ANY BASE USA: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MILITARY CULTURE IN THE

CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

A retrospective qualitative study was designed to gain insight into the degree to which an emotional attachment to place assisted in the construction of the personal identities among military dependent children. The premise was that military children developed an increasing identification with the military, military bases and the community the base is located within, as a core component of their identity. Two different reminiscence qualitative method collection strategies were utilized to identify key components of identity – interviews and favorite place analysis. A three article format was followed and focuses on the development of identity and its relationship to place attachment. A literature review of military dependent youth and identity development with suggested theoretical and methodological implications is provided. Interviews were conducted constructed from a social identity theory framework and applied to the development of a personal identity for military dependents. Results from the study indicated that military dependent identity has many facets and were they illustrated in four themes: *being a military dependent, accepting military culture, experiencing cultural differences, and the reinforcement of military social rules*. The possibility of military dependents developing place attachments and their identity development due to the study participant's experiences with the cycle of parental deployment and familial mobility (domestic and abroad) was also examined.

This study also highlighted some of the areas in literature that was lacking for military dependents. It provided a qualitative study examining personal identity development in a rather understudied population. There are 15 million former military

dependents that live in the United States. There is a likely possibility that the majority of them have been exposed to parental deployment and/or mobility. More understanding is needed to grasp what effect deployment had during their childhood phase and whether or not there is lasting effects throughout adulthood.

DEDICATION

Gump·tion [**guhmp**-sh*uh* n]
Noun Informal.
1. initiative; aggressiveness; resourcefulness: *With her gumption she'll make a success of herself.*
2. courage; spunk; guts: *It takes gumption to stand up for what one believes in.*
3. common sense; shrewdness.

In Loving Memory of **Joan Elizabeth**
October 1, 1933 to October 31, 2013

Without the gumption my Grandmother taught me, none of this would be possible.

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INTRODUCTION

Context

Throughout time, human beings have developed emotional and cognitive bonds to places. These bonds develop based on our everyday experiences, especially our childhood, adolescence and early adulthood life transitions, as individuals and as members in distinct social groups (Altman and Low 1992). Due to these bonds, humans construe an attachment and an identity to these places in order to better understand the person-environment relationship. '*Place attachment'* occurs when we have reoccurring positive interactions in a particular location (Altman and Low 1992). For children, as they move into adolescence, they begin to shift away from the home setting and spend more time in the neighborhood (Dallago, Perkins, Santinello, Boyce, Molcho, and Morgan 2009). Spending time in the neighborhood allows them to make social connections to the people in that environment as well as their culture to that specific environment. These positive experiences allow not just adolescents, but any human regardless of their developmental stage, to develop unique attachments to particular environmental contexts. Literature recognizes that place attachments are shaped by the experiences we have while in a place (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Inalhan and Finch, 2004; Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Kyle, Mowen, and Tarrant 2004) and thus those experiences can be either positive or negative which will either encourage or discourage a place attachment to develop.

It is during these experiences with people, places, and things that each individual's identity is developed as well. Identity is "the stable, consistent, and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world" (Josselson, 1987 p 10). Several identity theorist believe that even though identity is fluid, it is on a continuum (Josselson 1987). This continuum has specific requirements one must meet in order to go on to the next life span transition. In order for us to achieve identities as adults, we must do so as children and adolescents first. It is a process of growth and development. Though the role these experiences play in the development of identity is widely known, the influence place has in identity development is still not extensively understood.

Statement of Problem

Children who do not make a connection to a place can feel like they don't belong. This can cause them to increase their risk factors such as poor academic performance, illegal substances, promiscuous behaviors, and trouble making in general. Identity theorists believe that people who lack a concise standard identity can have issues connecting to other people (Burke 1991). We as human beings take on several different roles throughout our lives. It is possible to have multiple identities but those who lack a concise standard identity can have a difficult time taking on other identities as well. There can also be identity confusion as the differing identities conflict with one another. When this distress happens it can either increase or decrease the congruence for an identity (Gross, Mason, and McEachern 1958).

Hay (1998) suggests that place attachment can foster resilience to identity crisis by developing healthy self-esteem, self-worth, and self-pride within the individual, group,

and cultural contexts. Children who experience place attachment and social support are more likely to show pro-social behaviors (Lenzi, Vieno, Perkins, Pastore, Santinello and Mazzardis 2012). They are more likely to be productive in society because they have a unique experience which encourages them to care about their environment and community. They are less likely to get in trouble at home, in school, and in the community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study is to gain insight into the degree to which an emotional attachment to place assisted in the construction of personal identities among military dependent children who are currently enrolled as students at Texas A&M University. The premise is that many military children develop an increasing identification with the military, military bases and the community the base is located within, as a core component of their identity.

Research Questions

1. *What were the varying characteristics of military culture that contributed to the personal identity development of military dependent youth?*

2. *What were the effects of mobility (deployment and/or mobility) on the personal identity development for military dependent youth?*

3. *What role, if any, did place attachment contribute to the personal identity development of military dependent youth?*

Significance of the Study

More and more researchers believe that place attachment is affected by the role of social interactions (Green and White, 2007; Hammitt, Backlund and Bixler 2006; Kyle, Bricker, Graefe and Wickham 2004; Hixson, McCabe and Brown 2011). This has not yet been looked at in the context of the military community. No studies thus far have been done which address identity development and place attachment in military dependents.

Positive family functioning can boost a services member's morale, retention, and ability to carry out missions (Shineski, 2003). Therefore in the broader spectrum all members of the military have the potential to benefit from this research. In order for military programs to provide effective services for their children and families, a better understanding is needed of these challenges and strengths framed in terms of the culture and function of the military during both peace and war (Park 2011). This is important during this time period because military service members need to be completely committed to the mission in order to adequately complete their mission. If there are problems at home, then the military risks the chance of those problems presenting themselves on the front line.

Children who are unable to connect to a place can feel as if they don't belong. This can increase the likelihood that they will take part in risky behaviors. Identity theorists believe that the inability to have a concise identity can also cause issues with making connections to other people (Burke 1991). Throughout life, people take on multiple identities and those who lack a concise standard identity can also have a difficult time

taking on those other identities. Identities can also conflict with each other and create identity confusion and when this distress happens it can either increase or decrease the congruence for an identity (Gross, Mason, and McEachern 1958).

Overview of Methods

This study will utilized two different reminiscence qualitative method collection strategies – *interviews and favorite place analysis*, with a sample of 5 military dependents who attend Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. In general, qualitative studies tend to be quite smaller than those of quantitative investigations. The reason I choose qualitative research, is because it is aimed at understanding meaning without making a generalizable hypothesis toward a specific population (Crouch and McKenzie 2006). This kind of research does not require large sample sizes for it seeks to reach a point of saturation and Marshall (1996) stated that an acceptable sample size for qualitative research is one that adequately answers the research questions. Multiple forms of methodology require fewer participants in the study (Lee, Woo, and Mackenzie 2002).

Interview questions will be guided by the primary research questions of the study. The interview guide (Appendix A) was developed based on place literature (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996) and was adapted by place identity measurements (Proshanky 1978). Qualitative methods aim at understanding words and expressions that are utilized to express reality and the in-depth interviews allowed flexibility in probing in order to obtain a further depth of understanding. Childhood recollections as the

primary source for qualitative data collection are classified as autobiographies, reminiscence, and narratives.

During the interview, I conducted what Chawla (1992) described as one tradition of place attachment methodology, the use of a favorite place analysis. Favorite place analysis can be derived from drawings, interviews, and essays. Moudon (1987) used favorite place analysis in a study about public streets for public use and found that favorite place analysis can illuminate the diverse inclinations of children, teenagers and adults alike. Schicker (1988) concluded that the use of a favorite place analysis can be utilized for planning public spaces for children. Chawla (1992) also used this analysis to retrospectively evaluate places of significance in children's past experiences and throughout their childhood. Interviewees were asked to bring 4-7 artifacts related to their favorite place during their childhood to the session to share its importance to them. Participant's perception of the place, its meaning and influence on their identity will be explored.

Data Analysis

Notes were taken during the interview conversation as well as audio record for subsequent transcription after the sessions. Upon completion of transcribing the data, I began the open coding process. Ryan and Bernard (2000), Patton (2002), and Thomas (2003) described this method of induction as the procedure of abridging raw sociological data into summarized themes in order to connect these themes with the research objectives of the study. These authors also state that this system of open-coding is typically used for exploratory phases of research. Each main question asked in the

interview will be considered a segment. Coding is a term used to signify the marking of segments of data with category names, descriptive words, or symbols. I will keep a master list of the initial codes and will recode at least two times. Wang (2001) recommends summarizing the themes into paragraphs of complete ideas as they relate to the research objectives. Marshall and Rossman (2006) stress the importance of interpreting the data throughout the entire coding process.

The favorite place analysis took place during the interview session. I employed the same coding procedure for this as I did for the initial interview questions asked.

Trustworthiness is an important component of qualitative data collection (Bernard 2000; Patton 2002). A study is considered not trustworthy if others are unable to confirm the study (confirmability) and recreate the study (transferability) (Shenton 2004). Triangulation of data is one way to enhance the trustworthiness of a study. I prompted my participants during the interview to make it feel more like a discussion. I also allowed participants to explore every avenue of the answers they wished to. I have built my question guide from the literature available for this unique population. Together, we analyze their favorite places they experienced while they were children.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations are the bounds which are proposed before the study and used to bound the scope of a study. For this research, my delimitations are military dependents who 1) attend Texas A&M University, 2) have had no less than two Permanent Change of Station (PCS) experiences, 3) had (ve) a parent who has deployed, and have lived primarily on military bases.

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The limitation of this study is that it was retrospective and self-reflective. One of the biggest issues with a retrospective study is memory distortion, the idea, memory fades and is distorted by experiences over time. When this happens, individuals tend to have selective recollections (Baddeley 1979). Recollection of past events and feelings can change as individuals try to reinterpret them. Therefore, retrospective data can pose validity and reliability concerns. Some scholars however believe that the trustworthiness of retrospective data is not much lower than that of similar non-retrospective questions (Coen Van Riji 1994; Alwin and Krosnick 1991). In part this is because individuals are always constructing and reconstructing our interpretations.

Definition of Terms

Military dependent- Children are considered military dependents until they are 20 years old or 23 if they are enrolled full time in a university or college.

Military children- Children who are living with their active duty military parent at the parent's current duty station.

Emerging adulthood is a time when individuals have left the dependency of childhood and adolescence, but have not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are normative of adulthood (Arnett 2000).

Deployment- This is the period when the active duty service member is away from the family due to military obligations

PCS- Permanent Change of Station. This is the technical term that the military uses when a military member and their families. For the military, every move is "permanent" regardless if they return to a location they have previously been at.

Duty Station- Location where service member holds a position in a particular command.

Active Duty- When a military member is actively and regularly works for the military. They and their command sponsored family receive all benefits of the military.

Reservist- when a military member engages in work periodically for the military. They receive most benefits but do not reside in government housing. They typically hold other jobs and only participate in military activities one weekend a month.

Branch of Service- There are four main branches of the military, including Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps

Non-accompanied- Without the service members spouse or dependents

Accompanied- With the service members spouse and dependents

Place Attachment- The bonding that occurs between individuals and their environments (Low and Altman 1992).

Place Identity- The individual's incorporation of place into the larger concept of self (Proshansky 1978).

Identity- The constantly consistent and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world (Josselson 1987).

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is formatted for a three article format. This chapter provides a brief overview of the study undertaken for the thesis. Chapter two is the first manuscript and represents the literature review section of a traditional thesis. It provides a literature review and critique of the literature on military dependent youth. It also provides the conceptualization of military dependent youth population, the benefits and drawbacks of

their status, current research related to their education, health and education status. Chapter three is the second manuscript and focuses on the study findings about identity development in these participants along with suggested future research. Chapter four is the third manuscript which entails deployment and mobility's effect on the personal identity development of military dependent youth. Chapter five provides a summary of findings of Chapter 2, 3, and 4 and presents recommendations for practical implications as well as possible future research opportunities for those researching military dependent youth.

A TYPHOON IN A PALM TREE: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF MILITARY DEPENDENT CHILDREN

Introduction

Military youth are a special population that has been understudied Life as a military dependent can be difficult due to the uncertainly faced in terms of mobility and deployment. The uncertainly and often sudden changes in hypothesized to have a negative effect on their cultural experiences, place attachment, and identity development for military dependents.

The purpose of this paper is to review the literature related to military dependent youth. This paper will present both the benefits and negatives of being a military child, parental deployment, mobility, and new perspectives on how researchers are viewing military dependent children.

Military Children

There are currently 1.4 million active duty military personnel (Department of Defense 2012 Report) and over 700 military installations across the world. There are roughly two million family members (DoD 2012 Report) who serve alongside the active duty military personnel. Of these family members, 44.1% of them are children and 86,000 children attend Department of Defense schools (De Pedro, Astor, Benbenishty, Estrada, Smith and Esqueda 2011). Department of Defense schools are federal

sponsored institutions that provide education for military dependents of all US active military personnel on military installation within the US and overseas. These schools are free for military children to attend, have standardized testing, and are accredited. Children are considered military dependents until they are 20 years old. If they are enrolled in college however, they are considered military dependents until the age of 26. This allows them to maintain military dependent status which grants them access to military bases and medical insurance.

Benefits of being a Military Child

Despite the numerous relocation possibilities, research has found that military dependent children derive benefits from their experience. For example, they tend to be more mature, adaptable, and self-sufficient in comparison to their civilian peers due to their frequent moves and continually having to make new friends (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, and Blum 2010; Weber and Weber 2005). An early study found that mobility is less likely to affect military children than their civilian counterparts because mobility becomes normative for the military family (Lavee, McCubin, and Patterson 1985). Later Weber and Weber (2005) found that military moves can actually increase the flexibility and adaptability of military Because moving is so common, children see their friends come and go on a yearly basis. Sometimes 3 years will pass and friends may move back. This early acceptance of mobility has the ability to benefit these youth throughout their adult life as well by allowing them to make fast friends and maintain friendships once people move away.

One of the most valuable benefits gained from being a military child is that the majority of spouses and dependents will be stationed at an overseas base at least once during their active duty parent's career. Children thus have the opportunity to have a firsthand exposure to other cultures. (For example, in the elementary schools in Okinawa, there is a Japanese emersion classes designed to teach children about the unique Okinawan culture.) The military lifestyle also provides an opportunity to instill high ego-resiliency in military dependents (Weber and Weber 2005). This means that they are able to adapt more resourcefully to changing circumstances. People with high ego-resiliency are also able to analyze the goodness of fit between demands and possibilities as well as mobilize problem-solving strategies (Block and Block 1980). Along with the possibility of developing high ego-resiliency, they tend have some stressors eliminated due to their military life style.

This culture serves as a gateway to knowledge about the contingency operations taking place abroad for families left behind. These youth are surrounded by other youth who are experiencing the same things they are. Military children are very aware of how their actions can affect their parent's jobs, and in this sense social control is high. It is a close-knit community in the sense. If trouble arises, youth are not the only ones in trouble as schools and military police contact not only the parent, but the parent's chain of command as well. Depending on the severity of problems, there is typically a three-strike rule on bases. Once the child gets in trouble 3 times, the chain of command has the option of filling for an Early Return of Dependents form (ERT). This happens only about 2-3 times a year for bases.

Military children are not exposed to the stress some might feel when their parent is unemployed. For the most part, military children who are living with their parents will not worry about where their next meal will come from. The military also provides assistance for those families who are in need. The military provides adequate housing which can even include furniture. They also provide full medical coverage, dental, vision, and referrals to specialty doctors when need be. If the military does not have a specialty doctor on staff then the patient can be sent to local physicians in the surrounding community.

Department of Defense Dependent Schools are set up on the same curriculum in order to maintain a consistent learning environment for military youth. Their campuses are set up similarly. DODD schools also provide integration assistance for military youth by offering them programs that allow them to connect with other students at their new schools who are either in the same types of classes or into the same kind of athletics.

In spite of these benefits, there are also risk factors that many military dependent children face.

Negatives of being a Military Child

Boss has defined ambiguous loss theory as focused on the profound uncertainty about the whereabouts and whether the loved one is dead or alive (Boss 2007). Military families often face confusion when family members experience loss of a military member who is physically absent but psychologically present (Boss 2007, 2010). She also found that family members who are experiencing this are also less likely to cope,

make effective decisions, and their grief process is usually frozen (Boss 1999). Ambiguous loss is also common in children who have a deployed parent and this becomes even more prominent if the at home parent is experiencing this complex emotion as well. Sometimes the signs of ambiguous loss are not visibly present to the untrained eye. One of the signs of this is either a sudden or gradual decrease in academic achievement. There has been a negative association found between academic achievement and parental deployment (Angrist and Johnson 2000).

Since 2001, more than two million children have been affected by deployment because of an absentee parent (Chartrand, Frank, White, and Shope 2008; Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, and Richardson 2010). Shifting household demands upon deployment can increase stress levels in military children (Petty 2009). In addition, non-deployed parents may suffer from poor mental health which can affect the military child's performance as well (Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, Jaycox et al. 2010). Children who do poorly in school have a higher probability to have other behavioral issues.

One of the most notable issues with military youth is a confused sense of identity as often times they feel as if they have no hometown. Some are able to grasp this positively by believing that "Home is where the military sends you." Others feel lost in a world where they are between cultures. Research done on Third Culture Kids (recently related to military youth) has identified the issue as feeling nomadic in a sense (Pollock and Van Reken 2001). This is discussed further in the section below labeled "New Perspectives on Military Children."

There are several other negatives for military children who are stationed overseas. According to the 2012 Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), military dependents who illustrate troublesome behaviors to the extent it adversely affects their parents performance of duty, an Early Return of Dependents (ERD) can be issued. An ERD not only interrupts the military child, it also interrupts the family unit, and the active duty military personnel through a process of paperwork, hearings, and possible return of the problematic dependent. This causes extreme strain on the family as they must appoint their child in to someone else's custody. An ERD can also be issued when divorce is in the picture. This can be disruptive if only the non-military spouse is returned to the states without the children.

Base: The Center of Military Life

U.S. military bases serve as the center of the community and culture for military personnel and their families. Bases tend to duplicate each other, building to their culture as it provides them with similar settings. Military bases are typically surrounded by a fence with limited points of access. These access points are guarded by uniformed members of the military police. One must have a military ID card in order to access the base. Officers are saluted upon entry to the base by the gate guards. There is at least one American flag flying, usually at the headquarters building. Ordinarily, a high percentage of the individuals located on a base will be uniformed military personnel. Military bases are designed for military function. Lower ranking military personnel are expected to respect senior enlisted and officers, pending severe consequences if they do not abide by this. Bases may also have different traffic regulations compared to the city

or country it is located in. Base speed limits tend to be slightly slower than the ones "out-in-town."

Base housing is assigned by branch of service and rank. Families are housed together; however, enlisted personnel and officers are housed in separate locations. These separate locations can be across the street or on the other side of the base. Base housing is typically restricted to one or two areas on the base and can include single unit homes (typically reserved for senior ranking Officers), duplex's (up to a six-plex), and apartment style units. Base housing sections typically have some sort of park within close proximity. Base housing must be returned in the condition it was assigned. If families personalize the space by painting walls or hanging pictures, the walls must be returned to their original color and the holes in the walls must be properly patched up.

New Perspectives on Military Children

Due to military dependents unique life context, military children develop their own cultural identity. This new identity is commonly referred to as *Military Brats* (Kaslow and Ridenour 1984). Military brats are more willing to accept the mentality that the mission (of their parent) must come first (Kaslow and Ridenour 1984). Some see it is a term of endearment while others see it as a negative stereotype. Another term has more recently arisen as Third Culture Kids. These are not specifically military dependents however it has been suggested that military dependents could fall into this new perspective.

Pollock and Van Reken have described Third Culture Kids (TCK) as someone who has spent a significant part of their developmental years outside the parents' culture

(2001). Third culture is a culture between cultures. TCK are also known as global nomads (Smith 1991; McCaig 1994). TCK sometimes find themselves almost fixed between cultures and unable to fully identify with one or the other (Walters and Auton-Cuff 2009). They are a unique culture as they may feel disconnected once they return to the United States (Ender 2006). More recent literature has also closely related military dependents to this subculture, Third Culture Kids (Werstch 1991, Williams and Mariglia 2002, & Ender 2002).

It has been suggested that the subgroup categorization of *military brats* are able to fit into its larger terms and share many of the same experiences and challenges. Similar to military dependents, the greatest challenges that TCKs face are forming their sense of identity and a sense of belonging to places they may live (Bennett 1993; Fail, Thompson and Walker 2004; Pollock and Van Reken, 2001; Schaetti and Ramsey 1999; Walters and Auton-Cuff 2009). How can one feel an attachment to a place they feel like they do not belong? These two subcultures are once again related to one another as they share the same problems to forge their own senses of identity and senses of belonging. Both of these cultures can either be lacking of or excel with resiliency skills in comparison to other children their age.

Although researchers have discussed "military brats," there has been no clear cut definition of what is a military brat. This identity of sort has been linked to TCKs however there has not been research conducted on military brat identity. Identity is fluid throughout our lives however the foundation for it is laid when we are children. It is difficult to grasp the magnitude of this common identity as no one has tried to define it.

This identity is one that is self-claimed and even though it lacks a definition most American's understand its terms. "I am a military brat," could be the answer to questions that inquire about one's home or origin. This undefined identity speaks volumes to those who do not even understand what it means.

Implications

The military community is strong in numbers. They help provide critical support groups, children living on a military base tend to be more informed militarily about what is happening. . This community is one of the few stable contexts that military youth have. The military family is supposed to be a supportive unit dedicated to the mission of the military and as such, everyone has their part to do, including youth. Positive family functioning can boost a services member's morale, retention, and ability to carry out missions (Shineski 2003). Therefore in the broader spectrum all members of the military have the potential to benefit from research about military culture's effect on youth. In order for any of the military's community services programs to provide effective services for their children and families, a better understanding is needed of these challenges and strengths framed in terms of the culture and function of the military during both peace and war (Park 2011). Many military families are encouraged to believe that home is where the military sends you. So to best serve this distinct population we have to understand the challenges these youth face every day.

Such research will not only serve the military dependents but the military as a whole. A happy home life contributes to a happy work life. Problems at home can reflect themselves at work, at school, or during play for people regardless of age.

Research conducted this far has provided contradictory findings. There is little research that examines the military community along with culture and the benefits it provides to military youth or the development of a military youth identity. Practitioners and educators could learn from research of this caliber by learning how to identify the early signs of behavioral issues as well as learning what works in this specific community in order to provide every opportunity possible in order for these youth to become fully functioning, positive, and healthy adults.

Conclusion

The military is 3.4 million strong (Department of Defense Report 2012) but military families remain understudied. More research is needed to determine the best way to positively engage military youth. Although they receive numerous benefits while they are dependents (Block and Block 1980; Webber and Webber 2005) are these enough to make up for the negative aspects of their childhoods? Military children develop a high ego-resiliency due to their seemingly constant mobility (Webber and Webber 2005) but more research is required to evaluate these unique factors that play into the development of their personal identities. These new generations of military children were exposed to deployment more frequently in the past 12 years than this nation has seen in decades. We still have yet to learn the outcome this has played on the children and families of those who have been deployed.

The term "military brat" seems to be an identity in and of itself. People tend to not understand the military context yet this identity suffices as a response to introductory questions. Practitioners stand to gain from understanding what the identity encompasses.

Since both positive and negative influences are associated with this identity, it is important for practitioners to understand how to build on these positive experiences in order to encourage a healthy military dependent identity. Identities are developed and nurtured: Some become salient while others are discarded. It seems as though military dependents never fully discard their identities associated with growing up military.

MANUSCRIPT 2

I AM A MILITARY DEPENDENT: THE EFFECTS OF GROWING UP MILITARY ON ADOLESCENTS PERSONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Background

Military dependent youth are a special population that has been understudied. There are currently 1.4 million active duty military personnel (Department of Defense 2012 Report) and over 700 military installations across the world. In 1991, Conroy stated that military dependents spend their entire youth in service to the United States and no one even recognized their existence. Deployed service members believe that military readiness is like a three-legged stool, the first leg being training, the second leg is equipment and the third leg is the family (Henderson 2006).

There are roughly two million family members (Department of Defense 2012 Report) who serve alongside the active duty military personnel. Of these family members, 44.1% of them are children and 86,000 children attend Department of Defense schools (De Pedro, Astor, Benbenishty, Estrada, Smith and Esqueda 2011). The 2009 Mental Health Advisory Team reported that positive family relationships are a source of resilience to service members and families that are filled with relationship problems (with either family members or spouse) are a source of stress. In order to build a strong, effective, and sustainable military force, the development of military families must be considered (Park 2011).

Since 2001, more than two million children have been without a parent because of deployment (Chartrand, Frank, White, and Shope 2008; Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, and Richardson 2010). These military dependent children have parents who are currently or were active duty and reserve from all branches of the military.

Literature Review

Human beings take on several different identities throughout their lives based on the different positions or roles that a person holds in society. It is possible to have multiple identities (i.e., mother, wife, friend and colleague), but those who lack a concise standard identity can have a difficult time taking on additional identities in various contexts. Intersectionality results as people belong to different groups and categorize themselves with them simultaneously (Deaux 1996). This may result in identity confusion as the differing identities conflict with one another. When this confusion arises, it can either increase or decrease the congruence for an identity (Gross, Mason, and McEachern 1958). Additionally, self-esteem is derived from varying group memberships once a person sees themselves as part of that group (McDermott 2004).

Josselson describes identity as "the stable, consistent, and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world" (Josselson, 1987 p 10). Several identity theorist believe that even though identity is fluid, it is on a continuum (Josselson 1987). This gamut has requirements individuals must meet in order to go on to the next life span transition. In order for people to achieve identities as adults, they must first do so as children and adolescents as it is a process of growth and development. Stets and

Burke (2000) believe that the theories of identity theory and social identity will merge together to produce a holistic view of how people obtain their identity.

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981, 1982) is a form of self-concept that is obtained by acquiring knowledge and membership of social groups. A social group is a set of individuals who view themselves as members of the same social category and hold common beliefs, norms, values and behaviors. Even though people can be part of many different groups, social identity only takes place once we categorize ourselves with specific groups. We thus value our group memberships and thus find emotional significance attached to the membership. Through this social identity, people also share commonalities with others (Deaux 1996). People are able to achieve self-esteem from their group memberships. Therefore group memberships are an imperative characteristic of our self-concepts that build our personal identity. Social identity theory focuses on how a group is represented within an individual (Abrams & Hogg 2012). Throughout our lives we become parts of many groups. As we are accepted into these groups, we are expected to maintain a group mindset. This mindset often includes belief, values, and thought processes. Once a high level of social identification with the group occurs, group think is more likely to happen (Turner, Pratkanis, Probasco, Leve 1992). This is where social identity differs from other identity theories. Identity theory values individual perspectives and actions of roles and its negotiation with counter roles; in comparison to a collective group perceptions and actions.

In social identity theory, there are two types of groups, an in-group and an out-group (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, Wetherrell 1987). The in-group represents a

membership to a group that someone has become a part of while the out-group represents people who do not fit into this category. People are able to categorize themselves into groups because they perceive themselves as objects as the self is reflexive (Stets & Burke 2000). Once people categorize themselves into the in-group, they are able to understand their social identity through the comparison of their group with the out-group(s). People perceive similarities between themselves and the "in-group" which in turn causes them to see differences in the "out-group." Thus as people categorize themselves into groups, different sides of their identities (personality) emerge.

This process of self-identification occurs in two different pathways: self-categorization and self-comparison. When individuals begin to compare themselves with other in-group members they accentuate all of the attitudes, values, beliefs, behavioral norms, styles of speech and other identity characteristics that are correlated with the relevant intergroup categorization which results increased self-enhancing outcomes (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, Wetherrell 1987). These intergroup characterizations relate to issues of more or less power, prestige, status, and more, and consequently are part of a structured society that only exists in relationship to other contrasting categories held by out-group members. For example, research has illustrated that a group's overall status might be low however, once people identify themselves with a particular group they are still less likely to leave the group due to their perceived commitment (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje 1997). Individuals seek to preserve positive social identities. A positive social identity can be obtained by the group membership as the group successfully compares itself with others. This also builds self-esteem but is seen as a

motivational pull to be part of a group. The categorization of the in-group is further reinforced with the inclusion of cultural symbols, roles, and naming that is used to form a set of standards based on designated positions, cultural meanings, and group expectations with regard to a member's role and performance (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, Wetherrell 1987). .

Due to military dependents unique social life context, military dependent children develop their own social group identity and this identity is commonly referred to as *Military Brats* (Kaslow and Ridenour 1984). Military brats are more willing to accept the mentality that the mission (of their parent) must come first (Kaslow and Ridenour 1984). Another term has more recently arisen as Third Culture Kids.

Pollock and Van Reken have described Third Culture Kids (TCK) as people who have spent a significant part of their developmental years outside the parents' culture (2001). Military dependents have the opportunity to fall into this category as the likelihood their parents are not stationed somewhere new every few years. They are engulfed in a culture between cultures. TCK are also known as global nomads (Smith 1991; McCaig 1994). TCK sometimes find themselves almost fixed between cultures and unable to fully identify with one or the other (Walters and Auton-Cuff 2009) and therefore develop their own in order to formulate their identity. They are a unique culture as they may feel disconnected once they return to the United States (Ender 2006). There are two big challenges TCKs face. These include forming a sense of belonging to places and identity formation (Bennet 1993; Schaetti & Ramsey 1999; Pollock & Van Reken 2001). This can be an issue because those who lack a congruent identity are at

greater risk to other problems such as isolation, making lasting friendships, and risky behaviors.

This paper will illustrate the factors that influence the personal identity development of military dependent youth as they navigate through some of these different cultural contexts.

Methods

This study followed the qualitative research approach provided by Crouch and McKenzie (2006) in that it was aimed at understanding meaning without making a generalizable hypothesis toward this specific population. Qualitative research does not require a large sample size as it seeks to reach a point of saturation. Marshall (1996) stated that an acceptable sample size for qualitative research is one that adequately answers the research questions.

Childhood recollections are classified as autobiographies, reminiscence, and narratives (Bell 2003) when used as the primary source for qualitative data collection. Wang (2001) furthered these classifications into four sub-categories which included narrative reminiscence, integrative reminiscence, instrumental reminiscence, and transmissive reminiscence. Narrative reminiscence refers to when participants draw modest first-person accounts and stories without any sense of moral attachment while integrative reminiscence is when participants recall their past with infliction of its meaning on their present situation. When participants remember the strategies, complications, or difficulties of their pasts instrumental reminiscence is implied. Lastly, transmissive reminiscence is when participants recollect the lessons and values they

learned during their past experiences. This study included all four aspects of these classifications.

Sample and Recruiting

Military dependents were recruited at Texas A&M University during the summer of 2013 by the use of posted fliers throughout campus and a subsequent snowballing technique. The fliers included an email address for participants to contact if they wished to participate in the study, a set of qualifying questions and indication that a $20 Wal-Mart gift card will be provided for qualifying participants as an incentive. Once interested persons contacted the researcher and were identified as qualified to participate in the study, a date and time was set up for a two hour interview.

Overview of Participants

During the time of the interviews, all of the participants were enrolled as full time students (undergraduate and graduate) at Texas A&M University. Participants ranged in age from 19-23 years. Three of the five participants were female. All of the participants had lived at least part of their lives overseas on a military base. Their overseas living included Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Iceland. Three participants hailed from Air Force families while one came from a Marine Corps family and one from an Army family. Four of them had officer parents. All of them experienced familial mobility and parental deployment at some point during their lives. The names used below are changed to respect the privacy of the participants.

Sam was the first participant was a 22 year old Filipino-American male who was a junior at Texas A&M University. His father was active duty in the United States Marine Corps (USMC) throughout childhood. He lived in Okinawa, Japan for the majority of his life as his father was stationed there. He lived on base for a brief period of time, however his family moved to off-base housing when he was 13 years old. He graduated from a Department of Defense Dependent School (DODDS) in Okinawa before coming to Texas A&M on a USMC Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship to pursue his undergraduate degree. His father is now retired from the USMC yet his parents still reside in Okinawa. He will still receive military dependent benefits until he graduates from college.

Chris was the second participant was a 23 year old white male who was about to graduate from his master's program at Texas A&M University. His father is still an active duty officer in the United States Air Force (USAF). His father is a pilot. He moved about every two years to a "radically different state or country." The longest time he has lived in one place was three years while the least amount of time he spent was less than one year. He graduated from a non-DODDS high school in Hawaii before coming to the mainland US to obtain his undergraduate degree at the University of Oregon.

Traci was the third participant was a 21 year old white female who is a junior Communications major at Texas A&M University. Her father is still an active duty USAF officer. Like the previous participant, her father is also a pilot. She lived in five to six places before graduating high school. She graduated from a DODDS high school

in Germany. Her parents are currently stationed in Germany but are expected to make a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move to another location within the year.

Andy was the fourth participant was a 19 year old white female who was just finishing up her freshman year at Texas A&M University. Her father is an active duty USAF officer. Her parents divorced after she lived in three different duty stations, one including Japan. She graduated from a non-DODDS high school in the state where her mother resides. Even though her parents are divorced, she still receives benefits from being a military dependent.

Gail was the fifth participant was a 22 year old divorced white female who was a junior at Texas A&M University. Her father is an active duty Army officer. Throughout her childhood, she lived on four different bases. Two places she lived, they lived off base. She still receives military benefits from her father. She graduated from a DODDS high school in Seoul, South Korea. She married an enlisted Army solider shortly after graduating high school.

Data Collection

Recruited military dependents participated in a two hour interview at a location on the Texas A&M campus, upon receiving Institutional Review Board approval. The initial interview guide was developed based on social identity literature (Tajfel 1982) place literature (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996) and was adapted by place identity measurements (Proshanky 1978). . Interview questions included asking the participants if they feel a connection to any of the previous locations they lived in and perceptions regarding the development of their personal identity with specific reference to being a

military dependent child. Participants were asked for their permission to audio record the interview. All of the interviews were audio recorded. The audio recordings were transcribed no more than three days after the interview took place.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis method was utilized for the interview transcripts. Thematic analyses are a coherent way of organizing or reading interviewing materials in relation to specific research questions (Banister et al 1996). After the interviews were transcribed, an open coding process was undertaken. Each main question asked in the interview were considered a segment. Coding is a term that signifies the marking of segments of data with category names, descriptive words, or symbols. Bernard (2000), Patton (2002), and Thomas (2003) described this method of induction as the procedure of abridging raw sociological data into summarized themes in order to connect these themes with the research objectives of the study. These authors also state that this system of open-coding is typically used for exploratory phases of research. Wang (2001) recommendation was taken into consideration and thus this study summarized the themes into paragraphs of complete ideas as they relate to the research objectives. Marshall and Rossman (2006) stressed the importance of interpreting the data throughout the entire coding process. In order to prevent researcher's bias, another graduate student was also asked to code the same data.

According to Shenton (2004), there are four aspects of trustworthiness. These aspects include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Triangulation was sought during interviews by comparing the artifacts with participant's

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statements about their identity. This helped the researcher check that their physical identifiers aligned with their verbal descriptions. These artifacts were seen as the physical examples of their personal identity. In order to provide transferability, thick description is provided as well as a step by step detail of the research study. While confirmability is used in order to assure the researcher remains objective during their analysis of the data, Maykut and Morehouse (1994) also recommend including personal and professional information to any phenomenon being studied.

Each participant was provided the opportunity to refuse participation and stop the interview at any time without any repercussions. Participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers. Member checks were utilized after each interview with participants. Concepts and specific terms from the first and second interviews were incorporated into the three other interviews. This information was then again checked by the first two participants. All participants were given the opportunity to re-read the transcripts upon their completion and read any subsequent publications. Only one participant was interested in reviewing documents.

Results

The participant interviews in this study reveal four key themes in relation to the development of military dependent children's personal identity. These themes were: "I am a military dependent," "Esprit de Corps," "Experiencing cultural differences," and "Reinforcement of military identity through social rules and requirements." Time spent on base within the military culture, leads these dependents to identify as a member of a group separate from the larger civilian population. Key aspects of military culture,

including patriotism and differences in rank and branch of service were expressed as elements of these individuals' personal identities. Interview participants also similarly noted the cultural differences unique to base life that other individuals might not understand. Additionally, the rules and requirements for military personnel and their dependents constantly reinforce the military identity these young military dependents develop.

I am a Military Dependent

A military dependent is anyone whose parent, spouse, or legal guardian serves in the United States military. For military dependent youth, they spend vast majorities of their time on military installations throughout their childhood. Social identity (Tajfel, 1981, 1982) is a self-concept formed by acquiring knowledge and membership of social groups with value and emotional significance attached to its membership. Participants in this study have built their identities by defining themselves by their group membership as military dependents. Sam defined his identity based on the membership within this social group. He stated that membership in this group is "The core of who I am." When an individual is associated with certain groups, they become representatives of that group (Walters and Auton-Cuff 2009). For these participants their life throughout childhood has been as a military dependent.

> I've been in the military my whole life and I've been on air force bases up until I
>
> moved
>
> here to TAMU. It's something that I guess is assumed, it's an understood thing

and don't think about it much. But at the same time people who aren't in the

military don't really understand the dynamic of constantly moving. (Andy)

It [the military] kind of shaped me into the person I am today. With military

dependency you don't get that normal childhood. Most people haven't been to 4-

5-6 countries and haven't lived in a foreign environment. (Sam)

The influence of the military culture further swayed the participant's identity. Their

identity was further developed and reinforced through military social roles, customs and

practices. This resulted in a military culture that permeated every aspect of their life

during childhood and began the process of viewing outsiders as the 'other.' Tajfel

(1982) found that group membership created intergroup enhancement in ways that

favored the "in group" at the expense of the "out group." The way these military

dependent youth regarded civilians made the importance of group membership even

more apparent.

"Civilian" is a word commonly heard on a military base. This can refer to

anyone not in the military. Wertsch notes, it is, "next to impossible to grow up in the

warrior society without absorbing the notion that civilians are very different and

sometimes incomprehensible" (Wertsch 2006). Gail admitted, "I never grasped this

concept [civilians] until I was older. There were people who lived in the states who were

different. They didn't understand the things we were going through." This can pose a

challenge for military dependents who are already struggling with this lifestyle, as they

may have difficulty connecting with other children who are nonmilitary. Unknowingly to these military dependents, civilian reinforces a difference between their in-group and the out-group. Civilians fall into this out-group category while other military dependent youth draw similarities amongst themselves as they categorize themselves together.

In turn, everything associated with the word civilian reinforces the military dependent youth's social identity. Since civilians can be seen on a daily basis, military dependents are constantly reminded of their in-group preferences as they interact with other military dependents. For this special group of individuals, their social identity becomes the forerunner for their main identity until they spend significant time out of this culture. Once this occurs, military dependent youth identity is once again treated as a social identity.

Esprit De Corps – Military Culture

As military dependents, each has immersed their selves within the military culture and it is at the core of their identity. These participants have a difficult time imagining what life would have been like had they not been a military dependent.

> "Everywhere you go, you see uniformed personnel, you see American flags, Unit flags, people running or working out."

> "The military is in and of itself a culture."

All of the participants strongly agreed with this statement. Military culture to them encompasses patriotism, understanding most of the rules and regulations of military personnel, and understanding there are different services with their own rules and regulations.

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Patriotism plays a role in this culture. Andy remarked, "Everyone stops when the colors (Flags) come down, they turn and salute." This is a culture which instills to the greatest of its ability the need for commitment of service to military members and their dependents before self.

Families are brought up understanding the importance of any mission comes before themselves.

> The military base is very much so a community, very America. Very patriotic for sure! Being in the military culture you appreciate so much more what you have back in the states. I had to make my bed perfectly every day. My father is military officer so some of that bleeds into the household. (Chris)

Sam described the situation by stating that he knew that at any given time his family could receive orders and be stationed in a completely different geographic location. Gail spoke of a similar situation where her father (like many other soldiers) was stationed at a completely different base in South Korea, closer to the border of North Korea. Her family along with the others lived further south, away from border. This means that she made sacrifices due to her father's job. Her father wasn't there to read her bed time stories; he missed several holidays, and even missed a few birthdays. These participants grew up knowing that their parent's job was more important than their desires.

Knowing the Branches of Service

For many participants, the different branches of the military affected their overall connection to other military dependents. They acknowledge that not all branches of

service are stationed at the same locations worldwide and therefore it is easier to form camaraderie with other dependents that have lived in the same locations or countries. The branch of service for these military dependents becomes part of the whole identity. They found themselves sharing more similarities amongst military dependents of their parents chosen service. To these participants, who were dependents of the Air Force (Chris, Traci, and Andy), the only time the branch of service matters to them is in recollecting past experiences.

> You can sit there and talk to them about stuff and they can relate. My dad was in the Air Force so I can relate to those better who were also from an Air Force background. It's so not bizarre when you tell people you lived in Japan. Normally anyone who was in the military as children, they can relate because they had to do the same thing, especially if they were Air Force. They had to move and did the same things I had to. (Andy)

Even though most of the participants were almost unaffected by the different branch of services, Sam was the only participant who had a service preference when interacting with other military dependents (his father was in the Marine Corps). Sam believed that his entire family influenced his perception about the Marine Corps. Both his older sister and brother were active duty enlisted in the Marine Corps before he graduated high school. He took pride in being the son of a Marine and like his siblings he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps. This led him to see other branches of service as an out-group and those who were children of Marines as the in-group. This categorization helped him build a strong sense of pride for which branch of service his father was in.

Understanding Rank Structure- We Are Not All the Same

Military dependents are socialized at an early age to understand the rank structure that divides the military community. Rank structure infers quality of life for military members. For example, higher ranking personnel (both enlisted and officer) housing allowances differ in size and quality. Four out of five of the participants were children of military officers. They spoke of the privileges they received in accordance with their parent's seniority. Chris shared a special experience made possible by his father's rank, "Once for show and tell, my dad came and landed his helicopter on our schools football field." Traci talked about on base, "Officers tend to have nicer houses, if it wasn't for the housing, you might not be able to tell the kids apart."

Although higher ranking personnel tend to have nicer housing units, this is not always the case as this differs by branch of service. Sam remembered the housing as being the same with the only exception is that each cul-de-sac of housing was segregated by officer and senior enlisted. Lower enlisted ranks tended to live in housing that was smaller than a duplex, almost apartment like, if they had a family.

As military dependent youth learn the difference between Officer and Enlisted, or senior ranking and junior ranking personnel, they start to separate themselves within their already established in-group. They start to categorize themselves into another subset of in and out groups. Within the military context, there can be an in-group of either officer children or enlisted children. Holistically, military dependent youth play this down when describing their military dependency as a whole to people who are unaware of their lifestyle.

Experiencing Cultural Differences

Culture can be the practices of a society; its customary beliefs, material objects, and social roles. There is an irreplaceable cultural opportunity most civilian children never experience. Sam stated, "I have lived in places most kids who had been my age had never heard of." Burrell (2006) supports this up by saying that military youth are exposed to another culture and it becomes normative. These military youth described their third cultures and their unique ability to experience a culture between cultures. Children of a third culture are unique culture and they may feel disconnected once they return to the United States (Ender 2006). This unique third culture that military dependents encounter due to their mobility helps them excel with resiliency skills in comparison to other children their age.

Along with this cultural opportunity comes an opportunity to travel. Traci claimed, "Because of where we lived, it was easy to go travel to other places nearby. So it would be the weekend and we would take a trip to Paris when we lived in Europe or Thailand when we lived in East Asia." This was not uncommon amongst participants. They all shared stories of being able to travel and appreciating the opportunity to experience lands where they civilian peers may only see on television.

These social interactions and experiences affected personal identity development of these participants. They describe themselves as adventurous people who love to travel and experience new things. They have a hunger for change. Deployment may seem difficult at first when they were children but it became another normative part of their ever changing lifestyle. One participant described the military lifestyle for

dependents, he said that one can attempt to explain it however one would never be able to do it justice because "everyone's experience is different but the same." Perhaps this is just something only military dependents will understand.

We Work Together, We Play Together, We Live Together

Military bases are the center of the military culture. Most bases are designed similarly to increase functionality. This makes for an easier transition for military families as it reflects comfort and familiarity. The military base represented for many participants as "Any town USA". (Chris). Other participants felt that the base was viewed as normal regardless of the high level of security that it encompassed:

> Everywhere you go there are people in uniform. It just feels normal. (Traci)

> There are armed guards at the gates, which are the access points for the bases. They are surrounded by barbed wire fences you know. (Gail)

Chris jokingly remembered how his mother used to describe the base, "We live in an exclusive neighborhood, complete with armed guards." He was referencing the prominence of the military police. There are military personnel that police the base. They are also the gate keeps to enter the base.

Military base housing had a similar experience for all participants. They noted that, "On base housing was kind of bland, all the walls and buildings were painted the same color." They described situations like, if they wanted to paint their walls; they had to paint them back to the same color they were before they got there. Gail was the only participant who painted her room every time she moved, every time a different color.

One of the biggest differences for on base housing is what you are assigned in terms of square footage and appeal. Many times these assignments were based on the enrolled personnel's military rank. For example, officer housing tends to be much nicer in quality and appearance on most bases. Enlisted families and officer families do not reside as next door neighbors. In addition to rank, housing is often segregated by branch of service. For instance, Air Force bases are heavily Air Force personnel and Army bases are the same. Navy and Marine Corps bases have a slight cross over since the Marine Corps until recently was a Department of the Navy.

Functionality is always a concern of the military as they want to be as efficient as possible. Bases are designed to be functional, separating the family sector from the military sector. Some Army posts in Korea have segregated to the extent that active duty military personnel live on a separate base from their families. This may seem extreme to a civilian but to these participants, bases seem normal.

Base Amenities

There are commonalities with amenities from base to base. "A lot of people don't understand what a commissary is but that's all we had growing up on base, which was where we got everything. If they didn't get the shampoo you liked then you just had to wait for it to come in." Some of the amenities that made up bases included a commissary (basic, grocery store needs), a BX/PX (the general store with snacks, clothing, jewelry, etc.), bowling alley, a pool, and a movie theater. These are also examples of functionality as the base has the possibility to provide its services members and their dependents with common "luxuries" in a close proximity. Another way this

serves as a factor of functionality is its ability to make transitions easier because military members and their families know "what to expect" at their next duty station.

Off Base

The presence of the military base is always apparent even if the military dependents are not on base. When military members or families go off base, they enter into the local culture and town where they are stationed. However, military social rules and customs still apply off base. and serves to reinforce the identity of a military dependent. Gail remembered, "Even off base, you can see people driving in uniform."

Off base was a place to be explored for military families as a unit and for military dependents once they came to the age they were allowed to do so. Once a dependent turned 10 years old, they were issued a military ID card which granted them access to go on and off base by themselves. Exploration for the family unit could take them all over the country where their parents were stationed and as well to neighboring countries. All of the participant's families took the opportunity to travel to neighboring countries when living abroad. In addition, the participants described locations off base where they would spend their leisure time. These locations included local movie theaters (movies were shown in English and/or the native language, sometimes with subtitles), arcades, shopping areas, beaches, and other locations of this nature.

The participants in this study all had independent exploratory experiences visiting off base military historical sites. These sites included: Arlington National Cemetery (Arlington, Virginia), Marine Corps Museum (Quantico, Virginia), Air Force Memorial (Arlington, Virginia), Iwo Jima Memorial (Quantico, Virginia), and the

Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) (South Korea). These sites reinforced their social identity as military dependents as they are staples in military history and thus become part of their culture. Military dependents are often afforded the opportunity to visit these sites as their active duty parent might take pride in their histories and its relation to their service to this country.

Place is related to social identity as it is able to contribute meaning to both identity and place. Places personify social symbols that are capitalized with social implications and significance and thus places become imperative foundations of identity elements (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell 1996).

Reinforcement of Military Identity through Social Rules and Requirements

Military bases are carefully planned as well as their military rituals. Military conditions control life for dependents whether they realize it or not. As an example, after September 11, bases were shut down while military families were not allowed to leave their house as armed guards carefully patrolled the fence lines. New protocols were adopted to give added safety to protect the military. Any time there is a threat, military families are directly affected as base protocols change.

Military social rules also affect military dependents and reinforce their military dependent youth identity.

"MP's [are] always driving around and soldiers saluting everyone. You can tell the difference between enlisted and officers. You learn to know battalions flags and ranks and their hierarchy." Gail.

They also learn at a young age they cannot hold their parents right hand while walking in case their parent needs to salute, a sign of military respect. Another realization of these rank differences is that, "Officers are saluted by junior ranking people" this is whether an officer is in a vehicle or if they are walking. They talked about if it wasn't for this fact, "you might not be able to tell the kids apart."

For all personnel, including dependents, they must show an ID card to get on base. Military dependents are issued an ID when they turn 10 years old. At this point, they are allowed to exit and enter the base at their own discretion. Sam recalled, "When you're 10 years old you couldn't really go off base by yourself without an ID because you had to have one to get back on [base]." They are also granted other privileges with this ID card, they are allowed to go to base pools by themselves, and they can purchase items (drinks, snacks, etc) at the BX or at the commissary.

There are curfews that all military dependents must follow. Lower ranking service members are subjected to curfews as well. There are two types of curfews for military dependents; there is one for when you have to be back on base and one for when you can no longer be outside of your house. Andy spoke of this as she viewed, "Curfews were the biggest limitation of being a military kid." Social rules are an important aspect of identity development because it can pose a limitation of how much military dependent youth can grow individually. This normalization of rules questionably limited their exploration of growth.

Discussion

It can be suggested that this study's participants are "success" stories. They are all full time college students, two of whom have graduate college since the interview. Not all military dependents go on to college. Perhaps future research can evaluate whether or not there is a difference between those who did not go to college and those who graduated from it. There is a possibility that these military dependents adapted to their changing environments better than others. College could be one of the predicting factors in such analysis.

According to identify theory, identity is a condition (acknowledgement) while identification is a process (Lalli 1992). The process of identification in social identity theory is called self-categorization (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, Wetherrell 1987; Hogg 2012). Through these processes, identity formation occurs. Throughout their experiences growing up as a military dependent, these participants were socialized to recognize their identity as a "military dependent." Their in-group identity is continually reinforced as they live on military bases and interact with those who are in the out-group as those do not live on the base. Due to these socialization processes, the participants continue to retain this group identity on an individual level even after they left their perceived in-group geographical settings. This could be attributed to their group identification and commitment. The stronger the identification is with a group, the more commitment to perceived role expectations and actions there are as well (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje 1997).

Identity theorists state the self has to be attained psychologically (by the process) and maintained (as a condition) in a continuous and often conflictive process of socialization (Grauman 1983; Turner & Reynolds 2011). These military dependents process of socialization is very different from their civilian counterparts. The in-group characteristics including perceptions of power, status, cultural menaings, symbols, and behaviors are continually ingrained throughout their childhood. Josselson (1987) acknowledges identity formation as a life-long process but notes that identity development in adolescence will lay the foundation for identity formation in adulthood. These adults describe themselves in terms of dependent status, military experience, and where they are from. They discussed how this particular lifestyle can be difficult for a child but their military culture taught them to be resilient to every situation they face.

Military youth cannot be treated with the same regard when it comes to youth development practice and leisure opportunities. Many bases have teen centers and out-of-school time programs located on the base, however these participants did not utilize their services. How common is this amongst military families? Could there be a service or rank difference when it comes to this? These questions need further examination. Military dependents must be flexible, resilient, and understand the importance of sacrificing their self for the mission of their parent. Practitioners need to be aware of the obstacles military youth face in order to better serve them. They also need to take into consideration the benefits of making activities culturally relevant, whether overseas or in the United States.

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

This study's delimitations were military dependents who attended Texas A&M University, those who had no less than two PCS experiences, a parent who had either been deployed to an active duty war zone or an exercise abroad, and those who had lived on a military base. Their responses were limited by their memory since it was a retrospective study.

The limitation of this study was its nature, as it was retrospective and self-reflective. One of the biggest issues with a retrospective study is memory distortion. Memory is limited by a person's mind and that can be inconsistent as with time, memory fades. When this happens, individuals tend to have selective recollections (Baddeley 1979). Recollection of past events and feelings can change as individuals try to reinterpret them. Therefore, retrospective data can pose validity and reliability concerns. Some scholars however believe that the trustworthiness of retrospective data is not much lower than that of similar non-retrospective questions (Coen Van Riji 1994; Alwin and Krosnick 1991).

This qualitative study was focused on the implications of the military culture on the identity development of military dependents. Future research could look more deeply into race/ethnicity, gender, and/or religion and its role in the identity development of military dependents. Time constraints limited access to military dependents that were still in high school. It is expected that this specific population might lead to more implications for practitioners. Future research should also consider using multiple focus

groups instead of one-on-one interviews. This could allow military dependents to recall more details when discussing military culture and its effects on their identity.

Conclusion

Through being a military dependent, accepting military culture, experiencing cultural differences, and the reinforcement of military social rules all go into the development of the personal development of military dependents. They are socialized in a military manner. Social identity theory transforms within these youth as they accept and acknowledge their role and identity as military dependents. They understand their in-group and draw comparisons to others they deem as the out-group. The experiences they encountered growing up military have stayed with them, at least thus far, in their transition to becoming independent and fully functional adults. Military dependent is not only an identity but a life style that seemingly goes with them wherever they go.

Early research has found that a positive sense of identity can be maintained by adolescences via place and the self-esteem principle (Korpela 1989). This indicates that place has the ability to foster identity through its meanings to adolescences and their experiences within those particular places. For these military dependents, mobility was normal throughout their childhood. They experienced a culture that reinforces itself on a daily basis through its own rules and regulations. The social identity of these military dependents becomes part of their holistic identity as their group membership is apparent through their interactions with civilians on and off base. They categorized themselves with each other in order to understand their in-group while placing others in the out-group. This happened on several levels. Level one was military and others (civilians).

The second level was designated by branch of service and the third level was designated by military rank structure. The last level was only apparent on base and was ignored once the in-group setting shifted to branch of service or to military dependents. In a setting where military dependent identity was not apparent, the first two levels broke down accordingly while the third was left to be inorganic.

How do these levels factor into identity development? A better understanding of these factors might provide insight into the degree to which these levels play into identity development. Practitioners could use this information while interacting with military dependents and while they are interacting with children whose parents are enlisted or in another branch of service.

MANUSCRIPT 3

VARYING ASPECTS OF PLACE ATTACHMENT AND IDENTITY

DEVELOPMENT AMONG MILITARY DEPENDENT YOUTH

Introduction

This was a qualitative study curious about the factors that play into the identity development of military dependent youth. Individual interviews were conducted with five participants who identified themselves as military dependents at Texas A&M University. Some of the questions asked in the two hour long interviews, inquired about parental deployment and place attachment. In order to assess place attachment's effect on their identities, a favorite place analysis was conducted with each individual participant. Along with the research questions, household responsibilities emerged as another important aspect of military youth culture. Deployment and mobility are two of the major influences on the military dependent child's identity development.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the role of deployment and mobility in identity development and the perceived resulting place attachments among military dependent youth.

Literature Review

The Role of Deployment and Mobility as Major Influences of Behavior

There is no way to predict how every military child will respond to either positive or negative aspects of their lives. These are part conditions of day-to-day life

that shape who they are and how they perceive their world. Older research has indicated that military youth have behavioral issues due to an ever-changing environmental context. They also cite that issues arise when the military parent cannot separate his military life style from his home context in the sense that they are perceived as authoritarian figures. Instead of learning appropriate ways to punish their children, they resort to their military roots of "do as I say."

There are two major influences on the military dependent youth's identity development. Deployment and mobility are cited as the most influential factors. Deployment is when the active duty military personnel are sent away from their family and primary home location in order to provide support to the infrastructure of the military worldwide. Familial mobility is when active duty military personnel are reassigned with a PCS (Permanent Change of Station). This can include two types of tours, accompanied or unaccompanied.

The most prominent is the frequent moves that occur within the family home life. Many   military members decide to take non-accompanied tours to overseas military bases. Unaccompanied tours are defined as when an active duty parent is assigned to a new location and they choose to leave their family in the United States either their current location (only if they live off base) or relocate them elsewhere in the US. This can put even more strain on the institution of the military family. Unaccompanied tours compared to PCSing can be 1-3 year tours without the family at that duty station. This is not uncommon when service members live off base in the United States. Since these

tours can be less than three years, some service members do not wish to uproot their family from their current location.

Deployment- Temporary Change of Station (Parent Only)

Life as a military dependent can be rather difficult. September 11th, 2001 marked a huge change for the military and the military family. Increased deployment frequency has changed the context of the military community as overseas contingency operations press on. Deployment has affected more than two million children because of an absentee parent since 2001 (Chartrand, Frank, White, and Shope 2008; Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, and Richardson 2010). These are military youth whose parents who were not only active duty and reservist but from all branches of the military. Not only are children moving every two to three years but they are living in a household where one parent is absent for extended periods of time. The average deployment rate varies by military service and can range from 3-12 months.

In 2001, a comparative study was done by Ryan-Wenger as an attempt to analyze the impact of the threat of war on children in military families. Her comparative study included active duty children, reservist children, and civilian children. When compared to reservist and civilian children, some active duty military children were found to use more destructive and be more aggressive in their coping mechanisms while others would bite their nails or daydream (Ryan-Wenger 2001). They were more likely to fight, yell, and/or scream while reservist children thought finding a way to relax was a better coping mechanism. Ryan-Wegner also found that more active duty children were expressive in their fear that their parent would die in war (2001).

Another risk associated with deployment is what is known as ambiguous loss. Boss (2007) has defined the ambiguous loss as a profound uncertainty about the whereabouts and whether the loved one is dead or alive. This happens in the military when family members feel confusion while the military member is physically absent but psychologically present (2007, 2010). She also found that family members who are experiencing this are also less likely to cope, make effective decisions, and their grief process is usually frozen (Boss 1999). Ambiguous loss is common in children who have a deployed parent and this becomes even more prominent if the at home parent is experiencing this complex emotion as well. Sometimes the signs of ambiguous loss are not visibly present to the untrained eye.

There are some benefits associated with deployment as well. Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, Jaycox, et al. (2010) said that the positive aspects of deployment include financial benefits, a sense of family pride, and increased camaraderie. When military members deploy, their pay is non-taxable (Department of Defense).

Stages of Deployment

There are three major stages of deployment recognized by researchers (Laser and Stephens 2001). Stage one is the Pre-Deployment stage, stage two is the Deployment stage, and stage three is the Post-Deployment stage.

The Pre-Deployment stage starts when the military member is informed of the deployment and this stage can last from several weeks to a year (Hall 2008; Pincus, House, Christenson, and Adler 2008). Some research has shown that the Pre-Deployment stage is the most stressful for children (Kelley 1994). This stage is also

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taxing on the family. Military members may start to pull away from their normal family activities in order to mentally prepare themselves for their departure. Others spend more time with their military unit in order to build stronger bonds with their troops. Parental engagement by the military parent decreases substantially for some while others increase because they want to spend as much time with their family as possible before they leave for the Deployment stage.

The Deployment stage is when the military member is away from their family. Deployment rates vary across different service branches of the military. They can last anywhere from 3 months to 12 months. Military youth can experience a plethora of mixed emotions and feelings while their parent is deployed. Young children often show visible signs they are struggling with the deployment. These signs are not exclusive but can include bathroom accidents, refusal to eat, refusal to sleep alone, and crying (Petty 2009). Older youth may exhibit problem behaviors such as aggression, promiscuous behaviors, and experimentive attitudes towards drugs or alcohol (Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset, and Blum 2009). They may also become irritable, whiny, rebellious, and try to isolate themselves from friends and/or family members (Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset, and Blum 2009; Petty 2009).

The Post-Deployment stage is when the military member is reintegrated into the home after deployment. When a parent deploys the dynamics of the household can change. As military parents return from deployments, military children are facing a new kind of problem- reunification/reintegration (Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset, and Blum 2009). This is the time period when the parent returns and assumes "normal" family

roles.　These roles are the ones which the family member were ascribed before the parent left.　This can be difficult because when the parent initially deployed, the adolescent typically takes on more responsibilities in the household.　This is even more common when there are younger children in the home as well.　The parent assumes that the traditional roles that were set pre-deployment should be re-instated however,, both the parent and child have changed.

The reunification process varies depending on how old the children are and how long the parent was deployed.　Some research has found that this is the most stressful time for children (Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset, and Blum 2009).　Some children have to re-establish bonds with their parent, while some children may not remember theirs and are forced to establish bonds (Rotter and Boveja 1999; Sayers, Farrow, Ross, and Oslin 2009).　Support from others was found to be a key factor to adolescents who showed resiliency while the active duty parent was deployed (Huebner and Mancini 2005).　Only 30% of adolescents who experienced multiple parent deployments and reunification periods showed signs of depression and anxiety (Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass and Grass 2007).

Familial Mobility- Permanent Change of Station (Parent with Family)

On average, military members are relocated every two to three years whether or not they have children (Croan, Levine and Blankinship, 1992; Vernez and Zellman, 1987).　Military members have no choice when they are told to move and are four times more likely to relocate in comparison to their civilian counterparts (Griffith, Stewart and Cato 1988).　Children who move more frequently have a harder time adjusting in school

(Reynolds 2000), may suffer from emotional and behavioral problems more frequently that non mobile youth (Fowler 1993) and have a harder time making friends (Brett 1982).

One study, however determined that mobility was not a factor for psychosocial adjustment of military children (Kelley, Finkle, and Ashby 2003). Research suggests that adjustment depends on the age of the child (Barrett and Noble 1973; Shaw and Pangman 1975), but suggests they are more likely to struggle when they are first entering school or during adolescence. A more recent study reported that children's behavior improved as they became older and more accustomed to moving (Weber and Weber 2005).

Moving overseas is common among military families. Not only are families subjected to adjusting to a new location and a new social environment, but also a new culture (Burrell 2006). For some military children, the first experience they have at their new "home" is in temporary housing. When my family was stationed in Okinawa, Japan, we lived in temporary housing for the first 3 months until residential quarters became available. According to the National Military Family Association, between 2008 and 2010, 40% of military families who were PCSing resided in "temporary housing" after the initial relocation. Of that, 20% waited for assigned housing; while 1 out of 4 of those waited 10 days or less to be assigned.

The Role of Place in Identity Development

Place and identity have had an ambiguous relationship in the literature. Research has called for a closer look at the relationship shared by the two (Spencer 2005).

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Environmental psychology has the tendency to see place attachment as essential to self-definitions. Place attachment in this sense provides the adolescent (individual) with a sense of stability amid change. Place attachment can reflect identity in two ways.

The first is what Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) call place identifications. This is also referred to as social identifications and is illustrated when place attachment is viewed as a place-related social category. Place identification in this instance refers to an individual's group membership based on location. An example of this is when adolescents became students at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas and learned to call themselves and other students "Aggie". Texas A&M is the place while their identity was formed based on the features that enhance their identity of the place (e.g., social experiences they had) while attending the university.

The second way place attachment is related to identity is through what Proshansky calls place identity. Proshansky defined place identity as the individual's assimilation of place into the greater concept of self (1978). In other words, place identity emphasizes the psychological construct and its relationship with an individual's social identity based on processes of identification, cohesion and satisfaction. Place identity is dependent and independent of social identity since all aspects of a person's identity have place related implications (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996)

Place identity and place dependence are the two main components used by many authors to conceptualize place attachment (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Gross & Brown 2006; Hammitt, Kyle & Oh 2009; Kyle, Graefe, Manning & Bacon 2003). Place dependence has been defined by the ability for of a

place to meet the social and physical needs of a person (Hou, Lin, & Morais 2005). Place identity is made up of two aspects which include place-referent continuity and place congruence. Place-referent continuity (Czikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Korpela 1989; Lalli 1992; Scannell & Gifford 2010) has shown that places will act as reference points to former selves, including people's actions. Therefore as people make this reference, they feel a sense of continuity within themselves and their identity. This can also maintain a sense of stability amongst their social identities as they remember the places where their group memberships occurred or how their group viewed the place. Another term closely related to place-referent continuity is place congruence. Place congruence is when people believe that places reflect their identities (Inalhan & Finch 2004). Since social identities help make up personal identities, it is noted that geographical places also reflect social identities.

Methods

This study followed the qualitative research approach suggested by Crouch and McKenzie (2006) in that it was aimed at understanding meanings ascribed to the role of deployment and mobility in identity development and the formation of place attachments among military dependent youth. Childhood recollections are often categorized as autobiographies, reminiscence, and narratives (Bell 2003) when used as the primary source for qualitative data collection. Participants went through a two hour long interview (Appendix A) who's script was adapted by place identity measurements (Proshanky 1978) and derived from place literature (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996).

During the interview, a favorite place analysis was conducted as Chawla (1992) described it as one tradition of place attachment methodology. One of the ways a favorite place analysis can be derived from is interviews along with drawings and essays. Moudon (1987) found that favorite place analysis can illuminate the diverse inclinations of children, teenagers and adults alike, in a study about public streets for public use. Favorite place analysis can also be utilized for planning public spaces for children (Schicker 1988). This analysis is also used to retrospectively evaluate places of significance in children's past experiences and throughout their childhood (Chawla 1992). Participant's perception of the place, its meaning and influence on their identity was explored.

Sample and Recruiting

During the summer of 2013, five military dependent children were recruited from Texas A&M. Fliers were posted throughout campus and a subsequent snowballing technique was utilized. The fliers included a set of qualifying questions, an email address for participants to contact if they wished to participate in the study, and indicated that a $20 Wal-Mart gift card will be provided for qualifying participants as an incentive. A date and time was set up for a two hour interview once interested persons contacted the researcher and were identified as qualified to participate in the study.

Findings

This study looked at the participant's experiences with deployment and mobility. For the purpose of this paper, there are two different types of mobility. Deployment

represents when the active duty parent is gone for a specified period of time in an active duty war zone. The second type of mobility is familial mobility. This is when the family is relocated, also known as a Permanent Change of Station (PSC). The definition of family for this purpose is the active duty parent, their spouse, and any dependents (either children or relatives). This paper will discuss the participant's different views of deployment and mobility and their experiences associated with each.

The first section will discuss deployment. Respondents reported that the initial onset of emotions was troublesome but as they grew older, deployment became just another normative experience they had while growing up. The hardest part for them was dealing with their mothers who struggled more with the deployments. The challenge for them individually came when their father returned home as "everything kind of went back to normal." These military dependent's fathers had the tendency to act as if they had not just been deployed for the last 6+ months. All of the household responsibilities shifted once again.

Along with deployment (parental mobility), military dependent youth face another kind of mobility. They are uprooted from newly learned communities every two to three years as their parent is reassigned to another duty station. Sometimes this can be a move within the same country and other times, it means leaving the country they are residing in.

While facing these two adversities, military dependent youth are still able to form place attachments which undoubtedly effect their identity development.

Deployment

Dad's Leaving: Preparing for Deployment

Deployment is when the active duty military personnel is sent to a location (either known or unknown) away from their family in order to provide support to the infrastructure of the military worldwide. Absentee parents have affected more than two million children since 2001 (Chartrand, Frank, White, and Shope 2008; Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, and Richardson 2010). These are children have parents who were active duty and/or reservist from all military branches. Some research has shown that the Pre-Deployment stage is the most stressful for children (Kelley 1994). This stage is also taxing on the family. Military members may start to pull away from their normal family activities in order to mentally prepare themselves for their departure. Others spend more time with their military unit in order to build stronger bonds with their troops. For these participants, there were certain symbols that triggered their expectations of what laid ahead. "Whenever dad would break out the green duffle bags, it was time for another deployment or exercise." Others expressed the initial onset of emotion when their parent's work schedule changed. This, for them, meant that their parent's unit was preparing for deployment. They could tell by the look on their father's face whenever he would say he had something to talk to them about.

While Dad's Away: Coping With an Absentee Parent

Coping with an absentee parent can be difficult not only for a military spouse but for military youth as well. They tried not to make a big deal out of things like father's

day at school. Traci said her, "Mom kind of freaked out when it was father's day at school since my dad couldn't be there." This participant recalled how it her mother was the one who made this experience more difficult because she made a big deal out of it. She was more concerned with how the school was being unfair to have days such as these even though her daughter did not think twice about this being unfair. This incident was the only bad incident described by participants in this study. Participants did not believe they had much difficulty dealing with deployments because they became a normal part of life in the military.

Support from others was found to be a key factor to adolescents who showed resiliency while the active duty parent was deployed (Huebner and Mancini 2005). These participants did not use support services however in retrospect they believe they showed resiliency. Chris, "There were plenty of services available but we never really took advantage of them, just not the kind of people we are I guess." They supported each other within the family unit. Family relatives who lived nearby were a good support system as well.

Deployment's Effect on School Grades

There has been a negative association found between academic achievement and parental deployment (Angrist and Johnson 2000). Academic achievement can decrease as stress and anxiety increase. Shifting household demands upon deployment can increase stress levels in military children. There is a possibility of the non-deployed parent to suffer from poor mental health which can affect the military child's performance as well (Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, Jaycox et al. 2010). Andy and Gail

noted a drop in their grades during parental deployment. They attributed this only to the fact that when their father was away, they stopped caring about school work since he was the enforcer of this part of their lives. Something surprising came from this line of questioning as well. Chris described how his grades actually improved. He said, "Throwing myself into school helped me deal with his absence. I won every type of award my school had to offer."   Not only was this helping him deal with the absentee parent, but he felt as if they were making their dad proud for doing so good while he was gone.

Man of the House: Household Responsibilities

This group of military dependents took on household responsibilities starting from a young age. Gender differences were apparent in the household responsibilities. Female participants did inside work while their male counterparts did outside work. Chris recalled that he learned how to mow the lawn when he was just eight years old. He stated that he had to "become the 'Man of the House.'" Female participants who were the eldest in the family were assigned duties such as cleaning dishes, cooking, preparing younger siblings for school, and babysitting duties.

Along with these gender differences there were also age differences in the distribution of household chores. Andy recalled that being the youngest, her eldest sister took on the role of being the second mother hen. She would help with more difficult chores. Traci recalled taking care of their siblings as part of their new found responsibilities. This included making sure they were up for school, dressed, ate breakfast, brushed their teeth, did their homework and some even helped with younger

siblings homework assignments.   These respondents felt the need to help around the house to lessen the burden for their mothers.

These military dependents understood that their lifestyle was difficult at times without a father present but they also understood the hardship it placed on their mother when there was an absentee parent. The participants in this study however found more difficulty trying to help their mother cope with the experience. In order to make this smoother for their mother, starting at a young age, they would do more things to help around the house without being asked. They took care of their younger siblings.

Dad's Home: The Reunification Process

The reunification process is a critical moment in the military family's life. It is when the service member returns home from a deployment. As military parents return from deployments, military children are facing a new kind of problem-reunification/reintegration (Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset, and Blum 2009).   Some research has found that this can be the most stressful time for children (Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset, and Blum 2009).   Some children have to re-establish bonds with their parent, while some children may not remember theirs and are forced to establish bonds (Rotter and Boveja 1999; Sayers, Farrow, Ross, and Oslin 2009; Slone and Friedman 2008).   This is also the time period when the parent returns and assumes "normal" family roles.   These roles are the ones which the family member were ascribed before the parent left.   The parent assumes that the traditional roles that were set pre-deployment should be re-instated however, both the parent and child have changed.

Chris stated that when his father came home from deployment, "Everything went back to the way it was and he helped around the house, just as he did before." He thought that in retrospect, he did not have any difficulty with this process because he was excited that he had returned home. It also helped that it gave them more free time to do other activities that they wanted to do such as play video games, athletics, and being able to spend more time with their friends. Female participants struggled more with the reunification process. These youth described his return quite differently. They said he would come home and act like nothing had changed, even though everything had for them.

Familial Mobility

Familial mobility is when active duty military personnel are reassigned with a Permanent Change of Station (PCS). This can include two types of tours, accompanied or unaccompanied by their family members. Military service members are repositioned across the globe every two or three years regardless if they have children (Croan, Levine and Blankinship, 1992; Vernez and Zellman, 1987). Military service members have little choice when they are ordered to relocate and are four times more likely to relocate in comparison to their civilian counterparts (Griffith, Stewart and Cato 1988).

On the Road Again. And Again. And Again

The military lifestyle also provides an opportunity to instill high ego-resiliency in military dependents (Weber and Weber 2005). This means that they are able to adapt more resourcefully to changing circumstance such as mobility. People with high ego-

resiliency are also able to analyze the goodness of fit between demands and possibilities as well as mobilize problem-solving strategies (Block and Block 1980). Children who move more frequently have a harder time adjusting in school (Reynolds 2000), may suffer from emotional and behavioral problems more frequently that non mobile youth (Simpson and Fowler 1994) and have a harder time making friends (Brett 1982).

> When I found out we were moving to Japan I thought I had to go to a Japanese
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> school. I didn't understand the military enough at that point and didn't
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> know I would be living with other Americans and going to school with
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> other American kids. (Sam)

Moving overseas is common for military families. Not only are families subjected to adjusting to a new location and a new social environment but also a new culture (Burrell 2006).

Learning to be the New Kid

Andy said she liked going to new places, starting over, and being able to making new friends. She also believed it gave her the opportunity to be whoever she wanted to be and she liked it. To these military dependents, moving also meant, "Lots of boxes" and "Lots of eating alone in the cafeteria." Some literature says that kids have a hard time making lasting friendships because of mobility. Research has said that military youth have a harder time making friends (Brett 1982). Research suggests that adjustment depends on how old the child is (Barrett and Noble 1973; Pinder 1989; Shaw and Pangman 1975) but children are more likely to struggle when they are first entering

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school or during adolescence. A more recent study reported that children's behavior improved as they became older and more accustomed to moving (Weber and Weber 2005).

Chris described a lifestyle of learning early how to "suck it up and move on." Sometimes they would live in places for only two years. They acknowledged that in the beginning of every move they struggled a little getting adjusted to the culture and the new environment however once they were past that stage they liked where they lived. This was however bittersweet for some of them as they had a hard time embracing the change since now that they liked it, they already knew they were going to be leaving in a year or so. The military teaches children to be self-sacrificing.

> As a family, you move however often they [military] need you to or how often your parent's job needs you to. Your parent has to work with the system. We usually ended up going to a lot of squadron Christmas parties. The military community understands and they are like your family too but at the same time they move too. Friends and houses changes often. You just have to be used to brown cardboard boxes. (Traci)

Esprit de corps molds them as they mature and as the time passes they learn to cope with constant change. Participants acknowledged the difficulty this seemed at the time of the relocation however looking back they no longer feel that way. They enjoyed every place they lived, even if they hated it at the time. They are even grateful for the opportunities they had to live in those countries.

Military youth tend to be more mature, adaptable, and self-sufficient in comparison to their civilian peers due to their frequent moves and continually having to make new friends (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, and Blum 2010; Weber and Weber 2005). An early study found that mobility is less likely to affect military children than their civilian counterparts because mobility becomes normative for the military family (Lavee, McCubin, and Patterson 1985). Later Weber and Weber (2005) found that military moves can actually increase the flexibility and adaptability of military children. These participants acknowledged an early acceptance of mobility into their lifestyle. They credit this as a big reason of why they are able to adapt to new environments and situations that they now face as adults. Participants discussed two very unique opportunities they were afforded because of their mobility habits.

Forming Place Attachments

One of the interests for this study was if and how military dependent youth were able to form place attachments due to their unique mobile lifestyle. This section of the paper will briefly cover these military dependents abilities to form place attachments to specific physical locations as well as conceptual locations, known as place genres. These physical locations included specific towns, bases, states, and houses. Conceptual locations included broader categories such as a military base, a country, and familial residence where the participants only visited.

Place-referent continuity is made possible by looking at past experiences. Places represent who people used to be and their previous actions. For some people, this draws continuity amongst their identity. For these military dependents, as they remember

living on bases, they find continuity from their identities as military dependents. Place identity is critical in forming place attachments. The relationship between place and identity is similar to that of social identity. People define themselves by the groups in which they are a part of. Likewise, people define themselves by the places they have lived or feel attached to. The participants in this study shared the social identity of military dependents. They each had a place identity associated with their larger feelings of place attachment.

In short, these military dependent youth were able to form place attachments both to specific locations and to conceptual places. This was determined by conducting a favorite place analysis with each individual participant. The favorite place analysis was analyzed using their favorite childhood location. Every participant was able to identify at least one location that they felt a unique and special bond toward.

> My favorite place…being near a flight line with airplanes! So pretty much any base we lived on and being able to watch planes and [heli]copters take off. Yes. So my first memory was when I was 4 and we lived in Lubbock, Texas. I was playing with our family dog in back yard, watching planes just circle around. (Chris)

Most of the participants felt these connections with the base that they lived on the longest while others felt a connection to the base where they graduated high school. Three of the participants described locations that they experienced while they were in high school. One of the participants described the last base that she lived on overseas when she was a small child.

When I think about Tokyo I think about my childhood. It's a main part of my childhood. I soaked it up a lot when I was there. The community I had on base was really cool. We would play street hockey all the time or ride my bike around. I remember having really good family friends. Our families would always hang out. It was cool. I miss it. I can't remember the people's names anymore but I wonder what they are doing. (Andy)

The last participant described a place that her family went in between every PCS move.

I don't really have a favorite place. We didn't have a choice going anywhere. My grandpa had a cottage in Indiana, we would ask if we were going there for the summer to the lake. That was a connection. There were no military there. It was a break from the military. It was in between moves. We would go the lake first before we moved. If I didn't have the lake then there probably would have been nothing in between the moves to put me in a better mood. (Gail)

Discussion

What most people do not understand is that deployment is a process. Mobility is different from deployment as it involves the entire family and not just the active duty service member. This study's military dependents experienced mobility more than deployment. Preparing for deployment is usually the most stressful stage for military children (Kelley 1994). The soon to be deployed parent can become withdrawn as they might be spending more time with the military unit they are set to deploy with. Other

times the parent can devote extraordinary amount of time with the family which could possibly make the deployment separation harder once it occurs. However, with the participants of this study, they only difficult time they had was in regards to how their mother dealt with the deployment. For them, this was the most stressful aspect of deployment. The participant's parent neither became withdrawn nor did they spend more time with the family. All of their experiences were that their parent acted "normal" before they left.

The next stage of deployment is the actual time when the military service member is abroad. This affects their children's school grades. For the military dependents in this study, only two saw drops in their grades while the others "threw" themselves into their schooling in order to help themselves cope with the deployment. There has been a negative association previously found between school grades and deployment (Angrist & Johnson 2000). However, one very interesting finding in this study indicated that a drop in school grades was not directly linked to deployment. Further research is needed to expand this finding.

The last stage of deployment is the reunification process. This proved to be difficult for many of this study's participants. Since deployments can vary at a wide range of length, there was no prediction for these military dependents for how long their parent would be gone for. These military dependents took on household responsibilities while their parent was deployed in order to help take some of the weight off of the remaining parent. The issue with them taking on these responsibilities came up when

their parent returned. No longer were they needed to fulfill their new found responsibilities but their parent acted as if he had not been deployed.

Mobility is considered to be one of the toughest parts of being a military dependent youth. For these participants, mobility became normative. They understood that the mission of their parent must come before them. This meant if they needed to move (again) then they would do so with a smile on their face. They all admitted that it was harder when they were younger, when they didn't understand the context of the world they were living in. As they got older and learned how to navigate through military culture -- constantly making new friends and living in new houses, they learned to appreciate and accept the culture of the military.

Given the relationship between place and identity, researchers are still attempting to understand, what happens to a child who is not rooted to a specific physical home environment? What impact does involuntary displacements have on children's senses of place attachment and sub sequentially their identity? Research has indicated that even voluntary re-locations, such as going away to college, can potentially cause problems in adolescent's identity development (Brown and Perkins 1992). Those authors suggest that involuntary disruptions in place attachment can have major consequences for the psychological well-being of a person by causing them to attempt to establish new identities or re-identities (reinforcing the identity they already ascribe themselves). Participants in the study however showed lack of place attachment as a factor in their identity development. Their involuntary displacements helped build different facets of their identity by making them more resilient to change. They enjoyed trying on different

identities while they moved to different places. All but one of the participants embraced the displacements.

The formation of place attachment has long been linked to identity development. When children lack a connection to a place, they can suffer from identity crisis, however it has been suggested that place attachment can nurture resilience to this crisis (Hay 1998). It does so by developing healthy self-esteem, self-worth, and self-pride within the individual, group, and/or cultural contexts. For these participants, their place attachments actually enhanced their identity as a military dependent. All of their place attachments occurred on or because of military cultural settings.

Conclusion

Deployment is not only difficult for the military spouse left behind, but for the entire family. More research is needed in order to have a conclusive idea of how this now "normative" deployment weighs in on the identity of military dependent youth. Deployment is a process which not only affects the mental capacity of the family but its day to day lives as household chores/responsibilities shift. These participants learned to deal with mobility. It was another aspect of their military lifestyle that became normative. It became part of the culture that made these participants who they are today.

Place attachment was possible for these military dependents. For those who are struggling with the military lifestyle, perhaps it can be used as a bridge. As practitioners, how do you foster this relationship between individuals and place? Do you merely need to introduce the two and hope it takes off like a whirlwind romance? More research

needs to be done within the military context in order to further understand this

relationship.

SUMMARY

This retrospective qualitative study was designed to help understand what aspects go into the identity development of military dependent youth. The first chapter was a basic background for the study, describing the population. The population was military dependents who attended Texas A&M during the summer semester of 2013. It also discussed my methodological foundation for the study. Chapter two was my first manuscript that covered the literature on military dependents and the issues they face while growing up. Two of the biggest aspects that the literature talked about were mobility and deployment. The third chapter was my second manuscript. I feel as if that manuscript was the heart and soul of my study. I used participant interviews as my main data collection. I discovered the different aspects of military life that effected the identity development of military youth dependents. These different aspects covered being a military dependent, accepting military culture, experiencing cultural differences, and the reinforcement of military social rules. The fourth chapter was my third manuscript which specifically covered deployment and familial mobility and their effects on military dependents ability to form place attachments.

This final chapter will review the overall findings for the entire thesis and present my final thoughts.

Overview

From a practical stand point, this information can be invaluable to the military in regards to their youth programming. Military dependent identity is developed through

the experiences these youth have with people, places, and things. The premise of this thesis is that military children develop an increasing identification with the military, military bases and the community the base is located within, as a core component of their identity. Military culture undoubtedly played a role in their identification as a military dependent. Mobility and deployment also affected their identity as it became salient with the military lifestyle.

Hay (1998) suggested that place attachment can foster resilience to identity crisis by developing healthy self-esteem, self-worth, self-pride within the individual, group, and cultural contexts. More research needs to be done in order to analyze the effects of place attachment on the personal identity development of military dependent youth. However this study did find that place attachments occurred in a military cultural context and therefore enhanced the military dependent identity of these youth.

Social identity theory looks at group representation in individuals (Abrams & Hogg 2012). The basic assumption is that our group membership helps define one part of our self-concept. We continuously categorize ourselves and others into different groups. For these participants, the group was military dependents. Traci summed it up with one statement, "Everyone has a different experience and shared experience that make us who we are and similar to one another." This was why anyone who came from a military background was able to fit into the initial designation of the in-group and out-group.

Through their self-categorization, military dependents developed this identity that remains with them for their entire lives. The reason this identity remains constant is

because of the value they place on it. Positive social identities help establish self-esteem. As these military dependents grew up in this military culture, their experience such as mobility, social rules, deployment, and experiencing cultural differences have had positive lasting impacts on their identity. They have all retained their military dependent identity once they went to college.

Before I started this journey, there was a gap in the literature. Hardly any conclusive studies had been conducted about military dependent youth and their identity formation, let alone place attachment. This study demonstrated that people between the military culture and one owns identity development. It has brought new light to mobility and deployment as it has shown that these factors that were once believed to be the two biggest issues military dependents faced, have become normative in today's society.

Active duty military personnel are not the only ones making sacrifices for this country. More research is still needed. This study would have benefited from conducting this interview and favorite place analysis amongst high school students who have an active duty parent. Initially this study called for focus groups but due to the interviews being conducted at Texas A&M University, not as many participants were identified as I would have liked.

Final Thoughts

This was a qualitative study and thus this research is influenced by my own understanding of my particular circumstances. I grew up overseas on a military base in Okinawa, Japan. I seek out others who share the same or similar experiences I had throughout my childhood. How is it that I came to be drawn to others like me? There is

a specific identity role I take on because of these experiences. I have a strong place attachment to the location my family was stationed at for nine years. So it left me wondering if place attachment had an effect on the identity I have ascribed myself. How does this intersect with the place attachment I feel for another duty station? I have very unique circumstances in comparison to other military children. I only lived in three places from the time I was born until I graduated high school. So the question begs, where am I from?

When I think about this question, my initial response is Okinawa, Japan. However, the more I have to explain it the more complicated this answer seems to become. Most people respond with "you don't look Japanese," which I tend to treat with a humorous response asking people if they're sure or that my parents must have lied to me. Once I proclaim my home location, people tend to next ask where my parents live which then I must respond that they live in Virginia and I make sure to include that I have *never* lived there. They do not seem to cognize that to a military child, *home* is usually understood that it is where you live, where your family lives, or the location you have lived the longest. Many military families are encouraged to believe that home is just where the military sends you. To some extent, one might think that military children are lucky in the sense that they seemingly get to choose where their "home" is.

When military children make several moves throughout their childhood, they can have a hard time adjusting to their new location as home. I saw my friends come and go every 2-3 years. I saw friends leave and later come back as their parent was stationed in Okinawa again. It leads me to question if that is the reason I believe place attachments

can be fluid. Fluid in the sense that even though hardly any (if any) of the same people still reside in Okinawa and that many physical environments there have changed, I am still drawn to associate myself with the identity of being a military kid from Oki. Therefore, I hesitate to articulate as I cogitate about other military children who shared similar experiences in Okinawa or in other locations experiences with place attachment and how it has or has not possibly affected their identity development.

Critical inquiry is a theory which seeks to change situations. I believe this study has the ability to open a door into understanding the unique culture of the military child. Military service members make sacrifices on a daily basis therefore we should try to help improve their quality of life. I believe this is just one way that we can do so. If we understand this unique culture, then we can work together to preserve and improve it. Out of the worse, we have to create the better.

My examination of military dependent children's concepts of place attachment and its effects on identity development within the military community is shaped by my social constructivist epistemological stance. This disposed me to adopt a theoretical perspective rooted in symbolic interactionism and critical inquiry. Do we want children to associate their identity with being military dependents as they are referred to in the military context? Are there benefits associated with having a place attachment to multiple locations considering the ever changing environment they live in? It leads me to wonder if they can even develop multiple place attachments and how this effects their identity development.

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Interview Question Guide

<u>Personal Identity</u>

1. Can you describe yourself?
2. How do you define your identity?
3. What role do gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity and other dimensions play in this definition?
4. What are some of the practices that reflect your identity?
    PROBE: *Why do you think you included (or didn't include) your relationship to the military? How do you think you would have turned out differently had you NOT been a military dependent?*

5. Do you feel a bond with someone once they identify themselves as a military dependent? Why or why not? Does it matter to you if their parent was in the same branch of service as your parent?
6. Have you found friends here who also are military dependents?
7. Do you interact with them on a regular basis?
8. What about you military dependent friends from childhood, do you keep in touch with them? Do you interact with them on a regular basis?

<u>Military Deployment And Dependent Status</u>

9. Describe to me what it was like growing up as a military dependent?
    PROBE: *Were you close to your extended family? Are you still benefiting from being a military dependent? What benefits did you receive as a military dependent?*

10. Tell me about your experience moving around?
    PROBE: *About how many different schools did you attend? How many different bases did you live on?*

11. Which of your parents was the military member? What branch of service where they in? Do you have other family members who are military?
    PROBE: *Did they ever go on a non-combat related deployment? What about a combat deployment? How long were they gone for?*

12. What was life like for you while they were gone? Did you have to take on any extra responsibilities? Do you think your grades suffered while doing so? Do you think this made any other aspect of your life difficult while they were away?

 Place Attachment

13. Given the number of places you have visited, when you think back to your childhood, what was one of the special places to you that come into your mind first?
14. LIST HERE_____

15. Tell me about your connection with this place. How important is this place to you and your life? Begin wherever you like and take the time that you need. [If needed, probing: Can you mention some particular places or stories or people?
> PROBE: *Describe the physical setting of the place. Are there any symbols, features or elements that help frame the place (examples could be natural resources, creatures, historical landmarks, events, etc.).*

16. What makes this place meaningful for you? How does that place make you feel? Discuss your feelings (positive and negative) when I mention this place.
17. I would like for you to tell me about the most important experiences you have had with this place .
18. Is this place somehow part of your identification?
19. Do you connect yourself with the place you have previously mentioned:
> a.   Would you venture to say that you are from that place?
> b.   Do you have a sense of community there?
> c.   Do you feel like you have an instant connection with other people who say

they are from the same place?
> d.   What do you miss most from this place? Why is that?
> e.   How was life in this place compared to life in your current country of

origin (the US)?

20. What are the most important characteristics of this place?
21. How would you describe this place to someone who'd never seen it?
> PROBE: *Could you describe some things and/or places what for you are symbolic to this place? Why? If you have to show this place to your friends who visit it, where would you take them? Why? Are there some places you would not take your friends? Why?*

Home/Rootlessness

22. I would like to ask some additional questions about your own special places elsewhere. Where do you consider home? Could you describe home? Have you ever lived there? How long did you live there?
23. How do you feel about the place where you live permanently?

PROBE: *What does the phrase being at home mean to you? Tell me about a place what you would call a home place, not just a place of residence? What makes a place a home place? How important is for you knowledge of your roots? Does this knowledge have some connection with your home place?*

Military Lifestyle

24.   Describe the military lifestyle? What benefits or limitations have you experienced?
25.   To you, is the military in and of itself a community, regardless of where you are?
26. Is there a culture that goes along with this community? Could you describe it?

Mobility

27. About how many different schools did you attend?
28. How many different bases did you live on?
29. Do you feel like moving around limited you from making positive connections with the military? How about in regards to making lasting friendships? Do you feel like you moved too often to establish connections to nay of the locations where you lived?

Favorite Place Analysis

Please explain to me the artifacts you brought with you today.

How do the artifacts make you feel?

Why did you choose these particular ones

Okay now I would like you to think of your favorite place growing up.

How is this artifact related to that place?

What is the first thing you remember about your favorite place?

Why do you think this is your favorite place?

How does it make you feel?

What does it make you feel?

Does it make you feel safe, happy, and/or secure?

Were your first interactions with this place pleasant?

Were they ever unpleasant?

Do you associate this place with the military or with your military experience?

Would you ever want to go back to this place?

Have you already gone back to this place since you left it?

Do you think this place affected your relationship with the military?

Could this place trump any bad experience you were having at the any time?

Did it make dealing with the difficulties of growing up military seem bearable or not as bad as you initially thought?

Can you imagine not ever living in that place?

Do you think that would change who you are today?