Anxiety levels, problem solving abilities and social support in military spouses experiencing spousal separation prior to a military confrontation

1991

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ANXIETY LEVELS, PROBLEM SOLVING ABILITIES AND SOCIAL SUPPORT IN MILITARY SPOUSES EXPERIENCING SPOUSAL SEPARATION PRIOR TO A MILITARY CONFRONTATION

BY

ELIZABETH C. SMITH
B.A., Auburn University, 1988

THEESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Masters of Science degree in Clinical Psychology in the Graduate Studies Program of the College of Arts and Sciences University of Central Florida Orlando, Florida

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1991
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Abstract

The effects of spousal separation on military dependents were investigated. Thirty-four female spouses of active duty United States Air Force personnel responded to a mail-out questionnaire following deployment of troops to the Persian Gulf, yet prior to the beginning of the Desert Storm military confrontation. The study examined the state anxiety levels (Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory), the problem solving abilities (Problem Solving Inventory), and the social support levels (Provision of Social Relations Scale) of the subjects. The results of this investigation revealed that the subjects without children perceived themselves to be stronger problem solvers than those subjects with children, that the subjects experienced higher levels of social support from their friends rather than family, and subjects not attending a support group viewed themselves to be receiving more social support than those subjects attending a support group. These results were significant at the $p < .05$ level or lower. These findings are important in that they provide direction for future research with this population, yet, due to the small sample size, they cannot be construed as representative of the population as a whole.
INTRODUCTION

This study is being introduced in response to the lack of research regarding the effects of separation in military families. Separation is a common occurrence for any military family and, in the opinion of this researcher, a constant threat to its stability. The emotional and social accommodations made by the dependent spouse during the separation affect the family's reintegration, especially the marital relationship after the return of the absent spouse (Hill, 1949; McCubbin, Dahl, Lester, Ross, 1975). Additionally, for couples with children, the pressures of the separation and the modifications made during it, of which the mother's response plays a significant part, have been shown to negatively affect the children in the family greatly (Dahl and McCubbin, 1975). Greater comprehension of the coping patterns demonstrated by the couples during separation from the active-duty spouse has important implications for the individuals dedicated to planning services for these families and preparing them for both separation and post-separation reintegration (McCubbin, Dahl, Lester, Benson, Robertson, 1976).

Traditionally, it has been the wife who was termed the "dependent" and who was left behind. The husband was almost always the active-duty individual and therefore was the one who had to leave the family unit to serve his country. However, in the current generation, increasing numbers of women are electing to join the military. This is resulting in a new development of the husband being the one who must remain with
the family unit.

One of the most difficult times for any military family happens when the active-duty spouse is reassigned to a remote tour. A remote tour can last for as many as eighteen months and there is typically no possibility of bringing the family along (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1980). This is a primary cause of separation in the military. Additionally, separation is possible when the active-duty individual is deployed to a combat situation. While the second type of separation may sometimes be shorter in duration, it carries with it an increase in the potential for danger to the active-duty spouse.

A remote tour means several changes for the military family. For those families unable to live on base, it can mean estrangement from the military community. With the active-duty individual out of the household, the family may feel separated from the close-knit military community. This can be stressful for the spouse who remains behind since it may be accompanied by feelings of abandonment by their absent spouse, an overload of familial responsibilities, and separation from their extended family network.

When children are involved, it can be especially overwhelming for the dependent spouse. The spouse left behind must assume those roles of the absent spouse and therefore, take on the parental roles of two people (Hunter, 1982). In the past, it was the mother taking on the role of the father. In today's military, it is very possible to have a husband assume the role of mother for his children. Research in this area is absent and it will be very interesting to see what results when this category of individuals are focused upon in quality research.
In past investigation of the separation for military families, it has been observed that the dependent will experience many physical and psychological ailments during the separation. Wives whose husbands have been deployed on an unaccompanied tour, complained to doctors of "body weight fluctuations, nervousness, throat problems, emotions, headaches, high blood pressure, tiredness, loss of pep and spinal and back difficulties" (Hunter, 1982, p. 25). In another study, conducted by Snyder (1978), it was found that a positive correlation existed between the number of illnesses reported by submarine wives and the length of their husbands stay at sea.

Along with the existence of physical problems, there is likely to be an occurrence of emotional and psychological problems as well. Nice (1978) stated that when the wife has been left behind, her emotional resources may be overextended due to extra financial and occupational requirements.

Many variables such as age, education level, and whether or not the dependent spouse has experienced separation from the active-duty spouse before, affect the emotional stability of the dependent during separation. MacIntosh (1968), for example, reported that the younger the wife, the more likely she was to encounter separation-related difficulties. Nice (1983), in his study with Navy wives, agreed with MacIntosh's statement. Nice (1983) had first suggested that separation be viewed as a developmental chore for the military wife which would be difficult early on but become easier with practice. The findings in his study do not support this suggestion. He concluded that the number of previous separations had no bearing on the level of depressive affect.
Nice (1983) then suggested that the job of managing the separation may be related to age or maturity level, rather than previous experience.

Depression is simply one of the separation-related problems found to exist for dependent spouses. It results from stress encountered by the dependent spouse during the separation. Other studies have suggested that separation is related to significant increases in guilt (Cretekos, 1973), anger (Gonzalez, 1970), and pathological mourning symptoms (Cretekos, 1973).

One focus of the present research is on the dependent's perception of his/her inability to cope with everyday problems during the separation. In *Families Under Stress* (1949), Reuben Hill laid some groundwork in this area by studying spousal responses to war-induced separations. He postulated what became known as the ABC--X model of family stress response. In this model, A (the specific event) interacts with both B (the family resources) and C (the manner in which the family defines the event) to result in X, the crisis. In this instance, crisis is defined as "any sharp or decisive change from which old patterns are inadequate" (Hill, 1949, p.51).

In Hill's study, it was found that the families experiencing separation did initially enter a state of disorganization. As the length of the separation increased and new coping strategies were discovered, most families adopted a way to handle the situation and regained a sense of steady functioning. However, this new state of functioning was not necessarily at the same level as it had been before the separation. The findings revealed that "some families remained disorganized and achieved a lower functioning level, while others
regained their previous functioning level, and still others found new system patterns enabling higher functioning levels" (Jacobs, 1985, p. 10). Hill concluded that the most important elements in determining the outcomes of the family's functioning abilities were: (1) the family's functioning level prior to the introduction of the stressor; (2) the resources available to the family during the stress; and (3) how the family defined the event (Jacobs, 1985).

One of the more interesting variables in Hill's (1949) study, wife's self-sufficiency, added a twist in this study of temporary marital separation. Hill found that the ability of the wife to be self-sufficient was positively related to her separation adjustment, yet negatively related to the marital adjustment upon reunion of the couple. It was Hill's suggestion that while the wife's new-found independence was a valuable tool in her management of the separation, it could, within certain relationships, cause difficulties within the marriage once the husband returned (Hill, 1949). An example of this might involve a woman who had previously chosen to stay at home, but decided to seek employment during the couple's separation. Upon his return, the husband must adjust to his wife's job or problems may evolve in the relationship.

McCubbin et al. (1976) studied the coping patterns of military families faced with separation due to the Vietnam conflict. They revealed six specific coping behavior patterns: (1) Seeking Resolution and Expressing Feelings; (2) Maintaining Family Integrity; (3) Establishing Autonomy and Maintaining Family Ties; (4) Reducing Anxiety; (5) Establishing Independence through Self-Development; and (6)
Maintaining the Past and Dependence on Religion (McCubbin et al., 1976). The findings of this study corroborated with "Reuben Hill's thesis of the critical value of the husband's and wife's background, the history of the marriage, the development of the family, and the stresses of separation in determining the family's response to separation" (McCubbin et al., 1976, p. 461).

One way in which the coping patterns of an individual can be assessed is through self-reports of their current problem solving ability. Heppner, Reeder, and Larson (1983) conducted a study in which they "examined differences between self-perceived effective and ineffective problem solvers on several cognitive content variables (e.g., self-concept, irrational beliefs, and dysfunctional thoughts) as well as cognitive process variables (e.g., need for cognition, and coping patterns)" (Heppner et al., 1983, p. 537). The findings of the study indicated that the subjects who thought of themselves as effective problem solvers, in comparison to those subjects who defined themselves as ineffective problem solvers, appeared to enjoy cognitive activities more, presented a higher self-concept, and scored lower in the self-criticism rating. These subjects were also less likely to have dysfunctional thoughts, along with fewer irrational beliefs, and their coping styles were described as less blameful and more problem focused (Heppner et al., 1983, p. 537).

In 1985, another interesting study examining problem solving was conducted. Nezu (1985) examined "differences between self-perceived effective and ineffective problem solvers along variables typically associated with psychological dysfunction and emotional distress" (Nezu,
In using two hundred and thirteen undergraduates, Nezu concentrated on those students who scored one standard deviation either above (n=43) or below (n=38) the mean on the Problem Solving Inventory (Corcoran and Fischer, 1987) as his primary subject pool. Those students who were classified in the one standard deviation above the mean group were labeled effective problem solvers and those who were classified in the one standard deviation below the mean group were labeled ineffective problem solvers. Eighty one subjects remained in this pool. Nezu then proceeded to administer to these select students the Beck Depression Inventory, the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale and the Problem Check List. The findings from this study indicated that those students who perceived themselves as effective problem solvers, "reported less depression, less trait and state anxiety, a more internal control orientation, less frequent problems, and less distress associated with these problems" (Nezu, 1985, p. 135). These findings suggest that self-perceived effectiveness in problem solving is strongly related to lowered levels of emotional distress (Nezu, 1985). One of the purposes of the current study is to examine whether or not self-perceived problem solving effectiveness is related to emotional distress in the waiting spouses population.

The second factor to be concentrated upon in this study is the anxiety level of the participants. Anxiety has been defined as a "curvilinear phenomenon" (Grinker, 1966, p. 130). After studying the effects of anxiety upon soldiers who served in World War II, Grinker (1966) concluded that "some people who are stimulated by (moderate)
anxiety become more proficient and efficient; those who are overwhelmed
with anxiety regress and react as if they were no longer adults in that
they are unable to maintain the levels of emotional stability which they
had previously achieved" (Grinker, 1966, p. 130). The positive effects
of moderate degrees of anxiety were again evident in Auerbach's (1973)
study. In this particular study, state-anxiety levels were
curvilinearly related to post-operative adjustment in surgery patients.

In this research project, the term anxiety pertains to two
related, but very different constructs: trait anxiety (T-anxiety) and
state anxiety (S-anxiety). According to Spielberger (1983), T-anxiety
"refers to relatively stable individual differences in
anxiety-proneness, that is, to differences between people in the
tendency to perceive stressful situations as dangerous or threatening
and to respond to such situations with elevations in the intensity of
their state anxiety reactions" (Spielberger, 1983, p.1).

T-anxiety can also be an indication of "individual differences in
the frequency and intensity with which anxiety states have been
manifested in the past, and in the probability that S-anxiety will be
experiences in the future. The stronger the anxiety trait, the more
probable that the individual will experience intense elevations in
S-anxiety in a threatening situation" (Spielberger, 1983, p. 1).

According to Spielberger (1966, 1972), when a situation is
perceived by an individual as threatening, S-anxiety will be high. When
a situation is perceived as non-threatening, S-anxiety will remain low.
Auerbach (1973) further believed that T-anxiety should not be affected
by situational stress.
Spielberger, Wadsworth, Auerbach, Dunn & Faulber (1973) conducted a study which examined the emotional reactions displayed by individuals who were facing the threat of impending surgery. The findings from this study revealed that S-anxiety scores, for this population, were elevated prior to surgery and that T-anxiety scores remained approximately at the same level before and after surgery (Spielberger et al. 1973). There are obvious differences between the Spielberger et al. (1973) study and the current project. The most obvious would be in regards to the subjects. In the Spielberger et al. (1973) study, the subjects were surgery patients who were facing a physical threat to themselves. In the current study, the focus is upon waiting spouses who fear a possible physical threat to their mates. However, the connection of some type of threat of physical danger exists.

The third factor examined in this study is the participants' estimate of the amount of social support they are receiving during the separation. Several attempts to define social support have been made in the past. For example, Lin, Ensel, Simeone, and Kuo (1979), conducted a study in which they examined the relationship of social support to psychiatric illness in a Chinese-American population. They were concerned with how social support could reduce the effects of stressful life events. In this study, social support was defined as "...support accessible to an individual through social ties to other individuals, groups, and the larger community" (Lin et al., 1979, p.109).

Two different models of social support were defined within this research. The first model placed social support as an antecedent factor to perceived stress. According to this model, social support could
reduce the possibility of the onset of a psychiatric illness by "providing normative pressure against the likelihood of certain events occurring (e.g. divorce)" (Lin et al., 1979, p.109).

The second model placed social support in a buffering position. After the stressful event had occurred, it was assumed that social support would act as a mediator between the stress being experienced by an individual and the development of psychiatric illness.

The results found in this study indicated: (1) stressors are positively related to psychiatric symptoms; and (2) social support is negatively related to psychiatric symptoms. Also, within the results, support was found for the buffering model of social support. But none was discovered for the antecedent model. In the opinion of this author, one major fault of the Lin et al. (1979) study was that it did not include the family members of the participants in the composition of support systems.

Johnson (1983), in an unpublished thesis study using Army officer wives as subjects, expounded upon the results of the Lin et al. (1979) study by adding the family component. However, Johnson (1983) found only minimal support in the conclusion that the greater the degree of family support, the lower the amount of stress from life events. An additional analysis did reveal that, for the military wives in this study at least, an informal support system acted as their primary vehicle for support. Results showed that friends were viewed as the most valuable support system members. Next came the immediate family members, and then, neighbors.
One could conclude from these two studies that social support may be broken down into at least two subgroups, one of family members and the other of non-family members, and that to some degree, these two sub-groups may buffer an individual against some amount of stress during stressful life events.

Based upon the different factors being examined within this study, the following hypotheses are made. The first hypothesis concerns the gender of the participants. It was hypothesized that the dependents who are male will report higher levels of state anxiety, a poorer perception of their problem solving abilities, and lower levels of social support. The basis for this hypothesis is that the role of a husband as "waiting wife" is a relatively new one and expectations for them by others in the military community are not as rigid as they are for the female dependent.

Secondly, it was hypothesized that those dependent spouses with children would score lower on the state anxiety scale, demonstrate higher perceptions of their problem solving abilities, and perceive themselves as receiving more family support than those dependent spouses who are childless. The foundation for these beliefs stems from the opinion of this researcher that being a parent will allow the individual to focus on other areas of their life rather than simply dwelling on the separation. Their problem solving ability will be higher since they are accustomed to the added responsibilities of parenting. Other support for this hypothesis includes the findings in the Johnson (1983) study in which minimal evidence was found to exist in the area of the importance of family support in reducing stress. It is believed by this researcher
that dependents with children will automatically maintain some sort of family support network through the mere existence of their children and this might aid them in coping with the separation.

A third hypothesis was based upon the examination of the direction from which the dependents perceive themselves as receiving the most support, either the family or the social support system. As stated in the second hypothesis, it is the opinion of this author that the dependents with children will maintain a strong family support network through the existence of their children. However, their children are also a connection for them with other military spouses through activities such as school meetings, sporting events (i.e. little league baseball), and social clubs (i.e., boy and girl scouts). Many activities such as these are offered on military installations as an aid to military families in developing a sense of community. They provide opportunities for interactions not only for the children but also for the parents. In accordance with the findings in the Johnson (1983) study, it is hypothesized that for the dependents, the social support network will be viewed as more valuable than the family support system.

A fourth hypothesis for this study stated that those dependent spouses attending a support group will exhibit lower state anxiety scores, perceive themselves as stronger problem solvers, and feel that they are receiving more social support than those dependent spouses not attending such groups. It is anticipated that by being in a support group the spouses will experience feelings of belonging and support which will be reflected in their scores.
A fifth hypothesis examined whether or not the number of times that the dependent spouse has actually experienced separation from his/her husband is correlated with their anxiety level during the separation. Nice (1983) demonstrated in his research that practice in being separated from one's wife or husband had no effect on the depressive affect of the individual. However, this author is hypothesizing that a negative correlation might exist between anxiety level and the number of separation experiences.

The sixth hypothesis in this study focused on a possible correlation between the length of the current separation being experienced by the spouses and the dependent's anxiety level. Nice (1983) concluded in his research with Navy wives that depression was at its highest levels prior to and during the prolonged periods of separation from their spouses. Based upon this data, the author of this study hypothesized that a positive correlation exists between anxiety level of the dependent spouse and the length of separation.

The seventh hypothesis examined the dependent spouses' ratings of danger for their mates and the S-anxiety scores of those spouses. It was hypothesized that for those dependents who rate the danger level for their mate as either four or above (moderate or higher), a higher S-anxiety score will ensue, in comparison to those dependents who rate the danger level for their spouse three or lower. This hypothesis stems from the Spielberger et al. (1973) study in which the S-anxiety scores were elevated for surgery patients before the actual surgery. If the dependents believe that their spouses are currently facing an actual physical threat, then it seems likely that a higher S-anxiety score
would be reported by them in comparison to dependents who do not view
their spouses to be in any immediate danger.
METHOD

Subjects

Thirty-four subjects responded to this study although 270 Air Force and Air National Guard spouses were invited to participate through the mailing out of individual packets of questionnaires. This sample was derived from the list of servicemen and servicewomen that had been deployed through the 2nd Combat Communications Group from Patrick Air Force Base in Cocoa Beach, Florida. Questionnaire packets were sent to all dependent spouses whose active duty spouses had been deployed through the 2nd Combat Communications Group. Their selection was based upon their willingness to participate by returning the completed questionnaires to the researcher in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. The President of the United States had set a specific deadline for the soldiers of Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. The deadline for participation in this study was established as three days prior the Presidential deadline. Therefore, all data gathered in this project was received prior to the actual beginning of the Desert Storm Operation. Two weeks into the study, postcards were mailed in order to remind the subjects of the deadline date. The packets and postcards were mailed with the permission of Col. Earl Scalet, Jr., Group Commander.

Each of the 34 individuals who returned the questionnaires by the previously stated deadline was female, between the ages of 22 and 44, and a spouse of an active duty Air Force person. Seventy-nine
percent of the subjects who responded were the wives of enlisted personnel and 21% were the wives of officers. Seventy-nine percent of the dependents were also mothers, whereas 21% had no children. The whereabouts of the spouses and the percentages of the spouses stationed in these countries were as follows: United Arab Emirates (9%); Saudi Arabia (67%); Panama (12%); Puerto Rico (6%); Honduras (3%); and Unknown (3%). One of the wives who responded did so after her husband had already returned home, therefore her scores were not used in any of the analyses.

The period of separation for these couples ranged from 2 to 16 months and the number of previous separations ranged from one more than seven times. Thirty-six percent of the respondents were, at the time of data collection, attending a military-provided support group, and 64% were not attending a support group. Thirty-two percent of the respondents feared their husband would see combat on his current assignment, while 56% did not believe their husband would see combat on his current assignment, and 12% did not answer this section of the questionnaire.

Apparatus

Questionnaire packets, containing eight different forms were used in this research study. The first form in the packet was a letter (see Appendix A), written by the researcher, which outlined the study and the steps for participation.

The second form was a consent form (see Appendix B) designed by the researcher. By signing this statement, the subject agreed to
participate and was acknowledging that he/she understood the purpose of the study.

The final letter (see Appendix C) in the packet was one in which the subject was acknowledged for their participation. The name, address, and telephone number of the researcher was made available in the case of questions or requests for copies of the results by the subjects.

The remaining contents of the packet was a demographic sheet (see Appendix D), designed by the researcher, three questionnaires (see Appendices E, F, and G), and a statement from Col. Scalet (Appendix H), which declared the Air Force's noninvolvement with the study. The purpose of the demographic sheet was to allow the researcher to divide the volunteers into different groups for analysis.

The first questionnaire utilized was the Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, (STAI) Form Y (Spielberger, 1983). It was developed by Charles D. Spielberger in collaboration with R. L. Gorsuch, R. Lushene, and P. R. Vagg. The STAI is a 40-item instrument which rates an individual's levels of both state and trait anxiety. Normative data has been collected for many varying populations. Permission for usage of this test, along with a copies of the norms, scoring manual, and test booklets was obtained.

The test-retest reliability Form Y and Form X of the STAI is based upon two different populations. The reliability data for Form Y is derived from the testing of two groups of high school students in the classroom setting. The reliability data for Form X stems from three groups of undergraduate students. The test-retest correlations between
the two forms for the T-Anxiety Scale range from .65 to .86 (Spielberger, 1983). The reliability correlations for the S-Anxiety Scale on both forms range from .16 to .62 (Spielberger, 1983).

Many comparisons were used in determining the construct validity of the T-Anxiety Scale (Spielberger, 1983). A comparison was made between neuropsychiatric patients and normal subjects. The results of this comparison demonstrated that all of the neuropsychiatric groups had higher scores except the character disorder group. This is a disorder which is characterized by the absence of anxiety.

In order to prove construct validity for the S-Anxiety Scale, the scores from military recruits were compared to those of high school and college students equivalent in age. The military recruits had just begun a very stressful training program at the time of administration. The military recruits exhibited higher scores than did the high school and college students (Spielberger, 1983).

The T-Anxiety and the S-Anxiety Scales of Form Y correlate at .65 for male college students and at .59 for female college students (Spielberger, 1983). Spielberger (1983) stated that the correlations between the two scales are higher when the testing has occurred in a situation where one's self-esteem is being appraised and lower when the individual is in physical danger. Also, when both scales were administered in the same session, Spielberger (1983) found the correlations to be higher. In this study, both scales were distributed, yet the S-anxiety scale was the one utilized in the analyses.

The second questionnaire, the Problem Solving Inventory (PSI), was developed by Dr. P. Paul Heppner (1982). Its purpose is to evaluate the
subject's perception of his/her problem solving abilities. The 35-item instrument probes into how the individual views their reaction to everyday personal problems. Lower scores on this questionnaire indicate a more positive self-appraisal of their problem solving abilities (Heppner, 1988). The questionnaire was derived from the testing of several samples of individuals, including a group of 101 average adults. This instrument is currently being marketed by Consulting Psychologists Press. Permission for its usage was granted by Consulting Psychologist Press.

The PSI has demonstrated reliability measures with alphas ranging from .72 to .85 on the different subtests and .90 for the total measure (Corcoran and Fischer, 1987). With a test-retest, two-week comparison, the PSI exhibited reliability scores for the subtests and the total measure that were between .83 and .89 (Corcoran and Fischer, 1987). Validity for the PSI has been established in many ways. Concurrent validity was proven by significant correlations between the PSI and the marks on a self-rating scale in determining a person's problem solving ability (Corcoran and Fischer, 1987). Construct validity was established through research in which the PSI was compared with instruments such as Rotter's Internal External Scale and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Corcoran and Fischer, 1987).

The final questionnaire utilized in this study was the Provision of Social Relations Scale (PSR). Developed by R. Jay Turner, B. Gail Frankel, and Deborah M. Levin (1983), this scale purports to evaluate the components of social support. Permission for usage of the PSR in this research was granted by JAI Press Incorporated.
The PSR is a 15-item instrument based upon five aspects of social support (attachment, social integration, reassurance of worth, reliable alliance, and guidance). The two dimensions of this scale focus on family support and friend support. The PSR has demonstrated good reliability, with alphas stretching from .75 to .87 (Corcoran and Fischer, 1987). The scale has demonstrated concurrent validity which correlates significantly with the Kaplan Scale of Social Support (Corcoran and Fischer, 1987).

Each packet contained a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The subjects were instructed to mail it back to the researcher.

Procedure

The materials were assembled into a large manila envelop and then given to Col. Scalet for mailing. Postage for the envelopes was prepaid by the researcher to assist in absolving Col. Scalet of any responsibility in this study. Once Col. Scalet had received the packets and postcards, they were affixed with address labels. He then mailed them on the predetermined date to the dependents' spouses. Due to the sensitive nature of the many missions in which active duty spouses were serving at that time, Col. Scalet felt a need, on his part, to protect the identity of the subjects from the public. This is the reason for his mailing of the packets rather than the researcher. However, Col. Scalet saw no reason why the dependents could not reveal their identity to the researcher at their own discretion.

The forms in the questionnaire packets were arranged in a particular order. The top letter described the purpose of the study.
Next in line was Col. Scalet's disclaimer, followed by the consent form. The demographic sheet and the questionnaires were next. The acknowledgment letter was placed last. It was estimated that it would take the individual about 30 minutes to read and complete the forms. Their final step was to seal the forms in the enclosed envelope and mail it back to the researcher.

Once the packets were received by the researcher, the consent form was separated from the rest of the forms. This was done to protect the identity of the subject and to guard against researcher bias. The questionnaires were scored manually by the researcher three times to ensure numerical accuracy.
RESULTS

The information obtained from the demographic sheet was used to divide the subjects into several different groups for analysis. These groups were based upon the following information: (1) the gender of the dependent; (2) the age of the dependent; (3) whether there are children in the house; (4) the dependent's knowledge of the whereabouts of the active duty spouse; (5) the number of times the family had experienced separation due to military assignments; (6) whether the dependent was attending a support group; and (7) the degree of personal danger in which the dependent viewed their spouse as having been placed; and (8) the length of the current separation. Each subject had three sets of scores obtained from the three questionnaires.

In order to assess the effects of the current spousal separation on the dependents, the demographic data gathered was matched with the scores from the questionnaires in accordance with each stated hypothesis.

The first hypothesis, predicting a gender difference, was unable to be tested due to the fact that all of the respondents were female.

In examining the data relevant to the second hypothesis, significant differences were not evident between dependents with and those without children in relation to their self-perceived degree of family support \( t(28) = -0.170, p > .05 \) and their reported levels of state anxiety \( t(29) = 1.725, p > .05 \). However, a significant difference
[\(t(31) = 2.310, p < .05\)] did exist for this category of subjects in terms of their overall perception of their problem solving abilities. While the means for both groups in this category (dependents with children group mean = 86.57692 and dependents without children group mean = 70.85714) fall within the normal range according to the norms presented in the instrument's manual, those dependents without children scored significantly lower on the instrument. It should be noted that lower scores on this scale indicates a more positive self-appraisal of problem solving abilities (Heppner, 1988).

These results contradicted the prediction stated by the researcher. Instead of the dependents with children perceiving themselves as stronger problem solvers, the data supports the idea that dependents who have no children are actually the better problem solvers of the two groups.

**TABLE 1**

**NUMBER OF SUBJECTS, MEANS, AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR MILITARY DEPENDENTS WITH AND THOSE WITHOUT CHILDREN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*STAI</th>
<th>DEPENDENTS WITH CHILDREN</th>
<th>DEPENDENTS WITHOUT CHILDREN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N of Subjects</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>49.50000</td>
<td>39.85714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>11.98913</td>
<td>16.36489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PSR FAMILY SUPPORT SCALE</strong></td>
<td><strong>DEPENDENTS WITH CHILDREN</strong></td>
<td><strong>DEPENDENTS WITHOUT CHILDREN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Subjects</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>8.78261</td>
<td>9.00000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2.82773</td>
<td>3.41565</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*<strong>PSI</strong></th>
<th><strong>DEPENDENTS WITH CHILDREN</strong></th>
<th><strong>DEPENDENTS WITHOUT CHILDREN</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N of Subjects</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>86.88001</td>
<td>70.85714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>15.65066</td>
<td>18.16983</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* State-Trait Anxiety Inventory  
** Provision Of Social Relations Scale  
*** Problem Solving Inventory

A second significant effect \( \chi(30) = -7.748, p < .01 \) was found to exist in the analysis of the data in the third hypothesis. In examining the difference between the dependent spouses' perceptions of their family support and that of their friend support, results corresponded with the expectations of the third hypothesis. That is, the dependents perceived that stronger levels of support were, at the time of this
study, being supplied by their friends rather than family members.

**TABLE 2**

NUMBER OF SUBJECTS, MEANS, AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS
FOR MILITARY SPOUSES ON THE PROBLEM SOLVING INVENTORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FAMILY SUPPORT SCALE</th>
<th>FRIEND SUPPORT SCALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N of Subjects</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>8.83333</td>
<td>15.46667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2.91350</td>
<td>4.96702</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The Problem Solving Inventory

In the analysis of data pertaining to the fourth hypothesis, no significant effects were present in the comparison of those dependents attending the military-provided support group and those not in relation to problem solving abilities $[t(29) = -0.764, p > .05]$ and state anxiety levels $[t(28) = -0.048, p > .05]$. However, a significant effect
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SPOUSES ATTENDING SUPPORT GROUP</th>
<th>SPouses NOT ATTENDING SUPPORT GROUP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAI STATE-ANXIETY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of subjects</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>47.25000</td>
<td>47.50000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>13.92267</td>
<td>13.88715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>** PSI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of subjects</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>80.08334</td>
<td>85.05262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>19.58412</td>
<td>16.33495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>** PSR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of subjects</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>20.40000</td>
<td>26.52632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.50238</td>
<td>7.11312</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* State-Trait Anxiety Inventory
** The Problem Solving Inventory
*** Provision Of Social Relations Scale
In the fifth hypothesis, a Bivariate Correlation-Regression was utilized and a significant correlation was not evident [$r(29)= +0.244$, $p > .05$] in the comparison between the number of previous separations which the dependent wives had experienced from their husbands and the state anxiety levels of those wives.

TABLE 4

DATA INFORMATION IN COMPARISON BETWEEN STATE ANXIETY SCORES AND NUMBER OF PREVIOUS SEPARATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* STAI state-anxiety</td>
<td>47.32258</td>
<td>13.43723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of previous separations</td>
<td>2.87097</td>
<td>1.87514</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* State-Trait Anxiety Inventory

In the comparison between the dependents' state anxiety scores and the number of months the spouses had been separated at the time of data collection, again a Bivariate Correlation-Regression was employed. This time a correlation [$r(29)= +0.340$, $p = .058$] was found. In this correlation, the analysis revealed a $p$ value slightly above the $p < .05$ criteria for significance. However, this result reveals a general trend in this comparison which tends to coincide with the stated hypothesis, which is, as the length of separation increases, the dependents' state anxiety scores will also increase.
TABLE 5
DATA INFORMATION IN COMPARISON BETWEEN
STATE ANXIETY AND NUMBER OF MONTHS SEPARATED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* STAI state-anxiety</td>
<td>47.32258</td>
<td>13.43723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of months separated</td>
<td>4.40322</td>
<td>2.47460</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* State-Trait Anxiety Inventory

In studying the data gathered in the seventh hypothesis, a significant difference was not found to exist [t(29) = 1.686, p > .05] between the state anxiety levels of those dependents who believed their husbands to be in a moderate to high degree of danger and those who believed their husbands to be in little or no danger.

TABLE 6
COMPARISON OF STATE ANXIETY LEVELS BETWEEN
DEPENDENT WIVES' PERCEPTIONS OF DANGER FOR THEIR SPOUSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MODERATE/HIGH DANGER (4 OR HIGHER)</th>
<th>LITTLE/NO DANGER (3 OR LOWER)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N of subjects</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>49.65217</td>
<td>40.62500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>12.85093</td>
<td>13.62705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 6 -- CONTINUED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* State-Trait Anxiety Inventory

**Discussion**

While the author of this project considers the information obtained valuable, the small number of subjects greatly hinders the ability to generalize the results to the population of military dependents as a whole. Participation in the study by at least 100 of the possible 270 dependents had been expected. However, only 34 individuals responded. One explanation for the small number of participants would be that the design of this study, in particular the procedure of mailing the questionnaires to the subjects, was not adequate. Mailing questionnaires to the subjects usually results in a low response rate. Miller (1983) found that even when self-addressed, stamped envelopes and follow-up letters are used, the return rates still fell in between 40% and 60%. It appears that it would have been a stronger study if the author had been able to deliver the questionnaires to the subjects personally. In the early planning phase of this study, this was the approach that the researcher recommended to Col. Scalet. However, due to his concerns for the safety of the spouses and the protection of their identity, he would not allow this particular approach. After much compromise, the only alternative appeared to be the procedure of mailing the forms.
Another explanation for the small reply is that the study could have provoked disturbing thoughts in the individuals. If an individual's primary coping strategy is to ignore a situation then that individual would not be comfortable answering questions about that particular situation. Therefore, if some of the spouses preferred not to think of the situation in the Persian Gulf or the absence of their spouses, then they would not have wanted to complete the questionnaires.

Another excuse would be that the dependent spouse, regardless of the inclusion of Col. Scalet's letter, might have been afraid that his/her results might find their way back into their spouses' military record and in some way affect their spouses' military career. There was, of course, no possible way this could have occurred and every measure was taken to explain this fully to the dependent spouses. However, the fear of negatively affecting the career of the active duty family member is a very real one and every family member must deal with it since the behavior of the individual family members does carry some weight in deciding future promotions and station assignments.

The final possible explanation would be that perhaps the spouses were unable to answer the questionnaires due to hectic schedules. This is a distinct possibility, especially if there were children in the family, since that spouse would have been fulfilling the responsibilities of both parental roles. Although the procedure was designed to be as simple as possible, many spouses may have felt that they could not spare the 30 minutes necessary for completion from their day.
In distributing this study, it was hoped that at least a small percentage of the results would come from the male segment of this population. This did not prove to be the case since all of the respondents were female.

One reason might be that relatively few married women had been deployed from Patrick Air Force Base. Another explanation could be that the male dependent spouses were usually employed outside of the home and the majority of the female dependent spouses were employed inside of the home. This would allow the female dependent spouse more time to complete the forms and to mail them back to the researcher.

A final explanation is that, perhaps, male dependent spouses with children perceived themselves as "too busy" to participate in a research study. In the past, it has been primarily the father that occupied the role of the active duty member but recent trends are showing that as more women join the military, more husbands are becoming dependent spouses. The newness of this situation could place additional stress upon the male dependent spouse who has been left behind to carry on the responsibilities of keeping the family intact. With this additional stress, busy schedules would become even busier. Therefore, the male dependent spouses may have felt that the 30 minutes required to complete the questionnaires was a luxury they could not afford.

Earlier, it was stated that one of the groups for analysis would be based upon the age of the spouses. During the analysis of the data, the author opted to remove this dimension due to the small number of replies which in turn would create even smaller groups when broken down by age and due to a relatively limited 20-year age span. The author
feels that this is still an important dimension and it deserves exploration, yet the subject pool of this study did not lend itself to such examination.

Also, the author had stated that another analysis would be performed based upon the knowledge of the whereabouts of the active duty spouse. Col Scalet had stated that many dependent spouses were unaware of the location of their spouses due to the secrecy of many missions. The author felt that this would be a very interesting dimension of the study. Yet due to the low number of repose from individuals unaware of the location of their spouse, this analysis was unable to be accomplished.

As noted previously, since no male dependent spouses chose to participate in the study, the first hypothesis could not be tested. Possible explanations for this result have been stated in the earlier paragraphs of this section.

The second hypothesis, the comparison of dependent spouses with and those without children on each of the three questionnaires, revealed some interesting results. It was predicted that dependent spouses with children would perceive themselves as having higher levels of family support. Analysis did not support this prediction. A possible explanation for this outcome is that the addition of children into the household does not constitute a stronger feeling of family support; that the variable of family support is in no way affected by children or grandchildren.

Another possible explanation is that the dependent spouse may have been experiencing a disillusioned perception of the family system since
her own family was currently in a state of turmoil due to the separation.

A final reason may revolve around the nature of military life itself. The military family is rarely able to put down roots in an area for more than a few years at a time and the constant moving places distant between the family and extended family members. Maintaining close ties with family members across the country or sometimes even across continents, is a difficult task and one that is not always successfully accomplished.

Also, in the second hypothesis, the levels of state anxiety between dependents with and those without children were examined. The results revealed no significant differences. One explanation for this is that having children does not affect one's state anxiety levels.

A second explanation is that, for those individuals who believed that raising children would be too stressful, the option of not producing children had been taken. While on the other hand, those individuals who felt ready to take on the responsibilities of parenthood did not view children as adding stress to their lives.

The third component of the second hypothesis examined the problem solving abilities between dependent spouses with and without children. A significant difference was noted in this particular analysis, yet it was different than what the author had expected. The means for both groups were well within the norms stated in the instruction manual of the instrument but the dependents without children revealed stronger problem solving abilities. While it had been expected that having children would strengthen the perception of one's problem solving
abilities, the opposite proved to be correct.

A possible explanation for this outcome is that those dependent spouses without children may have more energy to solve their own problems. The other side of this explanation is that those dependents with children may be spending much of their energy in assisting to solve their children's problems.

The results of this investigation supported the third hypothesis and found that for the dependent wives, a stronger sense of support was being supplied for them by their friends rather than other family members. These results appear to coincide with those in the Johnson (1983) study and illustrates that, while the family support factor is most surely important to these women, the primary vehicle for support by their friends. This is not a surprising finding since the military tries to maintain its image as a close-knit community and socialization is usually stressed. Another explanation is that since the military family leads a mobile life and is most likely to live away from an extended family members, the dependent spouse, over the years, has learn to adapt by relying on friends to fill the need for support.

The fourth hypothesis examined the differences between those spouses attending a military-based support group and those not on the three questionnaires. In relation to the problem solving dimension, no significant differences were apparent. A possible explanation for this could be that those dependents attending the group were receiving the help they needed to solve their problems and those not attending the group were doing so because they did not need any assistance in solving their problems. Therefore, both groups were about even in their problem
solving abilities since the individuals which need help were receiving it and those that did not were not.

The previous explanation could also hold true as the explanation for the reason that a significant difference did not exist between the two groups in terms of their state anxiety levels. Perhaps, the support groups were providing the function of lowering the anxiety levels of those individuals who needed their anxiety levels lowered and the spouses not in the groups were able to keep their own anxiety levels in check.

A significant difference did exist on the third dimension of this hypothesis, perception of social support. However, contrary to expectations, the results indicated that those subjects not attending the support groups were perceiving themselves as having higher levels of social support. It is obvious that the support groups were not providing a balance in this instance. It is probable that those spouses who attended the support groups because they had been unable to build a strong enough support network through their friends, while the other set of spouses possessed a network of friends who were able to provide enough support. If this is the case, it appears that the trend is that the military support groups does not meet all of the needs of its participants. In future studies, it might be interesting to go further into what these support groups do offer this population and gather suggestions from the members as to what could be done to improve these groups.

In regards to the fifth hypothesis, a significant correlation did not exist between the number of previous separations the dependent
spouse had experienced from her husband and her current state anxiety level. This piece of information indicates that the trend is not one in which each separation becomes easier for the spouse to handle, nor does it become more difficult. Perhaps, since each separation involves differing durations of time, different locations, and occur under differing circumstances, each separation is such a unique experience that coping skills must be adjusted every time accordingly. This would explain why it did not appear that spouses who reported higher numbers of previous separations were not any better in controlling their own state anxiety levels and why those spouses who reported fewer previous separations were not any worse.

An empirically significant correlation did not exist in the comparison between the dependents' state anxiety scores and the number of months the spouses had been separated which constituted the sixth hypothesis. However, with the p value being \( p = .058 \), it would seem probable that the general trend in this correlation would be toward a positive correlation between these two variables. This result, although not statistically significant, corresponds with findings in the Nice (1983) study. This study found that depression was at its highest level prior to and during periods of separation for Navy wives. While the current study was not designed to record the level of state anxiety prior to the departure of the dependent's spouse, it would seem reasonable to expect anxiety to also be at its highest during the separation since anxiety is an associated feature of depression (American Psychiatric Association, 1987).
The most probable explanation of this trend appears to be that as the length of separation increases, anxiety builds possibility due to factors such as loneliness, increasing financial burdens, increasing feelings of abandonment, increasing fear of danger for one's husband, exhaustion from fulfilling two roles in the family, and a lack of intimacy. This author suggests further investigation into variables such as these in order to obtain more information about this particular trend.

A significant difference was not evident in examining the anxiety levels of those subjects who judged their spouses to be in moderate to high levels of danger in comparison to those spouses who viewed their spouses to be in only low levels of danger. One basic explanation is the perceived danger levels of one's spouse is not a variable which greatly influences an individual's anxiety scores. However, this author opts for a different explanation. It could be possible that the actual fear of something catastrophic happening to a spouse would elevate one's anxiety levels and that the majority of the participants of this study were subject to this fear. Yet, for whatever reason, be it apprehension over actually admitting that fear or feeling that she has to be strong for the other family members, some subjects may have refused to acknowledge the fear and stated that they believed their spouse to be in little or no danger in the Persian Gulf. If this theory is true then the effects of the fear would be the same whether the individual admitted the presence of the fear or not.

Although this study can not be generalized to be representative of the entire population of military dependents when dealing with a spousal
separation due to the possibility of a military confrontation, it does point out some valuable information which could be useful in developing services for this population. If this information was to be utilized correctly by the military and counselors, life for the dependent spouse may be made easier during this difficult period.

Several aspects of this study would be beneficial for any counselor, military or civilian, who is working with a dependent spouse in this particular situation. First, it is important that the therapist recognize the possibility that the spouse has developed a support network devised almost entirely of friends rather than reliance upon family or extended family members. This, as stated earlier in the paper, would be due to the physical distance that normally exists between military families and their extended family members.

Upon recognizing this possibility, a counselor would be wise to help the spouse increase his/her support network by assisting the person in devising new ways of meeting and making friends. Manners in which the spouse could accomplish this range from participating in activities such as military support groups and clubs to civilian organizations such as church leagues or volunteer agencies. The author recommends that at least a few of the alternatives devised by the counselor and spouse focus on interest outside of the military setting as this would allow the spouse some relief time from the military lifestyle and pressures.

Another trend which was apparent from this research was that those spouses without children demonstrated stronger problem solving skills. One possible explanation stated was that these individuals may have more energy to cope with their problems successfully. Spouses without
children may possess more physical energy since they do not have to watch after the children. They may also have more psychological energy since they do not have to spend any on solving children's problems. If a counselor was to consider this possibility, then it would appear that teaching efficient problem solving techniques to those dependents with children would be a beneficial tool for those spouses. If the individual was more efficient in dealing with his/her children's problems then they would maintain more energy to assist in solving their own.

A counselor, whether military or civilian, needs to recognize that a support group is not necessary for all members of this population and that avenue does not need to be forced upon the individual in any fashion. This study found that those individuals who chose not to attend the support group actually had a stronger perception of social support. Upon recognizing this trend, the counselor needs to evaluate the support network of the individual before suggesting a support group. It would also be wise to consider several support groups and what each one would have to offer before assisting the spouse in choosing one. Some support groups may be more action-oriented than others, and while those types may be better suited for an individual who wants to keep busy, they would not be well suited for a spouse who just needs an occasional shoulder on which to lean.

And finally, the counselor would do well to acknowledge the positive correlation which existed in this study between the length of the separation and the anxiety levels. Although the correlation was not statistically significant, there is a distinct possibility that with a
larger number of subjects it would have been. Therefore, this piece of information is worthy of attention. It would be beneficial for a therapist, in working with a spouse in this situation, to keep in mind the possibility of a continuing increase in that person's anxiety levels and to enlist techniques in therapy which would attempt to lower these levels. Techniques that would seem to be useful range from relaxation therapy, in which one could absolve physical and mental tension, to the Gestalt "hot seat" technique, were the spouse could attempt to resolve any feelings of abandonment or anger. The timing in using such techniques would be critical in obtaining a successful outcome.

These are a few important contributions this study has made in obtaining information about the situation of the stranded military spouse. Again, it needs to be reiterated that no attempt should be made to generalize these results to any larger population since such a small sample size was utilized. However, the theories postulated in this paper will hopefully be helpful to future researchers. In future research attempts, this author advises against trying to contact members of this population through the mail services. Not only is it a major financial undertaking, but the response will always be lower. It is recommended that the spouses be contacted individually or as a group in order to get a bigger return. Therefore the results will carry more weight in terms of being able to be generalized to a larger population.
APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTORY LETTER EXPLAINING STUDY
Dear Military Spouse,

Hello! My name is Elizabeth Smith and I am a graduate student in Clinical Psychology at the University of Central Florida. The purpose of this letter is to recruit volunteers for my thesis research. Since my thesis centers on the life of the military spouses, I am directing this letter to you!

Currently, our military forces are involved in serious and sensitive operations all around the globe. During this time, life is a challenge for family members left behind. My reason for choosing this topic is that, being a military spouse myself, I understand the realistic possibility of being one of those left behind. In searching the literature, relatively little research has been performed concerning the hardships of being a military spouse. It appears that the importance of our role in the military has been underestimated. To change this, I need your help.

My research will focus on how you cope individually and in relationships with other individuals. Your participation will provide an abundance of information which will be useful in future planning of support services for the family left behind.

Due to the value and shortage of your time, the process of participation has been made relatively simple. It requires only the signing of the consent form, the completion of the demographic sheet and all sides of the three questionnaires. The five forms will then need to be mailed back to me in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by January 12, 1991. Total time involved in completing the four questionnaires is approximately 30 minutes.

Due to the sensitive nature of the position in which you and your family have been placed, confidentiality is my highest concern. On the demographic sheet and questionnaires there are identical numbers in the upper right-hand corner. However, there is no number on the consent form. Upon receiving the packet from you, I will separate the consent form from the other information. This will insure your confidentiality. Upon completion of the study, all consent forms will be destroyed. You may mail the consent form to me in a separate envelope than the one I’ve provided, but this will be at your own expense. Even in the event of the publication of these results, your identity will remain untraceable. The Air Force will have no knowledge of who the participants were nor their responses. Therefore, your participation will in no way effect the military career of your spouse.

This study is neither endorsed nor sponsored by the United States Air Force or the Department of Defense. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. I would furthermore like to inform you, even after participation, you still maintain the right to withdraw your consent and data. You would be required to remember the number from your packet and to request the withdrawal of information by March 1, 1991.
Again, I urge you to participate. My method of conducting this study has been approved through the Human Subjects Committee at the University of Central Florida in assuring that your rights as a participant are protected. If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact me. I have enclosed my name, address, and phone number in this packet.

Thank you for taking the time to read my request. Please return the forms to me by January 12, 1990. Again, Thank you!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth C. Smith
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT TO USE EVALUATIONS IN RESEARCH
CONSENT FORM

I, ____________________________________________, agree to
(please print)
participate in a research study conducted by Elizabeth C. Smith, a
Clinical Psychology graduate student at the University of Central
Florida. This research is under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Houston,
Department of Psychology, University of Central Florida, Orlando,
Florida, 32816. By signing this form, I am acknowledging that I have
been informed of the purpose of the study, that my participation is on a
voluntary basis, and that I understand my identity will remain
confidential even in the event of publication of the results. I realize
my right to withdraw my consent for participation at any time throughout
the study (prior to March 1, 1990) and understand that by doing so, I
would not suffer any negative consequences. I also understand that
this research is being conducted by Mrs. Smith on an independent basis
and is in no way connected with the United States Air Force or any other
branch of the Armed Services. I realize that I may obtain a summary of
these results from Mrs. Smith after June 1, 1991, and prior to August 1,
1991. Mrs. Smith can be reached at the following address:

Elizabeth C. Smith
95-B Camellia Avenue
Satellite Beach, FL 32937
(407) 777-8102

Date ____________________________  Signature ____________________________
Dear Participants,

I would like to thank you for participating in this research study. Being a military spouse myself, I understand that your present situation is a difficult one. My heart and prayers go out to you and each member of your family. I hope that the information gained from this research will be able to someday provide benefits for all military spouses in this type of situation. If you have any questions regarding this study or its results, I will be more than happy to discuss them with you. Please contact me before August 1, 1991 if you would like a copy of the results. My phone number and address are:

Elizabeth Smith  
95-B Camellia Avenue  
Satellite Beach, FL 32937  
(407) 777-8102

Again, thank you for your important contribution to this research.

Sincerely,  

Elizabeth C. Smith
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please answer the following questions by circling or writing in your answer.

1. Your sex: Male Female

2. What is your current age? ____________________________

3. In which branch of the Armed Services does your spouse serve?
   Air Force Air National Guard Other ____________________________

4. What is your spouse's rank? ____________________________

5. Are there children in your household? Yes No

6. If you answered "Yes" to # 5, what are their ages? ____________________________

7. If known, to what country has your spouse been deployed? (If unknown, please put "Unknown")

8. If known, what is the nature of your spouse's duties in their present assignment?

9. How many months have you and your spouse been apart during this current separation? ____________________________

10. How many times have you experienced a prolong separation (3 months or more) from your spouse, including this separation?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7+

11. Are you presently attending a support group for dependents who are separated from their spouses for military purposes?

   Yes No

12. If you answered "Yes" to #8, is that support group military-based or civilian-based?

   Military Civilian

13. To what degree of danger do you perceive you spouse as being in due to his/her current assignment? (Please circle the number that applies.)

   1------2------3------4------5------6------7
   none moderate severe
14. Do you believe your spouse is likely to be involved in any combat due to their current assignment?

Yes  No
APPENDIX E

STATE–TRAIT ANXIETY INVENTORY (FORM Y)
Due to copyright laws, the author of this research was unable to include a copy of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory in this thesis. Obtaining a copy of the questionnaire is possible by contacting Consulting Psychologist Press at the following address.

Consulting Psychologist Press
3803 E. Bayshore Road
P.O. Box 10096
Palo Alto, California 94303
(415) 969-8901
APPENDIX F

THE PROBLEM SOLVING INVENTORY (FORM B)
Due to copyright laws, the author of this research was unable to include a copy of The Problem Solving Inventory in this thesis. Obtaining a copy of the questionnaire is possible by contacting Consulting Psychologist Press at the following address.

Consulting Psychologist Press  
3803 E. Bayshore Road  
P.O. Box 10096  
Palo Alto, California 94303  
(415) 969-8901
We would like to know something about your relationships with other people. Please read each statement below and decide how well the statement describes you. For each statement, show your answer by indicating to the left of the item the number that best describes how you feel. The numbers represent the following answers.

1 = Very much like me
2 = Much like me
3 = Somewhat like me
4 = Not very much like me
5 = Not at all like me

___ 1. When I'm with my friends, I feel completely able to relax and be myself.
___ 2. I share the same approach to life that many of my friends do.
___ 3. People who know me trust me and respect me.
___ 4. No matter what happens, I know that my family will always be there for me should I need them.
___ 5. When I want to go out to do things I know that many of my friends would enjoy doing these things with me.
___ 6. I have at least one friend I could tell anything to.
___ 7. Sometimes I'm not sure if I can completely rely on my family.
___ 8. People who know me think I am good at what I do.
___ 9. I feel very close to some of my friends.
___10. People in my family have confidence in me.
___11. My family lets me know they think I am a worthwhile person.
___12. People in my family provide me with help in finding solutions to my problems.
___13. My friends would take the time to talk over my problems, should I ever want to.
___14. I know my family will always stand by me.
___15. Even when I am with my friends I feel alone.
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER

DATE:

TO: Combat Communications Spouses

Enclosed is a graduate school project being conducted by Mrs Elizabeth Smith (an Air Force dependent wife at Patrick). She has included her letter of introduction explaining the purpose of the project and how the information will be used.

I want to advise you that the 2d Combat Communications Group has not provided Mrs Smith with a mailing list. We continue to want to protect your privacy from people or agencies directly contacting your family. Mrs Smith provided us with the packages and the postage. We simply mailed this package to you. The decision is entirely yours whether you participate or not. Should you have any concerns with the manner in which the organization participated in this project, please feel free to call and discuss this matter with me.

EARL J. SCALET, JR.
Colonel, USAF
Commander
APPENDIX I

INFORMAL LETTER EXPLAINING RESULTS TO PARTICIPANTS
Dear Participant,

This letter is being mailed to you in response to the request you made to be informed of the results of my thesis study. Before I begin to explain the significant findings, I would like to thank you for the interest you showed this past December and your participation. It is my sincere hope that this study will pave the way for future research in the dependent population of the military and lead to improved services for this particular population.

Three significant results were evident in the analysis of the data gathered from the questionnaires. The first of these concerned the differences between spouses with and those without children in relation to their problem solving abilities. The statistical means for each group fell well within the expected norms. This means that both groups reported adequate problem solving abilities, however, those without children reported stronger abilities.

The second significant finding was in a comparison between the levels of support supplied by the family members and that of friends to the spouses. It was demonstrated that for the dependents who participated in this study, the majority of them felt that their friends were their primary vehicle of support.

The final significant effect was noted in the comparison between those dependents attending the military-provided support group and those not attending any type of support group. The results showed that the spouses not attending the support groups perceived themselves to be receiving higher levels of social support than those spouses actually attending the support groups. This was the opposite of what I originally expected to find, yet, this finding does make sense. The existence of the support groups is important so that military spouses who are in need of stronger support networks will have the opportunities to establish these networks. For those spouses who do not feel a need for a stronger social support network, the support groups would not be necessary.

These findings are the statistically significant results of my research. It is my hope that you find this information interesting and your participation rewarding. If you feel a need to discuss these results in more detail, you may contact me at 777-8102. Again, thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth C. Smith
REFERENCES


