a while at the end of the day. They often spoke of their literacy practices as a means of entertainment, as well as a means of communication among family and

friends. Their engagement in these literacy practices often reflected their efforts to just be ‘regular’ adolescents, within the deployment experience. Reading novels, playing video games, listening to music, and watching television are practices that many adolescents commonly engage in. For these adolescents experiencing deployment, the practices also offer them opportunities to assert their identities as ‘regular’ adolescents by engaging in activities they enjoy.

In the next section, I will examine and describe the ways in which participants enacted their agency by adjusting their identities during the cycle of deployment.

Agency

Agency is a way of positioning oneself in order to allow for new ways of being and new identity development (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). As the participants in this study experienced various situations throughout the cycle of deployment, power relationships circulated within the family and the adolescents’ positions within the social communities of their families shifted. Each adolescent underwent some form of strategic remaking of themselves, their identities, their activities, or their relationships. In this section, I describe the ways in which each participant enacted their agency within the circumstance of deployment and the ways in which their literacy practices may or may not have factored in to this new way of being. This description was developed utilizing the following questions:

- What aspects of the action, talk, and silence could be considered agentic?
- *What* is made and remade in these practices? How, if at all, does the making and remaking destabilize local and global power relations?

- What tools are being used to engage in these agentic practices? How are these tools both local and global? How are they embedded in power relations? How if at all, does the use of these tools destabilize power relations? (Moje & Lewis, 2007)

Timothy

At the time of our interviews, Timothy was the only participant who had experienced the trauma of a parent's injury during this deployment cycle. He spoke calmly when he told me of his stepfather's injury, but when he spoke of the moment of departure, his eyes filled with tears. As Timothy and his family went through the ordeal of bringing his stepfather home and securing the medical attention he needed, Timothy had to assume a "new way of being" (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). He not only had to continue with his usual roles and responsibilities, but additionally he had to be available to assist his stepfather with daily care. Timothy said that he had to "kind of watch out for him".

When we spoke of his out-of-school literacy practices, Timothy indicated that his engagement in them was much the same as it had been before his stepfather's deployment and injury. Though his role had changed somewhat, he still had time to engage in activities such as watching television, practicing his musical instrument, and playing video games. He commented that being with his friends and going to a friend's house had helped him when he was worrying about his stepfather. As he enacted his agency throughout the deployment and post-deployment phase of this cycle, Timothy's literacy practices seemed to offer a source of continuity for him, rather than transition. As he

engaged in these practices, he was able to maintain his identity as an adolescent during this experience.

Barry

The difficulty of enacting his agency was described by Barry himself when he spoke of the pressure he felt to do well in school so his father wouldn't experience more stress.

Then you think, 'If I don't do good, then they're [the deployed parent] gonna be kinda more stressed out', but then if you do pretty good, it's a little bit more stressful 'cause you 're thinking bout that, at the same time you're thinking about the other thing [deployment], so...you're always thinking about something else, the opposite of what you're other thinking.

Barry was candid when he told of his struggles in school and admitted that he didn't get along with his teachers during his father's previous deployment. He spoke about how he was doing so much better in West Lakeside School, attributing that to the smaller size and fewer distractions.

During the pre-deployment phase that his family was currently experiencing, Barry and his family were dealing with the ambiguity of the delayed timeframe for his father's deployment. The positive, make-the-best-of-it aspect of Barry's identity seemed to have increased his appreciation for extra time with his father before he leaves and a hopefulness that he might not have to deploy after all. While this time is filled with uncertainty, Barry did not exhibit signs that this was more stressful than the pre-deployment phase typically is for him.

Barry's engagement in literacy practices outside of the school setting did not seem to be affected by his present situation within the deployment cycle. He continued to engage in watching television and playing video games as he typically did after school. He described potential plans for the summer that included a trip to Italy for his mother, a trip to Oklahoma for the rest of the family, and his completion of Driver's Ed. The enthusiasm and gratitude that he expressed regarding military life indicated that he felt secure in his identity as a member of a military family. His comment, "Well besides the fact that deployment kinda stinks, it's actually kinda cool..." indicated that he was able to recognize both the hardships and benefits that are inherent with deployment. This recognition offered evidence that he was able to adjust to new ways of being as he moved through the deployment cycle.

James

James described his family's current phase of deployment, the pre-deployment phase, as the most difficult. He stated that his family tried to do a lot of things together before his father actually leaves. He mentioned this several times throughout our conversations, this importance of spending and enjoying time with his father.

The evidence of pride that James felt regarding his parents and their service – his father through deployment and his mother through her support of deployed families – indicated that while the experience of deployment may be stressful, the agency required during deployment is not problematic. As he adjusted to the increase and decrease of responsibilities as the family moved through the deployment cycle, he seemed to accept these changes as part of family life.

James continued to be close to his father during previous deployments by communicating with him via Skype and spending time with him during R & R. He spoke of other out-of-school literacy practices that he engaged in during the pre-deployment phase of this deployment cycle as a means of entertainment and a way to interact with friends. These practices seemed to be activities in which he engaged on a regular basis that contributed to his ongoing established identity.

He seemed to approach the uncertainty of his father's impending deployment with much the same attitude as his brother Barry. He chose to enjoy the time he has now with his father and remained hopeful that he will not have to be deployed at all. The close interpersonal connections that were evident among James's family members seemed to be an important influence in the way that James approached experiences related to military life.

Maggie

Maggie verbalized that she struggled with enacting her agency as power relations shifted within the social community of her family. She shared the difficulties that the family encountered when her father left for Kuwait, as well as when he returned home. Once she established her self-described identity as "kinda the mom", she then had to shift back to being the oldest daughter when her father returned as head of the household and her mother returned to the role of caretaker. Maggie noted that in some ways things were easier for her because she "[has] more of a chance to get out now, 'cause there's another parent home", but that there were difficulties as the family adjusted to changes in roles, and punishment and parenting styles.

Literacy practices were important for Maggie as she sought to adjust to her fluctuating identity within the family. She noted that journaling helped her record her struggles and then reflect upon them later. She said that by “submerging” herself in self-guided research projects, she was able to focus on something else for a while, something that she was interested in and not related to her current situation.

Maggie’s statements about wanting to be a mom and wanting to serve in the military indicate that she is contemplating ways her identity might shift in the future. These statements express that she is willing, and perhaps eager, to undertake different “way[s] of being certain kinds of [people]” (Gee, 2000-2001).

Weston

When Weston described his roles within the family and the changes in these roles that he assumed when his father was deployed, he was very straightforward about the difficulties that accompanied those shifts. His pride in his family was evident, and he appeared willing to move back and forth between the added responsibilities that fell to him during deployment and the release from some of the responsibilities when his father returned home. He stated that the pre-deployment phase was the most stressful, and that once his father was gone the family fell into a routine again, “...we’re normally so busy that it’s not, like, horrible”. He mentioned that it was very difficult for his family when his father’s deployment was delayed, and that “having to say good-bye twice” caused him to have to adjust, and then readjust his identity.

Weston relied more on sports and physical activities than literacy practices during these times of readjustment. As he reconfigured his identity from an adolescent child, to more of a caregiver, and then back to a child, he engaged in various literacy practices as

noted on his literacy log. But while he described these practices in detail, he shared that listening to music was the one practice that helped him cope with exhaustion from sports and physical activities he engaged in as he coped with the stress of deployment.

Weston also spoke of pursuing a career in the military, perhaps joining the Air Force and becoming a helicopter pilot. This future enactment of agency indicated that Weston's identity as a member of a military family is one in which he feels confident.

Agency, Literacy Practices, and Deployment

Differing degrees of agency were evident as participants shifted roles within their family relationships. As each adolescent adjusted to the phases of pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment, he or she retained some aspects of identity while making changes or adjustments in other aspects. Each one mentioned increased responsibilities. Maggie and Weston described in more detail the shifts in their roles from child to caretaker and back to child as their family moved through the deployment cycle.

Literacy practices seemed to be a source of constancy during the remaking of selves within the identities of the participants. As each participant positioned himself or herself to allow for new identity development or retention of perceived identity, the out-of-school literacy practices they engaged in offered a way to "be" within the ongoing changes of the family structure. When participants played video games, for example, the discourses they engaged in with friends, present and online, offered opportunities to shift their identities from an "adolescent experiencing deployment" to just a "regular" adolescent. Within the context of the video games, participants shifted or suspended their identities for a time to engage in role playing games and story-based games. This agentic

shift of identities offered a chance for the adolescents to move thoughts of deployment to the background, rather than the foreground, for a time. As participants watched television, listened to music, or read novels or magazines, they also were able to suspend one identity in order to embrace the identities of the characters they were reading about for a while.

As the participants were engaging in these practices, the agentic remaking of their 'selves' was evident as they shifted from being helpers and caretakers within the family structure to 'regular' adolescents who play video games, watch television, and listen to music. After engaging in these practices, the adolescents most often shifted back into the roles they had suspended for a time, back to helpers and caretakers. As the families moved through the deployment cycle, the structures of power within the family community circulated from dual parents, single parents, and sometimes to the adolescents themselves. As they moved through the cycle, their shifts in identity were often in response to this destabilization and re-stabilization of the power structures.

The participants' use of literacy practices as agentic tools enabled them to shift and suspend identities. The use of social tools such as conversation and chatting often utilized technology at both the local and the global level. When the adolescents utilized Skype, Facebook, and video games to connect with friends in other parts of the country and overseas, they were able to maintain identities they had previously established with family and friends. At the local level, these adolescents utilized the same tools to maintain relationships with family and friends who were physically present in their lives. Rather than destabilizing, these practices utilizing these tools had a stabilizing effect on the adolescents' relationships as power circulated within the circumstance of deployment.

In the next section, I will examine these circulations of power within the families of participants as a result of interactions and relationships that occurred during deployment.

Power

Foucault's (2004) theory of power as "productive", influences the sociocultural perspective that power is a result of interactions and relationships rather than something that is possessed, desired, or resisted. As I examined the discourses of the participants in this study from a sociocultural perspective, circulations of power were evident as their families experienced phases of deployment.

In this section, I describe these circulations with regard to each participant's unique experiences. The following questions will guide the examination of the descriptions:

- What relations of power are enacted and/or produced in these practices?
How are these power relations locally produced? How are these power relations tied to and reproductive of larger systems of power?
- What is being learned via these practices? (Moje & Lewis, 2007)

Timothy

When Timothy's stepfather deployed to Afghanistan, the power shifted from his stepfather to his mother. As the circumstances of deployment suddenly changed for this family, the shifts in power that often occur when a service member returns home did not occur. For the initial days of the post-deployment phase, Timothy's mother continued to assume most of the roles and responsibilities as a single head of household. In addition to the daily responsibilities of managing a household, she now had to assume the role of

caring for an injured family member and securing and negotiating appropriate medical care for him.

Within this aspect of power, Timothy's identity as child and helper expanded to include the role of caregiver as well. While his stepfather was present in the home, and his presence afforded help with some decision-making and eventually some household tasks, Timothy's mother remained the head of the household as he recovered. This did not seem to alter Timothy's sense of identity or his perceptions of his role in the family. He spoke of helping his stepfather more with daily tasks, and he seemed sensitive to his mother's sadness over his stepfather's injury.

Within this power structure, Timothy's out-of-school literacy practices continued to offer constancy for him. He did not indicate that the changes in the power structure of his home caused him to utilize these practices any more or less than he did before his stepfather's injury and his return home. Timothy's engagement in literacy practices continued to offer him entertainment and respite from the stress of his family's current situation.

For Timothy's family, this phase of the deployment cycle and the situation of his stepfather's injury has resulted in circumstances that influence the power of both his stepfather and his mother. As they seek treatment for his stepfather's wounds, the family must follow guidelines and timetables regulated by the military. This has meant that while they are required to make decisions and inquiries regarding treatment, oftentimes those decisions had to be tabled, or even revoked, when different orders were given. This added to the ambiguity of the post-deployment experience as the family interacted with

military medical professionals within the power structure of the army. For Timothy, this meant daily uncertainty about the extent of his stepfather's recovery.

Barry

Barry's statements about the roles each of his family members assume, indicated that his family had established a systematic circulation of power that transpires each time his father deploys. As he described the events that usually lead up to a deployment, the ensuing separation of deployment, and the gathering in of post-deployment, Barry offered statements that suggested a shifting of head of household responsibilities from his father, to his mother, to his father. As these shifts transpired, the daily functioning of family life seemed to continue with as much predictability as military life affords.

Throughout the deployment cycle, Barry's engagement in literacy practices for entertainment and communication seemed to remain constant. The interactions and relationships among his family members and friends allowed him to maintain his identity and function within the circulations of power that occurred as the family moved through the deployment cycle.

Barry's enthusiasm for the experiences he has had as a result of his father's deployment indicated that he did not struggle with these shifts in power and adapted to them without having to adjust his identity. He was straightforward about the uncertainty of his father's impending deployment, and indicated that, regardless of whether or not the deployment occurs, he appreciated the extra time he has had with his father in this pre-deployment phase.

James

Like Barry, James is aware of the roles and responsibilities within the circulation of power in his family during deployment. He expressed pride in his father's service and spoke at length of his mother's role as a deployment assistant, helping families cope with the circumstances of deployment. This evident pride in his family indicated that he understood and accepted the changes that occurred within the power structure of his family. James's identity seemed to be accompanied by a sense of security and worth established by his relationship with family members.

It did not appear that James's literacy practices changed in response to shifting roles or circulations of power within the family. He continued to engage in practices that offered entertainment and communication. He was unable to engage in some of the sports and physical activities he enjoyed because of a broken bone in his foot. As his family awaited concrete plans for his father's deployment, James continued to express appreciation for the delay in his father's departure and remained hopeful that he would not be deployed. At the time of the interviews, the power structures within his family remained unchanged, with his parents ready to shift roles if, and when, the deployment occurs.

Maggie

Of the five participants, circulations of power seemed to cause the greatest shift in identity for Maggie. As the oldest of six children, she seemed to feel deeply the effects of the transfer of power from her father to her mother and back to her father as the family cycled through deployment. As she struggled to enact her agency as power circulated within her family, Maggie received counseling services. As she found herself assuming

the role of a mother figure, she discovered that she had more of a desire to be a mother one day than she had before this most recent deployment.

Maggie noted that reading, researching, and journaling were literacy practices helpful to her as she struggled to adapt and adjust her identity during power circulations in the family. These practices afforded her a form of escape from the “hard time” she was going through and allowed her to focus on something that was interesting to her. As she spoke of the need to be less selfish, she indicated that it was difficult to dismiss some of her “wants” in order to assume her new role in the family.

Upon the delay of her father’s previous deployment, Maggie struggled to adjust to the recirculation of power. Her father was ready to go, his belongings had been shipped, and then his departure was delayed for almost four months. She did not find solace in having more time with him before deployment. To her, this meant that all of the adjustments in roles that had occurred in anticipation of his leaving would now in effect, be undone, only to be faced again in a few months. This also meant a delay in the date of his homecoming, placing the return to normalcy farther out into the future.

When her father returned from Kuwait and power circulated back to him as head of the household, Maggie’s mother resumed more of the caregiver responsibilities. Maggie spoke of the agency enacted by all members of the family as they established new identities.

...we all kind of had to readjust ourselves and kind of bring him back into the family again. ‘Cause we had changed when he was gone, and he had changed, but we hadn’t changed together.

She specifically mentioned the transfer of power that occurred upon her father’s return.

The transfer of power back to Dad is kind of frustrating at first. ‘Cause they’re [her mother and father] kind of, they were, not conflicting, but not like fighting about it, but like she was just so used to having control and he’d come back and, “Well I’m the man” and so, that, yeah...

Maggie did express that she had more freedom as a result of living in a two parent household again. With two parents to manage caregiving and transportation, Maggie was able to participate in more activities. As her identity shifted back from caregiver to adolescent child, she could again have some of the freedoms she had before her father was deployed.

Weston

Like Maggie, Weston struggled with the circulation of power that occurred, was rescinded, and then reoccurred due to the delay in his father’s deployment. In his words, “That was like having to say good-bye twice”. However, once the deployment took place, Weston seemed to slip into his new role as more of a caregiver in addition to being a brother. He spoke of having to help out more, but seemed to accept this as a natural result of being part of a one parent household.

Weston spoke of engaging in sports and physical activities as he coped with the stress of the situation of deployment. He then described the physical exhaustion that followed. Literacy practices played a role in helping him through the exhaustion and the “keyed up” feeling he experienced after exercise. He continued to engage in literacy practices in much the same manner as before the deployment, and his use of them did not seem altered in response to power circulation within the family.

He described the readjustment of roles and identities that occurred when his father returned as ‘occurring as usual’. He felt that having his father home allowed him more opportunities to do other things away from home. He had fewer responsibilities that involved supervising and giving care to his younger siblings.

Weston’s description of military life as “hard, but it’s fun” indicated that he had found a way to maintain his identity while adjusting to shifts in power that resulted from circumstances such as deployment. While acknowledging that there were difficulties involved, he still expressed enthusiasm and gratitude for “opportunities and experiences other people might not get”.

Power, Literacy Practices, and Deployment

As each participant experienced deployment, circulations of power inevitably occurred. As roles were reassigned and households shifted from two-parent to single-parent and back to two-parent power structures, each adolescent faced changes that caused him or her to maintain or adjust identities and enact agency. While all of the participants had experienced deployment before the most recent orders, each one faced unique challenges in these circumstances. Serious injury during deployment, delays in departure, and possible cancelation of deployment caused the circulation of power for all of these families to remain fluid and ambiguous.

While each adolescent engaged in literacy practices within the shifting power structures of the family during the deployment cycle, it is interesting to note that their engagement in these practices also *resulted* in shifts of power. Four of the participants continued to engage in out-of-school literacy practices in ways that did not seem to be

affected by the changes in power that resulted from deployment. But, rather, this engagement resulted in shifts in power for the adolescents for a time. As they engaged in these self-selected literacy practices that included video games, watching television, listening to music, and reading, they caused power to shift to themselves as they were “in charge” of their characters in video games or voluntarily suspended their identities in order to slip into the role of a character in a book or television show. One participant, Maggie, relied upon the practices of reading and writing to help her struggle through the role changes that resulted for her due to the shift in power in her family. This practice empowered her to self-reflect, examining the stressors she faced and her responses to them.

Utilizing Foucault’s theories that power is “productive” resulting from interactions and relationships rather than a trait that is possessed, desired, or resisted by others, the question “What is being learned via these [literacy] practices?” is addressed. Lewis, Enciso, Moje (2007) suggest that learning may be a resistance to certain skills and knowledge, or it may be an instance of seeing certain skills and knowledge in a different light. Examination of the literacy practices engaged in by participants in this study suggests that the first assumption is true for this experience. As participants engage in video games, reading, watching television, and listening to music, they are in a way resisting their current circumstances and assuming the power to shift and suspend their identities for a time. By this same engagement, participants also were able to enter different communities (within video games, books, and television shows) and establish new identities within these communities.

Bloome & Talwalker (1997) state that critical discourse analysis offers insight into the nature of discourse that lends itself to careful analysis and can lead to questions for further study. Upon examining the adolescents responses to the circulations of power in their families, I found there remains an area of inquiry not touched upon in this study. The parent in each family in this study who is experiencing deployment is an active duty service member. Each family has been part of the military culture for many years, and many aspects of that lifestyle seem to have been experienced and accepted. In my conversations with each adolescent, many of the ambiguous aspects of their experiences were described. The ambiguity of their experiences resulted from acts and decisions handed down from power structures within the military. While each adolescent mentioned stress, worry, and disappointment because of decisions that filled their lives with uncertainty, none of them questioned the power structure of the military. Further study into the perceptions and perspectives of adolescents within the circumstance of deployment with regard to the power structure of the military would offer valuable insight into the ways adolescents and family members cope with the non-normative stressors of deployment.

Summary of Theoretical Analysis

As I sought to understand and explain the relationships and transformations that occurred in the lives of adolescents as they engaged in literacy practices during deployment, my thinking was guided by a sociocultural perspective. In examining the discourses of the participants in the study, I looked for indications of established identity, enactment of agency, and responses to structures of power change. I found that while

they shared the common circumstance of deployment, each adolescent's experience was varied and unique. And as each one coped with the issues of stress, ambiguity, separation, negativity, responsibility, communication, and readjustment, a resiliency was evident in their character. In Chapter Six, this resiliency is examined and implications of this study are considered.

CHAPTER 6 - Implications of the Study

This study essentially began on an ordinary day in my sixth grade classroom. Though the research question would be formulated in the coming months and the research conducted at a later date, on that day the words of a young man called me to recognize the *extraordinariness* of the lives of my students who were impacted by the experience of the military deployment of a family member. This recognition launched my quest to understand the impact of deployment on the students in my literacy classroom.

The informal beginning of my research brought to light two things. First, many resources available to parents and educators seeking to help adolescents cope with the stress of deployment suggest strategies that would likely be implemented outside of the school setting and that would fall into the broad scope of what could be categorized as literacy practices. Secondly, the *voices* of the adolescents themselves regarding their experiences were glaringly absent from the literature. As my thinking focused on the suggestions for literacy practices as strategies for coping, along with the absence of attention to the perceptions of the adolescents for whom they were suggested, the research question for this study began to form.

Addressing the Research Question

This section will address the research question that guided this study:

What are adolescents' lived experiences as expressed through out-of-school literacy practices during the military deployment of a family member?

As I considered this question and the available research traditions for my study, it became clear to me that a phenomenological qualitative inquiry would allow me to explore the depths of the experiences of my participants and describe them in such a way that my goal to understand these experiences through their perceptions would be met. Schram's (2006) description of a phenomenological study affirmed that this methodology would offer the best inroad to the understanding I was seeking.

Phenomenological researchers, particularly those of a descriptive bent, focus on what an experience means for persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. The underlying assumption is that dialogue and reflection can reveal the essence – the invariant structure or central underlying meaning – of some aspect of shared experience (Schram, 2006; p. 98).

Polkinghorne's (1989) suggestion that readers of a phenomenological study should come away with a feeling that he or she has a better understanding of the experience being described, also affirmed that this methodology would allow me to communicate the essence of the experiences of these adolescents with educators, parents, and other support professionals who work with these young people.

It was important to me to place the perspectives and perceptions of my participants at the foreground of consideration. Not only was I struck by the absence of adolescent voices in the literature I had explored, I was also intrigued to find this absence confirmed by literacy experts as a source of concern. Alvermann (1998) described this irony.

Ironically, the very persons we assume to be most important in our classrooms – that is the students – receive the least amount of attention in our research...Students' points of view received the least amount of attention, and when they were represented, typically, they appeared as brief quotations from a few carefully selected student informants whose thinking was supposedly reflective of the larger student body (p. 360).

When Hinchman (1998) explored the possibility that literacy researchers' ways of seeing might unintentionally minimize the perspectives of adolescents, she inquired how researchers might reconsider the ways in which adolescents' perspectives are represented. She suggested researchers must find ways to represent the communicative competencies of adolescents.

To do this, we should think about finding ways to place teenagers, quite articulate about those things that are of interest and concern to them, in the center of this research and the subsequent discussion (Hinchman, 1998; p. 188).

By including multiple quotations from each participant in the descriptions of his or her experiences, I sought to give prominence to each voice. Hearing, or reading, their perceptions expressed through their own words offered authenticity to the descriptions of their experiences. By "tuning in" to what these adolescents had to say about their lived experiences with deployment and their perceptions of their literate identities, I allowed their innermost thoughts, reflections, and lives to guide me to an understanding of how they, themselves, perceived their life-worlds.

So, what are the lived experiences of these adolescents as expressed through their out-of-school literacy practices during the deployment of a family member? Because of the unique, rich experiences of each individual participant, this question can only be *addressed*, rather than *answered*. The circumstances of each adolescent's experiences were varied, even the experiences of the siblings who participated in this study. These varied experiences lead us to unique descriptions that cannot be quantified or theorized. Yet understanding each individual adolescent's experiences yields *insight* into what it is like to engage in literacy practices while experiencing deployment. The themes that became evident during the analysis of discourses offered a depth to this insight and a richer understanding of the complexities that emerged upon examination of each participant's life-world.

The adolescents who opened the windows of their worlds to me through our conversations, allowed me to glimpse their thoughts and feelings as well as their literacy practices. Each participant seemed to regard his or her engagement in literacy practices as ordinary and commonplace, not something unique that he or she did or didn't do because of the circumstances of deployment. While traditional literacy practices of reading and writing were part of each participant's repertoire of practices, enthusiasm for new literacies and popular culture such as playing video games, chatting on Skype, listening to music, and communicating through Facebook was most evident in our conversations. During our initial interviews, participants expressed surprise that these activities fell within the scope of literacy practices. When I assured them that I considered them to be legitimate uses of their literacy skills, they eagerly spoke of their

engagement in them as out-of-school literacy practices. Their engagement in these practices is further examined in the next section.

In sharing their experiences with deployment, the participants' voices offered their perceptions of deployment's effect on their life-worlds. The words of the participants allowed me to see how their identities had been shaped by their experiences and how they had enacted agency as they shifted roles throughout the various phases of deployment. Each participant's experience demonstrated how power circulated within his or her family as they prepared for and experienced changing roles as they moved through the deployment cycle.

Upon describing their experiences and examining the discourses of these adolescents with regard to evident themes, a characteristic common to each participant emerged: resiliency. Resiliency is defined in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (1980) as

The ability to recover quickly from illness, change, or misfortune;
buoyancy.

This definition expressed exactly the characteristic I observed in each participant. I felt that each adolescent was honest with me when sharing the aspects of deployment that he or she found stressful. They spoke at length of the uncertainty and ambiguity of not knowing what future plans were in store for their military parent or for the family as a whole. They shared frankly about the ambiguity of plans that were in place, knowing that they might be changed or altered at a moment's notice. Separation from the military parent during deployment was a definite source of stress and hardship for each adolescent. Each expressed negative remarks about certain aspects of deployment, and

each spoke of the difficulties of communication and readjustment. Even so, enthusiasm and gratitude were evident. Yet, beyond all this was the characteristic of resiliency, a trait that ran deeper than emotions or feelings about these experiences. Each participant had to recover from some change or altered state due to deployment. Whether it was the injury of the deployed parent, rescinded opportunities, delayed departure, uncertain living arrangements, or readjustment to changing roles in the power structure of the family, these adolescents coped with non-normative stressors that extended beyond the normative stressor of just being a teenager. This resiliency, along with the themes evident in the discourses of the participants offers implications for educators, parents, and other persons seeking to support adolescents experiencing deployment.

Implications for Educators

If literacy practices are suggested as strategies to help adolescents experiencing deployment cope with normative and non-normative stressors, it is critical for educators to listen to and understand the perceptions and perspectives of the adolescents themselves. This section begins with a summary of data collected from the literacy logs completed by each participant. Following this summary is an exploration of adolescent literacy and deployment as part of the lived experiences of the participants in this study and implications for their teachers.

Summary of Data from Literacy Logs

The following table summarizes the literacy practices participants engaged in as recorded on their literacy logs.

Table 6-1: Literacy Log Summary

Literacy Practices	Number of times participants engaged in practice
E-mail	3
Texting	17
Instant Messaging	2
Facebook	15
My Space	
Journal writing	
Story writing	
Telephone conversation	3
Blogging	
Letter writing	3
Twitter	
Cartooning	2
Videotaping	
Skype	1
Drawing/sketching/painting	15
Writing song lyrics	
Listening to music	47
Playing a musical instrument	15
Reading a novel	42
Reading a magazine	5
Reading on-line articles, blogs, material on websites	2
Played video games	46
Watched TV	50
Scrapbooking	
Photography	

The out-of-school literacy practices of watching television, listening to music, playing video games and reading a novel were the most frequently mentioned by the participants in this study. The types of television programs watched ranged from animated cartoons, informational and reality programs, and animated movies. Each participant described a variety of types of music he or she enjoyed listening to. They remarked that they listened to music for a variety of reasons, ranging from to relax and calm down to “just because it’s there”. The video games played by the participants ranged from fighting, war themed games to “games where you roam around and search

for things” (James). The novels the participants were reading ranged from classics such as *Gulliver’s Travels* to current popular young adult literature such as *The Lightning Thief*. During the second interview sessions, each participant spoke with enthusiasm about the literacy practices they enjoyed most. Each participant perceived that either reading or writing was their primary strength, but no one stated that they were “good” at both. When talking about the practices they had recorded on their literacy logs, each participant stated that his or her engagement in these practices was continuous throughout the deployment cycle and did not increase or decrease due to those circumstances.

Adolescent Literacy

The very nature of literacy itself changes for adolescents as they respond to continually changing literary demands in the 21st century. Their literacy needs and practices extend beyond skills mastered in school to include reflexive responses that allow them to compose, comprehend, and create texts within the many discourse communities in which they participate (NCTE, 2006). Luke (2003) notes that critical education theorists influenced by Bruner (1990) and Vygotsky (1978) have argued the need for a reconceptualization of traditional concepts of literacy in light of the access to and mediation of knowledge afforded by technology. Central to this reconceptualization is the fact that “many adolescents now interact with the widest array of print and nonprint media of any time in history” (Harper & Bean, 2007; p. 152). This wide array of media extends beyond traditional forms of texts such as books and magazines to include technology-based literacy practices such as media authoring, Web browsing, and playing video games (O’Brien, 2007). The implications of this study with regard to adolescent literacy are suggested in the following sections.

New Literacies

The body of research known as New Literacy Studies consists of studies that capture the breadth and the complexity of literacy practices as they occur in various settings. Within these studies, literacy practices have been expanded beyond book-based reading and writing to include the social practices of reading and writing that occur when people interact with and communicate with digital print. In this study, I wanted to understand the broad range of literacy practices my participants engaged in outside of the school setting and explore their engagement in them within the circumstance of deployment.

Each participant recorded engagement in literacy practices that extended beyond traditional reading and writing to include social practices involving technology and digital print. I was somewhat puzzled when, during our initial interviews, participants seemed surprised that I would include these practices on the literacy logs. One participant remarked, “I didn’t know that counted [as literacy].” These adolescents previously or currently were students in my classroom, where technologies and digital literacies are key components of our daily literacy routine. It seemed that, for these adolescents at least, there was an evident disconnect between in-school and out-of-school practices and their perception of them as “literacy”. Once the participants were reassured that these practices indeed “counted”, they recorded, and later eagerly conversed about, their engagement in these practices outside of the school setting.

The relationship between literacy and technology that was evident in this study can be viewed from a transactional perspective that examines how technologies utilized by participants and literacy practices transact and influence each other (Bruce, 1997). From this transactional perspective, technology transformed literacy as the adolescents in

this study engaged in practice. As well, literacy also transformed technology as “users envision[ed] new ways of using emergent technologies for literate acts” (Leu, 2000; p. 744). This transactional perspective was apparent as each adolescent questioned the inclusion of, for example, playing video games, on the list of literacy practices on the literacy log. After discussing the various literate acts, such as reading and chatting, that occurred during a session of playing video games, participants accepted this as a literacy practice.

An implication of this transactional perspective of the relationship between technology and literacy is that educators, parents, and support persons could help adolescents broaden their perceptions of what counts as “literacy”. By helping them understand that literacy practices need not be limited to reading and writing, and that the setting for engagement in literacy practices need not be confined to the walls of a classroom, we can offer continuity and help them perceive the value of their literate acts.

Popular Culture

As adolescents seek to make meaning of their life-worlds, it is important that they develop a

...critical understanding of how all texts (both print and nonprint) position them as readers and viewers within different social, cultural, and historical contexts (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; p. 193)

By accepting and valuing aspects of popular culture, educators, parents, and support persons can offer adolescents a way to

experience the pleasures of popular culture while simultaneously uncovering the codes and practices that work to silence or disempower them as readers, viewers, and learners in general (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; p. 194).

Adolescents who are experiencing deployment are continually making agentic decisions within the circulations of power that are inherent to this experience. Each adolescent in this study recorded on his or her literacy log that he or she had listened to music, watched television, or played video games. Each could describe in vivid detail scenes from the shows watched or games played, with direct attention to the plots, settings, and story lines of each show or game. White & Walker (2008) offer that

Television, movies, and music provide fodder for connections among our disconnected citizenry (p. 4).

They suggest that these and other forms of popular culture can go beyond entertainment and may offer opportunities to examine social issues that could help adolescents make meaning of their world.

An implication of this perception of popular culture as a means to connect, or reconnect, adolescents experiencing deployment to their social communities is an important one. As adolescents in military families continue to make adjustments to their identities as they move through the phases of the deployment cycle, accepting their engagement in aspects of popular culture could allow them to identify with other people, ideals, or concepts as they enact agency in an attempt to cope with the stress of their circumstances within various social contexts. As educators, parents, and support persons seek to understand the adolescents' perceptions of their engagement with popular culture,

they may also acquire an understanding of the process of how they establish their identities when a parent is deployed (Hagood, 2008).

Deployment

My exploration of the literature regarding deployment made me aware of the phases of the deployment cycle. My conversations with the participants in this study however, made me *understand* the phases of the deployment cycle. As each adolescent shared his or her experiences with pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment, I came to understand there is no *ordinary* aspect of each phase. The experiences in each phase varied among the participants, and for each participant those experiences varied among different deployments.

Each adolescent's father had been deployed multiple times, and each was facing the possibility of another deployment. The only aspect of these circumstances that remained certain was the uncertainty. None of the participants knew when the next deployment would occur, the destination of the deployment, or if it would occur at all. When conversing with me about this ongoing ambiguity, each participant seemed to accept it as part of military life.

The implication of this is that the adolescents in this study who are experiencing some phase of the deployment cycle and will, in all likelihood, experience each phase again, have developed a resiliency that allows them to cope with the ambiguity, stress, separation, and readjustments that are intrinsic to military life. This resiliency, though evident in the character of each participant, does not imply that he or she does not experience difficulties coping. Rather, it implies that they have made this characteristic part of their identities, offering them a way to enact agency when the power structures in

the social communities of their families shift from family member to family member. As educators, parents, and support persons who seek to support these adolescents, it is critical that we possess an understanding of the process of deployment and an understanding of the situation of each person.

There is much to be gained from listening to and examining the words of adolescents who are experiencing deployment. This section concludes with words spoken by each participant when asked to share their final thoughts about deployment or about being part of a military family.

Timothy: It's kind of hard. Because, mostly after some deployments, the first or second time? We actually have to move. Somewhere where you don't know.

Barry: It's awesome. Sometimes. Because, you know, when you're in the military, you've got money, a lot of money. So, when we were in Germany, we had the money to go on a cruise. And we could go to Italy and different places like that. 'Cause our friends live in Italy. That's why my mom is going.

James: I'd say I don't really like it because you don't get to see him a lot. Usually at work. Most of the time. But then, since we have school, by the time I get home, it's only about an hour or two before he gets home, so... Then, in the summer, since he doesn't get a break, we have to wait almost all day for him to come home.

Maggie: [referring to things she thinks her teachers should know about deployment] I mean, some of the teachers in West Lakeside have lived

here their whole lives and so, their bubbles are kind of small. And, obviously they're not all extremely always understanding, just 'cause they don't have the experience. But I don't think there's a specific thing. Just having a firmer understanding of what military families have to do.

Weston: Um, it's hard, but it's fun. And you get a lot of opportunities and experiences other people might not get. And it's just a lifestyle that's fun. Entertaining at times.

These words, spoken as final thoughts about deployment, allude to the themes of ambiguity, responses, and roles. The broad scope of the conversations throughout this study offer examples of the resiliency exhibited by the participants as they navigated the complex situation of growing up in a military family.

Implications for the Educators of Adolescents Experiencing Deployment

My conversations with the adolescents in this study offered great insight into their life-worlds as they experienced deployment. As they described their engagement in literacy practices within this circumstance, several implications became evident that could assist educators seeking to support them.

1. Adolescents who are children of active duty military service members are likely to experience deployment more than one time throughout their grade school and high school years.
2. The out-of-school literacy practices engaged in by adolescents experiencing deployment are often a source of normalcy and constancy within the ever-ambiguous experience of deployment.

3. Adolescents do not always view their engagement in new literacy practices, aspects of popular culture, and use of technology as something that “counts” as literacy.
4. Adolescents experiencing deployment need opportunities to share their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about their life-worlds.

It is critical for educators of these adolescents to develop an understanding of their experiences as children of active duty service members. By supporting their use of literacy outside of the school setting and communicating that their practices are *valued* as *literacy* practices, educators can validate their attempts to establish their identities, enact agency, and function within circulations of power within their social communities. By creating spaces for sharing in the classroom setting and allowing one-to-one conversation opportunities, educators can offer adolescents the opportunity to express their perceptions and perspectives of this experience.

Implications for Further Research

In this study, I offered a description of the lived experiences of five adolescents as they engaged in out-of-school literacy practices within the circumstance of military deployment. By giving their voices a place of prominence in each description, I allowed the participants’ own words to tell a large portion of their stories. In order to offer rich, thick descriptions of each participant’s experiences and to achieve depth rather than breadth, I limited the study to five participants. As in all qualitative studies, the findings of this research cannot be generalized. Nor should they be. Johnson & Christensen (2008) state that the

purpose of phenomenological research is to obtain a view into your research participants' life-worlds and to understand their personal meanings (i.e., what something means to them) constructed from their "lived experiences" (p. 395).

Thus, the view into the life-worlds of adolescents experiencing deployment through their own perceptions is distinctive and valuable, offering insight into each unique lived-experience. Important studies could build on the work of this research, extending the descriptions and offering understanding of various other lived experiences of adolescents.

With the extended and repeated deployments of today's military personnel (Golding, 2011), families of service members continually make adjustments as they cope with this experience. Further research, in the form of phenomenological qualitative inquiry, could extend the descriptions gleaned from this study to include the perceptions of each family member with regard to their experiences with deployment. By including the perceptions and perspectives of the deployed service member, his or her spouse, and children, themes could emerge that would offer important insights to extend the body of research used to help and support families experiencing deployment. Within the circumstances of deployment, such studies could also be extended to broaden the body of research regarding family literacy practices. These studies would examine not only the adolescent's literacy practices, but also the interaction and interplay that occurs when other members of the family engage in literacy practices. Researchers seeking to extend the body of research with regard to family literacy studies could replicate this study by interviewing each member of a family experiencing deployment and exploring the literacy practices of each person. Would the same themes emerge from discourses of

members of the family of various ages? Would all family members engage in the same, or similar, literacy practices? Such examination would offer descriptions that could contribute greatly to the existing body of research in family literacy.

This phenomenological qualitative inquiry focused on the circumstance of deployment. As in deployment, many other circumstances can cause individuals to experience non-normative stressors and ambiguous loss. This sense of loss that is vague, unclear, and indeterminate (Boss, 2007; Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007) can occur when one is uncertain about a current situation or the possible outcome of an experience. The tenets of this study could be applied to other circumstances adolescents may find themselves situated in, such as the long-term illness of a family member, divorce, joblessness, or homelessness. Understanding the unique aspects of each circumstance by listening to the perspectives and perceptions of the adolescents within such circumstances would offer authentic description of each lived experience. Themes that emerge from such description could offer insights for parents, teachers, or support persons who are working with adolescents experiencing these unique and often difficult conditions. Such phenomenological inquiry could offer important understanding of what it is like to be an adolescent living within such circumstances.

This study focused on the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents within the deployment cycle. Extensions of this study could examine the perceptions of adolescents regarding their school-based literacy practices as well. As noted in a policy research brief by the National Council of Teachers of English,

Frequently students' extracurricular literacy proficiencies are not valued in school. Literacy's link to community and identity means that it can be a

site of resistance for adolescents. When students are not recognized for bringing valuable multiple-literacy practices to school, they can become resistant to school-based literacy. (NCTE, 2007; p. 3).

By conversing with participants about their use of literacy inside and outside of the school setting, future researchers could examine discourses to develop descriptions of the ways adolescents perceive their engagement in these literacy practices while experiencing deployment. Such extensions could include adolescents' perceptions of what "counts" as literacy, and the ways they can negotiate their literate lives between home and school.

Future studies seeking to understand the ways adolescents engage in popular culture as a distinct category of literacy practices could expand such understanding to include an examination within the context of a military deployment. Such studies could shed additional light on the ways that adolescents identify with other people in their social and discourse communities. Studies that would focus solely on aspects of popular culture through exploration of the discourses of adolescents could offer insight to educators, parents, and support persons regarding how adolescents identify with people, ideals, or concepts depicted in various "symbolic forms transmitted by various media such as television, film, popular magazines, and music" (Farber, Provenzo, Jr. & Holm, 1994; p. 11). Such studies of popular culture, framed within the circumstance of deployment, may build upon the work of this research to understand ways that adolescents perceive their engagement in these practices while coping with the stress of their situation.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the use of critical discourse analysis calls researchers to examine structures of power and their influence on social and political

communities. When inquiring about the perspectives and perceptions of adolescents experiencing deployment, researchers could ask participants to share their feelings about the power structure of the military and the way they respond to and cope with decisions and ambiguity.

Reiterations of this study, collecting more descriptions of adolescents' experiences, would offer further understanding of their widely varied and unique experiences as they navigate the circumstance of deployment. With each description of a young person's experience, new understanding could be gained through the perceptions of the adolescents themselves. By asking them to speak about their lives, listening to their stories, and then using their words to offer descriptions, future researchers can help bring to the forefront the "lived experiences of those whose literate identities are being affected the most" (Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps, and Waff, 2006; p. xxxii).

Summary

The data gathered through initial interviews, literacy logs, and follow-up interviews yielded descriptions of the lived experiences of five adolescents as they engaged in out-of-school literacy practices within the circumstance of the deployment of a family member. Three themes emerged from the individual and composite descriptions of the participants: ambiguity, responses, and roles. By placing each adolescent's words prominently in the descriptions, the perceptions of each participant, with regard to literacy practices and the experience of deployment, were at the foreground of this research.

The most important, overarching implication of this study is that educators must create opportunities for adolescents experiencing deployment to talk about their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. And when they talk, we must listen.

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Appendix A - Initial Interview Protocol

Research Question: How do the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescents in military families mediate the stress of the deployment of a family member?

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Age Range:	11-12	13-14	15-16	17-18
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Grade Range:	6-8	9-12
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Questions:

1. What kinds of things do you do in your spare time after school, in the evenings, and on weekends?

6. Tell me about your family's experiences with military deployment.

7. What are some of the procedures that your family has to go through when getting ready for a deployment, the deployment itself, and returning from deployment?

8. What things in your family change during deployment?

9. How does your role in the family change during deployment?

10. What is the most stressful thing about deployment for you?

11. Do you engage in these activities more when your family member is deployed, less, or about the same regardless of deployment?

12. How do these things that you do after school help you?

Appendix B - Literacy Log

Participant:

Date:

Please place a check mark beside each literacy practice in which you engaged today.

	E-mail
	Texting
	Instant messaging
	Facebook
	MySpace
	Journal writing
	Story writing
	Telephone conversation
	Blogging
	Letter writing
	Twitter
	Cartooning
	Videotaping
	Skype
	Drawing/sketching/painting
	Writing song lyrics
	Listening to music
	Playing a musical instrument
	Read a novel
	Read a magazine
	Read on-line articles, blogs, material on websites
	Played videogames
	Watched TV
	Scrapbooking
	Photography

What shows did you watch?

What websites did you visit?

What books did you read?

Please jot down any thoughts you have about your literacy practices today.